



Andrew Tate: his misogynistic beliefs need to be stopped



'Spongebob' remains the greatest cartoon of all time



Microcosm of Saratoga: West Valley Joggers and Striders Club



THE saratoga falcon

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SCHOOL SPIRIT RETURNS WITH ANNUAL ACTIVITIES



Clockwise: Junior Bryan Wang soars in the stunt dance. Senior girls perform in the dance team act. Sophomores group together in the boys' dance. Senior Tony Fernandes drinks milk in the senior boys' dance finale.

FALCON // WILLIAM NORWOOD and ALLISON TAN

Bell schedule satisfies staff and students

BY Daniel Wu

Senior Harrison Hwang calmly strolled out of class on a recent day. With a rigorous course load stacked full of AP classes, most would assume Harrison had a mountain of work awaiting him at home. However, Hwang said he had already completed his homework for the day at least in part thanks to the reintroduction of daily tutorials in this year's bell schedule.

"The primary benefit is that I can have more time to myself during the school day and work on what I please," Hwang said. "It frees up time after school to hang out with friends or do something else."

This year's new bell schedule features a number of changes, including the reintroduction of daily tutorials and 85-minute classes, shorter by 5 minutes than in recent years. The schedule aims to address criticism from students and teachers last year.

The daily tutorials differ in duration for Red and Blue Days, with Red Day tutorials lasting 30 minutes and Blue Day tutorials lasting 50 minutes. (Red Days are periods 1, 3, 5 and 7; Blue Days are 2, 4 and 6.) According to principal Greg Louie, the district board faced a multitude of issues when determining the bell schedule for this year.

>> BELL on pg. 5

MOSAIC attempts to create a sense of community

BY Sanjoli Gupta & Isabelle Wang

MOSAIC, short for "Making Our School An Inclusive Community," has replaced last year's advisory sessions for the 2022-23 school year at both Saratoga and Los Gatos High, making it a district wide effort. Advisory included lessons on topics such as bullying, mental health and consent.

MOSAIC occurs less regularly than the advisory units that began during the on-line year in 2020-2021. Taking place once a month with the same assigned room and teacher, it occupies the entirety of tutorial instead of 30 minutes. MOSAIC now in-

volves more student-to-student interaction, allocating more of its curriculum time for students to get familiar with each other before diving into presentation topics.

The MOSAIC team, including history teacher Bismah Siddiqi, principal Greg Louie, special education teacher Lauren Taylor and assistant principal Brian Safine, works together to create lessons that are relevant to the students.

Early in the year, students and teachers filled out a form about the topics they wanted to be covered in MOSAIC. The team looked through these respons-

es and created the lessons accordingly to try to ensure the lessons would engage students.

This emphasis is an attempt to bring students closer to each other and make them more comfortable to open up and talk about the lessons as a class.

Previously, advisory only took up part of tutorial, and students were allowed to work on homework or ask their teacher questions after the lesson was over.

Junior Taylor Chu thinks the 50-minute duration is too long because students, especially upperclassmen, need tutorial time to communicate with

teachers and clarify concepts.

"I don't think MOSAIC should take up the whole period. After a brief lesson is done, students should be allowed to spend the remainder of the time as a regular tutorial," Chu said. "However, it still is an improvement from having advisory only on Wednesdays."

The first MOSAIC on Aug. 29 began with introductions of what students did over summer, which helped generate small discussions. The second MOSAIC on Sept. 29 talked about the importance of prioritizing sleep and managing schoolwork.

>> MOSAIC on pg. 5



Louie

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Upgrades continue on campus

BY Howard Shu

Over the summer, most of the campus was temporarily closed, and five active Measure E projects took major leaps forward or were finished by the dozens of workers who were on site: heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and roofing upgrades in 24 classrooms; covered walkway refurbishment; the installation of a pool canopy; the remodeling of the engineering lab; and the turfing and remodeling of the baseball field.

Of those projects, three are finished,

while the engineering lab and baseball field are still under renovation in the new school year.

New HVAC systems prevent leaks

As students and teachers returned to campus on Aug. 18 for the fall semester, one noticeable change was improved air conditioning. From June 5 to Aug. 14, construction workers installed new HVAC units in 24 classrooms spanning the 000, 100, 300 and 600 wings.

>> CONSTRUCTION on pg. 5

newsbriefs

Five candidates vie for three open board positions

The board election will be held on Nov. 8. Four candidates are running for election for the first time.

On his website, Chris Miller, a teacher at a private high school, said he aims to “balance the needs of the students, parents, staff and the community [...] in an age of uncertainty concerning climate, funding and security.”

In a voter statement, Misty Davies, a project manager, said she has a mission to “provide well-rounded comprehensive academic programming” and “maintain transparent, strategic financial policies.”

Steve Chen, a recently retired math teacher at Los Gatos High, hopes to “provide a balanced and educated perspective on all matters before the board.”

Alex Shultz, a retired Biology teacher of 27 years at Los Gatos High School, said he plans to focus on retaining teachers and bridging relationships between all members of the school community.

In his voter statement, Guidry, whose children graduated from Saratoga High, said he aims to improve the mental health of students, build on the strengths of teachers and improve the district’s outstanding curriculum. ♦

— Lynn Dai and Jonny Luo

National School Lunch Program provides free meals

On the first day of school, hundreds of students stormed out of their third period class as the lunch bell rang, tussling in line for free lunch. Within minutes, the lunch line extended all the way from the cafeteria to the student center.

Beginning this fall, the school was required to join the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This change came as a result of Gov. Gavin Newsom’s signing of new legislation that mandates public schools to provide free breakfast and lunch for students.

To participate in the free lunch program, students must fill out a form through their Titan Account — then, they can scan their student ID to redeem their free meal.

According to cafeteria head Pam Carlino, each free meal includes a main course: two ounces of meat/meat alternative, two ounces of grain, one cup of vegetables, one cup of fruit and one cup of milk. Everything served in the lunch is made from scratch in the kitchen.

“I understand why they decided to make the food free,” junior Marco Wang said. “Even though the portions have gone down in size, I still think the quality of school lunches is good.” ♦

— Sam Bai and Victoria Lin

Bring Your Own Device policy elicits mixed views

In a Friday newsletter sent out by principal Greg Louie late last spring, the district publicized a new “Bring Your Own Device” policy, requiring students to either bring a personal device to school daily, or check out a Chromebook from the district at the beginning of each school year.

The district believes the policy, first approved by the district board in 2019, will help prepare students for success in college and beyond. Another reason for the shift is the district struggling to manage the aging, existing fleet of Chromebooks — and insurance rates for protecting against cybercrimes have skyrocketed for school districts.

Sophomore Sameera Kapur said that people with older laptops may be negatively affected by this change.

Others like junior Jake Merrill have more neutral opinions, who said he was fine with the changes and, before the policy, brought his own device to school.

Though students may start to see the Chromebook carts around the school getting phased out, the school promises to continue to support students using current technology skills and prepare them for the digital age by providing the tools, skills and knowledge necessary. ♦

— Atray Desai



FALCON // NATALIE CHUA

Homecoming | During the Homecoming quad day performance on Sept. 23, the senior boys dance to “Boyfriend” by Big Time Rush, lifting their hands in the shape of a heart to a roaring round of applause.

Wellness Center welcomes new therapist team and resources

by Lynn Dai & Kathy Wang

Ever since the Wellness Center was built at the heart of the school in rooms behind the Student Center in 2019, it has facilitated more convenient access to its mental health resources and provided a private, calming and supportive place for students.

This year, it’s seeking to provide even more resources to students who need help.

The wellness team on campus works with the school’s CASSY services, an agency that contracts mental health therapists for students. CASSY therapists are directed to the center’s lead therapist Shobha Vaidyanathan, who determines student-therapist pairings. Both CASSY and the center strive to protect and provide self-care strategies and mental health support.

This year, the center expanded its team, introduced more mental health resources and added youth outreach workers who work as a group to provide for students’ needs, aiming to destigmatize the process of reaching out for support. The center is also in the process of collecting more resources that address issues related to gender identity and racism.

“The wellness center isn’t just therapy; it’s okay to just come, talk and relax.” LEAD THERAPIST Shobha Vaidyanathan

This fall, the wellness team welcomed new coordinator Grace Conley, who is responsible for coordinating meditation and peer-to-peer groups between students and youth outreach workers. Also new is a team of three wellness therapists serving students: Naomi Burke, Kim Cousins and Sunny Tan.

Both Burke and Tan are therapists from CASSY. Vaidyanathan emphasizes that in the wellness center, there is no division between the CASSY therapists and district therapists, and they all work together as a whole to support students. If a student is in need of a therapist, Vaidyanathan assigns a therapist to the student depending on their personal needs.



Conley

She hopes the new additions will provide more ways for students to relax.

“Students in general take on a lot, and they don’t think self-care is important at all,” she said. “In Saratoga, there is a lot of stigma around mental health. It’s important for students to know that stress, peer pressure, depression, anxiety and panic attacks aren’t something to be ashamed of. The wellness center isn’t just therapy; it’s okay to just come, talk and relax.”

Vaidyanathan said she also regularly checks in with her team alongside Conley to figure out the personal concerns of specific students and issues regarding the stigma around mental health.

“I talk about self-care with my teammates. Even though there might be differences of opinion at times, that comes from a place of respect and not judgment,” Vaidyanathan said.

Vaidyanathan’s philosophy when working with students incorporates cognitive behavioral therapy, meaning she strongly believes that every student is different and their mental health needs must be approached on a larger spectrum.

Much of her philosophy is influenced by her experiences prior to working at the school. In the past, she has worked with teenagers going through mental challenges with domestic violence, addictions and eating disorders.

Around one-third of the SHS student population visited the center last year.

“It’s really been a mind-boggling experience to know that so many of our teens are going through these mental health [struggles] and need assistance,” Vaidyanathan said.

New wellness coordinator has roots in education

Working alongside Vaidyanathan is Conley, who was born and raised in Santa Clara, where she grew up in a large extended family that influenced her people-loving personality.

Much of Conley’s family worked in education. Her mother was a high school English teacher, and her uncle worked as a professor at San Jose State University. Conley started working in education after attaining her BA in English from San Jose State University and her BS in child studies from Santa Clara University.

Conley previously worked at an education organization called Opportunity Youth Academy. There, she mentored high school students who dropped out of school, ultimately inspiring her to pursue her position as the wellness center coordinator at Saratoga.

She emphasizes how the Wellness Center acts as a calm place where students can take a break or relax.

“I see a lot of students kind of hesitant to come in here. They peek their heads in a little,” she said. “I just don’t want anybody to be afraid or feel like there’s some kind of stigma coming into the Wellness Center.” ♦

Safine leaves district admin role to return to counseling

by Maggie Zeng & Zachary Zinman

After guidance department chair Alina Satake left for a new job in the Los Altos Mountain View district last spring, an unexpected but welcome candidate applied for the vacancy: Brian Safine, who resigned from his post as the district’s director of human resources to take a role he had held years before.

Safine, a self-deemed “nerd for counseling,” said he is thrilled with his decision to be back working closely with students and staff. He said the opportunity came to him as “a bit of a surprise, but a very welcomed surprise” nonetheless.

Taking Satake’s position, Safine is serving both freshmen and sophomores with last names S through Z, and juniors and seniors with last names T through Z.

Safine has worked for 16 years in the district, with 13 and a half at the school in roles as a guidance counselor and assistant principal and two and a half at the district office in his human resources role. He is taking a large pay cut to return to his counseling role.

Safine attributes his return to a reflection on why he went into education in the first place: Fueled with passion to support students and good teaching, he feels energized from students’ optimism and diligence. He enjoys every part of his work — down to the monotonous tasks of reading emails and schedule changes.

Safine’s immediate goal for this year is reconnecting with students and processing college applications for the vast majority of students who have applied early to college.

Additionally, he seeks to resolve a major issue within the community, one he calls the “college rat race.” From his experience

working with students, he believes many of them place their worth through colleges, using acceptances as validation.

“It’s something constantly that I’m looking at for our community, which is not letting that college scorecard define a student’s worth,” he said.

Beyond that, Safine wants to continue expanding outreach by talking with parents and staff and helping the community understand how to view guidance in college admissions and courses decisions.

Wishing to help students find the right academic match for them, he, the guidance department and Ward, have already scheduled 40 college sessions for all of the students.

So far, Safine said his return to the school has been enjoyable.

“I like being in front of students,” Safine said. “I like hearing their feedback. The excitement of working at a school and working with students again in the last two weeks have totally met my expectations.” ♦

“I like being in front of students. I like hearing their feedback.”



GUIDANCE COUNSELOR Brian Safine

Hoping to ease this process, Safine and the guidance department have partnered with college and career counselor Brad Ward in the College and Career Center.

New computer science teacher hopes to inspire students

FORMER SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TEACHER TAUGHT MATH BEFORE SWITCHING TO COMPUTER SCIENCE IN AUGUST

by Saachi Jain & Martin Xu

Following the temporary leave of AP Computer Science teacher Thomas Wang and the departure of teacher Jarvin Bayona, Brandon Petersen joined the school’s teaching staff at the start of the fall semester.

He is acting as a replacement after Wang — who is currently living in Taiwan on a Fulbright scholarship — took a leave of absence until the middle of spring semester.

After graduating from Citrus College in Glendora, Calif., for his undergraduate degree, Petersen fell in love with computer science following his enrollment in programming classes as a part of his general education requirements.

His passion for teaching emerged while he served as a substitute teacher at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona for his bachelor’s degree in Applied Mathematics.

After he graduated, he went on to obtain a master’s in mathematics and a teaching credential to pursue his passion for teaching.

However, Petersen soon noticed that most schools wanted him to teach computer science instead of math, so he made the

decision to become a full-time computer science teacher.

“The school I first substitute taught at was a really good school. The students and teachers were super friendly,” he said. “I’ve come to believe that I was always meant to be a teacher.”

After eight years of teaching in Southern California, Petersen finally made the move to Saratoga that he was looking forward to for many years, since his wife’s family currently lives in Saratoga.

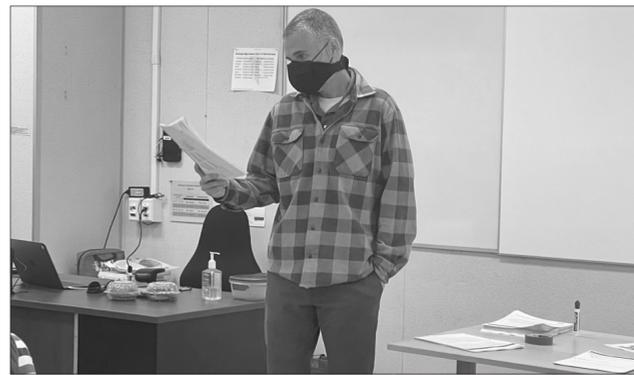
Petersen said that he was delighted by students at Saratoga given their diligence and attentiveness.

“It was a bit of a culture shock at first,” Petersen said. “I especially noticed that during the fire drill, all the students were lined up nicely and listening to their teachers. At my previous school, it would be chaotic during something like that.”

He hopes for students to become more comfortable with discussing programming and with their own skills.

His main goals are for all his students to develop a genuine love for computer science and succeed on the AP exam.

“The students here are really great,” he said. “I hope that by the end of my class they are all comfortable creating their own projects, and can turn any one of their ideas into reality.”



FALCON // NATALIE CHUA

Teacher Brandon Petersen holds up paper, instructing the class about an upcoming project.

Petersen is determined to inspire bright students who are interested in programming to pursue computer science while in high school. He hopes that this gives them the power to speak with different experts in

the field and bring their ideas to life.

“Right now, we are mostly doing an intro to programming which is bit slow for students previously programed,” Petersen said. “However, I am really looking forward to group and individual projects where students can use what they have learned.” ♦

New World History and AP Government teacher looks to instill positive growth mindset through class activities

by Sunny Cao & Jonny Luo

Students in new teacher Holly Royaltey’s World History class circled the classroom in early August while offering their opinions on what constitutes the world’s top 10 worst problems, such as poverty and racism. Through this activity, Royaltey hoped to help her students understand leadership and the lenses through which history is viewed, both important concepts in World History.

Royaltey teaches three periods of AP Government and Economics for seniors and two periods of World History for sophomores.

Growing up in the East Bay, Royaltey graduated from San Lorenzo High School in 1995. She continued to study at UC Santa Barbara and UC Santa Cruz for her undergraduate and master’s degrees in history and teaching respectively. She chose to pursue teaching because it was the job that she thought was most viable for a history major.

At that time, Royaltey said she had “blinders on” because she failed to consider other career options such as entering law school, but she soon found that teaching was a great fit for her.

“I wanted to do something that was active, where I had a lot of freedom and autonomy, and where I was around people, and teaching fits all of those things,” Royaltey said. “I knew I couldn’t work behind a desk all day; it wasn’t for me.”

Her first teaching job was at Scotts Valley High School, where she taught for three years. She later taught at Leigh and Del Mar High school for five and 11 years respectively.

When teaching, Royaltey places a large emphasis on learning theory: She wants students to know how they learn best after leaving her class. Royaltey also hopes to help students form good study habits and manage their time well.

To prevent boredom and exhaustion in class — which Royaltey often dealt with at Scotts Valley High’s 106-minute-long periods — she constantly has students engage in interactive activities such as having students move around the classroom and discuss ideas with each other.

Despite troubles with the transition to Saratoga High’s shorter class periods, Royaltey noticed a big difference in student attitudes, praising their high level of academic commitment.

“The level of academic commitment [at

SHS] is unlike anywhere I’ve ever been,” Royaltey said. “Scotts Valley and Leigh are high performing, but students here do so many interesting things like tutoring English, playing in the school orchestras and teaching art.”

“I believe there’s a huge amount of potential at this school.”



HISTORY TEACHER Holly Royaltey

However, as a downside, Royaltey has also noticed that such a level of academic performance is accompanied by a “wicked amount of stress,” and she hopes she can provide some perspective to help students relieve their stress.

“I think that I can help students by just telling them, ‘Hey, what you’re doing already is enough. It’s good, it’s glorious, it’s plenty.’ I want students to enjoy the work they’re doing and help relieve some of their

stress,” she said. Royaltey also emphasizes using a growth mindset to learn and grow from previous mistakes.

“I do Jujitsu in my spare time, and it’s a constant cycle of not knowing stuff and learning new skills,” Royaltey said. “It’s a good reminder as a teacher to remember what it feels like to not know something.”

To promote “a deep learning experience,” Royaltey expects her students to enter her class with curiosity and push themselves to try new things. She also expects her students to “push themselves to be better than they were yesterday.”

She explained that she’d rather spend six weeks talking about one topic in depth rather than skimming through multiple topics too quickly.

Besides academics, Royaltey — who’s heard many good things about Saratoga’s social events — looks forward to attending annual events like Bombay in the Bay.

“I’m super excited about the conversations I’m going to have and what students are going to learn and figure out,” Royaltey said. “I believe there’s a huge amount of potential at this school, and seeing what students do with their own potential really excites me.” ♦

Class of 2023 ends Homecoming quad days with a bang

by MeherBhatnagar & MichelleWan

A long line of seniors stood at the top of the quad steps, holding hands. The seniors displayed their hours of dedication and experience from past quad days with a series of Marvel-themed dances and an on-point skit that didn't disappoint.



Ramirez

Their quad day on Sept. 23 began with an enthralling and energetic opening skit which was written by Anastasia Ramirez and Allison Tan. Since the skit was based on Marvel, participants dressed in creative costumes like The Hulk, Peter Parker, Black Widow, Thor and Captain America. In preparation for quad day, seniors Kiana Compeau and Avani Gupta choreographed the partners dance, a crowd favorite. Choreographers for the other dances included Anand Agrawal, Ritisha Byri, Nadine Cobourn, Risha Desai, Kate Hsiung, Isha Jagadish, Ishir Lakhani, Annika Muju,

Varun Shah, Ojas Somani, Minsui Tang and Kaelli Tratang.

"We have almost 50 girls in the dance, which is nearly twice the amount of participation from previous years," Gupta said. "We put in extra effort to make the last all-girls' dance the best."

However, the choreographer for the dance, Risha Desai, said there were some technical difficulties in the sound system, which caused the performance to go overtime by five minutes.

Nonetheless, the dancers unanimously continued singing the song and dancing.

"A few of our dances got delayed because of technical difficulties, which definitely affected our timeliness and schedule," rally commissioner and participant senior Taylor Wilson said.

Despite many un-scripted errors and technical difficulties throughout the performance, the seniors managed to give their best effort.



FALCON // WILLIAM NORWOOD

Seniors Kiana Compeau, Nadine Cobourn and Avani Gupta perform during the girls' dance.

As the dances came to a close, more than 123 seniors gathered around for the finale, which highlighted the different sports teams and activities as the crowd cheered them on.

Many seniors felt the emotional weight of their last quad day as all participants linked together, shoulder to shoulder, swaying on the quad steps and cheering on their fellow dancers.

"I'm really going to miss hearing people laughing during the performances, especially during the all-boys' dance," Wilson said. "It brings me joy seeing people in the crowd entertained." ♦

Juniors stand out with ambitious stunt and solo performances

by DanielWu

The iconic beat of late artist Pop Smoke's "Get Back" thundered throughout the quad at the junior's Homecoming quad day performance on Sept. 22. Cheers erupted from the crowd as juniors Avik Belenje, Pearson Chung and Raghav Rajan performed the popular "Get Sturdy" dance to the panel of judges.

Eager to avenge their last-place finish in last year's quad day performance, a total of about fifty juniors participated in seven dances including K-pop, all-girls, stunt, all-boys, partners, colorguard and the finale.

Highlights of the junior quad day performance included a variety of stunts and solos. Junior Raghav Chakravarthi's all-

boys stunt drew cheers from the crowd as he was doused in a bucketload of water and proceeded to swagger towards the judges, emulating "Moto Moto" from the kid's show "Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa."

Junior choreographer Avik Belenje, who directed the all-boys dance, believes the performance went pretty smoothly. He said that although the performance was plagued with various audio issues, the participants managed to work around them and put on a stunning show.

"Our goal was to be original and have fun while we were at it," Belenje said. "The stunts and solos went well and everyone enjoyed

them." Given the workload associated with junior year, Belenje prioritized finishing the choreography for the all boys dance before the start of the school year. He began preparations before the end of sophomore year, a move he believes significantly reduced stress.



Belenje

In the lead-up to the performance, however, Belenje said that a particular challenge was determining positions for the participants, given the higher-than-expected turnout. As a result, positions for the all-boys dance were determined the night before.

Junior Erika Andersson, who co-choreographed the all-girls performance, shared

similar feelings to Belenje on the large numbers in practice turnout.

"Everyone's schedule is different, so it was a nightmare scheduling practices that everyone could attend," Andersson said.

Andersson and Belenje said that regardless of the judge rankings, they were satisfied with the performance. Belenje described the final product as "simply elite," while Andersson said she was relieved that the juniors performed so well despite the hiccups encountered with the audio system.

Altogether, the majority of the junior class is looking forward to next year's quad day performance, which will be the last quad day performance of their high school career.

"Who's going to come in second place? First is already reserved," Belenje said. ♦



FALCON // WILLIAM NORWOOD

The freshmen perform their all girls' dance, beginning the student quad days on Sept. 20.

The freshman class powers up with an exhilarating quad day performance

by EricShi

The freshmen were up first for the student Homecoming quad day performances on Sept. 20, following the teacher performance the day before. The bleachers in the quad were packed full as many watched in anticipation.

The freshmen theme this year was the "Powerpuff Girls." As such, they incorporated elements like costumes resembling the characters and skits from the "Powerpuff Girls" TV show.

Going into quad day preparation, the class, consisting of around 280 students total, faced a lack of participation. However, in the end, about 50 students agreed to participate.

"We couldn't get many people to do the quad day performance, as a lot of the freshmen didn't know what quad day was," freshman vice president Jena Lew said. "Only when the other grades started getting serious about their quad days did people begin to sign up."

Additionally, many performers felt nervous before the performance.

"People said that they felt 'shivers down their spine' and were freaking out because a lot of people were watching," Lew said.

Lew said that although preparation was tough, it was a very rewarding experience.

In the end, they thought their weeks of rehearsing paid off, and their performance went well. Additionally, the costumes, although simple, distinguished each character. After the performance ended, many upperclassmen praised the freshmen. "It was unfortunate that their posters got washed out by the rain, but the freshmen did a good job organizing their performance," junior Carine Chan said. "I am surprised with the amount of hype they were able to generate."

Lew said although there is also room for improvement, the process was what made Homecoming memorable.

"It was really fun to work with everybody to make our performance great," Lew said. ♦

Sophomores surprise audience with a solo rap and clever skit

by KathyWang

The crowd cheered on Sept. 21 during lunch as the sophomores ended their Homecoming quad day skit with a group dance using a mashup of songs: "Yeah" by Usher, "Nice for What" by Drake and the "Party Rock Anthem" by LMFAO, Bennett and Goonrock.

The sophomore theme was Power Rangers, and their skit revolved around the heroes hunting for six hidden items scattered across the campus in order to save Saratoga's SAT scores from the antagonists "Gru," (the main character of Despicable Me), "Mills," (the Hoco football game rival), and Gru's two minions: "Freshman Fan" and "MOSAIC."

"The group dance was my favorite. [During practice], everyone would bring positive energy with them."

SOPHOMORE Anisa Taymuree

"I think the plot was really unique and fun because they included aspects of the school like MOSAIC," sophomore Anisha Rahut said.

The skit was written and put together by sophomores Timothy Leung, Nirali Garg, Riley Stanton, Aarushi Sharma and Anushka Tadikonda.

"We wanted the Homecoming skit to have a cohesive plot where the Power Rangers would go around and save the school," Leung said. "Eventually the plot all came

together." The six hidden items were mostly based on the different class themes, including K-pop, The Powerpuff Girls, DC, Marvel, The Incredibles and Bollywood.

Using the hidden items as a segway into a variety of dances, the sophomores included a K-pop dance, Bollywood dance, all boys dance, all girls dance, partner dance and a group dance for the finale.

The dances were choreographed separately by different sophomores, including Anisa Taymuree, Katherine Berger, Saejil Thomas, Shaan Janardhan, Juhli Karamcheti, Gautham Jasti and Mihir Shaik.

"The group dance was definitely my favorite," Taymuree said. "[During practice], everyone would bring positive energy with them and make jokes with each other."

Unlike the rest of the quad day skits, the sophomores also included a solo rap, which was written and performed by Rylee Stanton. Stanton's rap was received well by spectators, receiving many enthusiastic cheers.

"I love being on a stage in front of a crowd so rapping was a great experience," Stanton said. "Everyone was chanting my name after and it was absolutely incredible."

The sophomore class and the rest of the audience watching from the bleachers were pleasantly surprised by the organized dances, creative plot and humorous roasts.

With the addition of the excited cheers from their peers, the sophomore homecoming skit was an overall success.

"The skit was really good and the plot tied to our school very well with how MOSAIC came to our school," sophomore Claire Zheng said. "I wasn't expecting the skit to be that good, but it was actually a lot better than I expected." ♦

CONSTRUCTION

continued

assistant principal Brian Thompson said. "In those 24 classrooms, the old age HVAC systems were not effective and not always accurate. Now teachers can control their individual classrooms rather than a whole wing being controlled by one thermostat."

Though the school is still working with contractors on construction touch-ups, they achieved their goal of getting all rooms ready by the first day of school.

"[The new engineering lab] is going to be a gorgeous facility," Thompson said. "The space is completely modernized. It's all brand new. Students are going to be so excited to get in there."

"Students are going to be so excited to get in there."

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
Brian Thompson

There will be a new window letting in natural light, glass doors, cabinets, tabletops and ceiling electrical outlets for workstations. The space for the 3D printers, laser printer and CAD machine was also redesigned to be more accessible and past storage facilities were turned into breakout rooms.

Renovation on the baseball field started the day after graduation and is on track to finish in December, in time for the baseball season in January.

The old grass field did not drain properly and had an awkward slope, causing the field's grating to puddle up during rainy days, leading to cancellations of practices and games for up to three days, Thompson said. The sprinkler system as well as regular mowing and monitoring of the field did not work well either.

With the new turf field, the baseball team will be able to play games even if it rains in the morning.

"It's going to be a beautiful, state of the art field once it's done," Thompson said. "The old field had reached the end of its life many years before it was demolished."

He expects the new all-turf field to save time and money in maintenance while also being more versatile. P.E. students, the marching band and other programs will also be able to use the facility, similar to the multi-purposed softball and upper fields.

Hallways all over the school had rust removed from their cover structures and damaged beams were repaired.

"If you just look up, you'll see the bright white paint on the walkways on our campus," Thompson said. "I noticed a huge difference. It's brighter, it feels more open and it looks fresh, clean and welcoming on campus."

Additionally, the school demolished the pool canopy and plans to install a new canopy in November and December after the water polo season. During that time, the pool will be shut down. Thompson expects that the currently ongoing projects

will be some of the last, if not the last, campus projects funded by the Measure E bond, which was passed in spring 2014. The district is set to exhaust the \$99 million bond soon, so funding for additional renovations will have to come from other sources.

The types of renovations will also be chosen by a different group. For the past eight years, the Measure E Bond Oversight Committee had the final say on which projects to do next out of a list of potential renovations made by Saratoga High and Los Gatos High.

The committee consists of community members, district personnel, board members, teachers and students, but it plans to dissolve following the conclusion of the final Measure E projects.

Thompson is happy with how all the recent projects have gone, especially since they have stayed on track despite weekly changes in construction plans. The most recent hiccup was learning that the school needed to redo the cement walkway between the weight room, engineering lab and MAP annex to satisfy state American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

While this will lead to more fencing around the area in September and October, ultimately it will only delay the project by a couple weeks.

"Everybody who was in charge of construction did an excellent job dealing with whatever issues came up over the summer and making sure the projects stayed on track and within budget," he said. ♦



Thompson

togatalks

Do Saratoga High School students have school spirit this year?

"This year school spirit has increased a lot because people are starting to feel comfortable with in person school."



senior Julian Berkowitz-Sklar

"We do have school spirit. Our rallies are really hyped and really fun, and our peers bring a lot of energy."



junior Taylor Chu

"I think that the only time where school spirit is demonstrated is during football games."



sophomore Joseph Warren

MOSAIC

continued from pg. 1

But Wong said that one improvement from last year's lessons was the graphics.

She said they seemed more positive and collaborative, and was glad that the lessons were being introduced in a more engaging manner.

"The slideshows are similar to advisory but have happier graphics," Wong said. "I think the games seem fun as well."

Although MOSAIC's purpose is to give students a support system if they are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, Spanish 2 and 3 teacher Claudia Zambon noticed that at first, students' general reluctance to talk about their emotions led to feelings of awkwardness.

"The students weren't very happy to be in MOSAIC because they weren't too fond of opening up and sharing things about themselves which is normal," she said. "I think opening up your feelings is really important because if we can't express them we lash out in different ways."

Soon, as the class progressed, students got more comfortable as they became more familiar with each other.

"As time went by, students started to open up and we kind of were able to talk," Zambon said. "I think in the end, it was a positive experience." ♦

Homecoming court celebrated during halftime

by AnirudhIyer & ShaanSridhar

During halftime at the homecoming football game against Mills High on Sept. 23, the school inaugurated this year's homecoming royalty.

The court included freshmen AJ Bawa, Jena Lew and Katherine Zeng; sophomores Alan Cai and Naahur Saajwan; juniors Abhinav Kiran and Nikhil Mathihalli; and seniors Julian Berkowitz-Sklar, Jeremiah Chung, Shafin Haque, Allison Tan, Taylor Wilson and Zachary Zinman.

The event was planned by the spirit commission: sophomores Emmy Pak and Lucie Le Toquin and seniors Nadine Cobourn, Arshi Chawla and Ela Machiroutu. Leading the school's annual procession of fall sports athletes were alumni from the Class of '72 who returned in celebration of their 50-year reunion.

Students representing sports teams such as water polo — shirtless, as according to tradition — and dance marched behind them.

The royalty procession came after: Court members paraded around the track in retro vehicles such as Ford Thunderbirds, with two students in each car.



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS

Seniors Zachary Zinman and Jeremiah Chung ride around the track in their retro vehicle.

They then walked through an array formed by the athletes and an arc of balloons, while a short pre-written snippet of their choosing was read by stadium announcers.

Zinman, who walked alongside Chung during the procession, described the honor

as one of his most memorable high school experiences.

"It was really fun to ride on the back of a cool car," Zinman said. "My favorite part had to be the crown, but to see all my friends cheering me on was something else." ♦

BELL

continued from pg. 1

Students and teachers have both reacted positively to these changes.

In a recent poll sent out in the Saratoga High School 2022-23 Facebook group, 93% of the 48 students who responded supported the new schedule, 7% exhibited an indifferent opinion, and 0% reacted with disapproval.

According to principal Greg Louie, the district board faced a multitude of issues when determining the bell schedule for this year.

"We conducted a survey back in May to gather student opinions, which returned with a strong wish for the return of daily tutorials while continuing to maintain a 3:45 p.m. dismissal on Red Days," Louie said.

"With daily tutorial, I've seen an influx of students into my classes."

TEACHER Natasha Ritchie

While the majority of the student body seems to embrace the new schedule, senior Lucas Dennis said it failed to address his biggest gripes from the previous year: the lack of consistency between even- and odd-period days, with one ending at 2:35 and the other ending at 3:45 for students with 7th-period classes.

"It really just makes planning things outside of school more complicated in the slightest," Dennis said. "I play basketball and baseball, so practices become quite a nuisance with the inconsistent schedule."



Ritchie

Dennis also thinks the 30-minute lunchtime is too short.

A large number of upperclassmen venture off campus during lunchtime, and he said 30 minutes is simply not enough time to drive, order, eat and drive back in time for class.

"I recognize that I represent a minority of students, and from a practical standpoint it's good that most students are pretty satisfied now, but I do wish we could have longer lunches and end classes at the same time for both days," Dennis said.

For teachers like English teacher Natasha Ritchie, the greatest benefit of the new schedule stems from the inclusion of daily tutorials.

"I'm a total believer in daily tutorials and I think over the years where we had it every other day, it was quite stressful to see all the students who needed help all come in on one day," Ritchie said. "With the daily tutorials, I've seen an influx of students into my class spread across both red and blue days instead of one."

Ritchie hopes the schedule can stay for the following years given the positive reaction exhibited by students and staff.

"It's been really tough trying to find a schedule that works for everybody and I'm really happy with what we have now. So I think if people like this schedule, it should be here to stay," Ritchie said. ♦

Local youth orchestra helps form friendships

BY Emma Fung
& Kathy Wang

Growing up, local youth orchestra founder Byung Woo Kim always had a deep interest in music, particularly the violin. After attending a performance of the Netherlands Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, a prestigious concert hall, he was inspired to pursue a career as a professional musician. In 2007, he founded a local youth orchestra, now known as California Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (CPYO).

Over the years, CPYO has provided a musical home to dozens of Saratoga High School students, allowing them to gain friendships, leadership skills and confidence in their individual talents.

CPYO takes place at the Joan Pisani Senior Center in Saratoga and is split into two sub-orchestras.

The senior orchestra has roughly 100 members, and the associate orchestra has roughly 50 members. Both are conducted by Kim and managed by orchestra manager Anh Tuan Huynh.

The senior orchestra acts as CPYO's advanced orchestra for high school students, and the associate orchestra acts as CPYO's development orchestra for elementary and middle school students.

Before founding CPYO, Kim graduated from the Juilliard School of Music and the University of Michigan with a master's degree in music.

He served as the concertmaster of the Juilliard Symphony and the San Jose Symphony before it dissolved in 2002.

As the founder and conductor of CPYO, Kim hopes students can utilize their experiences from CPYO in the future, continuing to pursue activities regarding orchestral



FALCON // KATHY WANG

Junior Levana Lai uses her break during orchestra rehearsal to practice the flute at CPYO.

music.

"This experience is worthwhile and is something I hope students will cherish their whole lives," Kim said.

As for orchestra manager Huynh, his job essentially consists of hiring musicians, organizing orchestra events, managing the legal work and helping out orchestra members.

Before officially becoming CPYO manager in 2014, Huynh received his bachelor's in music from San Jose State University with a concentration in tuba performance.

His professional playing career has brought him to notable performance halls such as the Davies Symphony Hall and the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, Germany.

As orchestra manager, Huynh emphasizes that a big part of his role includes "meet-

ing orchestra members where they are in their musical journey" and essentially supporting them with whatever they want to pursue through CPYO.

"The range of talent is really wide, and people's intentions with CPYO are so diverse," Huynh said, "whether it's preparing for Juilliard auditions [prestigious music school], or just being there for the extracurricular and friends. My job is to bridge that gap between people's intentions and CPYO's mission where hopefully everyone can look back and say that their time was well spent."

For sophomore Sarang Narasimhan, CPYO serves as a relaxing break from school work.

Being a part of CPYO has given him the opportunity to gain valuable friendships, and allowed him to connect with music.

"There's funny parts in rehearsal where sometimes we mess up and it's fairly obvious because people start laughing," Narasimhan said. "In general it's really fun."

Narasimhan joined CPYO's associate orchestra in fifth grade as a second violin. Now, he currently acts as the concertmaster for senior orchestra, which allows him to gain more knowledge of music and help him develop into a better leader.

Junior Levana Lai said that the camaraderie of CPYO makes the group particularly special.

During CPYO's annual summer orchestra camp, she recalls hiking with her friend off campus for 20 minutes, and coming back realizing that they were 10 minutes late for a surprise rehearsal.

"Honestly, it's my friendships at CPYO that make me look forward to rehearsal," Lai said.

Lai joined CPYO's senior orchestra in ninth grade as a second flutist. Now she acts as the first flute co-principal of CPYO's premier orchestra and feels that she has gained more confidence in her skills and leadership.

"Whenever I mess up, I realize that nobody really cares in the long run," Lai said. "So that's a good thing."

As the only Saratoga-based youth orchestra, CPYO serves as a significant community for students to express their love for music.

Through CPYO, students are provided the opportunity to join in on musical activities that they can't experience elsewhere.

"Both Mr. Kim and I derived so much joy from this classical music tradition and we found a lot of joy in finding community in the orchestra," Huynh said. "A lot of [CPYO] is just sharing the things that make orchestra fun for us." ♦

October 7, 2022

October 7, 2022

Despite some complaints, free lunches are benefiting K-12 students across California

Most of us don't ever think of California as a state rife with poverty, but in reality, it has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation. According to a Census Bureau Report, that number hovered around 15.4% between 2018 and 2020, close to 6 million people.

This astoundingly high number of impoverished people is reflected in the percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch in 2021: 58.8%. In the Los Gatos Saratoga High School District (LGSUHS), only 1.6% of students qualify, mostly from Los Gatos, compared to the 42.6% of students in the San Jose Unified School District.

Saratoga residents live in one of the most expensive zip codes in the country, and we too often forget the struggles of the people around us. For many K-12 students in our state, lunch is simply not affordable. Like textbooks and school supplies, it is a necessity that should be provided by the school as part of a public-school education.

For context, California's Bill 130 — introduced in 2021 as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity to break the cycle of educational inequity, including nutrition insecurity" by providing free lunch to all students — was an incredible boon to relieve financial burdens from lunch cost. The bill took effect this year, which is why our school has started providing free lunch.

According to the California Association of Food Banks, one in five people in California struggle from food insecurity. Prior to the free lunch policy, even money spent on reduced lunch was often a burden for families who struggle to make ends meet.

The consequences of food insecurity on children can have negative impacts on them for the rest of their lives: They have lower graduation rates, less de-

veloped math and reading capabilities and fewer skills required to "perform effectively in the contemporary workforce."

As a result, students who grow up food insecure have a lower chance of breaking the cycle of poverty because they have less developed skills and fewer chances of pursuing higher education. Free lunch helps alleviate the stress of food insecurity for students; in many cases, it may be their only full meal each day.

In past years, the free or reduced lunch program had strict income cut-offs that left out a portion of those who needed it. Free or reduced lunch is tied to federal poverty measures (185% of federal poverty levels) and thus does not accurately reflect the higher costs of living in certain areas like the Bay Area. In 2021, a family of four would need to make less than \$34,000 per year to qualify for free lunch and \$48,000 per year to qualify for reduced lunch.

For parents who relied on these programs, earning slightly more than the cut-off could mean that they have to spend a comparatively high amount of money on school lunches — approximately an average of \$2.74 per high school lunch, which would cost them an average of \$1,000 annually. While this may not seem like a lot, it could mean the difference between affording and not affording rent for low-income families.

Making it even more difficult for students is a social stigma surrounding needing free or reduced lunch. An article by the Associated Press indicates that tensions often arose prior to the free lunch policy between students who had to pay for lunch and those who didn't; some students didn't even eat lunch to avoid telling their friends they needed free lunch.

Lastly, for low-income parents who often have to work



LEYNA CHAN

multiple jobs, free lunch reduces the burden of having to make cheaper home lunches, yet again reducing the burden on families, both monetarily and time-wise.

Though free lunches seem unnecessary given the low poverty rate in the districts like LGSUHS, no solution exists to exclude high-income families without facing similar problems to the previous free or reduced lunch program. Solutions such as a sliding scale that gradually increases prices without strict thresholds would not alleviate stigma against free lunches, and providing free lunches for all to only low-income school districts would exclude those who qualify in high-income districts. With a need in every single school district for free lunch, California's free lunch for all program provides the only viable solution to solve food insecurity for students.

This year, the school will be reimbursed \$4.35 for each free meal provided, similar to last

year's prices. This reimbursement allows cafeteria staff to still produce decent-tasting, nutritional food on a tight budget while adhering to strict nutritional guidelines: one cup of milk, fruits and vegetables, and two cups of meat and grains.

Neither the food quality nor portions have significantly decreased, and the lunch is much better than the "gross" yet healthy school lunches that many schools in the country have been serving for decades.

Disregarding complaints over lunch quality and quantity, free lunch is simply necessary to even the educational playing field by combating food insecurity and the social stigma related to free or reduced lunch programs. Most of all, those of us lucky enough to be born into better situations should not forget the struggles so many people our age face with food insecurity. Free lunches are a boon for students that will pay dividends well into the future. ♦

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 33-2 in favor of the article.

New college and career counselor ramps up efforts to establish a welcoming space

BY Carolyn Wang
& Zack Zhang

Dozens of students crowded into the College and Career Center (CCC) in late September to attend a Boston University college visit organized by college and career specialist Brad Ward, who had adapted the former staff lounge into a warm space for college advice and career planning.

Plastered around the walls of the building were a variety of posters featuring more than 300 colleges that Ward had collected in the past 20 years.

"I keep at least one of the four doors open all day, and I have a plan to make the CCC even more cheerful."

COLLEGE COUNSELOR Brad Ward

With the frequent college visits and Ward's mindful customization of the center's furniture and college-planning resources, the center has also guided dozens of Class of 2023 students as they navigate the admissions process.

Currently, the center has planned approximately 70 visits this year, with college representatives visiting from local California to Maine and New Hampshire.

The purpose of the college visits, according to Ward, is to give seniors the chance to speak directly to representatives, all who intend on bringing a little piece of their university atmosphere to the Saratoga campus. "The representatives love our students, [and] appreciate the informed questions rather than questions like 'how is the food' or 'how many students go to the college,'"

Ward said. "The only negative is that they've sometimes needed to shush our students' side conversations."

The range of student attendance has varied, with some receiving zero attendance and others — such as the historically popular University of Southern California — hosting around 60-70 students in the McAfee Center.

While Ward understands the popularity of some schools, she also encourages students to attend the talks from less-popular universities, as many of them can turn into casual one-on-one interviews that help admission officers remember students. Senior Michael Jang, whose first time attending a college visit was during the Boston University information session, said the most striking aspect about the visit was the openness and camaraderie within the center.

"I'd never been to Boston before, so hearing what the BU admission's officer had to say about the school was helpful," Jang said. "She seemed really humble and knowledgeable, and it helps a lot when I'm in person and listening to people."

On the other hand, students like senior Jenny Campbell have found that the opportunity to ask questions face-to-face was the most beneficial.

"A major part of what college I apply to involves whether they have a hockey team, so if I want to inquire about club hockey or [another aspect] like research, it's really helpful," said Campbell, who plays hockey in the school team. "If you have any specific questions or needs, you can always ask them because the college websites don't always provide that."

To further promote the CCC as a warm and welcoming space, both for college visits and other activities including essay-writing and college-advising appointments.

Ward has also rearranged the center's



Courtesy of BRAD WARD

The newly designed interior for the addition of the College & Career Center (CCC) this year.

setup, with including adding soft, sleep-inducing sofas as she playfully warns students to "beware of" — in hopes of building a comfortable environment and maintaining a sense of confidentiality for students when requested.

"I keep at least one of the four doors open all day, and I have a plan to make [the building] even more cheerful in the weeks ahead, though I can't reveal any details about that yet," Ward said. "I'm also slowly adding things that I hope will be welcoming to those of all races, ethnicities, religions, LGBTQIA+, citizenship, socioeconomic status and so forth."

In order to maintain the privacy for one-on-one conversations involving students' private information, including college lists, GPA, class schedule, family finances

and essay topics among others, Ward has also added tables outside "to make it easier to go around a corner for a quick chat."

Besides furniture arrangements in the CCC, Ward has also sought to increase resource accessibility by student, setting up a new CCC website, improving the functionality of Naviance, and starting the center's very own Instagram @saratogacc and TikTok.

Ward appreciates the support from the principal Greg Louie and all the guidance counselors as she's worked hard to increase the visibility of the center. And she's excited to guide the new generation of graduating students.

"I have been so impressed with our students. They're so polite, and though on Day 1 of school no one came to the CCC, but since then since then it's been an ever-increasing stream," Ward said. ♦

THIRD PERIOD

STAFF POLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published 9 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070. Views expressed in The Saratoga Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

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MOSAIC: why the school can't teach life

BY Parav Manney

If you tell a group of kindergartners coming back from recess to sit down for a math lesson, the results will obviously vary. Some may ignore you and others may listen, but overall, your instructions are probably not enough to force each child into their seats.

I predict something similar will happen with Making Our School An Inclusive Community (MOSAIC). The program has replaced last year's advisories and occurs once a month on a Blue Day tutorial. Stu-

dents even have a MOSAIC period printed on their schedules with a corresponding teacher that they see each month. The problem here is not necessarily the content. It's that MOSAIC seeks to cover topics teens mostly learn through life experiences.

It's important to enlighten teenagers on pertinent subjects like bullying, sexual harassment and mental health, but the school would be better off condensing the lessons to 10- to 20-minute classes sparsely dotting the year's calendar. Just like the kindergart-

ners, high schoolers won't see the necessity of certain information by someone simply spilling it onto them.

Urging students to mingle with people who are a different race from themselves or to develop positive mindsets is unlikely to succeed. You can't force someone's mind into thinking a certain way by merely telling them to do so — this is especially true with regards to wisdom and overall maturity. Teens have their entire lives ahead of them to learn about such vital knowledge and will attain true social knowledge through self-actualized insights. In other words, they have to live it to believe it.

Additionally, the new period doesn't seem much different from the previous advisories. This was clear during the first tutorial presentation in August, which listed the topics as such: academic success, health, diversity, equity, belonging and inclusion. The slide containing that information was even titled "Advisory." Critiques of that previous class thus extend to the new one because it evidently functions under the same



LEYNA CHAN

The new bell schedule: a step up from previous years

BY Anirudhlyer

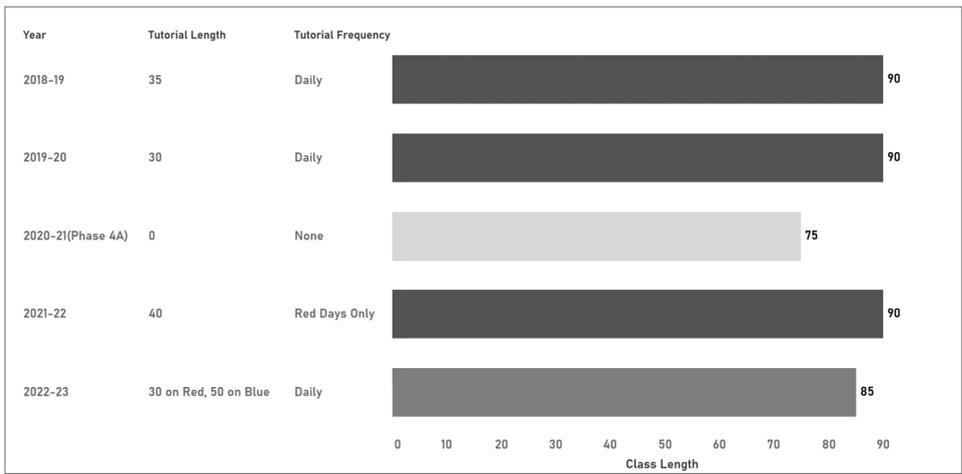
The district's introduction of yet another bell schedule for the 2022-23 school year marked the third alteration in the last three consecutive years. In fact, the bell schedule has changed every year for the Class of 2023.

A few months into first semester, however, the new bell schedule has proven to be more promising than previous ones. The implementation of daily tutorials and the reduction of class length from 90 to 85 minutes provide benefits for everyone.

Previous bell schedules were full of shortcomings; last year, the lack of tutorial on Red Days reduced opportunities for students to get vital help from teachers and study with their peers. Tutorial provides a supportive environment where teachers and other students are present, making it an essential. Only being able to ask for help every other day was a nuisance, especially given the abrupt entrance into in-person school and difficult coursework.

Last year, I had little time to consult a teacher in moments when I was confused or had to make up work. Because tutorials were simply too short and infrequent, I had to often dip into my free periods to get additional work done.

Nowadays, I find myself completing more work weekly as a result of daily tutorial. The 45-minute-long Blue Day tutorials are especially useful. In the first week of September, I got green sheets, recommendation letters and key assistance for AP Calculus BC before the infamous Chapter 2 Test — all during tutorial. Instead of handling these matters at home through email, I could pour my focus into the forty college essays I'm tasked with. Albeit not fun, at least I have far more time to churn them out early.



A graphical depiction of the changes in the bell schedule over the last 5 years, illustrating the annual shifts in both tutorial and class lengths.

Last year, I had little time to consult a teacher in moments where I was confused or had to make up work.

Though this new bell schedule has been a significant improvement compared to the clunky and confusing iterations in the past, it still has some notable flaws.

Lunches have been reduced from 35 to

30 minutes, and they seem to vanish in the blink of an eye. Even leaving campus for a place as close as Chipotle (3.2 miles away) requires extreme speeding. We don't want to practice bad driving habits, but we feel pushed to the brink due to the too-short lunches.

It is understandable that the district is unable to accommodate lunches any longer than 30 minutes in our new schedule. However, a potential solution would be marginally reducing the length of passings. The necessity for a 10-minute long passing is hard to justify; students often find themselves

lingering at their previous class or arriving way too early at their next class. If passings were reduced to enable a longer lunch, I, along with a significant portion of the student population, would be ecstatic. Perhaps a 5-minute passing and a 40-minute lunch could do the job.

It's important that this bell schedule lasts, or better yet, undergoes small but necessary tweaks for shorter passings and longer lunches. A consistent bell schedule for the coming years will benefit student and teacher plans immensely along with a necessary decrease in stress. ♦

togotalks

Do you prefer the new bell schedule over past versions?

"Yes. Especially on long Red Days, daily tutorials are really helpful for me to finish my homework."



sophomore Daria Cirliq

"It's great. The new one is less chaotic, and MOSAIC feels less frequent than advisory."



senior Caleb Chou

"I love it, but shorter class periods have left me almost two weeks behind my normal pacing."



teacher Kathy Nakamatsu

Inspire PCR testing: a school resource shouldn't go to waste

BY NicoleLee

Upon returning to in-person school in the 2021-22 school year, we saw an uptick in COVID-19 cases affecting our peers and staff. We were fortunate to have Inspire PCR Testing on campus to help us identify positive cases and make sure they were isolated before cases spread.

Now, it's much harder to know if there's a rise or fall in cases in the total population because such a small portion of the school is still getting tested regularly. Since Aug. 22, there have been 23 students and six staff members that tested positive, all of whom tested at home. However, according to district nurse Lisa Tripp, less than 1% of the school has gotten tested at the Inspire stations since the beginning of the school year.

The school no longer requires weekly testing, so the long line of students and staff that used to extend through the parking lot sidewalk has dwindled down to just a few. In fact, the idea of being tested weekly had started dwindling by the end of last school year when COVID-19 cases were spiking.

However, students should realize that we are privileged to be offered Inspire's weekly testing services (available in front of the gym every Monday and Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Although most Americans have already gotten COVID-19 at some point, according to a study reported by Time Magazine, there is no complete immunity to the disease. Vaccines and boosters help lessen the

severity of the virus, but people who have gotten all the shots available are still susceptible to catching COVID-19.

According to CNN Health, people who are afflicted by COVID-19 multiple times experience additional symptoms for up to six months after each infection. As the number of times afflicted increases, so do the number of symptoms.

All of this is to say no one has total immunity to COVID. Even worse, the idea of emerging "herd immunity" coming true any time soon is far-fetched. Living freely with COVID-19 until everyone becomes "immune" would have been a valid solution if immunity to the illness actually existed. However, scientific research opposes this idea and the danger of COVID-19 should be taken more seriously.

The last email regarding Inspire PCR testing was dated Aug. 21. Months have passed without information regarding the testing, and it's quickly being forgotten.

The school should start paying more attention to COVID again — as it did in the past — and regularly inform students about COVID-19 and the testing services.

It seems we cared about COVID-19 for only as long as the County Office of Education required schools to do so. Instead, we need to continue increasing awareness about COVID-19 and the various tools that we have access to.

One of the most valuable tools we have readily available is testing. Now it's up to us to use it again. ♦

Parents and students: please stop blocking my driveway

BY SarahZhou

As someone who lives on a street right by the school, I was fuming when I found cars blocking nearly half my driveway not once, not twice, but five times in the past week. People took their sweet time with three-point turns, parents stayed for over half an hour while waiting to pick up their children (hello to the parents I glared at), and some even parked for hours on end during events when the school parking lot was full (I hope people enjoyed the lengthy angry letter educating them on traffic laws that I taped onto their windshield).

If you block a driveway anywhere, the owner will rightfully be unhappy. Per the saying, "poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on mine" — so if you block someone's driveway, expect to pick up your car at an impound facility.

I am also a horrible driver and have places to be. That is a bad combination: There's a chance I might hit your car even if half your vehicle isn't in my way. So by listening to the law, you are saving your Tesla or Porsche from a fat dent in the side.

While I'm on the topic, I also ask parents to follow right-of-way laws and not drop off their children anywhere other than the school drop-off lane. There have been countless announcements sent out by the school about dropping off and picking up students, explicitly detailing where not to stop. Parents must simply be indifferent or woefully ignorant in order to continue

these problematic behaviors.

After the Saratoga Parent Nursery School put up signs banning cars in their lot, parents simply shifted their traffic further down the street, instead of following the school's drop-off procedures. The only time the problem relented occurred when multiple deputies stationed themselves on surrounding streets last year to ticket parents who violated the traffic laws.

If parents dropping students off were respectful of residents and other drivers, I wouldn't have such a big problem. But people dropping students off in the morning manage to be worse drivers than I am.

Here are some reminders for those drivers: You do not need to honk your horn every two seconds just because some resident is trying to safely back out of their driveway; you do not need to rudely cut off other cars by unsafely swerving around them; and you especially do need to yield to pedestrians. Countless senior citizens enjoy walking in the mornings in areas surrounding the school, and they should not have to be dodging cars left and right. Just because your child is late for school does not mean you get to create a dangerous situation for everyone on the street.

So, parents and students, you are saving yourself time in the long run by finding a real spot to stop, or waiting in the school drop-off line because, inevitably, a car will be towed or someone will be hit as the result of rushed, reckless driving. Don't be that one car. ♦

Andrew Tate: a look into his media presence and why he and his misogynistic beliefs demand further action

BY GeorgeHuang

Depression is fake. Women are powerless. They bear responsibility for rape, and most importantly, they belong to men.

These are all opinions viral influencer Andrew Tate shares. To say his takes are controversial (and wrong) is a blatant understatement, but controversy is precisely what he aims for — and what has made him rich. Tate boasted 4.7 million followers on Instagram and 14 billion views on TikTok when he was thankfully banned from the platforms in late August.

This was a sudden end to the exponential growth he relished by riding the flames of enraged internet users during the summer throughout all social media platforms. Meta confirmed that the reason for the ban was a violation of the dangerous persons and organizations policy.

As a 35-year-old millionaire who uses his influence and success to inject misogynistic values into millions of impressionable young adults and children while also profiting from a pyramid scheme, it's definitely fair to say Tate was a "dangerous person." His presence in his mere months of media terrorism spawned hostile mindsets that necessitate further action beyond a simple ban.

Who is Andrew Tate?

The former kickboxer has long lived in controversy. His first bout with bad publicity occurred during his brief appearance in the U.K. show "Big Brother" in 2016: He was kicked off the show because a video of him beating his ex-girlfriend with a belt began circulating across the internet. While the video allegedly depicted consensual role-play as Tate told The Sun, there is no denying the action was in character with the misogynistic and power-hungry persona he has since built around himself online.

After the incident eventually circulated in the media, Tate started a now-defunct model webcam business with his twin brother, Tristan Tate.

While entering the multi-million dollar industry on OnlyFans, Twitch and adult websites already seemed exceedingly lucrative, Tate significantly radicalized his business model: The models would fabricate stories, lie to their audience and fake their locations to young men online, giving them the idea that their relationships were genuine so that they would be more inclined to pay. In other words, it was a scam.

The brothers clearly knew young men were spending \$4 a minute and tipping thousands more to help models with their fake surgeries and

sick grandmothers, yet they felt no guilt. Tristan told The Mirror the details of the transactions were in fact all "in the fine print" and that "it's their problem."

The twins garnered millions of dollars from this exploitative venture, granting them the lavish lifestyle they gloat about today, Bugattis and all. In 2021, deciding to capitalize off his own success, Andrew Tate founded his next scheme — Hustler's University.

Hustlers University: a fraudulent venture Hustlers University is marketed as an online course currently on its third iteration taught by Andrew Tate and his team of "experts" to help everyone become just like him: rich and powerful. For \$50 a month, Tate provided classes on Discord on how to get rich quickly. However, it would soon be obvious that the only one getting rich quickly is Tate himself.

By using his own success as advertisement, Tate attracted a massive audience envious of the life he leads. In entrepreneur Charles Floaté's review of the business, the courses are "filled with not only basic business and financial errors, but also mainly promotional ways around affiliating the course itself." While Hustlers University attempts to teach its members finance and business, the meat of the program relies on self-promotion and its pyramid scheme structure.

A pyramid scheme is a structure where existing members recruit others for a commission in return, creating a cascade of money mostly benefiting the ones on top. According to The Guardian, members earn 48% commission for each person they refer to Hustlers University. Hundreds of Tate channels posting thousands of his video clips began to appear. It spread exponentially, peaking over the summer.

The members are encouraged to "stoke controversy to improve their chances of going viral." One Hustlers University guide even states a balance of 60% fans and 40% critics is perfect to accelerate attention.

Of course, Tate is easily capable of abusing and snowballing controversy for his personal wealth. Encouraging millions of others to use controversy for their personal gains, however, can be disastrous to their social and emotional lives if used

incorrectly, displaying a clear carelessness for

millions of young kids.

Why Tate is dangerous in today's media Young and impressionable boys around the world are by far the most vulnerable to Tate's influence. When boys see Tate, they see a powerful "alpha male," pushing an appealing and empowering truth to believe.

Though Tate has attracted a small group of real misogynists who can validate their ideals under his dominance in the media, most of his followers didn't start out as misogynists. They began to form these mindsets after being exposed to Tate content repeatedly online.

TikTok and Instagram, before the ban, only worsened the situation as pure controversy was the exact type of content the algorithm liked to promote to users. An Aug. 6 study in The Guardian found that after starting a brand new TikTok account, eight out of 20 videos concerned Tate. And once the user had watched Tate's video, the algorithm didn't stop promoting them, sometimes having lengthy strings of his videos in a row, all from different accounts multiplying from members of his pyramid scheme.

When boys see Tate, they see a powerful "alpha male," pushing an appealing and empowering truth to believe.

If Tate's charisma, promises of riches and social media algorithms can infatuate full-grown adults, then minors as young as 6th grade are even easier to prey on. Not only do they lack the social maturity and experience, but many have not even learned about subjects of inequality, sexism or mental health from their parents or their schools. If the first time they hear about gender equality or mental health is from Tate, who to them has no reason to be doubted, it threatens to undermine their futures.

It seems some middle-school age boys have already started acting differently because of Tate's influence. In the subreddit r/teachers where teachers share their classroom experiences, there are multiple top posts relating to Andrew Tate. Students have refused to read articles and books written by women, work on group projects with female classmates and have lost respect for female teachers. They also have started clubs and gangs devoted to "male domination."

It is shocking and problematic that these actions are coming from mere middle schoolers who hate women simply because it was empowering while unequipped with the mental maturity to understand and differentiate such power.

So yes, Andrew Tate needed to be banned on these social media sites, with his clear violation of multiple community guidelines such as hate speech.

But that's not enough. His influence has penetrated beyond the confines of social media and into the culture of our society's youngest generation. Banning him doesn't end the problem of misogyny and false social norms that were already infesting our culture before his eruption into the spotlight.

All the content from Tate still continues to spread via the members of his pyramid scheme at this moment, as they desperately continue to recruit new members — even with Tate himself banned.

A TikTok spokesperson told KQED: "We will continue to remove violative accounts and videos, and pursue measures to strengthen our enforcement, including our detection models, against this type of content."

But even so, the most imperative way to stop Andrew Tate's influence is to talk to his audience. Parents: Talk to your children. Teachers: Talk to your students. Ensure that children are very well informed of the dangers of malevolent online influencers like Andrew Tate. ♦



Photo illustration by GEORGE HUANG

Berkeley's POC Theme House: Addressing racial injustice does not mean separating communities

BY SaachiJain

A cooperative living house in Berkeley known as the “POC (People of Color) Theme House” has made recent news after banning white students and visitors from entering its common areas.

The new rules require all white guests to be “announced in the Guest Chat if they will be in common spaces with [residents] and if they are white,” according to the New York Post.

Such a decision has, and should continue to be, shunned by the public for its blatant division of different races under a naive, discriminatory generalization of all white people.

Berkeley's co-op system has become increasingly popular as normal housing rates have skyrocketed, and many houses can hold up to 60 students.

Other theme and gender-specific houses have been created, some serving the LGBTQIA+ and female-identifying populations of the school.

The POC Theme House was established in 2015 to serve around 56 low-income, first-generation and marginalized students of color who have been affected by racial violence.

At its founding, it did not restrict who could enter and exit the premises of the house.

In the past couple years, however, the house has become notorious for fostering a hostile environment, sparking unprovoked conflicts rather than fostering inclusion and



Graphic by LEYNA CHAN

diversity.

Of course, if a negative incident occurs with a particular individual, whether they are white or another race, it's obviously acceptable to ban them from the house.

But lashing out under the assumption that all white people enter the house with malicious intent backtracks the progress

sion as inclusion.

Since the house is not affiliated directly with UC Berkeley, the members feel some sort of immunity toward any consequences they may face.

However, as a project that serves the students of UC Berkeley, their actions unjustly harm the reputation of the school, regardless of their unofficial affiliation with the university.

To someone not familiar with the university, the house would immediately seem discriminatory and unwelcoming to specific demographics.

Only 25.4% of the school is white, and an even smaller subset uses such housing programs. The majority of the school includes POC (with most being Asian Americans), and already harbors a diverse community in most housing situations.

There are also many POC student associations on campus that properly advocate and celebrate POC culture, rendering a group like the POC Theme House not only damaging, but effectively pointless.

Organizations like the POC Theme House only further the divide between people of color and the non-POC population. Separation only increases the racial tension, as opposed to the unification brought from movements like Dear Asian Youth and Black Lives Matter.

Instead, the POC Theme House should achieve their goal of fostering a safe and inclusive environment for POC individuals without resorting to flagrant racism against white people. ♦

that many other POC organizations are fairly working toward.

POC members of the house claim they are looking to stop making “whiteness” central to the living experience of their members as an excuse to uphold these racist views, but there is a fine line between working toward inclusion and branding exclu-

Attempting to get rid of the royalty is a waste of time

BY ParavManney

The death of Queen Elizabeth II on Sept. 8 sparked wide-spread mourning and demonstrations of loyalty all across Britain.

The event, however, also brought light to a long-persisting question: Is it time for the monarchy to dissolve? In the age of democracy and representative bodies, common sense may imply an affirmation.

But when taking a closer look at Britain's political and social details, it becomes clearer that the monarchy will probably not go away for some time.

It's not wise to consider abandoning the system when considering that it is far too integrated into the British government but bears little influence on actual political decisions.

Why it's so hard to abolish the monarchy

If Britain ever did want to get rid of the royalty, it would require legislation from Parliament, which would in turn require a majority vote from a referendum issued by the government.

The monarchy's titular role in politics bears no influence on British society, but instead remains as a long-practiced institution of British history.

If such a vote were held this year, polling suggests that a majority would keep the monarchy instituted. Furthermore, the monarchs would have to be replaced by a new figure, such as a president, necessitating a conference of rights to a wholly new position.

So given the circumstances, it's virtually impossible to detract power from the royals. The probability that the factors line up in perfect succession at the perfect time when

the population is in the perfect social climate is exceedingly low.

At least for now, the case is quite inconvenient.

Why it's pointless to remove the royalty
The monarchy's titular role in politics bears no influence on British society, but instead remains as a long-practiced institution of British history. The position is just traditional. Queen Elizabeth II herself said in her 1957 address, “I do not give you laws or administer justice. But I can do something else. I can give you my heart and my devotion to these old islands and to all the peoples of our brotherhood of nations.”

The historical tapestry and cultural heritage defining the royal family continue to capture the hearts of many British citizens, regardless of what outsiders think.

Younger generations may continue to depart from these views and may, in the future, might cause the monarchy's reputation to fall into disfavor. But for now, there seems to be no indication of that occurring anytime soon.

The best we can do, instead of complaining about the royalty and their uselessness, is to allow time to simply run its course. ♦

pressure placed on them from being under the spotlight at all times.

As a result, in February 2021 Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, announced their resignation from their roles as senior royals to live a private life away from the media.

Additionally, the British royal family is not involved in political aspects of the government.

Even though the Queen was the Head of State, she did not exercise any formal pow-

England should abolish the outdated royal monarchy

BY SunnyCao

While thousands of people have taken to the streets to mourn the death of Queen Elizabeth last week, some critics of the British monarchy have taken this chance to protest against the monarchy. And to be honest, they're not wrong.

The monarchy should be abolished. The general population of England will thank me later.

The royal family of Britain has experienced their fair share of controversies and scandals in the past several decades, from King Charles cheating on Princess Diana in 1986 to recent media scrutiny over his ascent to the throne.

Plus, even the own members of the royal family aren't inclined to participate in royal activities anymore, since there is constant

pressure placed on them from being under the spotlight at all times.

As a result, in February 2021 Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, announced their resignation from their roles as senior royals to live a private life away from the media.

Additionally, the British royal family is not involved in political aspects of the government.

Even though the Queen was the Head of State, she did not exercise any formal pow-

er herself. The monarchy operates under the guise of wielding political power while the powers are actually exercised by prime ministers on behalf of the crown.

Ultimately, Queen Elizabeth was a non-political figure and the monarchy system merely symbolizes out-of-date British ideals from the past.

Few countries in the world even have monarchies in the modern day, since it results in an extremely high cost of living.

The guise of powers are actually exercised by prime ministers on behalf of the crown.

The British monarchy expends nearly \$345 million per year, and nearly one third of that comes from the citizens through tax.

Furthermore, the monarchy did nothing to earn the status of being bowed down to. In an age of democracy, especially in a developed country like Britain, it feels redundant to revere someone who did nothing to earn that reverence.

The monarchy instills a hierarchy among otherwise equal citizens, where familial status, lineage and connections determine one's status. England essentially labeled a family as superiors with no other reason than their bloodline. The system of monarchy is oppressive and obliterates fundamental ideals of liberty.

At this point, the monarchy only exists to honor centuries of British culture. The past matters, but the present matters more.

Because the monarchy is politically useless, raises the cost of living in England and intrudes on citizens' freedom, the monarchy should be abolished. ♦



Graphic by LEYNA CHAN

New app BeReal sparks transparency among teenagers

BY MeherBhatnagar & MichelleWan

Time to BeReal! Two minutes left to capture a BeReal to see what your friends are up to! You better be quick — smile before the camera catches you in the most unflattering angle.

This summer, a new social media app called BeReal has become widely popular among teenagers as a useful way to document what they are doing during the day.

Originally released in 2020, the app has been rapidly gaining popularity — reaching numbers as high as 21.6 million active users. It was developed by former GoPro employee Alexis Barreyet.

The concept is quite simple: A notification sounds once a day at any random time telling you to “BeReal.” As soon as this notification goes off, you have two minutes to post a picture of what you are doing at the time. With the click of a button, the app — using

the front and back cameras simultaneously — captures both you and what is in front of you.

Though the entire point of this app is to post within the two minute time frame, some users don't quite follow the rules and post their BeReal when they are doing something entertaining or hanging out with friends.

Personally, we think this defeats “being real,” but there is no judgment for wanting to snap a picture when you look and feel your best.

To be completely honest, most of our BeReals consist of us sitting in front of a TV or computer screen.

The big positive to this app is the transparency it encourages. It's comforting to know you aren't the only one who is sitting at home all day, not always surrounded by friends.

You can only view your friends' photos after you have posted your own. Oh, and not to mention that there are no filters included on the app.

Unlike Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok, which allow you to use face or body-shaping filters to create the “perfect” picture, BeReal only allows you to post unedited photos.

For the vast majority of the time, the angles of the photos

taken by users are completely horrendous, but that's what makes the app so fun.

Not to mention the interactive comment sections and fun “RealMojis,” which are essentially quick snapshots of your friends' reactions.

BeReal is strictly a friends and contacts-specific media platform, meaning there aren't any influencers stealing the spotlight on your feed. The app offers teenagers a

short two-minute opportunity to “be real” with their close-knit audience, whether or not they choose to post within the sporadic time frame, before returning to their everyday schedules.

Everybody is placed on an even playing field: Nobody is going to judge you for posting a picture of your ceiling.

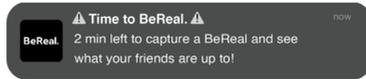
This app grants users a unique feeling of comfort in knowing what friends are doing at that exact moment the photo is taken. It helps to provide a sense of reality, something often missing from most social media apps.

Still, it's best to take the app with a grain of salt.

Some may think it's intrusive or disruptive, but if you really don't want to answer the notification, just skip a day — nobody will know! The point is for friends to be able to “be real” through unfiltered glimpses into each other's daily lives.

Try it!

You may find yourself looking forward to the spontaneous notification. ♦



FALCON // MEHER BHATNAGAR AND MICHELLE WAN

Crumbl Cookies remains the top cookie contender

BY MeherBhatnagar

Imagine taking a bite of the most perfectly moist but crunchy cookie that has just come freshly out of the oven. The Crumbl Cookies shop on Camden Avenue provides customers with just that — the most dense, rich cookies to exist.

Originally, when Crumbl Cookies had just blown up on TikTok, the shop's closest location was two hours out from the Bay Area, but by popular demand, a new location opened only 15 minutes away from the high school.

Though it's been almost a year since the cookie craze and some say it's overrated,

I truly think that the hype surrounding Crumbl is warranted.

I mean, the marketing strategy? Genius.

The weekly videos posted on their Instagram account about the odd flavor combinations that somehow always sound good? The insanely overpriced, yet strangely enticing bottles of “Crumbl water?” Pure genius. The business definitely knows how to keep its customers engaged with the store. Because of the rotating flavors, customers return every time their favorite flavor is there because they know that it won't be available a week later.

If Crumbl were to keep all flavors in the store at all times,

the hype surrounding the store would soon die out.

Crumbl's flavors range from standard options like chocolate chips, sprinkles and frosting all the way to custard, fresh fruits and Lucky Charms — things you would never find in a standard cookie.

After hearing many opposing reviews of the cookies, with some saying it was average and others who believed it was the most scrumptious thing they had ever put in their mouth, I decided to go there myself.

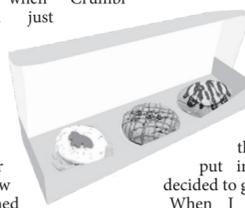
When I arrived, the line stretched around the corner of the building with groups of people standing together, restlessly awaiting their freshly baked cookies.

Having been there almost five times, I would like to consider myself an expert when it comes to judging Crumbl cookies.

The first cookie I tried was their milk chocolate chip. When I took the first bite, the chocolate chips immediately melted in my mouth and the cookie's brown sugar flavor complimented the cocoa very well. The freshly baked cookies were crispy on the outside and soft on the inside — absolutely perfect.

My favorite flavors are their famous milk chocolate chip, oatmeal rolo, raspberry lemonade and caramel popcorn.

After my recent experience there, I can confirm that the hype over Crumbl Cookies was and is not overrated. ♦



Fishing: boring but rewarding

BY JonnyLuo

On a Saturday in late August, you would have found me in the most unlikely spot: standing on a rocking boat in the ocean while holding a little metal stick with a thin piece of string attached to it. I was fishing.

My older brother has begged my dad to go on a fishing trip for his entire life, and after years of my dad dragging his feet, my brother decided to take matters into his own hands and organize the trip himself. At 4:20 a.m., my alarm clock blared, disrupting the otherwise peaceful Autumn day.

Thankfully, I vanquished the alarm clock with my almighty finger and managed to sleep another three minutes until someone rudely turned the lights on.

That someone was my dad, who as I will once again remind you, did not organize the fishing trip. In penance for not organizing the trip, or perhaps not trusting my brother to drive, my dad drove us to a dock in Santa Cruz, where we boarded a ship called The Velocity. Despite its name, the ship didn't reach more than 15 miles per hour at full speed. A lazy boat for a lazy sport.

I don't think I'll ever go fishing again, but on the bright side, I didn't throw up.

Bright and early at 5 a.m.

And the worst part was that we arrived an hour early! They told us to arrive at 5:30 a.m., but the ship didn't actually leave until 6:30 a.m.

I sat in the car for a solid hour doing nothing, and only went outside to see the sunrise before realizing that it was so foggy that we couldn't actually see the sunrise. I didn't really expect to catch many fish; however, thanks to my ability to catch all the fish in the sea (wink), I actually ended up

catching five! The voyage started off with a brief introduction on how to fish by two of the deckhands — which, I admit, was not as simple as I anticipated. There was a weight at the bottom of the fishing pole made out of lead (yay, poisonous metals!) and since we were fishing for rockfish, people's lines sometimes got stuck at the bottom: It was our lovely contribution to ocean waste.

In part due to the small bait and hooks we used, I couldn't really feel a tug when a fish bit my rod, so I spent a lot of time furiously reeling up my line.

Sometimes, the bait was still there, and sometimes it wasn't, meaning a fish bit but I just couldn't feel it.

It perfectly was a symbiotic relationship: The seagulls provided the entertainment, and we provided the food.

Fishing can be rewarding
All the fish I caught were no bigger than 8 inches. After my fishing trip, my dad taught me how to descale and clean fish, which was really fun, although I didn't do a particularly good job — my brother said some of the fish tasted like fish stomach. We caught a total of 10 fish and ate all of them.

If you, dear reader, ever want to go fishing, take two pieces of advice from me: Take an anti-motion sickness medicine and prepare to be thoroughly bored.

I tend to love stereotypically boring tasks like puzzling, but even so, fishing was just too boring for me. I don't think I'll ever go fishing again, but on the bright side, I didn't throw up.

The same thing can't be said for some others on the fishing boat. ♦



myself fighting the fish to reel them up and bringing home a 2-footers with a heroic effort, but the reality unfortunately did not meet my expectations.

At the end, the deckhands offered a service to filet people's fish, and I enjoyed watching them toss the carcasses into the ocean, because of the spectacle afterwards: tens of seagulls swarmed over and fought each other for carcasses like it was the Hunger Games.

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Local downtowns offer distinct flavors and experiences for teen shoppers

Home



Saratoga

Saratoga's downtown is a place most of us are all too familiar with. Small and quaint, it is over 160 years old and has monuments to display its rich history. Save for the Starbucks on the outer edge of downtown, Saratoga doesn't feature any chain or retail stores; rather, there are mainly one-location shops, boutiques and restaurants. Unfortunately, many of these places are expensive for your average unemployed high school student, parking can get limited and many of the lots behind businesses fill up on a Friday night. Nevertheless, because the downtown only spans half a mile, from Starbucks to Sue's Cafe, it is perfect for an evening stroll. It strikes the perfect balance of providing some social interaction, while not being

overcrowded. Tucked away next to Plumed Horse — the only Michelin Star restaurant in the area — are many salons, beauty bars and jewelry stores that surround a courtyard/shopping plaza area. Deja & Co. Exquisite Jewels, a luxury fine jewelry boutique, and Bal-Lance Hair Salon are two hidden but highly visited beauty stores. Bai Tong Thai Bistro and Rose Market are two popular food spots when you are in the mood for delicious, home-style ethnic Thai or Persian food. Saratoga downtown's small size contributes to its visual monotony over time. However, it is one of the most peaceful city centers to relax and enjoy upscale shopping and dining. And you can't beat the location.

Los Gatos

In comparison to Saratoga, downtown Los Gatos is much larger and more commercialized. Over 100 stores span an area almost one mile across. Since it is just a 10-minute drive from Saratoga, it makes a great spot for high schoolers, but just like Saratoga, it can drain the wallet. At Dolce Spazio Gelato, one of the most popular spots in Los Gatos, a standard size cup is \$6 before tax. For comparison, the same sized scoop at Baskin Robbins would cost just over \$2.50. There are many other Italian and American restaurants in Los Gatos such as Campo Di Bocce, Asa, The Pastaria and The Lexington House.



Both paid and unpaid parking lots line downtown, providing access to most commercial and shopping areas. The Los Gatos Apple Store is one of the only ones in the area, and it's not uncommon to see long lines there every time the next big thing from the company debuts. Parks are also abundant in Los Gatos. Oak Meadow Park, Belgatos Park and the Los Gatos Creek County Dog Park all have walking paths, hiking trails and picnic areas, to name a few. Downtown Los Gatos is a bustling but comfortable location for a meal or relaxing walk, and has a number of attractions to keep you busy during the day.

Cupertino

Cupertino's downtown — commonly referred to as "Main Street" — is only a 15-minute drive from Saratoga, but offers a drastically different scene, with an abundance of Asian stores. Boba shops and various Asian-inspired restaurants have popped up along Stevens Creek Boulevard. Its popularity among high school students has exponentially grown in the past few years. Despite the prominence of Asian influence, Main Street has more to offer than just Asian-themed stores. Some of the busiest traffic stops in Main Street are Oren's Hummus, an Israeli restaurant chain, and Lazy Dog,



an American restaurant and bar chain. Many sit-down restaurants downtown are centered in the Cupertino Main Street Plaza at the intersection of Stevens Creek and Wolfe. Recently, the city constructed a three-story parking garage with ample space and easy access to the main shops. Some of the most popular drinks and dessert spots, including Alexander's Patisserie, Icicles and Meet Fresh, are located on Main Street. A lively subsection of Cupertino, Main Street is perfect for socialization. No matter the occasion, you are guaranteed to find a spot that fits your mood.



Palo Alto

Spanning all of University Avenue and its cross-streets, Palo Alto downtown has a great mix of commercial businesses and offices. The always-bustling University Avenue is home to a number of cuisines and cultures. One highlighted restaurant is Coconuts, which serves Jamaican and Caribbean cuisine. Some popular items on the menu include jerk chicken and buttermilk cornbread. Salt & Straw, a popular creamery chain, is guaranteed to have a long line in the evenings as well, since it is one of the few ice cream shops in the area. Many expensive boutiques and smaller stores are found in downtown Palo Alto, though the nearby Stanford Shopping Center has many more chain stores such as Lu-

lulemon and Starbucks. There are many recreational activities in the surrounding area, including hiking trails such as the Baylands Natural Preserve and the Stanford Dish Loop. The areas around University Avenue have a lot of street space for parking, and there are also parking garages distributed throughout the area. Downtown is also home to the Computer History Museum, which has technology and documents dating back to the 1940s. Thirty minutes from Saratoga, Palo Alto downtown is a lively area that is often overlooked due to the nearby university. Though the center of the town doesn't have much nature or greenery, centralized plazas with live music provide a great place to eat food and do work.



Redwood City

Just north of Menlo Park and Atherton lies the bustling Broadway Street of Redwood City. Broadway, the center of downtown, has great eats, entertainment and educational spots to visit. Courthouse Square is a plaza with many food options and nice seating, but is also home to the San Mateo County History Museum. On the first Friday of every month, the museum — which has an exhibit with 24 model ships and boats — has free admission. It is a great afternoon activity for anyone, regardless of age. If you are ever in Courthouse Square during the summertime, you can expect to see concerts and street performances in the evening.



Broadway Street combines Latin, Asian, American and many other cultures, allowing visitors endless choices of food and entertainment. Some highlights include popular Mexican restaurants La Viga and Quinto Sol, along with Vesta pizza. The historic Fox Theater was opened for film in 1929 on Broadway Street and has now been added to the National Register of Historic Places for the various live performances and shows that have taken place there over the years. It can be a 40-minute drive to the city; however, you can save gas with the CalTrain, which runs from San Jose up to downtown, costing just \$12 round trip.

Los Altos

In the past few years, Los Altos has renovated its downtown to integrate native foliage and greenery. The majority of downtown is condensed into a triangle shape around 0.6 miles across. The main streets within that triangle are lined with shop after shop, and high foot traffic as a result. You can find a store for almost any need, from clothes to home improvement and toys. Los Altos is home to many hiking trails, open preserves and parks that are also highly visited. Some include the Hidden Villa Farm, Windy Hill Open Space Preserve, and the San Andreas Fault Trail. Though primarily housing boutiques and small businesses, there is a Safeway in downtown which serves most of the surrounding community.

It also features restaurants of almost every cuisine. Mediterranean, Japanese, Mexican, American, Georgian and Californian restaurants line Main Street, which runs directly through the triangle. About a 25-minute drive from Saratoga, the downtown area is concentrated, and also houses two hotels and five banks. Included in the modernization of the city are unusual sculptures, as well as bike racks shaped like various objects, from ice cream to text bubbles. Some restaurants like Los Altos Grill, a barbecue and homestyle restaurant, and Pompeii, an Italian joint, are hot spots in Los Altos. All in all, Los Altos is a modern downtown that packs a lot of people in a small space, providing a contemporary setting perfect for socializing. — Saachi



'The Crucible': Drama begins preparations for annual fall play debuting in November

by Andrew Lin & Victoria Lin

During a recent rehearsal, senior Olivia Smith said, "And mark this ... I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you."

Smith was cast as Abigail Williams, a character in the play "The Crucible." Her character is in love with John Proctor, a married farmer played by senior Eli Tsives. Abigail wreaks havoc upon the village of Salem in 1692 by spreading lies and taking advantage of the mob mentality and instability simmering under the surface of the townspeople's psyches.

Miller's famous play underscores how mob mentality is an ugly part of human nature. First performed in the 1950s, it is an implicit criticism of the Red Scare led by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the French Revolution. Mob mentality is also a major theme in books like "Lord of the Flies" and "Animal Farm." "The Crucible" will run on various dates from Nov. 12 to 19 at the McAfee Center.

"The Crucible" shows how fear mongering can lead groups in the wrong direction. The play marks a departure from previous, lighthearted productions like last year's production of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," a comedy about fairies playing tricks on four lovers in the forests of Athens and six actors rehearsing a play before a wedding.

"We've done a lot of comedies in the past. We haven't done a lot of tragedies and 'The Crucible' is definitely a tragedy," Smith said. "So there's a lot more intense emotions and a darker feel than past

shows, which is really exciting."

Drama teacher Ben Brotzman said he generally avoids plays with a "deep, harsh" message like the "The Crucible," but he believes the message is an important one to cover.

"My seniors in drama have been around for so long, and a lot of them feel that this play is social justice and conveys the importance of being unique, true to themselves and good people of the community," Brotzman said.

To him, the ability to think for themselves is very important for the seniors, as they will be heading to college soon and bombarded with a range of different opinions and worldviews. He hopes the play will be a lesson on the importance of not blindly following the crowd and staying true to oneself.

This year's play will be challenging for the veteran actors because it is so different from what they are used to performing, but Brotzman is confident in his actors.

"The audience is going to be intrigued by the depth and the acting abilities [of the cast]."

TEACHER Ben Brotzman

"The audience is going to be intrigued by the depth and the acting abilities [of the cast]," Brotzman said. They're going to see some really strong performances that I already saw in auditions."

In picking a cast, Brotzman explained that he chooses people based on how well they work with



FALCON // DANIEL WU

Drama teacher Ben Brotzman guides students as they practice scenes for the upcoming "The Crucible" fall play.

other cast members, rather than raw talent. He believes putting the most talented actors in leading roles by default makes no sense; instead, actors perform best in the roles they fit well into.

The cast was decided by Brotzman with the assistance of his two stage managers and production manager, junior Arushi Maheshwar, who has been working in drama leadership roles typically reserved for upperclassmen since her freshman year.

As the production manager, Maheshwar is aiming to alleviate any of Brotzman's burden by managing the student designers who handle sound, lighting, costume, props, backdrops and many other technical factors that go into a play.

"If every student designer came to Brotzman with a question about design all the time, it'd be over-

whelming for him. I'm trying to answer those questions myself and oversee the tech crew, because he had to do a lot of that last year," she said.

Other than assisting Brotzman with overseeing all of the students behind the scenes, Maheshwar also gives input on who she believes fits best for certain roles.

"I always look for respect. When you're going outside [the theater], are these actors supporting other actors? You want to see that the actor is not just thinking of themselves, but also thinking of everyone else and acting very selflessly," she said.

Additionally, Maheshwar likes to cast actors into roles that reflect their personality.

"It's sad when people try to act like another person instead of acting like themselves or putting in their own unique element [to the

role], so I look for big character choices that also reflect the person individually," she said.

As for cast members, the drama program is no longer dealing with last year's enrollment slump. Brotzman said he is "happily surprised" at the increase in students enrolling in the design and management team.

The number of actors and the backstage crew remained the same as last year: 25 and 10 respectively. Drama is currently utilizing a Cast All program model, in which they find a role for every student who auditions.

"We worked very hard to raise awareness about our program and get it back to the place it was in previous years. But people are starting to come back again," Smith said. "COVID was really rough. So now that we're a couple years out of it, it's really exciting." ♦

Academic excellence relates to musical pursuits

by Shannon Ma

From the spacious music building to the McAfee Center, Saratoga High is home to one of the best public high school music programs in the U.S., and is also ranked in the top 2% of all California high schools in academic performance. The school — a training ground for excellent musicians and scholars — is proof that there is a positive correlation between studying music and high academic achievement.

Since the 1900s, research has shown a significant link between music and mathematics. Learning music activates portions of the brain used in spatial-temporal reasoning — the ability to form mental images and perceive physical objects. Students gain intuition, imagination and problem-solving abilities essential for solving complex math and science problems.

Peter Gouzoasis, PhD, of the University of British Columbia, proved that music students actually see higher performance in all academic subjects. Gouzoasis studied over 112,000 high school student records and concluded that students in orchestra, concert band, conservatory piano, jazz band, concert choir or vocal jazz were the equivalent of one academic year ahead of their peers in English, math and science skills.

Student musicians that The Falcon interviewed affirm that their years of music studies have benefited them in their everyday academic work.

Senior Dyme Lee, who plays as first clarinetist in the Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE), attributes her strong memorization

skills to music.

"I have to constantly memorize things like fingerings and long pieces," she said. "That's trained my brain to grasp new pieces of information under short notice."

Lee added that music made her a more patient learner. Her studying routines paralleled her music practice routines, with 20 to 30 minutes of studying and brief breaks in between. She also noted that her years of performance experience have come to benefit her in the classroom.

"Before I take tests, I use the same techniques I use for music auditions," Lee said. "I often do breathing exercises or stretching to relax."

Junior Tejas Tirthapura plays three instruments: the viola, violin and marimba. Tirthapura currently serves as the principal violist in the Saratoga Symphony Orchestra (SSO), was a past violist in SSO and a marimba player for the marching band.

"Thanks to music practice, I know how to differentiate my strengths and weaknesses and then target my weaknesses," Tirthapura said. "I break anything I don't understand into manageable chunks."

On the flip side, both musicians noted that there's a

trade-off for students who learn music at a high-achieving level. While playing music provides them with cognitive benefits, they must juggle practice time with study time.

"Some days, it feels like I have to choose between studying and practicing clarinet," Lee said. "Cramming both into my after-school schedule can mean I don't get the best productivity out of either activity."

Aside from daily after-school rehearsals, the fall marching band schedule involves a whopping 12 hours of time commitment on Saturdays. Over time, after adjusting to her rehearsal schedules, Lee said she has achieved a better balance.

In Tirthapura's case, involvement in multiple music programs calls for back-to-back rehearsals on school days and a rigorous music life.

"There were times when I stayed at the music building after school until 10 p.m. teaching lessons for MESH (Music Education with Saratoga High), rehearsing in SSO, rehearsing in marching band and then doing my homework," Tirthapura said. With this packed schedule, Tirthapura

said it is difficult to achieve success in all his instruments, especially with the AP and honors courses he is now taking as a junior. Although he is still figuring out how to best balance his music schedule with academics, he embraces the extra time commitment.

"I often do some breathing exercises or stretching to relax."



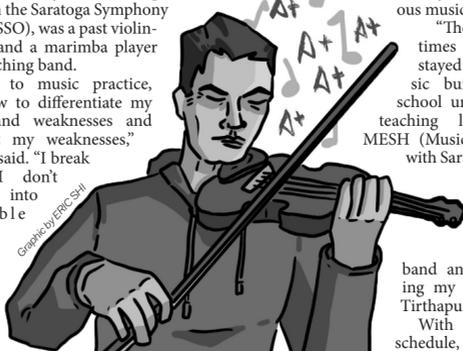
JUNIOR Tejas Tirthapura

"I live very close [to the high school], so I just stay in the music building until I finish everything," Tirthapura said.

There is no formula that produces the perfect balance between music and academics. But whether it's playing an instrument recreationally or playing pre-professionally, engaging with music instills discipline in students and trains positive study habits that inevitably improve academic performance.

When the effects of music are discussed, academics tend to become the major focus. But perhaps the most valuable reward from learning music is the lifelong passion and expressive outlet it provides adolescents with.

"I choose to put in this much work because I love playing music," Tirthapura said. "To me it's not 'work,' and it never will be." ♦



Graphic by ERIC SHAI

Teachers' favorite shows range from 'Big Bang Theory' to 'Downton Abbey'

by Sanjoli Gupta

Ask science teacher Kristen Thomson which movie she likes the best, and you'll get a definitive response: "Loki."

"Loki is just the love of my life. He's good and bad, but you can't decide which and it's just so much fun to watch," Thomson said. "But if you want a long binge watching session, 'The Big Bang Theory' is also phenomenal. I think it was better than 'Friends,' and from my generation, that's saying a lot."

From "Marvel" to "Reservation Dogs" to "Downton Abbey," teachers can become as hooked as students on their favorite shows. For Thomson, what makes certain shows so interesting are the nostalgia they bring and the glimpses of real life they reflect.

"I seriously would have discussions like [the ones in 'Big Bang Theory'] with friends in college," Thomson said. "I can see my friends in those characters and it cracks me up."

Thomson also finds the Big Bang Theory to be both lighthearted and silly — "perfect," she said, for a quick episode before bed.

"When I'm in a bad mood or I just need to get to sleep soon, it's a nice little break away from my world into [another fun world]," Thomson said.

Science Cheryl Lenz looks for such es-

capism when picking a TV show too. She said that "Downton Abbey" — with its intricate costumes and sets — transports her into a different time period that looks at the relationships between people in the upper and lower classes, exploring themes she finds particularly meaningful.

"You see issues which are timeless and that people are dealing with the same kind of things that happen today."

BIOLOGY TEACHER Cheryl Lenz

"You see that certain issues, such as relationships or money or conflict, are timeless and that people are dealing with the same kind of things that happen today," she said. English teacher Amy Keys looks for shows that challenge her expectations.

Keys' current favorites include "Reservation Dogs" and "Our Flag Means Death." The former's title is an allusion to "Reservoir Dogs" — an intense, violent Tarantino movie with a dark comedy aspect. However, "Reservation Dogs" mainly focuses on a

group of indigenous children who grow up on a reservation in Oklahoma.

"What I love about it is the writing is really, really clever," she said. "And unlike a lot of shows, there's no tokenism. It's this community of people and they have their lives and they're Native American, but that's not the only point of the story; they're actually living their lives: having friendships, figuring out what to do after they graduate high school, trying to decide how to be individuals separating from their families while remaining a part of their families."

The show — created by Sterlin Harjo, an American filmmaker who focuses on increasing Native American representation in media, and Taika Waititi, the son of a Maori father and an award-winning filmmaker — features an all indigenous cast and crew.

"It's really real; it doesn't pander to a non-native or a white audience, and it's very funny [when] identifying and lampooning some of the tropes of Native Americans that you might see," Keys said. "It's also extremely moving and it has relationships between girls and boys, relationships between men and their families and women with their friends, what it's like to be a kid and what

it's like to be a parent. I learned a lot from it."

Keys' other favorite, "Our Flag Means Death," traces the journey of a man from New Zealand as he decides to become a pirate. However, he later realizes that transitioning to the crude pirate life isn't as merry as he thought it to be, and fails to let go of the fine things in life back on shore.

In addition, he also struggles to assert command as a captain and lead his band of pirates.

"It's really funny, like 'Pirates of the Caribbean' except way smarter and funnier," Keys said. "It's interesting because he's a minority so he's also a native person having grown up in a colonized European society."

Keys said she thinks there are many affinities between Native Americans and Native New Zealanders.

"I like that challenge of your expectations because the guy becomes a pirate because he has this absurd idea, like a fairytale fantasy idea, from his childhood of what a pirate is," Keys said. "What's good writing is that everybody can see bits of themselves in [the show]. There are relationships where characters evolve and then you see other facets of all of these characters and they change in relationship with each other." ♦



Keys



'Spongebob' remains the greatest cartoon of all time

by ParavManney

The inaugural episode of "Spongebob Squarepants" aired in 1999, garnering a whopping 6.9 million views. Since then, the show has influenced millions of people across the globe, with many holding the show near and dear to their hearts.

The series is the brain-child of Stephen Hillenburg, a marine biologist who envisioned a cartoon revolving around aquatic creatures.

In particular, he wanted the show to be centered around a cute sea sponge boy (aptly named Spongebob) and his adventures in the deep blue.

The cast of characters includes a lazy starfish (Patrick, Spongebob's best friend), a miserable, narcissistic octopus (Squidward), a penny-pinching crab (Mr. Krabs), a diabolical plankton (literally called Plankton) and a scientifically inclined squirrel equipped with gear allowing her to breathe underwater (Sandy).

The show's premise may seem unassuming, but it is a masterpiece in storytelling, humor, maturity and aestheticism. Seasons 1 to 3

particularly exhibit these qualities in a refreshing and evocative fashion, marking "Spongebob" as a gem among cash-grabbing children's shows.

Each episode consists of a concept that is first introduced as a small gimmick and later developed through jokes and a vibrant atmosphere.

Take, for example, the "Hooky" episode in which Spongebob and Patrick become entranced by fishermen's hooks and engage in dangerous activities involving them.

The episode culminates with Spongebob learning his lesson (Mr. Krabs makes Squidward use a fishhook to rip off Spongebob's clothes, embarrassing him in public). This simplistic formula allows the breadth of a concept (like the danger of hooks) to be explored fully and gives the episode an all-encompassing structure.

The humor in "Spongebob" is also remarkable. The standard for comedy for kids' shows is a low bar, but "Spongebob" is actually funny.

Excellent jokes — humorous enough to even amuse adults —

are sprinkled throughout each episode.

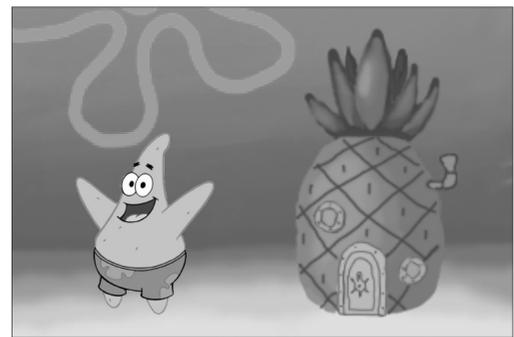
The show has molded much of Gen Z's sense of absurdity, with its sometimes suggestive comments and bizarre uses of unexplainably funny gags.

Furthermore, the morals in "Spongebob" are far more practical and memorable than those of other kids' shows, which often include cliches such as "be nice to each other," "appreciate differences," "sharing means caring" and so on.

"Spongebob," instead, teaches kids social intelligence: that people won't sit next to them if they smell bad, as in "Something Smells"; that using a joke too much saps its comedic potency, as in "Ripped Pants"; and that rather than wasting time getting irritated by people you don't like, you should instead purposefully ignore them and move on with life (literally every Spongebob and Squidward encounter).

Additionally, the show includes superb aesthetics in three major categories: the atmosphere, the sounds and the animation. These components of the atmosphere are not only the most euphoric moments of my childhood memories, but also the reasons the show continues to capture me.

"Spongebob" incorporates underwater sunsets, fluid, nightly reflections in the deep ocean and overall mastery of tropical imagery, making the show beautiful



and sometimes even melancholic. Hillenburg's background in marine biology surely gave him an edge in producing sounds appropriate to his setting.

One particular episode that I admire for its animation and audio is "Scaredy Pants." The moon depicted against the backdrop of a starry sky is like a dream, set before the rippling water of Spongebob's aquatic world. The overhead waves, tinged with moonlight, cast flowing silver ringlets on the ocean floor. These overarching effects, and more, are what make "Spongebob" memorable to me.

The music and sound design, not just in the evening bits, cannot be stressed enough in their excellence. The sounds of water and Hawaiian blues in the background — especially the ones in the first

three seasons of the show — enchant the resplendent landscapes.

The artistic style in seasons 1 to 3 use frame-by-frame animation, meaning animators drew each frame by hand. This adds depth and charm to characters' movements.

Moreover, the colorful Polynesian environments draw the viewer into a serene world, allowing them to forget about their worries and take part in a relaxing retreat. There are no perfect pieces of art, but if there was one, "Spongebob" would come extremely close. It accomplishes so many aspects that most showmakers struggle with and still manages to include comedy that outlasts even late night shows. "Spongebob" is not only a masterpiece, but an icon of pure expression. ♦

From the ground up: Robotics teams prepare for season

BY SaachiJain

Thirty enthusiastic rookie members gathered in the robotics quad on Sept. 10, eagerly awaiting the kickoff of their robotics season. The eager newcomers appeared to be in awe of the organized chaos inside the robotics lab.

On a typical work day, Taylor Swift blasts through the in-room speaker system while the whirl of hand drills and the screech of a chop saw echoes through the room. All around, mentors stand in groups with students, some gathered near the robot to analyze the next issue to be tackled, others running the laser cutter and overseeing other machine usage. Two volunteer parents sit at the "parent table", in charge of supervising the room for general safety and moderation of student-student interaction. The discussion taking place between students ranges from robot-related decisions to the latest AP Physics test many are stressing about.

As just a small fraction of the students who crowd Room 903 on the weekends, the rookies represented a new generation of team members within the Mechanical Science and Engineering Team Robotics Club — otherwise known as MSET — which has become one of the most popular organizations at school since its founding in 2001. Starting with less than 20 members, MSET has now grown into a community of over 100 participants across four teams.



Led by hardware mentor Ivan France, the Jellyfish and Bettafish discuss hardware strategies during the weekends for extended work time under the supervision of volunteer parents and mentors.

FRC team 649 MSET Fish

Members of the FRC team, also known as the "Fish," were busy preparing their robot for an off-season competition at Bellarmine Prep that occurred on Sept. 24 and 25. They were testing two different intake designs — a mechanism which takes in a ball from the ground into the shooter system — that they hoped to use on the robot.

A new intake design was being tested by a few members of the software team, who were mainly focused on its folding and deployment. The new design uses a motor to power the deploy, replacing the old pistons.

Other members of the software team were working with the main robot and testing the shooter at various distances from the goal, which they housed in the MAP Annex due to its size. Both days of the weekend were spent doing such software testing.

On Sunday, the FRC team also held an outreach meeting, where they discussed all the initiatives and projects they were

currently working on to spread STEM and robotics awareness throughout the community.

Some of the projects they discussed included GoBabyGo, where students modify ride-on cars to aid children with mobility disabilities, and Vikalp Sansthan, an organization where the teams create English and math videos to teach girls in India who don't have access to education.

FTC team 6165 MSET Cuttlefish

The FTC teams spent their Saturday attending the season kickoff event on Sept. 10. Once their game challenge had been revealed, they began designing their robots.

They held strategy meetings in the afternoon to discuss the fine details of the game and scoring, as well as the capabilities they wanted to eventually design their robot for.

The FTC teams also hold weekly "org" (or organizational) meetings on Sundays, where mentors for each team sit down with all the members and address their management, hardware, software and outreach progress.

FTC Program Lead Trevor Leung said he believes organizational meetings help the

team stay on track with their goals, since there are so many tasks that need to be completed at any point during the robot preparation.

FTC teams 7390 MSET Jellyfish and 7641 MSET Bettafish

Two of the FTC teams in MSET, the Jellyfish and Bettafish, are composed primarily of rookie members and relied on the guidance of their veteran Cuttlefish members during and after the kickoff.

A few Cuttlefish members held a meeting with the Jellyfish and Bettafish that Sunday to discuss the game in more depth and guide them on how to approach the first few days of the season.

The discussion was similar to the one that took place among the Cuttlefish the day before, where they studied the 80-page rule book and answered any questions members might have regarding the gameplay.

The Bettafish and Jellyfish then participated in a general design meeting with a couple hardware mentors, while the Cuttlefish began discussing the finer details of their design plan.

"Working on the weekends gives us longer periods of uninterrupted time, and people are generally less busy," junior FRC member Owen Liang said. "The mentors are also available on the weekends, and it makes everyone a lot more productive to have help and someone to bounce ideas off of."

"We have established leadership and schedules for the teams, and I'm excited to see how far they can all go."

SENIOR Trevor Leung

As they gear up for the upcoming seasons, all four robotics teams will continue to meet regularly. The goal of all these hours of collaboration, of course, is to complete the robots as quickly and effectively as possible.

"There is a lot of potential on all the teams this season," Leung said. "We have established leadership and schedules for the teams, and I'm excited to see how far they can all go." ♦

"It makes everyone a lot more productive to have help and someone to bounce ideas off of."

JUNIOR Owen Liang

SAT set to undergo major changes beginning 2023

BY EricShi

The SAT is set to receive major changes coming 2023 for international students and 2024 for students in the United States. The change may be a result of many colleges and universities shifting to test optional applications.

The primary difference will be the transition from paper tests to digital tests. This is the result of an attempt

to reduce student stress: 80% of students reported they experienced less stress during a pilot of the digital SAT according to Collegeboard. On test day, test takers will be able to use either their device or a school-provided device for the test.

The Collegeboard hopes to make the SAT easier to take and administer in order to reduce costs. Because many colleges are going test-optional, Collegeboard hopes to entice more students to take the SAT by slightly reducing the testing length and difficulty of some questions. After the changes, the students should expect to only spend two hours taking the SAT instead of three.

Other changes are more section focused — the reading section is receiving a major overhaul, becoming less passage oriented and more paragraph oriented and the math section is going fully calculator-permitted. For the reading section specifically, Col-

legeboard plans to use passages which are shorter, less difficult, and more broad.

These changes do not come without controversy. Students at Saratoga High School have conflicting views about these changes. Junior William Cao recently took the August SAT, and said, "I have mixed opinions about the SAT changes." Cao continues, "I remember a couple of months ago, I saw a picture of what the testing format would look like from TikTok — it seemed a little unfair to people that took the SAT before the change."

Cao goes on to explain that the reading section shifting to shorter passages takes away the whole point of locating textual evidence. Finally, Cao talks about the digital format. "I'm not the best at taking online tests and prefer taking hard copy tests instead," he said.

On the other hand, Junior Marco Wang believes that the changes are more beneficial than harmful. "I think that the SAT changes are pretty good because you get your scores back faster," said Wang.

Though the SAT comes with its controversy, Collegeboard believes that making these revisions to the SAT, holistically speaking, brings more benefits than harm. It is unlikely that these changes will be reversed, so many students will have to adapt to the new test. ♦

French classes teach culture through holiday celebrations

BY AmarisCharton & SanjoliGupta

Think of France, and images of the iconic Eiffel Tower, sweet crepes overflowing with juicy strawberries or crispy baguettes slathered in brie cheese might come to mind. But France isn't just about its glamorous reputation and or its famed food; its culture is a product of hundreds of years of history.

The French language classes dive into this culture, educating students about the holidays, history and general norms in France so that students can successfully communicate in the future if they ever visit France.

French teacher Elaine Haggerty, who teaches all levels of the language, French 1,2,3 honors and AP French, said a big part of learning the culture is knowing how to interact with people in France or other French-speaking areas. For example, she mentioned "La Bise," a kiss on each cheek, which is a common greeting in France.

As the year goes on, the classes celebrate various French holidays such as Mardi Gras in February and Poisson D'Avril in April. They hold parties and have students bring French-themed food to share with peers.

Haggerty fondly recalls how one of her

students brought cooked snails to a class party.

"He made everything, from the butter to the herbs," she said. "All the students ended up tasting them."

French 3 student junior Zitong Wang learned about the French holiday Poisson D'Avril through classroom activities where they decorated paper fishes with coloring utensils. The arts session reflected what people in France would actually do during the holiday: give fish to their friends and family.

Another major part of the French curriculum is a cultural project where students can pick their favorite aspect of French culture and delve deeper by visiting museums, making art pieces and cooking traditional French dishes.

"We cooked chocolate truffles for the cultural project and they were really bitter, but everyone in class tried them," Wang said. "We had a lot of fun baking."

The hands-on projects have helped students better grasp France's complex culture.

"We learned about French provinces and specialties within each province, and French roots inside the U.S. such as New Orleans and Francophone countries," Wang said. "[Because of the class], I'm not going to assume anything about cultures and will speak basic phrases politely." ♦

Sports teams make strides practicing on weekends

BY SunnyCao

Visit the school on a typical weekend this fall, and you'll see the cross country team stepping into their running shoes and the boys' water polo team getting ready to jump in the pool.

Cross country: early morning runs

Saturday mornings, the cross country team practices at 6:45 or 7 a.m. in the morning — sometimes at the school track, but often on nearby trails like Sanborn Park.

Many of the runners' favorite trails include the 5-mile Montalvo trail and the Narnia trail, a quick 2.9-mile-run that features a path reminiscent of the fictional world of Narnia.

On a typical practice day, athletes warm up with some light lifting in the weight room, followed by running and conditioning activities such as Oregon drills — where athletes run in "S" shapes on the field — or Ladders, a conditioning exercise where runners sprint 200 meters and then jog 300 on the track for a

specific time or distance.

Other weekend practice days include running five miles on the track, aiming to work on slow-paced endurance.

Senior Jenny Chan said cross country coach Ian Tippetts keeps students motivated during weekend training by mixing up the runs.

"He's dedicated because he uses his weekend to drive us to different trails and he does a lot of research on running form and quick practices to help people become faster runners," Chan said.

Boys' water polo: dryland conditioning

During their longer Saturday practices, the boys on the water polo team work on improving skills that they usually don't get to cover in the team's normal weekday practices.

Besides practicing in the water, the team also does dryland training — intense conditioning exercises outside the pool — to build endurance and stamina for players.

For example, the team ran four miles recently as a conditioning exercise, going



The varsity cross country team poses for a photo at school after the RAM invitational on Sept. 24.

from Saratoga High to downtown, then Redwood Middle School and finally back to the school.

"It was pretty intense, but it was also an amazing experience as I had never done something like this before. I really enjoyed going through the run with my teammates," said sophomore Tarun Ramakrishnan, a

member of the JV water polo team. The athletes hope to hone in on their weaknesses, particularly improving their ability to focus and communicate in the pool during their home games.

"We're definitely improving from where we started and can only get better from here," Ramakrishnan said. ♦



Marching band spends long hours rehearsing for the season

BY SaachiJain

On a recent hot Saturday, the sun beat down on the 175 members of the marching band as they rehearsed Niccolò Paganini's "Caprice No. 24" for this fall's show: "Blossom."

Besides rehearsing three times a week, members spend Saturdays learning new choreography and doing drills on the football field. Though it varies on a weekly basis, Saturday rehearsals usually begin at 9 a.m. and end between 5 to 9 p.m.

Sections such as percussion, winds/brass and guard hold their own rehearsals on Thursdays from 6 to 9 p.m. In past years, the band has only been able to perform a couple movements of their show at their first couple of competitions.

However, they are currently on track to perform their entire 9-minute program at a competition at Cupertino High School on Oct. 8, which is the first time they've done so in over seven years.

"A lot of our staff come on weekends where we can learn the drill and choreography," said senior Alison Okuno, who is a drum major along with senior Petr Tuptsyn and junior Gabriel Shyh. Many members of the band find Saturdays more productive due to the ability to focus only on rehearsal rather than think about homework and other extracurricular activities that occupy time during the week.

A typical weekend morning begins with physical and musical warmups, which are led by the three drum majors.

"We might spend the morning refining our marching technique and reviewing Movement 1 drill and choreography, for example," Okuno said. "The afternoon might be spent learning Movement 2 drill and putting it to music [marching and playing]."

Long rehearsal days allow members of each section to spend more time together, especially during their one hour lunch break where students can leave campus. Many instrument sections spend the hour together. Junior Edmond Hsu, a trombone player, noticed the close bond that formed between his section in a short time.

"After our full section dinner, where everyone met the freshmen, they immediately felt like any other bandmate I've had before," Hsu said. "For my section, being around each other and working with each other so much has created a really tight bond in a short time."

Band director Jason Shiuan finds that each week is different, and the productivity of Saturday rehearsals varies.

For example, extreme weather, such as the recent heat wave, can result in a less productive practice session. But he maintains his goal of students taking pride and ownership in their very hard work, as well as what they produce in the end with the music program.

"We spend all these hours on this activity, and it's not only for ourselves," Shiuan said. "It's to be able to share it with others, and I always hope that the students are believing in what they do and are able to share that with others in a meaningful and impactful way."

Writing the show from scratch in collaboration with other music directors, Shiuan tries to communicate two messages with each show: one directed at an audience who is only seeing it once, and another for the students who are putting on the show.

The second message is emphasized throughout the season, and is the mentality backing all the hours of rehearsal that take place.

"A lot of our staff come on weekends where we can learn the drill and choreography."

SENIOR Alison Okuno

"In this show, it's a lot about 'you reap what you sow,'" Shiuan said. "The amount you put in is the amount you are going to get out. This kind of concept is what we want our students to think hard about, and hope it will help them grow as much as they can." ♦

Saturday Chinese school utilizes school facilities for their lessons

BY ZackZhang

Dozens of young children enter 25 classrooms on campus most Saturdays to learn Chinese in weekly classes hosted by non-profit educational organization Mandarin Language and Cultural Center (MLCC). The district receives money in exchange for renting out the classrooms.

According to Jane Chen, the principal of MLCC, the future of Chinese language education in the area seems promising as the Chinese program has seen an increase in enrollment in the past several years.

Currently, the organization holds classes in two locations: Milpitas High and Saratoga High. Almost 1,000 students from kindergarten to 11th grade are enrolled in the program, with around 400 taking classes at SHS. MLCC was founded in 1992, and has held classes since 1997 with the original goal of helping Mandarin-speaking children raised in the U.S.

However, as the number of younger students whose parents don't know Chinese has grown by 16% annually since 2010, according to China-United States Exchange Foundation, MLCC has now expanded their teaching for all of those who are interested in learning the language. MLCC uses teaching material (textbooks, workbooks, CD files and articles) from Taiwan for students below 7th grade. Students in 8th grade and higher use U.S.-based materials to prepare for the AP Chinese test.

"Around 80% of MLCC students speak Mandarin at home, while the remaining 20% do not," Chen said. "The Chinese school prepares different teaching materials to fit the needs of each class of students, no matter where students are in their learning journeys."

For example, the teachers focus more on reading and writing skills for students who speak Mandarin at home, and provide practice and assistance in daily conversation for students who don't speak Manda-

rin at home. Many SHS students who attended MLCC classes say they enjoyed the program and gained a lot from it.

"The classroom environment and learning experiences were definitely unique and fun," said freshman Millie Wang, who attended the Chinese school for four years.

Some students later volunteered to become Teaching Assistants (TAs) to give back to the community. TAs prepare materials before class, lead group activities, test students on vocabulary, keep students focused during class and assist teachers whenever necessary. Senior Morris Yu was a student at MLCC for 10 years and is in his second year of being a TA for the Chinese Foreign Language class 7. Being a TA, however, comes with challenges. Yu said the most difficult part is keeping students focused during class.

"Whether they're too excited and talk with friends or bored out of their minds, it can be difficult to keep them focused without disturbing others — especially when one tried to bribe me with an \$80 Pokémon card," Yu said.

When he was a student, Yu's class didn't have TAs and teachers were strict, so he enjoys "being chill with the kids" as it "keeps a pretty good energy in the classroom."

"Having spent over 10 years as a student, being on the other side of the spectrum was satisfying," Yu said. "Being able to share what I've learned when I was a student or make class more enjoyable and fun has been my favorite part."

Having many successful students coming out of the program in the past 25 years, Chen said MLCC hopes to continue promoting Chinese culture in the future.

"We wish that our students who are born of Chinese heritage can become a bridge between the two languages and cultures when they grow up, and those who are not to be familiar with a second culture so it allows them to have another perspective in mind when examining social issues," Chen said. ♦



Graphic by ERIC SHI



FALCON // NATALIE CHUA



Graphic by LEYNA CHEN

LET'S TALK ABOUT INDIA'S CHRISTIAN MINORITY

By Sanjoli Gupta

Junior Sarah Thomas recalls attending a church service at a predominantly Caucasian church in Sunnyvale as a young child. As the only Indians in a room of Caucasian Christians, she and her parents found themselves excluded from the church community, never being invited to bake sales or lunch after service.

Sarah and her family then joined a South Indian church to better connect with the community, only to find the sermon given in Malayalam. Most of the children were bilingual, and Sarah, who only speaks English, couldn't understand what was going on.

"[The people in both churches] don't think you're part of the church community, so it can be hard to feel included," Sarah said. She never fit in with either church because she was not as religious as the other Indian Christians and did not identify with the primarily Caucasian church.

Students embrace being Indian and Christian

Although Sarah recognizes Christianity as a religion that preaches love and acceptance, she acknowledges that many connect blatant racism and homophobia with some churches.

For example, some churches use verses from the Bible — like Leviticus 18:22, which has been generally interpreted as prohibiting some or all homosexual acts — to justify their stances against abortion and gay rights. This makes it hard for her to identify as Christian sometimes because she doesn't agree with a lot of what the church does. Sarah and her family have been Christian for as long as she can remember.

While Sarah doesn't pray weekly as many Christians she knows do, she does so every few months to collect her thoughts and reflect.

"Praying isn't about asking a higher power; rather, it's about taking time to acknowledge and be yourself," Sarah said. "Recently, one of my mom's friend's children passed, and I felt grateful that I was OK. I wanted to pray for his

family because I felt saddened by the loss, but I didn't know him. Praying helps me re-center."

On the other hand, sophomore Saejel Thomas' family (no immediate relation to Sarah Thomas' family) is Christian Agnostic, which means they are unsure about the existence of God. They don't go to church or strictly follow religion. Saejel and her older sister were baptized as Christians, continuing a tradition of Christian agnosticism in her family — her grandmother went to church and held ceremonies after her grandfather passed. Her family and friends vary in the extent of their religious beliefs.

"I like embracing my culture, and I don't think being agnostic takes away from any of that," she said. "I still celebrate the holidays and go to weddings."

Saejel's ancestors built a church in Kerala, one of the southern-most parts of India, and her family always visits the church whenever they go to India.

"It's a very special family place because my grandparents and great grandparents are buried there, so when I think about connecting back to the church, I think of my family," she said.

A lack of knowledge of India's religious and cultural diversity

Both Saejel and Sarah's parents are from Kerala. Christians from Kerala believe in the Apostle Thomas who came to Kerala in 52 A.D. and baptized the ancestors of those present today.

Kerala is extremely diverse because different cultures occupied it over the course of its history, such as the Portuguese, Dutch and British. Each culture left a legacy behind, creating the multicultural and diverse society that exists today. Thus, people from there have many different names depending on their religion and background.

"A lot of people assume Indian people are always Hindu, but my family is Christian because we are from the southern part of India," Sarah said.

Saejel and Sarah said when most Americans think of India, they primarily think about North



Sarah Thomas was baptized in Kerala by a bishop as a toddler while her parents and three grandparents watch.

India and Hinduism or Buddhism, disregarding the many other cultures and religions in the country.

Due to the lack of representation of South Indians and Indian Christians, many are confused as to why Saejel's first name is Indian while her last name is Christian.

She also faces the mispronunciation of her first name, which makes her feel inferior to the people around her whose names are typically pronounced correctly on the first try.

"[People] who look like me in mainstream media makes me feel represented."

SOPHOMORE Saejel Thomas

"No one wants to be made fun of because of their name, or to be called something else that they're not," she said. "But I feel like as I've gotten older, I've gotten used to it, which obviously isn't the best thing."

However, over time she has grown to like her unusual name.

For her part, Sarah thinks her Christian last name has separated her from the North Indians she goes to school with. She also feels disconnected because she doesn't speak Hindi as many other Indians at school do.

Because the majority of Indian students at SHS are North Indian, Sarah said that it makes it difficult to find someone with her background, but when she does, it's "life-changing." She also said that there is a limited understanding of Indian culture as a whole.

"I don't think a lot of people [in Saratoga] know about religious differences within the Indian community. I feel like people just see an Indian person and think 'OK, they pray to cows,'" she said. "Not a lot of people go the extra mile to be educated about the incredible diversity in India, whether it be cultural or religious."

Saejel thinks the school should

work to expand students' understanding of Indian cultures. She believes the addition of the ethnic studies class last year is a step in the right direction, and that education on Christianity's prominence in India would make it easier for people to understand the diversity of cultures and religions in India.

Media misrepresents South Indian culture

Saejel recalls being excited when the Netflix show "Never Have I Ever" was released in 2020, but was disappointed to see that the show only represented a sliver of Indian culture and included countless stereotypes.

However, content creators like YouTubers Liza Koshy and Lilly Singh help Saejel feel represented on television.

"Seeing someone who looks like me in mainstream media makes me feel represented and welcome in these kinds of environments," she said. "It's really inspiring to see Lily Singh with her own talk show, and it makes me feel empowered. Anyone can do this, and I feel like that's a really important thing for Indian girls to know."

Similarly, Sarah also finds misrepresentation of South Indian culture in movies. In Bollywood movies, there is often a subtle nod to religion throughout the movie, even if it isn't the main emphasis of the movie, which makes them difficult for Sarah to connect to.

There are many misconceptions and stereotypes labeled against South Indians specifically, decreasing the effort made into understanding the religious diversity there.

"In 'Chennai Express' [one of Bollywood's most famous movies], South Indian people are portrayed as gangsters and blood-thirsty," Sarah said. "It's very interesting because to this day, a lot of North-Indian people will talk about 'Lungi Dance' [a song composed for Chennai Express] being so funny, but you look at yourself, and you think, 'oh, this is about

my culture. What's so funny about that?"

"Chennai Express" also contains dialogue considered offensive to South Indians. Some lines in "Lungi Dance" mock and misrepresent South Indian culture, specifically "coconut mei lussi milake," which means serving lassi, a sweet milk drink in a coconut; in reality, Sarah said no one actually drinks lassi out of a coconut.

Saejel said other religions also discriminate against Christians for being non-vegetarian — in Hinduism, beef isn't consumed, while in Islam, pork isn't consumed.

"South Indians are non-vegetarian and eat beef, which is also a source of conflict," Sarah said. "Thoughts like 'look how barbaric they are' or 'it's so disgusting that they would do that' may come up when it's really just cultural differences."

Despite all the misrepresentation of South Indian culture, Sarah embraces her roots and continues to be proud of her culture.

"My favorite thing about being Indian is the rich culture and community, and my favorite thing about being Christian how it helps me deal with loss and grief and find community during tough times," Sarah said. ♦

BEFORE YOU LEAVE, REMEMBER THIS:

India is not homogeneous in religion, and do not assume that all Indians are from North India or from a major religion like Hinduism. Media representation also plays into these stereotypes.

All graphics by JONNY LUO

INFLATION BURDENS ELDERLY

"In our country, there are people who really don't have enough to get by, and I think that's where the focus needs to be." — a local senior

General Overview of Inflation

According to the Census Bureau, nearly 24% of residents in Saratoga are 65 years or older, most of whom are retired. Despite the city's reputation for wealth, many elderly residents have seen their pocketbooks hurt by the inflation that has led to consumer prices rising by 9.1% in the past year.

Many senior citizens' financial struggles are the result of having a fixed income as prices for gas, food and other items skyrocket. Many receive retirement income such as Social Security or pensions, which often fail to keep pace with inflation. They also generally experience decreased mobility due to age and have less time to recover from economic disruptions in the long run, factors that hinder them from working to support themselves.



Foley

dents like Michelle Jackson and her family, who moved in generations before "big tech came in and the small town vibe became a metropolis."

Citing her late grandparents' grit after surviving the Great Depression, Jackson said she believes that even they would find the current high prices of food and gas daunting. Her mother, who is still alive, has also struggled immensely amid the recent inflation.

"It's hard seeing my mom trying to adapt to the recent events and feeling left out, especially because she has trouble with technology," Jackson said. "We are overworked from trying to keep up with all these changes and everything is overpriced — I'm over it."

MOON: prepared from the '70s

In the middle of the wealth spectrum, other seniors like former school cross country coach Danny Moon have felt the stress of inflation like others, but not to the point where it's affected their day-to-day lives.

"My wife Madelyn and I are very fortunate to be members of Kaiser's health insurance program along with Medicare [a government health plan for those above 65]," Moon said. "But we've noticed a big increase in spending since we buy food for ourselves, our son Michael and my mother."

Moon acknowledged that he doesn't make purchases or travel with the same ease of thought as the "young people [in the area] working with Apple, Google and the like." However, he and his family can still make a conscious effort to visit local restaurants and small businesses to support them.

He partly attributes this flexibility today to the savings he and his wife focused on when they were younger; anytime Moon or his wife received a raise, they would immediately put the excess money into retirement savings. Since both worked at large corporations — he was an employee at Lockheed Martin, and his wife worked at General Electric — they both had the opportunity to invest in their respective company's fixed pension plans.

Even with the limitations of living off a retirement fund, Moon said he is much more prepared to deal with current inflation because he experienced the 1970s inflation.

"We were fortunate to survive then," Moon said. "During the gas shortage in my 30s, it was

definitely harder for me than it is now. Back then, it wasn't paycheck to paycheck. It was paycheck to savings. Now we're taking savings to live. I'm also more responsible about maintaining a sustainable living style."

Yet even within families, economic circumstances vary.

While Moon, his wife and their son are relatively well-off, Moon said his 94-year-old mother, who started drawing from Social Security at 65, wouldn't be able to survive the recent inflation without their help.

"She is greatly affected because she has low [income] security, something that many people in her age category have a real problem with," he said.

Back when she was working, Moon's mom made "good money in those times" — around \$9 an hour, or \$105 adjusted for inflation. However, since Social Security is based on pre-retirement income and lifetime earnings, Moon's mom now receives only \$750 per month.

With over three decades of continuous inflation and drawing from her Social Security, her living expenses are much higher than her income.

"The only way I can keep her thinking she's within her

means is to take away the payments that come. Otherwise, she'd be real depressed and want to get out of there, since she lives in her own home," Moon said. "A lot of older people that live in Saratoga — I would estimate 20 to 30% — are on low security. They're the ones that really get affected." ♦

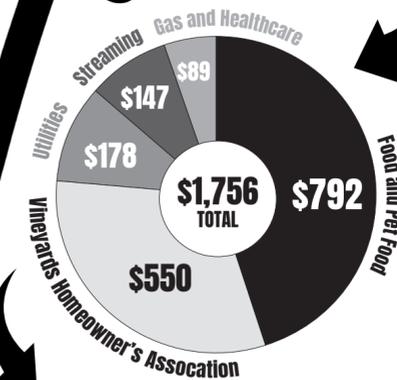


Moon

Baratta-Lorton's \$2,682 Social Security covers all monthly expenditures, which average to \$1,757, with \$925 left.

Saratoga senior's monthly expenses: **Bob Baratta-Lorton**

83, SHS parent of two Class of 2001 alumni

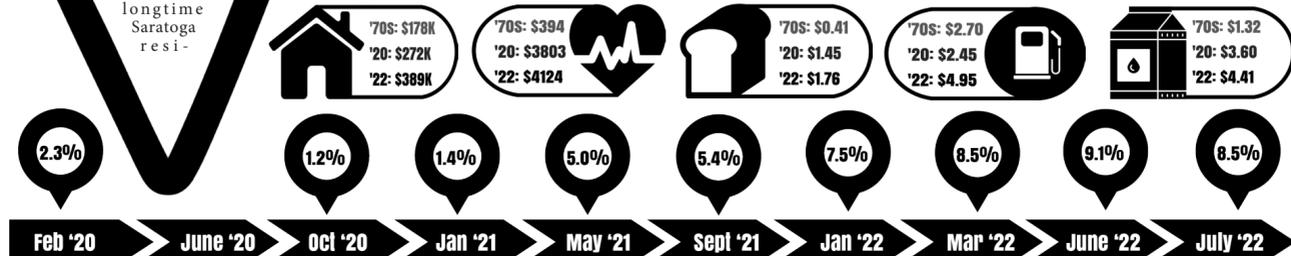
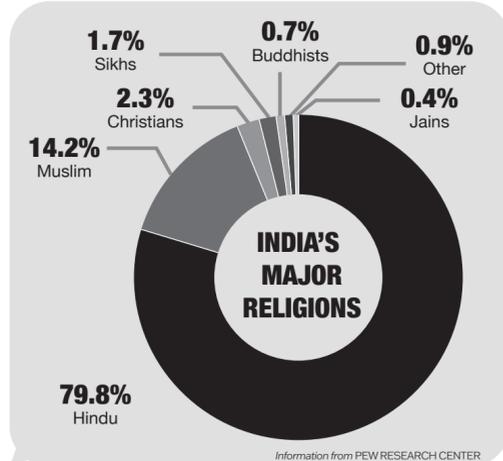
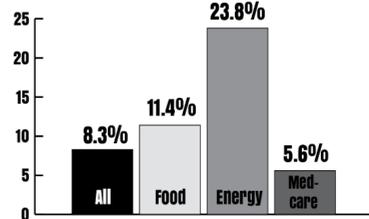


Biggest Savings

- Solar panels save \$500
- Prius saves gas
- Low property tax due to proposition 13
- Fully paid off home

National Inflation Numbers

All statistics from years before 2022 have been adjusted for inflation.



Story by CAROLYN WANG

All graphics by LYNN DAI and JONNY LUO

Statistics from U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

FOOTBALL

Officials' controversial decision on timing snatches Homecoming win from Falcons

By ParavManney & AidenYe

As the fourth quarter of the Homecoming football game on Sept. 23 drew to an end, the Falcons put up a staunch defense against repeated charges by the Mills Vikings, who were driving on the Falcons' 5-yard line. As the clock ran down to zero, it seemed the Falcons had won.

Fans roared as they looked at the scoreboard to witness what they thought was the final score: 28-22. That brief moment of glory soon ended. Officials reset the clock to 4 seconds; they said the timekeeper had made a mistake.

Fans booed and shouted words of abuse. In the extended time, Mills ran a quarterback sneak into the end zone tying the score 28-28. The Vikings then cemented a 30-28 win after converting 2-point conversion.

Like fans in the stands, Falcons head coach Stephen Matos didn't like how the officials did their job.

"The ending was wrong and to rob us of that is upsetting," Matos told The Falcon. "But when you



Falcons quarterback junior Shane Timmons sprints a 16-yard run to score a touchdown against the Vikings.

leave it in the hands of the refs, anything can happen and we were on the short end of that this time."

The Falcons started the game strong, with junior quarterback Shane Timmons scoring the first

touchdown on a 16-yard run. Later, however, the team formed a coverage in which the defenders

miscommunicated, giving the Vikings open receiver a path down the field, giving them their first touchdown. At the end of the first quarter, the score was tied 6-6.

The back-and-forth between the two teams continued as they traded touchdowns in the second quarter, with Timmons also scoring the Falcons' second touchdown on a run.

In the third quarter, the Falcons' defense didn't tackle well. The result was a running touchdown followed by a 2-point conversion; Mills was ahead 22-20 in.

But the Falcons bounced back. Senior running back Paolo Navarro broke into the end zone after a long run of more than 20 yards.

After their own 2-point conversion, the Falcons entered the fourth quarter up 28-22.

Despite the difficult loss, the Falcons have already exceeded their one win from last year. They stand 2-2 and are in 6th place in the Peninsula Lake Division. Their next games are against the Monta Vista Matadors on Sept. 30, South San Francisco on Oct. 6 and El Camino Oct. 14. ♦

Freshman swimmer achieves Olympic Trials cuts for 200 fly

By MeherBhatnagar

As a competitive club swimmer, freshman Kelsey Zhang gets up before the sun rises at 4:50 a.m. and is in the pool at 5:30 — for the first of two practices in her daily schedule.

Zhang recently qualified for the Olympic trials in the International swim meet hosted by Santa Clara Swim Club. Zhang had what she called "the best swim of her life." She swam a personal record of 2:13.18 in the 200-meter butterfly.

When she was five, Zhang was inspired by Katie Ledecky and Missy Franklin racing in Team USA swimming events. She wanted to become an Olympic swimmer just like them.

Now, after nine years of hard work, Zhang has made her way up to the Palo Alto Stanford Aquatics team's National Group at just 14. Swimming for a national team as a freshman is an achievement in itself, but Zhang has higher aspirations that shone when she achieved time cuts fast enough to qualify for racing in the Indiana Olympic Team Trials in 2024.

"I was just pacing off of the girl next to me and I didn't know I got Olympic Trials cuts till my coaches and parents told me," she said. "I was trying to catch up to her on the third lap and I did. I was really happy after that race."

Zhang noted that her Olympic Trials race didn't hurt as much as some other races when she touched the wall. Normally when she finishes her races, her muscles ache and fill with lactic acid buildup that make it hard to finish the race strong. She attributes this improvement to all the



Freshman Kelsey Zhang swims freestyle to prepare for a swim meet.

stretching and conditioning she had done prior to the race.

Generally, in larger Team USA competitions and championship swim meets, swimmers race in the preliminaries in the morning, and the top 10 swimmers come back in the evening for a second opportunity to race in finals as a chance to better their times. Zhang noticed she was swimming well at Santa Clara Swim Club's International meet and wanted to push herself more in each of her races.

"I was making finals and dropping lots of time," Zhang said. For Zhang, "lots of time" means 1-2 seconds, which makes a huge difference in a sport like swimming.

She explained that disqualifications from minor mistakes, which she'd made in the past, are common in the 200 fly, so her primary goal going into the race was to make sure all her strokes, turns and breakouts were legal.

"I was really focusing on my walls and touching with my hands, and making sure my kick was not illegal," she said. "I feel like if I didn't have that fear, my turns would have been a lot faster

and I would have gone even faster."

In the two years leading up to the 2024 Olympic Trials, she wants to compete in more USA swimming events like the Junior Pan Pacific Championships and other big meets.

"I want to socialize with a lot of fast people — that really pushes me to keep working harder," Zhang said. "I also want to go to more training camps and other big meets with my teammates." Zhang is also excited to compete for the school's team. She is looking forward to racing against her club team friends at other schools.

As her club's winter season is fast approaching, Zhang hopes to make improvements from last summer's season by better organizing her schedule so she can go to bed on time. She also wants to learn how to recover from her races faster so she doesn't feel so sore.

"Becoming an Olympian is what pushes me to keep swimming," she said. "My parents, coaches and teammates push me every day to be my best." ♦

How to Be an Olympic Swimmer



Earn a qualifying time for the Olympic trials swim meet.

Race at the Olympic trials swim meet.

Finish in the top two in one of 13 individual events.

Place in the top six in the 100-meter and 200-meter freestyle relay teams.

Graphic by GEORGE HUANG

FIELD HOCKEY

Team faces rough start after moving up league

By AmyLuo & IsabelleWang

As of late September, the Falcons hold a 2-4 record in the De Anza division, after moving up from the El Camino League last season. Due to the loss of graduated players, there were many slots to fill on varsity.

The Falcons were able to field a full team by calling up several JV players, but it meant the JV team doesn't have enough players and is playing scrimmages instead of real games. Varsity won 3-0 against Palo Alto on Sept. 29, lost 4-0 against Los Altos on Sept. 27, won 1-0 against Homestead on Sept. 22, lost 8-0 against St. Francis on Sept. 20, lost 2-1 against St. Ignatius on Sept. 15 and lost 7-0 against Archbishop Mitty.

The team had a rough start during their first game on Sept. 13. They trailed 5-0 by the end of the first quarter and ultimately lost 7-0 to a talented Archbishop Mitty team.

"Mitty's standing has always been decent in past years, so we were pretty nervous going in. I think it really showed in the first quarter when they scored a lot on us," junior midfielder Emily Hung said.

The team had to adjust to only having



Defender junior Emma Green, midfielder senior Georgia Adams and defender senior Anika Muju guard the goal as Mitty attempts to score in their very first game of the season.

one coach instead of two after former head coach Nanu Sidhu moved away. Nonetheless, practices and drills have remained similar according to senior center midfielder and co-captain Georgia Adams. She said that the team is working to gradually in-

crease the difficulty of practices and conditioning without overworking players.

This year, the varsity team has a new goalie, Grace Mischou. Despite being the only sophomore on varsity, she has a close connection with her teammates.

GIRLS' TENNIS

After dropping league, Falcons improve team morale

By HannahLee & VictoriaLin

After falling to the bottom of the De Anza league with a winless season last year, the girls' tennis team dropped to the El Camino league this year — a disappointing result for the program after a long history of CCS qualifications and several championships from 2009 to 2018.

A recent match concluded in a 5-2 win against Wilcox on Sept. 29, after previously losing to Lynbrook High 5-2 on Sept. 22. Before that, they beat Santa Clara High 7-0 on Sept. 20 and won against Fremont High 6-1 on Sept. 15. Their first game concluded with a loss of 6-1 to Los Gatos High on Sept. 13.

"We had our first win in two years against Fremont, so that's really exciting," said senior co-captain Arshi Chawla, who plays doubles No. 1. "We're in the lower

division this year, so I think that's going to help boost our morale a bit and hopefully get some wins."

Chawla is optimistic for the season as an unusually high number of strong freshmen have tried out and made varsity.

"It's good that a lot of freshmen are trying out," Chawla said. "When they're seniors, they'll obviously be better and it shows a promising future."

Several players also have experience playing United States Tennis Association matches, such as No. 1 singles player junior Sabrina Manea. Other key players include freshman Viki Toram, sophomore Megha Horantur and senior Melody Lin.

"The extra experience helps for playing matches because you know what to do in certain situations," Manea said.

While varsity is looking strong, the JV team still needs a new coach. In addition,

current low enrollment of only 8 girls on JV will cause one automatic forfeit every match.

Despite numbers difficulties and falling to the El Camino division this season, Chawla's main goal is to increase team spirit and positivity. Chawla said many of the members lose confidence during matches. As such, Chawla hopes the team can enjoy a predictable lineup in remaining matches, ensuring that everyone can be in the same position and play with the same doubles partner each time. By doing so, pairs can develop better coordination.

The team's main goal is to move back up to the De Anza division with the addition of nine new members, hoping the new players will gain extensive experience throughout the season.

"It's a lot of the young players who we are going to rely on to improve as they move up in grades," Chawla said. "I'm hoping our team comes back stronger this year, and we're definitely going to try our best." ♦



Sophomore Megha Horantur returns the opponent's ball during practice on Sept. 23.

BOYS' WATER POLO

From player to coach: Recent graduate encourages hardwork

By AnthonyWang

As the start of the boys' water polo drew closer at the end of summer, the school was scrambling to find a new head coach to replace Michael Fleming, who left to coach at Homestead High. At the last minute, Kendal Jarvis, the captain of last year's varsity team, volunteered to fill the spot.

Jarvis admitted that his age and relatively recent experience as a student compared to typical sports coaches has had an enormous impact on his interactions with the team: Many of the seniors and juniors on the team see their relationship as one between friends, which has caused some minor authority problems with the varsity team, according to left wing senior Eli Tsives.

Upperclassmen players said they have noticed differences in his teaching style as well. Tsives pointed out that Jarvis is the first coach he has had who physically gets into the water to demonstrate techniques.

As a coach, he pays more attention to

how water polo can be an invaluable experience for the players and how he can make each player a better learner. He has applied this philosophy to his coaching, trying to foster persevering attitudes.

"They're not going to learn from somebody who's telling them they're doing nothing wrong," Jarvis said. "I want them to constantly strive to improve."

However, the end of Jarvis' coaching days is in sight: After Oct. 24, Jarvis will leave for Navy Boot Camp in Chicago. He has no plans to continue coaching after leaving.

Until then, Jarvis is determined to do as much as he can to help the players, and he has already seen sophomore and freshman players greatly improve. Their hard work and persistence in learning a sport that Jarvis loves is inspirational to him.

"I was fortunate enough to play in front of a big crowd and it's something I'll remember for the rest of my life," Jarvis said. "I think these guys quite frankly deserve it more than I did." ♦

GIRLS' WATER POLO

Team looks to bounce back after prolonged string of rough losses

By JonnyLuo

Led by a new coach, the Falcons began the year enjoying the progress they were making but also facing challenges such as the loss of two players to graduation last year and two seniors, Fiona Feng and Hannah Baniani, who decided not to play this season.

Midway through the league season, the results have been predictable for the young squad: winning a few games but mostly losing to more experienced opponents. The 10-member team has been training new head coach Mike Allegretti, who also coaches the school's swim team and played water polo during high school.

"At the beginning of the season, we were unsure if we would even have a coach, so we were really happy when [Allegretti] stepped in," senior goalie Rosie Kline said.

Under his guidance, the team hopes to improve their performance by covering more plays and conditioning during practices.

Their practices typically start with swim sets and passing techniques. The team has

also begun to use weight belts during passing exercises to build strength and stamina.

Despite early losses, junior Medha Ravi, who doesn't have a set position, said team spirit has been much better than last year when she played on JV.

"A lot of people get really tired during games. We will see more successes if we can improve conditioning."

JUNIOR Medha Ravi

Ravi has been trying to prevent players from feeling left out on the team — which happened to her last year — by "bridging the gap" between the varsity and JV teams. "It's really daunting if you don't know how to swim," Ravi said. "I really want to make sure that no one feels left out this year, and we're all people and can work together inside and outside of the pool." ♦

Local club provides a home for runners young and old

by LynnDai, SaachiJain & KathyWang

"Just keep those arms moving, and try to keep up with Hillary," Danny Moon, 75, yelled to middle school runner Sophia Gonzalez on a recent Saturday morning. Sophia joined the West Valley Joggers and Striders (WVJS) club in July. She sprinted with her older sister, sophomore Hillary Gonzalez, at the end of the track after finishing their last 800-meter tempo run. Around the two young runners were 35 other runners, mostly in their 60s and 70s.

Senior members reveal storied history
The club was established at Westmont High School in 1966 by Carl Martin, Led Edhold and Bob Bonder. Edhold was a member of the Campbell Chamber of Commerce, a member-driven organization that promotes local businesses, and Bonder ran 50-kilometer-plus ultra races. All three participated in track events and marathons. As the club became more popular, it was formally organized as an Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) in 1970 and later as Club 117 under the USA Track & Field Certified Clubs.

At 7:45 a.m. on most Saturdays, a group consisting of approximately 30 runners ranging from their early 40s to late 80s gathers at the West Valley College track for a twice-weekly group run.

Every year, WVJS hosts multiple races around the Bay Area, including the 5-kilometer Morgan Hill Freedom Fest race, held on July 4, and longer runs like the April National 10-mile Championships.

Since its establishment, the club has seen over 600 members and boasted some of the country's fastest runners among its ranks, such as 1956 Olympian Don Bowden, the first American to run a sub 4-minute mile. Some have run in the club for decades: Walt van Zant, 83, the president and fifth member of WVJS, is the current longest participating member at 53 years.

When Moon, the school's former girls' cross country coach, joined the club in 1980, almost 200 runners trained five days a week with the group. Current-

ly, he is the club member with the second highest seniority at 42 years in the club; his wife, Madelyn Moon, is the third at 37 years.

Moon is now the unofficial leader and often handles the scheduling and timing of various runs. He encouraged many of his past athletes from Saratoga High to join the runs.

"A lot of us are more mature now," he said. "We'd like to see more of the younger folks."

Hillary Gonzalez began running with the club in seventh grade, when she was in the middle school cross country team and was looking to get more into shape. She has found many benefits of training with older runners.

"The club is a lot more chill than running with a competitive team," Gonzalez said. "Everyone in the club is very accepting and supportive, so no matter how I am running, they'll always push me."

Traditions built from decades of running

In the 1980s, Tuesdays and Thursdays were primarily track workouts, while Wednesdays were focused on speed. Saturdays were reserved for courses and loops around Saratoga, while Sundays centered on long distances from around 9-11 miles. Now, the club focuses on training form and speed on Thursday mornings, hosting longer runs and relay races on Saturdays.

In the nearly 60 years since its founding, the club has formed traditions such as inventing unique races, giving nicknames to members and going to breakfast as a group after Saturday runs.

For example, every few months, the club hosts a handicap race, where members predict their times beforehand and are scheduled to start at different times, with the goal of finishing at the same time.

Every week during the Saturday run, the group awards the Walt van Zant trophy to the runner with the best performance that week. Ironically, while the best performance runners typically score a personal record, Zant — who is also known as "Al Dictator" within the group — is also



Danny Moon presents the new Walt van Zant trophy to WVJS club member Dwayne Spencer during their Sept. 10 practice for finishing a course with a personal record.

known for accrediting the term personal worst. Historically, the trophy was dedicated to a prominent member of the group, Dick Barrett, who passed away from a heart attack in the early 1980s. After years of wear, the Dick Barrett trophy had lost a hand, and WVJS members agreed to replace it in August with the new Walt van Zant trophy.

Strong community of older runners forms

For the past few decades, news of the club usually spread through word of mouth. In 2003, WVJS member Gary Waggoner — who consistently scores among the all-time top 20 in courses the club organizes on Saturdays with records like an 18-minute 5K — joined the club with fellow member Dave Norlander's encouragement.

Though Waggoner has been running on and off since eighth grade, since joining the club, he has been running every day.

"I've formed great friendships here — they're all great people," Waggoner said. "I've also improved a lot, since everyone's pretty serious about running. It's really inspiring to run with these older fellas who may not be as fast as they once were, but held really impressive times in their primes."

During one of his first runs with the group on the Triangle Run course — a 4.68-mile, mildly hilly run around Saratoga downtown — Waggoner recalls a "humbling experience": While he was having trouble catching his breath, Waggoner remembers being surprised at how members Becki Kriege and Missy Sudan (both of whom have previously won the Racer of the Year title for women in the club) were hardly breathing when they passed him.

He also recalls a time when he stubborn-

ly refused to follow McAllister's directions on Short Six, the trophy was dedicated to a prominent member of the group, Dick Barrett, who passed away from a heart attack in the early 1980s. After years of wear, the Dick Barrett trophy had lost a hand, and WVJS members agreed to replace it in August with the new Walt van Zant trophy.

Another WVJS member, Wei-Ti Liu, 72, immigrated here from China in 1974. After reading an article encouraging people to run in marathons, he felt inspired to start training for a marathon himself.

Liu has run a total of 12 marathons, including ones in Poland, San Diego, Sacramento, Chicago, New York, Iceland, the UK, London, Paris, Tokyo and Berlin.

Liu, joined the WVJS club in 2018, and found that the club's early-morning runs motivated him to wake up and do something that would benefit his health. He continued running with the club even after he stopped racing. Currently in his 15th year of retirement, Liu also found that the club was something he could look forward to attending.

"It's good to feel finished after a race," Liu said. "You feel very happy, even if you're really tired and exhausted. But you immediately start planning for your next race and training, and it's almost as if your life has an objective."

This sentiment is a reflection of a gradual change in the club's dynamics over the years, Moon said, going from being very "intense" during race season to a more "happy, humorous and fun" atmosphere.

"Anybody is welcome to run with us," Moon said. "Being 'fast' is relative to each individual. We challenge each other all the time, and we always help each other and support each other." ♦

CROSS COUNTRY

'Team Tippettts' leads co-ed Falcon squads to early successes

by SaachiJain & KathyWang

For the first time in its history, the girls' and boys' cross country teams have merged under coaches Ian and Kathy Tippettts, long-time coaches of the boys' team, following the departure of many key athletes and former girls' coach Danny Moon.

"I think the coaching change is definitely a new atmosphere for the girls' team because Moon was more casual than Coach Tippettts," senior co-captain Elizabeth Stoiber said. "With Tippettts, the girls can be more competitive."

While key runner Stoiber is recovering from a stress injury, she has modified her plan in hopes of making CCS this season.

"These injuries have taught me that rest can be good, cross training and strength training is really important and sometimes you just have to make the best of uncontrollable situations," Stoiber said.

Stoiber decided to run meets, but reverted to cross training in between. She and the



Sophomore Timothy Leung charges up the hill during the Baylands' meet on Sept. 20.

girls' team placed 5th out of 14 at the RAM Invitational on Sept. 24. The varsity boys' team placed 9th of 18.

Other highlights from the RAM Invitational included sophomore Anisha Rahut,

who medaled as 22nd in varsity girls, along with Stoiber, who placed 7th individually.

On Sept. 20, the entire team ran their first league meet, a 5-kilometer race at Baylands Park in Sunnyvale. 17 runners set a

personal record.

Placing 5th out of 14, the frosh-soph boys had an "all-around great performance," according to Stoiber. Freshman Jack Tong placed highest of all frosh-soph boys, running an 18:25 for 3.1 miles.

The JV girls placed last of 11, and varsity boys came in 11th out of 13. The varsity girls finished 9th out of 12, despite Stoiber's absence due to her injury.

A week before Baylands', the teams first raced on Sept. 10 at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco with the top seven runners for the boys and the girls participating in the race. The boys placed 25th out of 34 and the girls placed 17th out of 25.

Since their latest meets, the team has returned to their normal practice schedule six days a week and has increased the intensity of their runs in preparation for upcoming races. Their next invitational is at Half Moon Bay on Oct. 1 for the top seven boys and girls, and their next meet is at Crystal Springs in San Mateo for the entire team on Oct. 4. ♦

Junior coxswain gains respect, discovers herself in highly competitive rowing culture

By JonnyLuo

When junior Ella O'Reilly started in the somewhat obscure sport of rowing, she remembers being belittled for her ineptitude from more experienced teammates. As a beginner coxswain, who primarily steers the team and guides the rowers, she lacked the knowledge needed to properly perform her duties in the boat.

"I've seen it happen to me and to other coxswains: When you're just starting out as a coxswain with little knowledge of the sport, there's very little to no respect," O'Reilly said. "It's really hard because the girls will talk behind your back or say 'you're wrong' when you make a call. There's an attitude of 'I'm better than you, I'm more experienced, so why should I listen to you?'"

As a coxswain, O'Reilly had to commit time outside of practice to study how to improve, a contrast to rowers, who mainly do their work during training sessions. Because many coaches began as rowers and not coxswains, she had to teach herself most of the techniques of the job.

As the weeks went by, O'Reilly built confidence in herself. A few months after starting the sport, she finally felt accepted by her team.

As a coxswain, she says a disconnect exists with her teammates since she's not doing the physical work on the boat. This disconnect contributes to a culture where



Junior Ella O'Reilly, farthest right, coxes during a September practice at Lexington Reservoir in Los Gatos.

newcomers often do not want to become coxswains even though it's an essential job, she said.

"There's a bit of a feeling in the sport that rowers are above coxswains because coxswains don't do the actual exercise, and that can lead to tension in teams," O'Reilly said. "People often just think of my role as 'yelling at the boat,' and it can really reduce the effort that goes into being a coxswain."

This disconnect is also heightened due to O'Reilly's seating po-

sition; in some boats, she sits at the front, where she can only see the water and not her teammates.

Initially, these difficulties held O'Reilly back. However, after a few months, O'Reilly "finally felt accepted" by her team. She remembers a regatta, rowing competitions, at Long Beach when her team won gold as an "eye-opening experience" where she said she realized that the sport was for her.

She was introduced to rowing in the second semester of her

freshman year by a family friend whose son attended Los Gatos High. O'Reilly decided to give the sport a chance.

Besides steering the boat, O'Reilly's duties include motivating rowers, correcting rowers' technical errors and acting as a "mini coach" on the water. Additionally, she is in charge of docking the boat as fast as possible, often at night

when it's difficult to see: Her team has close to 200 people and O'Reilly doesn't host to hold up the line.

O'Reilly rows year-round for the varsity girls' team in the Los Gatos Rowing Club. She practices between two-and-a-half and three hours six days a week and has won medals in regattas like the Head of the Lagoon, Long Beach and Pacific Novice regattas.

Because Los Gatos Rowing Club doesn't host its own regattas at Lexington reservoir in Los Gatos, where the team practices, they travel as far as Los Angeles to compete.

Besides coxing, O'Reilly's main duty at regattas is to rig the boats, and she appreciates regattas as a way to get to know teammates. O'Reilly has continued the sport, even though she has trouble managing her school life with rowing and often stays up until 3 a.m. doing homework.

This problem will be exacerbated in college, where practices are even longer. Though she has not decided whether she wants to pursue collegiate rowing, she has begun talking to recruiters and loves the sport regardless.

"There's this adrenaline rush when you are in a race, when everyone on the boat has one goal, and that's winning and rowing our best," O'Reilly said. "That's what I love about rowing." ♦



O'Reilly

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Falcons persevere despite injuries to star athletes

by NatalieChua & ArielZhou

Hoping to rebound from last year's disappointments, 4-12 (Overall), 2-10 (League), the girls' volleyball team started out their season with the news that two varsity players, sophomore right side Dahlia Murthy and junior defensive specialist Natalie Chua, would not be returning.

However, the rest of the team remained intact due to the lack of graduating players. Additionally, seven out of the 12 players on the team this year are seniors, giving the team strong leadership.

Despite positions staying relatively unchanged this year, the team's on-court dynamic has hit some rough patches, with practices being inconsistent and awkward due to switches in positions.

"Our team's chemistry is questionable sometimes," sophomore outside hitter Emmy Pak said. "Some people are closer friends with some than others, and you can tell that on the court with how we play and our overall energy."

The team also faced trouble when one of their key players, senior outside hitter Lisa Fung, injured her hand at the start of the season, which kept her from playing for six weeks.

Additionally, senior setter and right side Joanna Song had to sit out during the last two sets in the game against Prospect High on Aug. 30 due to a knee injury.

Because both Fung and Song tend to contribute a large number of the team's points, the injuries were a big blow to the team's dy-

namic on the court.

Through teamwork and perseverance, the girls' volleyball team managed to win first in the yellow division during the Spikefest tournament on Sept. 3, beating Christopher High, 2-0; Independence High, 2-0; and Fremont High, 2-0.

Even with this victory during Spikefest, another mishap occurred when their other key hitter Pak got an ankle injury during their game against Wilcox High, which resulted in a loss for the Falcons.

Missing their two starting hitters, Fung and Pak, the team had a rocky start to their league games with a 3-1 win against Fremont on Sept. 13, and losses against Wilcox High on Sept. 8, 3-0; Homestead High on Sept. 15, 3-2; Lynbrook High on Sept. 20, 3-0; and Milpitas High on Sept. 22, 3-1.

With a current record of 8-8, the team has felt the consequences of having a number of injured star players.

However, the team is also striving to improve with the help of Fung and other senior co-captains libero Noor Khan, libero Maaheen Khericha and middle Anika Koganti.

The captains serve as role models and encourage players to try their best, boosting everyone's spirits while also working on the team's goal of bonding and forming connections with one another to become close both on and off the court.

"Although we have our own set of challenges, playing with the team is really fun and I love talking to everyone," Pak said. "We have many seniors this year, so we really need to make this year count. I'm super excited to see what happens." ♦



Pak

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snapshots



Courtesy of SHANNON WANG



FALCON // LYNN DAI



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS



FALCON // EMMA FUNG

MAP students walk in San Francisco hunting clues on a scavenger hunt on Sept. 28.

Lawn signs at a gas station in downtown Saratoga campaign for city council candidates.

Left to right: seniors Samantha Stoiber, Eva Ruemmler, Elizabeth Stoiber and Noor Khan present on financial literacy at a Females for Finance meeting on Sept. 27.

Freshman Homecoming royalty Katherine Zeng and Jena Lew pose with bouquets in a vintage car at the Homecoming game, continuing a long-standing tradition on Sept. 23.

Tips and tricks to getting an A+ on every essay

A.Y.+ (not) guaranteed

Aiden Ye



Writing essays is hard. I know this, you know this, we all know this. From brainstorming to nitpicking every word to figuring out what the teacher even means by words like “creative” or “analytical,” the process of essay writing is filled with plenty of struggles.

My biggest issue with essay writing is just simply how long it takes. From planning to writing to editing, coupled with my robust procrastination skills, it is a long and arduous process. Essay writing often starts with me sitting down at the computer with a blank Google Doc open, and ends with that same Doc 4 hours later with hardly any progress.

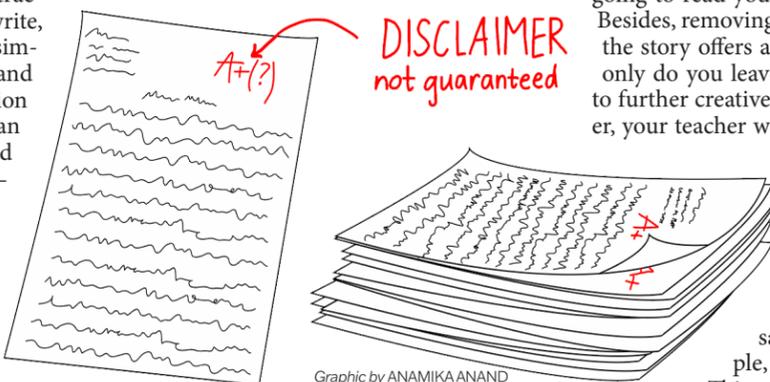
That’s not to say that there aren’t some ways of writing faster and less painfully. Here’s what I’ve learned: Call it “Aiden’s Rules to Essay Success.”

First, while you can always go with a mundane writing strategy like procrastinating less or getting rid of distractions like your phone when you write, it’s actually a better solution to simply write everything last minute and naturally. Then avoid the temptation to proofread it. This way, you can deliver a much more genuine and raw version of your thoughts — comma errors, run-on sentences, sentence fragments and spelling errors be damned.

Creativity is also crucial when it comes to essays. Obviously, running every single story through the five-paragraph cookie cutter mold is boring. Instead, why not mix up the ordering of all your paragraphs at the end after you’re done writing them? With

120 totally unique combinations to reorganize those five paragraphs, your creativity will soar.

Perhaps what’s even better is that this strategy is not just beneficial for students; it also helps your teachers embody their inner



Graphic by ANAMIKA ANAND

detective as they painfully try to decipher your intended meaning. And let’s be hon-

est: If the reader can’t understand that the new format is 120 times better than before, they’re simply not reading closely enough.

Secondly, you might as well just scrap MLA format altogether. What — are the people in the Modern Language Association going to read your essay? I didn’t think so. Besides, removing your name and title from the story offers a plethora of benefits. Not only do you leave the title of the story up to further creative judgment from the reader, your teacher will also have to guess who

could have possibly produced such a masterpiece, heightening their intrigue and likely increasing your score.

Clearly, writing essays is hard for most people, but it doesn’t have to be.

This guide will help you unleash your inner creativity and your grade will experience exponential growth — from 0 to 0. ♦

Saratoga showdown: ranking all 'togas

huang-t to re-alex in WY

George Huang & Alexander Kan



4. Saratoga, N.Y.

The OG. Saratoga, N.Y., is one of those places along the East Coast that peaked in relevancy during 18th century colonial America. The town’s moment of glory took place in 1777 with the Battle of Saratoga, when the Continental troops won a first victory over British forces and turned the tide of the American Revolution.

The battlefield is still there today, but little else of excitement remains. Currently, it’s just another recreational field and hiking trail in an isolated town with a population of 5,141 in the New York wilderness, which is Saratoga, N.Y., lags behind the other Saratogas.

3. Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Saratoga Springs is the second Saratoga that resides in Saratoga County, N.Y. As the name might suggest, Saratoga Springs is a vacation destination, but its mediocre attractions and mundane activities land it toward the bottom of this list.

Unless you are somehow infatuated with hot springs, there’s nothing worth going to Saratoga Springs to see. And even if you were, their springs don’t even make the top 25 hot springs in the U.S. And golf? The National Museum of Horse Racing? Sure, they might have a famous horse racing track, but there is no real reason to

watch animals with one horsepower run a race when you can watch cars move with a thousand times that power.

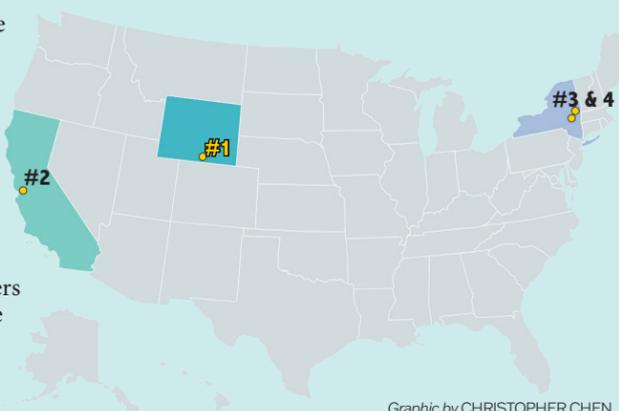
It’s logical to conclude that the only real “tourists” who go to Saratoga Springs are probably New Yorkers too lazy to drive more than an hour from their homes on weekends.

2. Saratoga, Calif.

You were expecting this to be No. 1, weren’t you? Well, there’s no denying that Saratoga — a city with a thriving high-middle class population in the heart of Silicon Valley — is a great place to live. It has a bustling downtown filled with cozy storefronts and a variety of restaurants with delicious food. The main problem is the cost of living, with sky-high housing prices. Yet even without any notable attractions, the city makes up for it with its academic institutions. Saratoga contains quite possibly the best high school in America, Saratoga High School, which more than makes up for the deficit.

1. Saratoga, Wyo.

Finally, the greatest ‘toga: What is there not to love about Wyoming? It’s big in acreage. And it’s almost empty, with a total population of almost 600,00 people. Saratoga, Wyo., is no different. With a population of 1,690, this



Graphic by CHRISTOPHER CHEN

Saratoga is by far the least populated of the four cities and affordable to boot: The average house costs under \$300,000 compared to the outrageous \$3.7 million in our home town.

We all know the saying: More money, more people, more problems. By that logic, Saratoga, Wyo., is undoubtedly the best.

Residing in the Sierra Madre Mountains and offering winter temperatures that rarely climb above freezing, Saratoga offers awe-inspiring natural beauty. Surrounded by snowy mountain ranges and streams filled with trout, it has no need for flashy tourist attractions or historical battlefields to stand out from the crowd. It lacks high-income, high-stress jobs but compensates in quality of life. The beauty of Saratoga, Wyo., lies in the absence of things. It’s peaceful there. It’s quiet. And that’s what makes Saratoga, Wyo., so special.

Just bring a warm jacket. ♦

topten

NUMBERS

- 10** **Eight.** Statistics say it’s one of the second most common numbers to roll on a pair of die, yet the lack of eights I roll during Catan games says otherwise.
- 9** **Twenty-one.** When playing blackjack, it never comes when I want it to.
- 8** **Thirteen.** After all the discrimination thirteen has been through, thirteen deserves its pity spot on the list as NOT last, even if it’s an unlucky number.
- 7** **Twelve.** A nice, round number, but a hassle in unit conversions. Who in the world decided that 12 inches to a foot was a convenient conversion?
- 6** **Seven.** Here by popular vote — most people believe seven is a lucky number.
- 5** **Two.** What’s the one and only even prime number? It’s *even* the smallest prime on the list.
- 4** **Zero.** What can you dislike about zero? Undefined division makes it special, OK?
- 3** **One.** When doing arithmetic, what is the number that people like to work with the most? That’s right, it’s one.
- 2** **Ten.** Not only is ten the first double-digit number, but it’s also one of the most iconic numbers — even this list is a Top 10!
- 1** **Three.** It’s aesthetic, it’s unique and it’s just better. There’s a reason we only count to three.

>> Nicole Lee