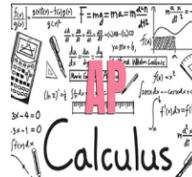




Cheating incident raises concerns about school policies



February break travel guide: How to spend 48 hours in Carmel



How to navigate through two of the hardest SHS classes



# THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

Friday, February 17, 2023

Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA

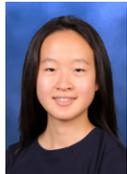
Vol. 63, No. 6

## Affirmative action draws alumni support

BY William Norwood & Sarah Thomas

A crowd in front of the Supreme Court was covered in bright blue, holding up signs proclaiming “WE WON’T GO BACK” and “Merecemos Estar Aqui.”

Forty-one college students, members of a group called Defend Diversity, gathered in front of the Supreme Court to protest in defense of “race-conscious admissions” on Nov. 28. Among them was Class of ‘22 alumna Cici Xu.



Xu

Affirmative action is the concept of favoring certain underrepresented groups in college admissions — in the U.S., colleges are allowed to use race as a factor in the admission process, but are not required to.

On the Supreme Court docket this year is the case of SFFA vs. UNC and SFFA vs Harvard.

If the conservative majority rules as expected, the landscape of affirmative action will be greatly altered and perhaps eliminated altogether.

Communities like Saratoga, which is

made up of mainly wealthy racial minorities, have been used as examples of why race-conscious admissions can be problematic or unfair.

Detractors of affirmative action often use the rhetoric of the model minority myth to argue that race-conscious admissions ignore other factors like wealth.

Despite this possible disadvantage, students like Xu, a member of Asian Americans for Affirmative Action at Yale, and Class of ‘21 alumna Kaitlyn Tsai (a student at Harvard) have been vocal about protecting affirmative action policies.

Xu’s college admission experience was different from many other students, especially since she had moved to the U.S. in eighth grade from China and was generally unfamiliar with the American application system.

Xu stressed that affirmative action has been proven to help minorities and raise their chances of underrepresented groups getting into college.

>> **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION** on pg. 3

## Drama program selected for theater festival in Scotland

BY Anika Kapasi

In January, drama teacher Benjamin Brotzman got news he had been hoping to receive: an acceptance email letting him know the program had been accepted into the Festival Fringe for 2024. Held in Edinburgh, Scotland, Fringe is one of the most respected theatrical festivals in the world, with events ranging from high school student-run plays to professional theater company performances.

“It was always a dream that one day I would be able to just go and watch shows at the festival, but being invited to perform was such an amazing opportunity,” Brotzman said. “Theater groups from all over the country and the world participate in the festival so it’s really exciting that we’re

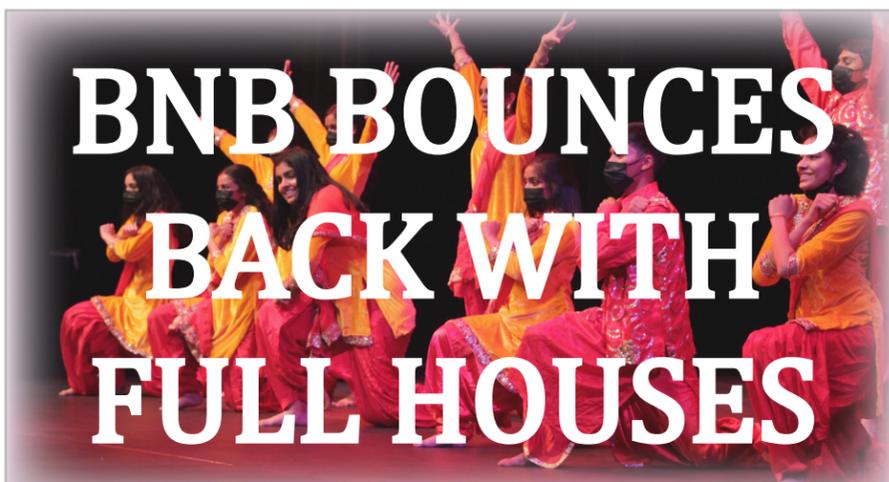
able to be part of it.”

The school was accepted by the The American High School Theatre Festival, which runs in conjunction with the Fringe Festival, and will be traveling under WorldStrides, an educational travel abroad company, for the duration of the trip.

The drama program was nominated for the festival by an unknown educator in the theatrical world, and received the application in an email to apply to the internationally renowned festival by Dec. 22 before being finally accepted in January.

“For about two weeks, I worked on almost nothing but the festival application, showcasing our department, our past productions, the type of shows we do and how”

>> **DRAMA** on pg. 3



## BNB BOUNCES BACK WITH FULL HOUSES



FALCON // ATREY DESAI



Clockwise: Bhangra dancers perform during BNB in 2022, current senior officers Anand Agrawal and Ishir Lakhani dance in Tamasha 2022, Lakhani and senior officer Risha Desai participate in the 2022 Partners Dance, Bhangra dancers leap during their 2022 performance Bottom: Senior Ojas Somani performs in Bhangra 2022

BY Neal Malhotra & Kavya Patel

For the first time since 2020, Saratoga High School’s Bombay in Bay will be returning back to its normal format: no drive-thru, no limitations on audience sizes and no masks.

Bombay in the Bay (BnB) — the annual Indian fusion dance show hosted by the school’s Indian Cultural Awareness Club (ICAC) — is set to take place on Feb. 17 and 18 at the McAfee Center.

The show consists of a multitude of different styles of Indian dance, from Bhangra to Classical dances. There is also a performance from the Tamasha team, the school’s competitive Bollywood dance team.

In addition to the special dances, each grade has its own girls, boys and partners dance, with the seniors having an additional AMD (All Men’s Dance) and AGD (All Girls’ Dance).

One act making a comeback this year is singing, which for the last

couple of years was pre-recorded to comply with COVID-19 protocols. This year, the act will have all the singers on stage singing a blend of Western and classical music live. The officers this year are seniors Anand Agrawal, Risha Desai, Avani Gupta, Annika Muju, Isha Jagadish, Varun Shah and Ojas Somani.

AMD and AGD are specifically reserved for seniors that have participated in three years of BnB. Normally, four years of participation are required, but because the 2020 show was recorded during the pandemic, the participation requirement was cut down to three.

For AMD, the participation requirement is only for the dance’s video, while the rest of the dance is open to participation from any seniors.

The show tickets for both days are \$20. All the tickets for both shows sold out a couple days after they were released.

>> **BNB** on pg. 3

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 **newsbriefs**

**Rare Saratoga shooting occurs at The Inn in downtown**

An out-of-state visitor opened fire in The Inn at Saratoga on 4th Street and Big Basin Way in Saratoga downtown on Feb. 2, after being unsatisfied with accommodations at the hotel and demanding a refund, according to a WeChat message sent out by council member Yan Zhao on the same day.

The suspect, a currently unidentified male — as the investigation is ongoing — was captured along Saratoga Avenue and Dagmar Drive in a black Ford Mustang.

No one was harmed in the shooting. According to Sergeant Russell Davis, who acts as the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office public information officer, deputies responded fast to the incident after being alerted.

"We would like to let the community know that this is a very uncommon circumstance that occurs in the city of Saratoga," Davis said in an interview with The Falcon. "Saratoga is a very safe community, and we want to ensure that we will continue to provide the highest level of law enforcement services to the city of Saratoga."

The shooter is currently booked into the County of Santa Clara Main Jail, and the shooting is pending investigation at the District Attorney's Office for prosecution. ♦

— Kathy Wang and Jonny Luo

**Benefit Fashion Show performance set for April 22**

The annual Benefit Fashion Show will take place on April 22 at 7 p.m. under the theme "Happily Ever After." The Benefit Commission released model sign-ups on Jan. 17.

"We're still in the early stages of planning, but it's coming along well," co-head commissioner Haley Marks said.

The commission has chosen to donate all of this year's proceeds to Planned Parenthood, a national nonprofit supplying sexual and reproductive healthcare and education.

"With the repeal of Roe v. Wade over the summer, we thought it was especially important to highlight safe options for women to get the healthcare they need," Marks said.

The established themes — Fun in the Sun, Vintage, Country Club, Streetwear, Cultural, Design Your Own, Broomance, Girls Night Out, Music Festival and Prom — will be joined by two new themes, Y2K and Sleepwear. The ticket prices have also increased from previous years: \$25 for regular and \$40 for VIP privileges. Marks attributes the cost change to lackluster sales last year that landed the commission "in the red."

Despite financial challenges, Marks is optimistic that the show will be a success this year. ♦

— Avani Kongetira

**Senior wins 2022 New York Times narrative contest**

Each year, the New York Times hosts a 100-word personal narrative contest for high school students across the world to tell a miniature memoir about a meaningful moment in their lives. Out of the 12,000 entries, senior Adam Xu's personal narrative was one of the 13 pieces selected as winners.

Xu wrote a humorous narrative of how their broken wrist, bound by a colorful cast, gave them celebrity-like recognition in first grade.

"The challenge of it was that it had to be written in fewer than 100 words," Xu said. "I had to cut it down and make sure that it made sense. I also wanted to make sure every word was perfect."

Despite the effort dedicated to the piece, Xu wasn't expecting any substantial recognition due to the vast amount of submissions. Thus, they were pleasantly surprised when the results came out and they were selected as a winner.

"Overall I'm just super excited about the work and it's really awesome for it to be published in the New York Times," Xu said. "In the future I want to write more works, especially in cross-genres like prose and poetry and submit them to various literary journals and publications." ♦

— Mitchell Chen and Skyler Mao



Following an intense fall marching season, the Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE) and Freshman Band/Symphonic Band (FBSB) rehearse for numerous concerts and performances during the second semester.

**Band transitions from marching to concert season in second semester**

By Saachi Jain & Shannon Ma

With the marching season officially concluded after first semester, the band has taken time to reflect on their accomplishments over the first semester and transition into their concert season. From placing 4th at the WBA NorCal Super Show and attending Cupertino Tournament of Bands (TOB) to winning 1st at the Sierra Cup Classic in Fresno, the band enjoyed a rewarding competition season while building unity as a group. Now, members are working on classical concert repertoire under the guidance of band director Jason Shiuan and music program director Michael Boitz. The band has separated into the Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE) of 59 members, Symphonic Band (SB) of 41 members and the Freshman Band (FB) of 40 members.

**"Being together for a semester set us up for a strong connection with underclassmen."**

SENIOR Dyne Lee

Select band members play with string players in the Saratoga Symphony Orchestra (SSO), consisting of Saratoga Strings and String Orchestra ensembles.

During concert season, a large contrast for band members is the distinction between SWE and FB/

SB. While the two levels of ensembles play together in marching band, they now play different repertoire as two separate ensembles in their respective class periods.

As a result, the freshmen and upperclassmen see one another less frequently and no longer "function as one," senior drum major Petr Tupitsyn said.

However, even across separate ensembles, band members of all grades continue to support and help one another.

"Being together for a semester set us up for a strong connection with underclassmen," said senior and principal clarinetist Dyne Lee.

Now, instead of marching on the field 3-4 times a week after school in preparation for competitions, band practices take place solely during school periods.

During class periods, SWE practices two to three pieces at once to prepare for annual concerts and events that occur in the spring, such as the March music concert and the CMEA (California Music Educators Association) Festival. Some pieces they are currently rehearsing include "The White Rose" by John Philip Sousa and the "Flute Concerto in D Major" by Carl Reinecke, which will be soloed by junior Eric Miao.

After school, select band students commit to SSO rehearsals. SSO, the school's symphony orchestra and highest level music ensemble, consists of 16 sections of instruments and nearly 100 students total. Students play ad-

vanced repertoires and perform at major school events including the early-May Pancake Breakfast for the community and late-January Electives Night for 8th graders.

They also perform at the music department's annual concerts.

Rehearsals are up to two hours long and occur once or twice per week, on Monday and Wednesday.

For band students, the biggest challenge is not the rehearsal commitment, but rather adjusting to playing with string musicians.

For example, at some points in symphonic pieces, strings, wind and brass will trade off phrases instead of playing together at all times. During these breaks in the piece musicians must keep track of counts very precisely so they can enter on time.

"We are normally playing outside on a field, and constantly moving to stay together," Tupitsyn said. "In a symphony, there are many moments where band musicians don't play but must stay very alert."

Band members are excited to make music with one another again, even in a completely new setting and style. During this upcoming concert season, audiences will get to see a different side of band as they perform lively classical music repertoire.

"Marching season is always enjoyable, but I like that we get a balance between marching together and playing as a symphony ensemble," Tupitsyn said. "That's what makes band unique." ♦



Lee

*Did you get your ticket to Senior Grad Night? 144 seniors already got their tickets to the party of the year. Don't miss out!*



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**BNB**

continued from pg. 1

Other than the changes to AMD and AGD, the seniors have created a streamlined system to learn the dance effectively and quickly.

For example, according to senior participant Ela Machiroutu, AGD has taken a different approach to teaching the dance.

"On the first day, they taught all three songs at once," she said. "At the second practice, which took place a week after we learned the songs, we had to review all the dances because a couple people weren't there."

For all the practices following the first, the participants have continued to review all the dances and begin working on the positions.

Choreographers provide videos so that participants can also practice at home.

"This practice is effective because it means that some people can go ahead if they have mastered the first dance," Machiroutu said.

Unlike the seniors, who have had three years of practice to get the formula down, the underclassmen are struggling this year due to a few different reasons.

According to sophomore choreographer Shaan Janardhan, the biggest difficulty this year is the drastic increase in participants across all grades.

He added that sophomore participation has increased to 66 people from last year's 36 people, including an increase to 29 boys from 14 boys in just the partner's dance alone.

The increase in people brings several challenges, including the immense pressure and stress of teaching more than 60 people at once.

If one person needs help, all the choreographers and participants have to stop and re-teach them, Janardhan said.

"We thought of a megaphone at one point in time, but I think now [the participants] understand that, if you're not listening, you aren't going to be in the song," Janardhan said. "We also always have at least one choreographer who has a free tutorial to teach people that want help."

Another challenge is consistent student participation, as a common problem for BnB and Quad Day alike is having participants consistently show up to practices.

**"We also always have at least one choreographer who has a free tutorial to teach people that want help."**

SOPHOMORE Shaan Janardhan

"It's also about people not showing up," junior girls choreographer Ameya Saund said. "Some people can only come to practices on Sundays, others can't come at all, so we have to resort to practicing during lunch and tutorial."

Despite the adversity, both the sophomores and juniors have made leaps in their overall quality of their dance from the previous year.

To solve the practice timing problem, junior choreographers sent out polls into their respective messenger chats, as well as film videos of participants and choreo dancing, so members who weren't there for practices can refer back to them.

In order to maximize time, especially nearing BnB, choreographers are also using tutorials to clean up their dances.

All of the hard work leads to an important focus, though. Aside from the show's popular dances, ICAC raises and donates money to give to charity in India.

Profits from the show this year go to "Koshish" and "One School at a Time," two organizations in India involving educating unprivileged children.

"Though practices are picking up, it's still important to recognize the true purpose for Bombay in the Bay," Saund said. "As a performing group, we want to put in our best work forward to not only entertain and have fun, but to also raise money for an important cause." ♦

**DRAMA**

continued from pg. 1

"I, as an educator, try to instill growth and togetherness [in the program]," Brotzman said.

Next year's drama students will have the chance to attend the two-week festival for two weeks, flying to London on July 27, 2024, and then heading north to Edinburgh, Scotland, to take part in the festival before returning home on Aug. 9.

The group will sightsee and take tours all over London, visiting sites including Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Globe Theatre, as well as attend a West End theater performance.

On day four of the trip, the group will travel to Edinburgh, tour Edinburgh Castle and walk along the streets of the Royal Mile, the heart of the old town. They will have an excursion to the medieval town of Stirling and attend Fringes' college fair with representatives from both U.S. and U.K. performing arts institutions.

Drama students will hold a tech rehearsal of their show at one of the festival's 332 venues to make sure the costumes, lighting and sound are all in order for their performances the following days. They will have four different performances spread over the second week, participating in the festival's more than 4,000 shows.

"Being able to perform on an international stage and see theater from all over the world is something that just nobody gets to do," Brotzman said. "Seeing what people do in smaller venues, rather than Broadway or flashing musicals, students will get a grand scale of what theater can be from this trip."

Brotzman said he has not yet decided what show the program will perform during the festival, as the choice is dependent on the number of actors and technicians that are interested in traveling. He expects around 50 students to take part in the trip.

Current seniors are ineligible to travel with the group, but the Class of '24 is encouraged to participate post-graduation.

Junior Ashly Henry, who plans to take part in the trip, said she is most excited to be able to perform with her drama family one last time before she heads off to college.

Hoping to minor or potentially double major in acting, Henry believes going to the festival will give her a new perspective on what theater is all about and make her a stronger actress through the performing experience she will gain.

"I love that they make everything a venue," Henry said. "It could be a literal coffee shop, on the streets or in a huge theater [where actors perform their shows and talents]. Being able to perform our show and show it to all the [attendees] is just an amazing opportunity." ♦

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

continued from pg. 1

"I definitely do feel like the minority has benefited more positively from affirmative action, even though the white population has benefited [from legacy affirmative action]," Xu said. "So when we think about affirmative action we usually just have a very limited misunderstanding about what the concept is."

Many Asian Americans believe that affirmative action negatively affects them. Xu, however, disagrees.

"I definitely feel like I have benefited from affirmative action," Xu said. "I feel like I'm really sort of blinded and, because our community is very Asian American dominant, I feel like affirmative action might not be seen as a highlight."

As a student at Harvard, Tsai feels that affirmative action becomes more necessary in older institutions.

"Harvard was never made for people like me, people who now constitute a large part of the population," Tsai said. "Harvard was made for wealthy white men."

Tsai also noted the importance of affirmative action is often misrepresented or oversimplified. Tsai argued that affirmative action can be easier to reach an agreement on by highlighting the benefits of affirmative action — namely, increased diversity.

"A lot of the activism that I've been a part of here at Harvard has been leveraging the word diversity as a campaign motto," Tsai said.

She highlighted the fact that diversity is often qualified as an opportunity to provide an educational benefit of diverse experiences to white Americans.

"I think that sort of frames [affirmative

action] as a means to people of color to these institutions, in order to educate white people," Tsai said. "Affirmative action is a compensatory justice measure that is about recognizing the very deep and very broad institutional barriers that people of color, particularly black people, have faced in accessing educational opportunities."

Both said they saw the positive impacts of affirmative action more acutely after attending college. Most students who are protesting against the possibility of affirmative

action being struck down by SCOTUS do not necessarily believe they will change the decision of the court but are protesting to have a voice and be heard by others.

"DC was an extremely empowering experience," Xu said. "We know perfectly well that our protest at DC will not change the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action, but we feel proud for taking a stance on what we believe in and fighting on a quotidian basis in our educational institution." ♦



Class of '22 alumna Cici Xu (far right) protests for affirmative action at the Supreme Court.

**FESTIVAL FRINGE**

*Facts*

**Dates**

Fri, Aug 4, 2023 – Mon, Aug 28, 2023, Edinburgh

**Numbers**

There will be more than 60,000 performances and around 4000 different shows



**How does it work**

Anyone who has a story to tell and a venue to perform in can put on a show here

**Show Types**

Most fringe shows take place in pop-up or non-traditional spaces, and are repurposed in August to showcase theatre, music, comedy, cabaret and everything in between.



Infographic by ATREY DESAI and KEVIN YANG

# Leadership students attend Disney conference

COMBINING FUN WITH WORKSHOPS, THE WEEKEND WAS AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE FOR THE 35 ATTENDEES

By Tara Natarajan & Allison Tan

Seniors Sydney Backhus, Arshi Chawla, Ela Machirotou and Kayla Steele waited with anticipation in the Guardians of the Galaxy: Mission Breakout line at Disney's California Adventure theme park on Feb. 3. Given the opportunity to go to Disneyland with some of their closest friends in leadership, students buzzed with excitement.

This year's leadership class attended "Disney Leadership — the Disney Way," a high school conference at Anaheim Disneyland Park on Saturday, Feb. 3. According to leadership teacher Kristen Cunningham,

the conference taught students how Disney approaches leadership and gave students the opportunity to "sharpen some of their leadership skills."

After the pandemic interrupted previous years' trips, 35 leadership students and three chaperones attended the trip.

Their three-night stay in Anaheim included one full day of exploring the parks with a group scavenger hunt set up by the four administrative chaperones: principal Greg Louie, guidance counselor Monique Young, activities director Anna Ybarra and Cunningham.

"Disney has a great reputation for executive leadership skills, and so I'm hoping that

we're going to learn a lot about what they feel is important when it comes to being a leader," Cunningham said.

On the second day of their stay, the students were split into three groups, each guided by their assigned Disney educator. The conference was a three-hour interactive workshop within the California Adventure park. Students took part in various team working exercises to learn Disney's five steps to a high-functioning team: trust, coming to a consensus, cooperation, support and valuing diversity.

"I had a lot more fun at the conference

than I was expecting," Steele said. "The crew members were super engaging and I was able to do hands-on leadership exercises with my friends."

After the team building activities in the Redwood Creek Challenge Trail, the crew members planned a Cars Land scavenger hunt followed by an exclusive look into Disneyland Imagination Campus's Blue Sky Studio.

"I was excited to spend a few days with just the leadership class," junior class president Emily Ta said. "It was a really great team bonding experience for us." ♦



Cunningham

# Engineering bridge project teaches key concepts

PRINCIPLES OF ENGINEERING TEACHER MATTHEW WELANDER HAS REFINED BRIDGE PROJECT PROCESS FOR YEARS

By Beverly Xu

At the start of second semester, sophomore Vera Fung was among the 31 students in Matt Welander's class of Principles of Engineering who heard how they would be spending the next several weeks: designing and building mini bridges out of lasercut fibrewood.

The project is well-planned and targeted toward developing software skills with a special emphasis on basic Newtonian forces in engineering.

"My favorite part has been drawing the beams on CorelDraw, which we haven't had any troubles with because [engineering teacher Matt Welander] gave us exact instructions," Fung said.

For their first engineering project of the second semester, Principles of Engineering (POE) students are building bridges to demonstrate their knowledge of tension and compression forces acting on truss bridge beams.

The project, derived from the engineer-

ing course Project Lead the Way (PLTW), has gone through multiple iterations by Welander, who has redesigned the project to focus more on the design process, take into account the acting forces and learn about using the laser cutter, a necessary skill for future robotics-focused projects.

"This project is more of a design creativity project where we're less worried about how strong the bridge is going to be and more just about creating a bridge that they think is good," Welander said.

In the beginning, students used CorelDRAW, a line-drawing software necessary to use the engineering room's laser cutter, to design their initial designs of the bridge trusses.

They learn to perform simple force calculations by hand and delegate more complex calculations to MDSolids, an educational platform for learning the mechanics of materials.

Using MDSolids, they also learn to simulate a truck crossing the bridge. The software

reports the compression and tension forces acting on each beam so they can work on redesigning it to be more robust.

"I show students how to create bridges with straight lines, but some students have enough knowledge of 3D software or CorelDRAW software that they can create bridges with curved beams," Welander said. "Some people create basic bridges that you might actually see in the real world and some people create bridges that are a little more modern."

Last but not least, students get to laser cut their beams and assemble their bridges out of medium-density fibreboard (MDF).

In previous iterations of the project, students used soldered metal wire, 3D printing, balsa wood and even toothpicks to build their bridges. But after five to six years of trial and error and deliberations with Engineering department chair Audrey Warmuth, Welander finally settled on using laser-cut MDF to allow students to focus more on

software designing and testing skills.

"The whole class is constantly getting re-imagined and we're always looking at ways to improve things or do things differently," Welander said. "At this point, I'm pretty happy with how it works, and I think students will be more proud than they were with previous projects."

As a colleague and collaborator of Welander, Warmuth has seen him make his vision of the bridge project a reality.

Through the years, he was able to observe and take feedback from students to reflect on the project and modify it so that students walk away with a more solid understanding of the forces demonstrated in the project.

"Obviously it's really the mark of a teacher when you have a project in mind, and you know what you want to do," Warmuth said. "You keep trying different versions until you can finally really hone in on a project that really comes back to the students — it meets the goals and expectations that you have for them, and is just really accessible." ♦



Fung

# Junior spreads drug awareness in Red Ribbon photo contest

By Anamika Anand

Junior Ryan Lin first visited Operation Dawn, a drug rehab center in San Francisco, when he was in fourth grade. It was there where he first interacted with individuals who were fighting the battle of drug abuse, igniting in him a cause to spread their stories in any way he could.

Lin has immersed himself in this cause by participating in multiple organizations and even starting his own that is based around interacting with the residents of Operation Dawn. He focuses on spreading information about the consequences of drug addiction and talking to people who have had their own experiences with it to reduce stigma and educate his peers.

Recently, Lin — alongside juniors Sam Bai and Samuel Kau — participated in the National Red Ribbon Week photo contest of 2022 and won the Region 4 sector prize of \$1,000, which has been donated to the school in support of drug-free prevention education. Lin said he is grateful for the recognition and sees it as a great way to spread drug awareness.

The photo portrays Bai, Lin and Kau holding up the red ribbon poster that says "Celebrate Life, Live Drug Free," lit up by candles in the foreground that form the red ribbon logo. Red ribbons are also tied behind the three stand.

"We used the candles because it was supposed to represent a candlelight vigil to remember those who lost their battle with addiction," Lin said.

The Red Ribbon photo is just one of many ways Lin has become involved in the drug awareness movement. In January 2022, he founded Outreach Initiatives iCare, a stu-

dent group that frequently visits Operation Dawn. The students talk to the residents to learn about their stories, conduct service projects and fundraise for the organization.

At Operation Dawn, students have installed solar string lights around the roof of the patio, planted roses, cleaned the goat barns and spent time with the residents. According to Lin, the residents need to exercise regularly, so students organize tournaments and play sports with them.

Lin highlighted an annual Movie Under the Stars event, where the students watch a movie of the residents' choice with the residents. There have also been two fundraising events for their solar electrical system, for which Lin's initiative has donated around \$4,400 to Operation Dawn to support.

Apart from fundraising, the students simply listen to the residents' stories, such as people who lost a bet, took drugs and became addicted or teens who ignored their parents, hung out with the wrong people and fell into a cycle of addiction.

Lin has observed a stigma around getting help for substance abuse, and he thinks that giving people a chance to talk about their stories and their journeys is the best way to reduce that stigma. He explained that getting involved with local communities helps their recovery.

"I listened to some of their stories and I realized we're all one step away from going down the same path," Lin said. "Many of them really want to stop using drugs, but their bodies and their brains don't cooperate. By being supportive, they will be less hesitant to see a doctor to get better."

Lin is also a member of the Peer Advocate Advisory Council of the Santa Clara County Office of Education, which holds



Courtesy of LGSUJHSD

Juniors Ryan Lin (left), Sam Bai (middle), and Samuel Kau (right) win the National Red Ribbon Week photo contest to spread drug awareness across his local community.

monthly meetings and designs student-focused projects in the county.

Lin has participated in the council for seven years, and through PAAC he started the Friday Fools! event on campus, which occurs monthly on Blue Day Fridays in the Student Center. Members hand out informational tri-folds, put up posters and educate about Naloxone and Fentanyl dip cards.

In addition to the PAAC events, Lin has aimed to educate students at the school about his cause by designing seven bookmarks that can be found in the library. His overall goal is to take even the smallest steps to educate students in school and in the community.

"I heard many people say, 'students will experience drugs one day,' but I think we should dismantle this myth by revealing the dangers of drug abuse so that we have enough information when facing tempta-

tion, not only in high school but also in college or beyond," he said.

Lin's future goals include partnering with ASB and the Wellness Center for a tabling event during Drug Awareness Week, likely sometime in mid-March.

His organization Outreach Initiatives iCare will also be part of the community screening of an award-winning documentary called "The War of Sobriety and Dazedness" — which tells powerful recovery stories of Operation Dawn residents on a much larger scale — at Oakland's Fox Theater on Feb. 19 with free admission. Lin said he encourages everyone to attend and educate themselves about the journeys of these individuals.

"Many people have had their lives cut short too soon due to substance abuse, and I really hope this trend can be reversed by collective community efforts," Lin said. ♦

# Chess club: learning, competition and play

By Beverly Xu

In the past year, bizarre posters touting "come see the grand master" and "come to Chess Club" have covered student lockers, corridor corners and even the sides of the cafeteria beverage refrigerators. Over the course of the year, the school Chess Club has grown in size, consistently attracting over 20 members per meeting. Rather than being specifically geared towards bringing in more members, the posters were mainly for fun, representative of the club's overall goal — to simply encourage playing chess.

"I have a pretty great group of friends who are also affiliated with the club, and I don't remember exactly when we started putting up posters, but we just thought it would be fun to grow it," senior club president and chess grandmaster Andrew Hong said.

Since Hong joined the club in his freshman year, the club has grown significantly, from five members to full room capacity in just three years. As a chess grandmaster who has been playing since he was 7-years-old, Hong continues to hone his skills through puzzles and playing training games against both human opponents and robots, analyzing the computer's performance to improve.

**"Chess has always been like a very big part of my life, and I want to play professionally."**

SENIOR Andrew Hong

Hong and other officers pass on their skills by giving level-friendly lectures, holding practice games, organizing funding and transportation for competitions and providing additional coaching outside of the club

>> **bigidea**

**Chess Club**

**Bizarre Posters**  
*Chess grandmaster Andrew Hong scattered posters around campus, intriguing over 20 new members to the chess club.*

**Club Goals**  
*The club held a Valentine's Day tournament and hopes to send teams to the U.S. Amateur West Team Championship in February.*

**Gender Diversity**  
*Skilled chess player Shayda Oliaei hopes to introduce more female participation in the club.*

for more expert players.

In addition, the club plans to host a "Chess-late" — a local tournament on Valentine's Day — and open it to anyone in the community. They also hope to send members in teams of four to the U.S. Amateur Team West Championship in mid-February, free of charge. Additionally, because all the club's officers are seniors, they are already training candidate juniors to lead the club next year.

After joining the club in her sophomore year, junior Shayda Oliaei has seen her own skills improve.

During the pandemic, she learned to play the game by reading a few books such as "Modern Chess Opening" by Nick de Firmian and watching YouTube videos on chess.

She mostly played matches online, but missed the face-to-face connection formed with over-the-board chess games, which she now finds in the chess club.

"Playing with someone else really has helped my tactical sharpness, and my ability to react to different situations," Oliaei said.

As a chess grandmaster, Hong has extensive experience in the game and, according to Oliaei, can deal with every situation. She describes how he advises amateur members on how to improve: In meetings, he puts a video on, analyzes games online or exhibits a chess puzzle — a snapshot of a chess game where players have to decide the ideal step to take.

With more than three years of experience, Oliaei hopes to become an officer herself and help balance out the male-to-female ratio in the chess club.

In her first year in the club, out of around 20 members, only three were female and even at the beginning of this year, Oliaei was the only female member at chess club meetings.

The problem stretches further than just the club however: only 1% of chess grandmasters are female.

"When you're like a boy, you're not skeptical about how you play, because typically, chess is played by men," Oliaei said.

Oliaei said she wants to continue bringing female members into the club and start female players off with the same credibility as their male counterparts to help them fit in more. Although she is nervous for the fate of the club after Hong's departure, she is adamant on moving forward.

"I think it'll be interesting without him because everyone will have the memory of 'the greatest chess player at Saratoga High,' and it's gonna be hard to fill those shoes, but I think I think we can learn to move forward," Oliaei said. ♦



Hong

# Sophomore organizes charitable art auction

COMBINING A PASSION FOR CREATIVITY AND THE DESIRE TO GIVE BACK TO OTHERS, THE EVENT RAISED OVER \$2,000

By Anika Kapasi & Divya Vadlakonda

After sophomore Amy Pan watched "Passport to Opportunity" — a documentary depicting the rampant educational crisis in Uganda, Africa — she considered the stark privilege present in her life, never having to worry about her own education and sought out a way to help.

"A lot of the time, these families live on less than \$5 per day," Pan said. "They have to make decisions deciding who gets to eat and who gets to sleep on a bed. These are situations that are so difficult to imagine as kids growing up in a wealthy neighborhood."

The documentary inspired her to create an initiative of her own targeted at helping children in Uganda who lack the resources to complete elementary school.

Combining her passion for art with her interest in the cause, Pan organized an art auction held on Nov. 19 in the art room. She curated a collection of 15 pieces created by artists from local schools and raised over \$2,200 for Opportunity International, a nonprofit organization helping "families living in extreme poverty build sustainable livelihoods and access quality education for their children."

Pieces included junior Yash Pai's "Natures Touch," sophomore Natalie Poon's "Reflections" and sophomore Sofiya Malko's "The Property of Hate." The collection included three of Pan's own pieces, "Aesthetic," "See Shells" and "Citrus on Ledge," all using varying mediums such as pen and ink, watercolor and acrylic paint, respectively.

She first approached the prospect in the middle of August but decided to work out

# MSET Fish work to build robot for 2023 Season

By Nikhil Mathihalli

Junior Naveed Kasnavi, hardware lead for the school's FRC team 649 MSET Fish, worked through a late January afternoon, finishing the last revision of his computer-aided design (CAD) model for the robot's arm mechanism. This robot will compete in two regional competitions: the San Francisco Regional on March 16 and the Silicon Valley Regional on April 5.

During competition season, the FRC team spends hours daily building a robot to compete in a complicated robot game. The robot game is given on kickoff day — this year on Jan. 9 — and teams are expected to build a robot to perform certain tasks in the game within six weeks.

This year's game is called Charged Up and involves robots moving either of two game pieces — a cone and a cube — to a location on the 27 by 54 feet field called the "scoring grid." Robots will have 2 minutes and 30 seconds to score as many game pieces in the scoring grid as they can.

Currently, the team meets five days a week in the MAP Annex, with weekends having longer work sessions than weekdays. In the eight weeks they are given to build the robot, the hardware team must first design the robot's various components for the game, the electronics team then adds wires and pneumatic tubing to finish the robot and the software team programs the robot to get it ready for upcoming tournaments. The various teams work together on readying the robot.

The 46-member team hopes to further last year's success, where the team won the Impact Award at the San Francisco Regional tournament last March.

Last year about 15 sophomores joined the team. With a year under their belt, these now juniors know what to expect during a full build season.

"My goal for this year is to make it to [the world championship]," Buttar said. "But primarily my goal for the team is having the new FRC members learn as much as they can to continue keeping the club strong." ♦

"This year, most members of the club have a full season of experience and can properly guide the freshman in our club," Kasnavi said. "This allows for everyone to have more opportunities within the team."

Kasnavi pointed out that the team sometimes gets fixed on a certain hardware design and needs to broaden its focus.

As always, the team's goal is to win a regional tournament, a task they have been unable to achieve since 2010. Last year's robot was unable to do so, making it to the semifinal round of two regional tournaments but ultimately losing to higher-seeded teams. Another aspect Kasnavi and the rest of the hardware team aim to focus on this season is keeping the robot's cost in check. In previous seasons, members "blindly added various components to [the] purchase list" without considering the costs. The senior mentors of the team agreed to have a loose limit on spending, allowing the robot to cost no more than \$4,000.

According to junior Govind Buttar, the team's software lead, the loss of the Class of '22 seniors presents a challenge for the team.

"The absence of [last year's] seniors mainly made our software team a little less experienced," he said.

Buttar, who directs the club's software for the robot's various subsystems, is focused on improving this year's software by evaluating the feasibility of the team's control choices. He also wants to improve software documentation so that future members of the team will have an easier time programming the robot.

"I think it'll be interesting without him because everyone will have the memory of 'the greatest chess player at Saratoga High,' and it's gonna be hard to fill those shoes, but I think I think we can learn to move forward," Oliaei said. ♦



Members of MSET Fish gather together to discuss some of the possible robot game strategies and robot designs for their new FIRST Robotics Competition game, "Charged Up," on Jan. 9.

Courtesy of SHEEBA GARG

the logistics of the project beginning in October. Visual arts teacher Joel Tarbox played an integral part in the process and was a participant during the event, selecting the final pieces of the collection.

**"This was the first better event I led and I was readily proud that the outcome was better than I anticipated."**

SOPHOMORE Amy Pan

"He was really helpful along the way giving suggestions and advice," Pan said. "[At the auction], he introduced each piece to the audiences, gave a short talk on the meaning of art and shared his tips on building an art

portfolio." Focusing attention on the initiative was more difficult than Pan imagined; at first, she received very little response from artists after putting out posters around the student center, cafeteria and in Tarbox's room. It wasn't until she said that she would provide 10 volunteering hours per artwork that students started submitting their pieces.

She added that it was a pleasure to provide her energy and ideas towards helping individuals and causes she was passionate about. Pan intends to create a club and continue to expand her reach to other communities.

"Making art is my passion because of the immeasurable joy it brings into my life. Creativity, to me, entails taking on the world to unearth and share the extraordinary beauty that lies within the mundane," Pan said. "I wish to use art not only to express creativity but also use it as a way to help others." ♦

# Prospective students get a glimpse into campus life through shadowing program

by VictoriaHu & SarahZhou

As enrollment deadlines for local private schools approach in mid-January to early February, more than 20 prospective students have signed up to participate in the Saratoga High student shadowing program — an opportunity for them to follow a current student around campus for half of a school day to better understand the school and the typical experience here.

Guidance secretary Sharon Fong, who manages the shadowing program, matches students who sign up to shadow with 18 student volunteers based on their responses to an interest form. While volunteers come from all grade levels, shadows are usually paired with underclassmen.

“It’s like a puzzle,” Fong said. “You want everyone to be matched in terms of grade and interest. If they like music, we try to find a student in orchestra, but this can be difficult since [shadowing] is only half a day.”

In general, students who sign up to shadow live in the district and tend to be from private middle schools such as St. Andrews or Sacred Heart. Shadowing is scheduled on an individual basis after winter break, due to students being busy before finals week. Fong aims to allow all prospective students to visit the school around January before applications for private schools such as Mitty and Valley Christian are due so that families can make an informed decision. Applications for intra-district registration, which allows transfers between Los Gatos High and Saratoga High, also close around that time (Feb. 10).

Freshman Navya Chawla decided to volunteer to be shadowed for the program after missing the opportunity to shadow someone in 8th grade, as she had moved to Saratoga from Fremont in March, past the deadline for sign-ups. While Chawla was able to receive a tour from her cousins over the summer, she missed the shadowing experience and wanted to ensure others could benefit from the program.

“As an out-of-district student and a freshman, I know how it feels to not know where you’re going,” Chawla said. “I thought I could make a difference if [my being a shadow] would help at least one student know what they’re doing on their first day.”

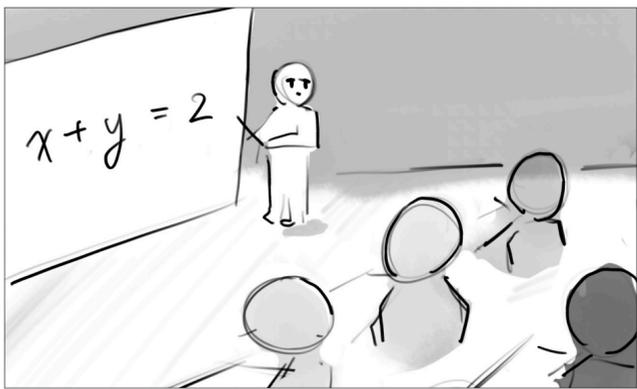
Chawla has already been shadowed by one student this year, with whom she was matched by the office and guidance department based on personality and subject interests.

After being called to the office in the morning, Chawla brought the student to all her classes, introducing them to the Media Arts Program and discussing student life.

“Shadowing is a really good way to introduce people to the community,” Chawla said. “That way, they don’t have to read an FAQ page later on, and actually know what’s going on.”

According to assistant principal Abra Evanoff, public schools sometimes choose not to run shadowing programs because prospective students live nearby and are already familiar with the school — or because of the potential logistical mayhem of huge numbers of students coming on campus.

Evanoff said she is “excited” that the school offers shadowing opportunities, and



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

Prospective students can come to SHS to shadow a current student and learn about classes.

feels that the number of students who have signed up to shadow is a manageable number for the office to facilitate.

“We have new students coming to us from overseas and from towns next door. We want to make sure that we’re welcoming them and making them feel at home here,” Evanoff said. “That’s why I think a shadowing day is a really important opportunity to show that. It’s nice to not assume everybody grew up right down the street and has knowledge of our schools.”

Evanoff noted that while community-wide events such as theater performances and music booster fundraisers can help

showcase the school’s strengths, they cannot replace the experience of seeing the campus culture firsthand: As both an administrator and a mother, she believes that shadowing is an invaluable opportunity for students to get a feel for a school’s atmosphere.

“My own two students shadowed at a private high school before I ultimately chose to put them in public,” she said. “But they both loved that day. And in fact, one of them still has a good friend she met from that school. Shadowing is just a neat opportunity for students to get a peek into a different kind of school, especially for our kids that are coming from small private schools.” ♦

## Recent student driving accidents raise safety concerns for many

by MitchellChen & DerekLiang

Roughly 230,000 teens in the U.S. ages 13 to 19 were injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2020, with the most at-risk group being teen drivers aged 16 to 19.

The issue of driving safety has received attention recently as the result of an increase in student-involved accidents and reports of excessive speeding. One such accident was a crash on Jan. 31 that occurred during lunch involving a junior boy and his friends. (The Falcon chose not to identify him because of his age.)

The junior said he lost control of his Tesla when he went too fast around the bend on Herriman Avenue and crashed into a nearby home’s yard, narrowly avoiding a house’s frame.

“I was rushing to get back to school and, with pressure from other passengers in the car, I decided to floor it,” the student told The Falcon.

His car ran into a pine tree and uprooted a fire hydrant, but none of the passengers in the car were harmed.

Assistant principal Brian Thompson sent an email to students recently about unsafe driving and cautioned them to change their behavior. “I see a lot of students driving fast and making turns that aren’t safe,” he said. “I’m out there watching students leave campus and I see a lot of unsafe driving very often.”

With these accidents happening among teen drivers, there are concerns among adults about safe driving. However, sophomore Dylan Wilson has a different perspective on the concerns toward student drivers at the school.

“I have seen a few things here and there, but for the most part everyone is just taking their cars to get to their destination, and no one’s actively trying to be a bad driver,” Wilson said.



On Jan. 31, a Tesla was totaled after crashing into a front yard on Herriman Avenue.

Wilson believes concerns about student driving are largely based on the worst offenders, causing some to think that all student drivers will drive in unsafe ways.

“I think people should have trust in their students, peers and children,” Wilson said.

While drivers on campus are required to follow the laws and practice safe driving, some students are still prone to distractions and bend the rules especially when pressured to get to places on time. During morning and lunch times, many students speed down Saratoga-Sunnyvale, in some instances reaching speeds up to 80 mph, double the legal limit.

As more students begin to get their driver’s licenses, the administration emphasizes the importance of following safe driving laws and taking the responsibility of driving a vehicle.

“Number one, always wear a seatbelt and just pay more attention when you’re driving on the road,” Thompson said. “I just wanted to take a moment to remind our student body to be safe for themselves and for other students as well as our community members because driving is a huge responsibility.” ♦

## Board continues deliberation for solar panels on campus

by WilliamNorwood & DivyaVadlakonda

Plans for installing solar panels at Saratoga and Los Gatos High and the district office appear to be moving ahead, though no final decisions have been made. The district has partnered with NV5, a provider of technical engineering and consulting solutions.

The motion to prepare and request the RFP — a request for proposal that the board will post to formally bid for potential vendors — was approved at the Jan. 17 board meeting.

Superintendent Bill Sanderson stated that NV5 will assist with its preparation as well as the evaluation of potential vendors, contracting support and technical construction support for the process.

Once bids are received, the board will make a decision on which company to proceed at a later meeting, taking into account the best net present value, skill set, background and experience of each contractor. The RFP is projected to be issued at the end of February, with the vendor selection taking place by March.

**An energy audit was previously approved by the board and is currently underway.**

This audit will assess how the current electrical systems can be improved.

As of January, the audit has already concluded that the overhead lights on both LGHS and SHS campuses are outdated, which is increasing energy costs. The results of the audit will reveal the possibility

of solar panels and their conceptual design.

Mike Borger, a representative for NV5, suggested that it would be beneficial to update the equipment before the addition of solar panels to ensure maximum electrical efficiency.

Discussions regarding the locations of the solar panels are now underway, with the plan being to install the panels over the front parking lot of the SHS campus in the form of carport canopies.

Additionally, board president Katherine Tseng asked about putting solar on the SHS staff parking lot in addition to the front parking lot, an idea that Borger said was not considered because spread out panel designs are much more expensive than the collocated panels of the current design.

However, amending the locations of the solar is still a viable option if the district pushes for it. The board has also discussed the prospect of putting solar panels on 123 New York, a piece of land behind LGHS that recently came into ownership of the district.

However, a potential problem that Borger noted is that solar panels on that parcel may impede traffic. When a company is selected, construction will begin as soon as it is feasible. The panels are projected to take up to 3 to 6 months and start construction in December 2024.

For many in the district, the approval of the RFP signifies a big step in the right direction. Carolyn Pyun, Green Committee chairwoman, was among the many students — most from the Green Committee — who pushed to put solar panels on the board’s agenda and was happy with progress being made.

“This step did fuel some hope in me as being a start of something our committee believes is necessary and important,” Pyun said. “I’m aware of its long-term nature so I’m glad they decided to take steps toward it.” ♦

### FOURTH PERIOD

### STAFF POLICY

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

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Printed by Folger Graphics in Hayward, Calif.



# Cheating policies need updating, clarifying



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

According to the Educational Testing Service, statistics show that between 75% and 95% reported cheating in high school in recent years, a stark difference to the 1940s, when only 20% of high school students admitted to cheating. In a 2022 survey conducted by the International Center for Academic Integrity, 95% of students confessed to having cheated in some form.

The school is no exception to the drastic rise of cheating — in fact, as a school that places a deep emphasis on academics, it’s a cesspool for these occurrences.

Most recently, 26 students were found participating in a group chat in which students shared chemistry homework. When the group chat was exposed, the students were referred and let go — without a mark on their record. Out of the entire group chat, only two or three students caught cheating actually received disciplinary action.

This came from a lack of evidence of who actually cheated: Those who sent work in the group chat were caught, but there was not enough substantial evidence for anyone else to get in trouble. It begs the question of what can be classified as cheating and what cannot.

This issue is exacerbated by inconsistent classroom policies on academic integrity.

The current school handbook should be updated to reflect a universal definition of cheating and its consequences — one that is standardized across all teachers, the board and administrators.

With constant technological developments, it is becoming easier and easier to cheat. The internet has become an increasingly relied upon external source

of information, especially with the rise of artificial intelligence like ChatGPT to help students write essays by simply entering a prompt. Students have admitted to using ChatGPT to summarize their readings in order to shorten their homework load, going as far as to say that using other resources for more efficiency in completing their homework should not be counted as cheating.

Currently, every teacher gives out their own unique syllabus, outlining their own academic integrity policies.

In addition, many teachers spend class time at the beginning of the year to highlight the importance of upholding academic integrity.

The current school handbook says that “copying work assigned to be done independently or letting others copy one’s work or another’s work,” is considered cheating.

It also lists the consequences of violating academic integrity: The first offense a student results in a zero on the assignment and a referral, the second offense results in an “infraction noted on secondary school report” and the third drops the student from their class with an “F” grade and the student receives suspension and a possible referral to an alternative education placement.

Despite rules like this, many student group chats circulate within the student body, some with the sole purpose of sharing notes and homework. While some teachers encourage students to work with their peers by sharing notes and study guides to better understand the content and reduce stress, others would consider this a violation of academic integrity, since sharing

work can inhibit students’ understanding of material.

In addition, academic policies regarding when to report cheating vary from class to class, blurring the lines in the process — for example, some English and history teachers condemn the usage of Wikipedia as a source, while others will not give it a second thought.

In some instances, teachers will not call the use of SparkNotes explicit cheating, even if it is clearly a violation of its definition.

Such inconsistencies and nuances often serve to confuse students. It is unfathomable for staff to simply expect students to

understand where the lines blur between cheating and collaborating or seeking help from outside sources.

The school handbook and teachers should also make an explicit, clearly defined decision on what counts as cheating, including answers to questions on whether students should be allowed to use ChatGPT and to what extent. There must be a hard line between the classification of cheating and collaboration.

Cheating is commonplace: It will always exist. But by establishing a consensus among both teachers and administrators on academic integrity rules, it can be mitigated. ♦

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 24-7 in favor of this article.

# Spring leadership events need to be revived

by AllisonTan

Words cannot describe the disappointment I felt when the Spring Fling dance got canceled last school year. My friends had to hold me back from rallying students and demanding they purchase tickets to this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

But sadly, this is not the first time a springtime event has been canceled due to the lack of student participation.

While there are many spirit events to look forward to throughout the year such as Homecoming, Winter Formal and Prom, the most anticipated events of the year almost always seem to fall in the first semester.

Although there is Prom to look forward to in the spring, the excitement is limited to upperclassmen, with graduation-related events filling up the rest of the calendar.

Since freshmen and sophomores make up half of the school population, there need to be more activities targeted toward them and the whole school to benefit springtime school spirit.

There exists potential events that can match the energy of first semester’s events: A week with well-planned Falconpuff (previously Powderpuff) activities, captioned with the Spring Fling dance at the end of the week.

Falconpuff creates a sense of playful competition between the



Graphic by ALLISON TAN

grades, as students participate in a series of flag football games and cheer stand-offs.

While the first semester has a total of three dances — Back to School, Homecoming and Winter Formal — the second semester only has prom for juniors and seniors, necessitating the revival of Spring Fling.

Leadership should also create excitement leading up to Spring Fling with a spirit week that mirrors Homecoming Week, when everybody dresses up in their class colors and merch.

Dances and in-school activities give students something to look forward to: dressing up, dancing, planning skits and having fun with friends outside of school.

Additionally, holding a large spring dance again would establish a tradition that can be carried

on and hyped up in future years.

I’m not trying to say that second semester is devoid of fun events: There are several noteworthy events that take place in the second semester.

The main one is Bombay in the Bay (BnB), which is admittedly an equally massive production, but mostly made up of a specific demographic and often only attended by family members of performers — in other words, not a school-wide event like Homecoming.

Other, smaller events also include Quadsidelands and the Benefit Fashion Show.

What makes these events unique is that they each have their own goal beyond raising school spirit.

Both BnB and the Benefit Fashion Show utilize student passion to

raise money for worthy organizations and causes.

In a similar vein, Dance Commission’s Quadsidelands, mirroring beloved music festival Outsidelands, highlights student musical talent.

One of the reasons these events don’t gain enough participation is that teachers and students often feel burned out from the rigor of first semester.

As a result, they don’t see the appeal or make time to attend such events.

Staff can significantly raise interest in school events by attending events and offering extra credit to students who also show up.

With frequent announcements on leadership events from teachers even just in classrooms, we can raise spring spirit to match first semester.

It is important not to undermine events such as these and to consistently show spirit throughout the whole year.

This not only benefits and uplifts the whole school, but it impacts students’ overall mood and attitude. Given that the school is highly academic, better school spirit can improve mental health.

While the leadership class can organize events, the rest of us need to show up and enjoy them.

From organizing Falconpuff cheers to buying Spring Fling tickets, students can help foster a vibrant spirit that continues throughout second semester. ♦

# Microcosm of Russia's human rights violations: Ukraine conductor dead after refusing to cooperate

By Nicole Lee & Isabelle Wang

In the almost year-long war between Russia and Ukraine, Russian president Vladimir Putin's generals and soldiers have shown almost no regard for human rights or basic decency. A case in point involves Yuriy Kerpatenko, 46, who was widely considered one of the most respected musicians in Ukraine. He was murdered by Russian soldiers on Oct. 14. His crime? Refusing to conduct a concert in Kherson, Ukraine.

Kerpatenko studied at the prestigious Kyiv Conservatory, and since 2000, he had been the principal conductor of the Kherson Regional Philharmonic, the region's main center of musical culture.

He was asked to perform with the Kherson Regional Philharmonic's chamber orchestra at the International Day of Music on Oct. 1, an event established in 1975 to promote peace and friendship between musicians and their national cultures. In a statement published on their Facebook page, the Ukraine culture ministry said that Kerpatenko "refused to cooperate with the occupants [Russian authorities]" and declined the role. According to the Guardian, family members lost touch with him in September, so the exact time of death could not be determined. A month later, Kerpatenko was found dead in his home, shot by Russian soldiers.

## Response to Russia's use of music as a military tactic to create peaceful facade

As word of Kerpatenko's death spread, Ukrainians responded with outrage. Many conductors and musicians condemned the Russian government on Twitter.

Among them was Dalia Stasevska, a Ukrainian-Finnish conductor who expressed her condolences.

"No words. Hearing your colleague being killed," Stasevska said in her tweet. "Russia imposing a 'comply or die' policy against artists is nothing new. It has a history which spans for hundreds of years. Let our fight for human rights, against dictatorships and free Ukraine be even stronger."

The Russian government has threatened musicians as an intimidation tactic since the Soviet days in the 20th century. Other musicians such as Evgeni Mikeladze, conductor of the Georgia Philharmonic Orchestra, have suffered similar fates as Kerpatenko: Mikeladze was killed by Soviet forces in 1937 due to his involvement in the Russia and Georgia revolutionary movement. In honor of his death, the National Symphony Orchestra adopted Mikeladze's name for their programs.

Historically, Russian authorities have used music to portray the facade of "improvement in life" there. In reality, musicians like Kerpatenko and Mikeladze are killed for refusing to become propaganda tools. Russia uses both military force and cultural activities such as International Music Day to manipulate other countries into believing they have everything under control.

## Human rights abuse exacerbated by war

Russia's continuation of human rights abuses seem to get worse by the day.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine again last February, both sides have faced high death tolls, even among civilians. Over 70,000 to 80,000 Russians and 40,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed or wounded. Thirty million more Ukrainians were displaced from their homes.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and other human rights groups have condemned Russia for its use of explosive weapons in populated areas and attacks on fleeing civilians. The commission has also documented executions, unlawful confinement, ill-treatment, torture, rape and other acts of sexual violence. In some instances, children have been forced to witness their relatives being raped by Russian troops.

Russian authorities have also silenced and harassed human rights defenders in



LEYNA CHAN

Ukraine, citing excuses ranging from national security threats to the pandemic's restrictions on public activities. They have prevented lawyers from representing peaceful protesters and human rights defenders. Websites featuring human rights projects have been blocked and police have detained and physically assaulted journalists covering the protests.

harsh winters, which typically have average temperatures of between 8 to 39° Fahrenheit. This caused even further complications as the water would freeze in pipes. Russia is committing blatant war crimes on innocent citizens, leaving them in the dark and cold, creating terror by making life unsustainable for them.

The use of banned weapons and artillery attacks have also killed hundreds of civilians in Kyiv, destroying at least eight civilian buildings and leaving cars and streets in wreckage. Russia's withdrawal from areas of the Kyiv region revealed many dead bodies from the destruction caused by cluster munitions over a wide area.

It has been almost a year since Russia invaded Ukraine, with no sign of Russia's human violations to end. Children have been killed, wounded, displaced and traumatized. Hospitals, schools and buildings have been destroyed. These sites have also housed the alleged forced transfers of people and expedited adoptions of children by the graves.

How can we help Ukrainians? The best actions individuals can do is donating to organizations, volunteering or helping professionally and sending humanitarian supplies. And praying that Putin will finally come to his senses and stop waging this disastrous war against an innocent, sovereign nation. ♦

## The best actions individuals can do is donating to organizations, volunteering or helping professionally.

Another instance of Russia's exploitation of Ukrainian citizens includes the attacks on civilian infrastructure. In November, Russian airstrikes hit Kyiv, Ukraine, killing six civilians and injuring 30. As a precautionary measure in response to Russia's attacks, Ukraine disconnected three nuclear power plants from the national electricity grid. These attacks caused harm to many innocent people, leaving hundreds of thousands of civilians in cold buildings without any heat, electricity or water system to survive. This problem is exacerbated by Ukraine's

# Superscoring exacerbates inequity in SAT

By Tara Natarajan

When I took my first ever SAT in November, I went in with the expectation that I would take it no more than twice. After all, I could always go the test-optional route if the retake didn't work out.

Unlike a lot of my friends, I was quite a novice at standardized testing: I had only taken one PSAT and had never set foot into a paid prep class or tutoring session, instead self-studying using the College Board's Khan Academy SAT prep resource and a secondhand prep book.

My score was much better than I expected and I was overjoyed. But when I spoke with a friend about it, she advised me to take it again to increase my math score. I was confused: I didn't want to risk a lower reading (and perhaps, overall) score on my retake just for the sake of doing better on another section.

That's when I learned about superscoring.

With superscoring, students can take the SAT more than once, with their highest score over all sittings from each section added together to gain their best score. This incentivizes students to retake the test over and over until they have maximized their score for each section.

While it may come as a boon to some who may perform better on any one section than the other, encouraging retakes to fine-tune scores is a harmful practice that undermines the entire point of a standardized test.

By design, the SAT is an aptitude test designed to measure knowledge without significant preparation — scoring in the 50th

percentile indicates meeting 8th grade level reading and math benchmarks. For students that need help with content, the SAT's free Khan Academy prep resource provides all students with the necessary skills and content for SAT proficiency. Past that, the SAT is simply a test of your test-taking skills.

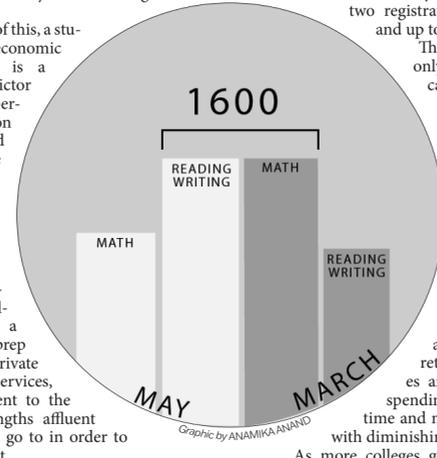
Because of this, a student's socioeconomic background is a strong predictor of their performance on standardized testing. The monumental growth of the test-prep industry, which rakes in hundreds of million dollars a year from prep books and private tutoring services, is a testament to the financial lengths affluent families will go to in order to game the test.

When superscores are added to the mix, the entire point of the SAT as a standard of aptitude is undermined further. If a student takes the test over and over with incremental increases each time, how well does their superscore actually reflect their abilities? Hint: It doesn't.

Time, resources for preparation and access to testing centers put affluent students at a further advantage when it comes to retake opportunities. Affluent students can also afford the \$75 registration fee more than twice — while the College Board offers fee waivers, they apply for only two registrations (one test and up to one retake).

This means that only students who can afford to pay the fee can afford to retake the test more than once. These are the students who inevitably benefit the most from the superscoring policy. Encouraging multiple retakes also places an emphasis on spending increasing time and money on a test with diminishing relevance. As more colleges go test-blind or test-optional, there is always the option to apply to colleges without submitting the scores.

So why are we still encouraging students to take and retake an exam for which the median score benchmark is eighth-grade reading and math?



Standardized testing is supposed to be an equalizer in college admissions. The entire point of the SAT is that regardless of differences in rigor of individual schools or the extracurricular opportunities available to each student, basic aptitude in reading and mathematics can be captured through a standardized exam with a quantitative score that can be easily evaluated by colleges. Superscoring goes against every one of these principles.

## When superscores are added to the mix, the entire point of the SAT as a standard of aptitude is undermined.

A possible solution to the current superscoring dilemma could involve taking the average of all attempts on a section to compose a final score rather than taking the raw score — this means that retaking would not make sense unless there significant improvement is guaranteed, disincentivizing students from simply taking it repeatedly. The College Board should also place a cap on the number of retakes allowed for all students, not just poor ones.

When it comes to the relevance of the SAT itself, there are plenty of good arguments on both sides of the debate.

But with superscoring, there isn't any good argument to support it — and it needs to go. ♦

## resources

### Donate To Ukraine

Organizations such as Rescue can help provide essential supplies to Ukrainian refugees. For more information on ways to help Ukraine, please scan the QR code for a list of organizations asking for assistance:



# Teachers: Please make work due at the beginning of class

By Skyler Mao

With 5 minutes until the due date and one paragraph left to write, you stare at the clock as you type furiously on your keyboard. A bead of sweat trickles slowly down your neck as the clock ticks in the background. Seconds away from midnight, you hastily click the "submit" button: A small burst of confetti appears on the screen, marking your completion of the day's homework.

Thinking back on your work, you realize the quality of it is rather low — and in the end you didn't learn much from the tedious experience.

Clearly, deadlines are important for students' time management skills. But many teachers set Canvas deadlines at 11:59 p.m. on the night before class. Some even have their deadlines due at more unconventional times, such as 9 p.m. the night before class.

Although these teachers are sure to have reasons for their due dates, they should return to a beneficial aspect of pre-pandemic education and set their due times at the beginning of class to alleviate stress and increase sleep for students.

Why is it better to have due dates set right before class? For one thing, many students attend a plethora of extracurricular activities after school, causing them to do their homework late at night upon returning home.

Forcing these students to turn in assignments earlier than class starting times creates a situation where they rush through their assignments, ruining the educational purpose of homework.

This increases students' existing stress and anxiety over the



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assignment, leading to negative consequences on their mental health. A student constantly thinking about their approaching midnight deadlines and late-night workload is bound to experience a lot of stress.

Another consequence of the due date policy is loss of sleep. A student with a midnight or early morning due date is more likely to stay up late than those with deadlines the next day.

Ideally, students should have the opportunity to complete homework during tutorials, lunch and free periods before later classes. Although this change may seem small, even an extra hour of sleep can bring many benefits to students.

In addition, making assignments due before the class period also ensures that all students have the same amount of time to complete their work, creating a more equitable academic environment. When due dates are the same for all periods, later periods have less time to complete the homework.

These later periods can also miss out on tutorial time that is available to students of earlier periods — first- and second-periods have two tutorials compared to one tutorial for other classes.

Despite these benefits, some people may argue that preclass deadlines invariably lead to procrastination.

However, this argument doesn't focus on the real issue: Some students will always procrastinate, and later due times will not change their habits. Preclass due dates merely change the time at which these students will do the work — a net neutral effect — while helping the students who need the extra time and help before class.

Teachers should prioritize students who are under a lot of stress over students who procrastinate, as the former are more likely to suffer in terms of mental health. Teachers can't change how much students procrastinate, but they can change due times to benefit those with genuine need.

Since there are rare cases that require unique due dates, a school-wide policy might not be the best idea. However, teachers themselves do have the ability to use more student-friendly due dates, and they can easily do so by setting their assignment deadlines before class — a simple fix that will certainly benefit students. ♦

# District correct to overhaul school's outdated website

By George Hu

When students open the school's website, they are presented with a slideshow that includes a series of pictures of various recent school events along with a large picture of the front of the school's football stadium. As they scroll down the page, they begin to see upcoming events, as well as links to over a dozen essential websites that the school uses.

## It requires a team effort from school and district staff to keep the information current and relevant.

But while a quick glance may seem like the school's website is perfectly satisfactory, there are many glaring flaws that should be fixed — and the district is right to prioritize.

Among the easy-to-fix flaws, the website lacks relevant, updated information. If students go to the Academics section and click on Tutoring, they will see that there is no

content because it is currently "under construction." Like many parts of the website, potentially helpful information is missing; just filling in these blanks would go a long way toward improving the site.

Another outdated feature is the subsection called Job Opportunities in the Student Life section. If you click on it, it clearly states at the top that it was last updated on May 6, 2021. Like many other parts of the website, the information is out of date.

This isn't an impossible task: For comparison, Los Gatos High provides much more updated information on its website. In the Guidance section, for instance, there is a video that teaches students how to use Canvas.

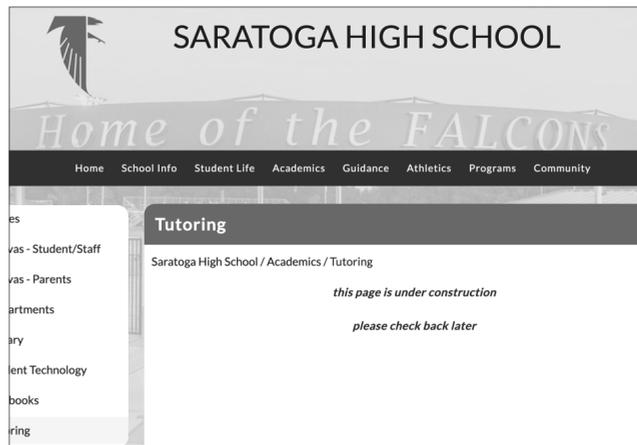
In Athletics, you are redirected to LGHS's athletics website, which does a good job on highlighting how well every sports team is doing.

Although SHS also has its own athletic website, there is very little information regarding updated news about our athletics team.

The district's recent hiring of Public Information and Engagement Officer Tanya De La Cruz — who is spearheading an effort to revamp the district's website, including

the SHS and LGHS websites — is a good first step, but ultimately, the effort to make the website more accessible and update its information will require more than just one

person. It requires a team effort from school and district staff to keep the information current and relevant. ♦



Courtesy of SARATOGA HIGH

# BBLs: the damaging effects of the trend cycle

BY TaraNatarajan

Blinding neon spandex, animal-print velvet and flimsy knitwear that lasts a single wash cycle; precarious cutouts and laddered holes; curve-hugging, cleavage-baring, waist-cinching dresses on curvy models who look like real-life versions of Jessica Rabbit: These are the holy tenets upon which stands the 21st century phenomenon colloquially known as BBL, or Brazilian butt lift, fashion. BBL fashion caters to a very specific body type — large breasts, small waists with flat stomachs and large, augmented buttocks — achieved almost exclusively through cosmetic surgery. It has infiltrated social media marketing, popular culture and seasonal trends.

But not only is BBL fashion impractical and oftentimes grotesque, it epitomizes the intersection of everything that is wrong with the fashion industry today: the pressures of cosmetic surgery, the trend cycle of women's body types and the rise of harmful, unsustainable fast fashion.

The BBL is a cosmetic surgery procedure where abdominal fat is removed through liposuction and reinserted into the buttocks to achieve an extreme hourglass shape. It has the highest mortality rate out of any cosmetic surgery at 1 in 3000 deaths.

The procedure is also pricey: Depending on the surgeon, a BBL can set you back up to \$30,000. This can result in women seeking cheaper surgery at shady "chop shops," causing the mortality rate to rise even further because of unaccredited providers administering lethal fat injections.

Yet, the surgery remains one of the most popular, with over 61,000 buttock augmentations performed in 2021 alone.

BBL fashion serves as marketing for this

procedure. Styles made for artificially enhanced body types have found their way into the mainstream, placing even greater pressure on women to conform to the standard of "slim-thick" hourglass figures. Touted by fast-fashion retailers such as SHEIN, Fashion Nova, PrettyLittleThing, Boo Hoo and more, these pieces are often cheaply, unethically made, and easily disposable.

While BBL fashion itself can't exactly be called a "microtrend," the clothing that exists within this scope certainly follows the harmful pattern of buy-wear-dispose-repeat that defines fast fashion. Fast fashion amplifies the beauty standard by advertising through influencers that have achieved this body type. A visit to the PrettyLittleThing site, for example, yields hundreds of bodycon dresses on hourglass-shaped models — a large chunk are made of cheap polyester and most cost under \$60.

**Styles made for artificially enhanced body types have found their way into the mainstream.**

Besides the danger of the surgery itself, BBL fashion is alarming because it represents the disturbing cycle of the fashion industry turning women's body types into cyclical trends.

The '90s heroin chic popularized clavicles, thigh gaps and concave stomachs. The Y2K look in the early 2000s was defined by the low-rise jean and the micro-mini skirt — all indicators of thinness.

Then, the 2010s gave rise to the BBL. The procedure gained traction quickly, with the number of BBLs increasing by 90% since 2015. This sudden increase in popularity is often attributed to celebrities like the Kardashians, who seemingly ushered in a new era of women's bodies which 2014 Vogue dubbed "The Era of the Big Booty."

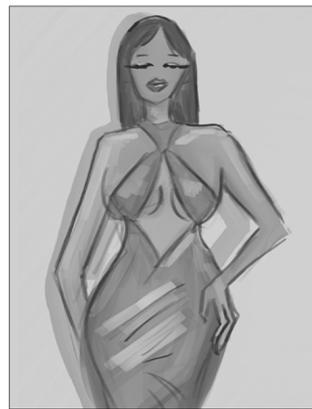
It is important to note that throughout the eras of fashion that glorified thinness, Black women and other women of color were often derided for naturally curvy bodies. But now, even they are under increasing pressure to receive BBLs because the aesthetic of a curvy body has been appropriated by the white-dominated cosmetic surgery and fashion industries and repackaged into an unattainable ideal — one that is often based in genetics.

BBL fashion feeds off the commodification of women's bodies at the expense of all women, especially women of color. Turning women's bodies into trends is misogynistic and pits women against each other.

The surgery, often pushed by the industry as an empowering choice for women, pushes racist, anti-feminist beauty standards and treats women's body types like commodities to be arbitrarily bought and sold.

All this comes at the expense of women of color, whose ethnic features like bumpy or large noses, wide hips and monolids are often shunned in favor of rhinoplasty, liposuction and eyelid surgery to adhere to white beauty standards. The BBL takes this premise to the next level by co-opting a body type common for Black women and contouring it into a standard largely unattainable without surgery.

While the rise of the BBL has certainly brought unprecedented attention to body types previously considered too large for the



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

A typical BBL dress can be found on websites like PrettyLittleThing and Fashion Nova.

industry, it has come at the expense of simply repackaging the harmful ideals of fashion into a new form.

The message seems to be you can be curvy, as long as the fat is deposited in all the "right places." Cellulite and stretch marks must be hidden. Small breasts are a big no-no.

And just like that, we fall into yet another destructive cycle of unsustainability — whether it is in unsustainable beauty standards or unsustainable garments.

BBL fashion needs to go — and consumers need to take a stand against the blatant exploitation of women's bodies by the fashion and cosmetic surgery industries. ♦

# My life struggles of not having a common name

ITS ANAMIKA, NOT ANNAMEEKA. THANKS!

BY AnamikaAnand

When I go to Starbucks and the barista asks me for my name, I avoid all the hassle that comes with saying my real name. It's already a mouthful to say "mocha cookie crumble frappuccino."

Instead, I take the easy route and say "Anna," saving much trouble for both me and the barista. For as long as I can remember, people have misspelled, mispronounced and otherwise butchered Anamika. To sum it up, having an uncommon name is ... inconvenient.

Don't get me wrong: I like my name when it's pronounced right and combined with my last name (which is also often mispronounced, but that's another story). It actually has a nice ring to it.

Others' troubles are understandable, especially if they aren't Indian — people have never heard of my name, so as a result, they can't say it right when they see it. So as unfortunate as it sounds, I

either awkwardly correct them or accept the new name I am given.

I often dread attendance, watching the teacher's lips quiver and waiting for their brow to furrow in confusion as they debate how to say my name out loud. I used to correct my new teachers at the beginning of every year that my name isn't Annika or Annameeka. It's Anamika, with a stress on the second syllable. It got too tiring, and legally changing my name to Anāmika isn't ideal.

So now, I just let my teachers think of me as Annameeka.

I've learned to respond to a name that is not mine. Not to brag or anything, but it's kind of like living as two people: a pretty exhilarating life, if I do say so myself.

I know I sound salty, but I won't stop going to Starbucks for my mocha cookie crumble frappuccino. Even though I'm always going to turn into a generic Anna there, I still like my name. I like having a unique name that, at least in Saratoga, is mine and mine only. ♦



Graphic by ANAMIKA ANAND



Graphic by ATREY DESAI

# The inner workings of The Falcon's deadline nights

WE ALL LOVE THE NEWSPAPER BUT HOW DOES IT WORK? HERE IS AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE PROGRAM'S MOST IMPORTANT NIGHT

BY AtreyDesai & NealMalhotra

Here is a not-so-familiar scene for most: 35 people sit in an abnormally large room with an absurd number of expensive iMacs lined up against the wall, half the people less than a foot away from their laptop screen, with the rest yelling at each other in a "constructive" manner. For the journalism students here, this monthly congregation is known as Thursday deadline night.

After weeks of writing and editing the stories for the issue, everything comes down to our deadline night because everything has to be finished by 6 p.m. the next day so that it can be pushed to the printer.

Oftentimes, it's a memorable night for us, no matter how chaotic it gets. The challenges are end-

less: There's always the difficulty of trying to find the location of that one staff member who has the entire page layout on their computer (it just turned out they decided to make a boba run). Or it's finding out that the editors-in-chief or adviser Michael Tyler has spotted a flaw (or multiple flaws) with your page, so you have to restart and revise in a major way.

But it's not all work. There are moments where you just look at each other and just start laughing. You are surrounded by the nicest people on the planet who will splurt out the most random words, then laugh for the next three minutes because you had inhaled six cookies before. And when the process is finally over, we wait a week for the finished newspaper to be printed, when we distribute bundles of old-fashioned print

newspaper to every class. Then the whole cycle repeats. While deadline nights can be tough for everyone, they are nights we all look forward to. We have so much fun and we wouldn't give it up for the world.

**We have so much fun and we wouldn't give it up for the world.**

To most, the school newspaper is just a stack of paper they pick up every couple of weeks from their classroom before running out for lunch and abandoning it after flipping to the colored pages. But for its creators, it is their blood, sweat and tears — an experience for us to treasure far into the future. ♦

» falconpoll

Q: What is most irreplaceable about deadline night?



The Falcon polled all of Period 4 newspaper

# The 'cashless future' carries negative implications

BY SarahThomas

The days of lining up at the ticket office outside the field before a game are long over: For fans of the school's sports teams, GoFan — an online ticket purchasing portal — is now the only way to buy a ticket.

Lately, our campus has become much more oriented to favoring (or accepting only) credit cards and digital wallets.

From the cafeteria to vending machines, it's possible to use your phone to pay for anything and everything. This is wonderful, right?

Wrong. While both credit cards and programs like Apple Pay make it easier to spend, research confirms that people often spend substantially more when using a card than they would spend with cash — therefore making it harder to save.

Additionally, for students who don't have a credit card or Apple Pay, paying for admission to games or other fundraisers can be a hassle and deter them from attending, worsening our already low school spirit and attendance rates.

Outside of Saratoga, going cashless is a problem our society has to quickly decide how to respond to. Defenders of the "cash-



MINSUI TANG

less future" claim that going cashless improves efficiency, helps eliminate fraud and is better for public health in the wake of the pandemic.

But the biggest benefactors of going cashless are not consumers — rather, credit card companies stand to gain the most as their profit margins soar from charging high

interest rates.

Going cashless especially harms the poor, homeless and what New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco call the "unbanked" — citizens who solely use paper currency.

**From the cafeteria to vending machines, it's possible to use your phone to pay for anything and everything.**

The "unbanked" make up 1 in 15 U.S. households — or nearly 7% — and an additional 20% are classified as "underbanked," meaning these citizens had a bank account but resorted to using money orders or other physical forms of payment for transactions.

Additionally, going cashless hurts citizens because of America's weak privacy laws: By making purchases through credit cards, Apple Pay or any other electronic payment, citizens become more susceptible to information about their spending habits being used by large corporations. ♦

# Los Gatos High deserved to suffer through school too

BY ShreyaRallabandi

Not fair.

That's the way many Falcon students were feeling the first week back from winter break.

On Jan. 10, there were power outages at both Saratoga High and Los Gatos High due to a storm, resulting in both schools missing that day of school. But while SHS regained power the following day and was back in session, LGHS only regained power on Jan. 13, leading their students to miss three days of school. Meanwhile, we were in class and stewing about the unfairness.

Judging by the headline of this article, it's obvious I'm still quite salty about it. I can't help but look at LGHS' two extra days off from school as another manifestation of the district's prioritization of well-being at LGHS over SHS.

I know I often overestimate the aforementioned sentiment, but I'm also not making it up — with school reopenings, pandemic handling, budgeting, superior facilities, recognition and more, it seems like the district just likes our Wildcat counterparts better. And because SHS is the less "jocky" school — limited athletic prowess, fewer outspoken parents, higher standard-

ized test scores — it feels to some of us that the district just loves the jocks, like that teacher who loves the popular kids.

**It feels to some of us that the district just loves the jocks, like that teacher who loves the popular kids.**

It's just plain annoying! It feels like Los Gatos is the favored youngest child who

ends up laughing in our faces whenever something happens their way.

They don't, really. But it feels that way sometimes.

I know I'm overreacting — and, yes, I'm probably even wrong. And I'm glad the power outage situations have been resolved for both of our schools, though I am slightly convinced power at LGHS could've been back sooner if everyone — I don't know who I'm really blaming here — just put more pep in their step.

Regardless of who's at fault, I'm glad our rivals are back in school: We know they need it. ♦

# The must-have dish for China's Lunar New Year

BY KevinYang

Like many other countries, China celebrated the Lunar New Year as a festive start to 2023 — and as a relatively recent immigrant, I was not there.

While sitting in a local restaurant and finishing dinner, I remembered what this was like in China: the lively firecrackers, exciting TV shows and, most importantly, the iconic, must-have dishes on our table. For my family, dumplings are the most important dish.

On the day before Lunar New Year, my grandma would put the dumplings that were freshly prepared early in the pot to preserve the flavor. At the same time, even relatives who were living far away would come to our house for a gathering and sit together at one table waiting for the hot, juicy dumplings.

The dumplings are made in an ingot shape, representing wealth in Chinese culture. There is also a tradition where we hide a coin in one of the dumplings. When the lucky person eats the dumpling

with the coin, it means that they will have the greatest fortune.

Then there is also the firewood-cooked braised crucian carp. Typically, my father makes this meal by himself. While my mother's cooking style is gentle and cautious, my father lets the fire run wild and swallow the iron pot. When the crucian carp's skin turns to a golden color, you know it is ready to move on to the next and final stage of this meal's preparation. With a spoon of elaborate braised sauce, a classic Braised crucian carp is served!

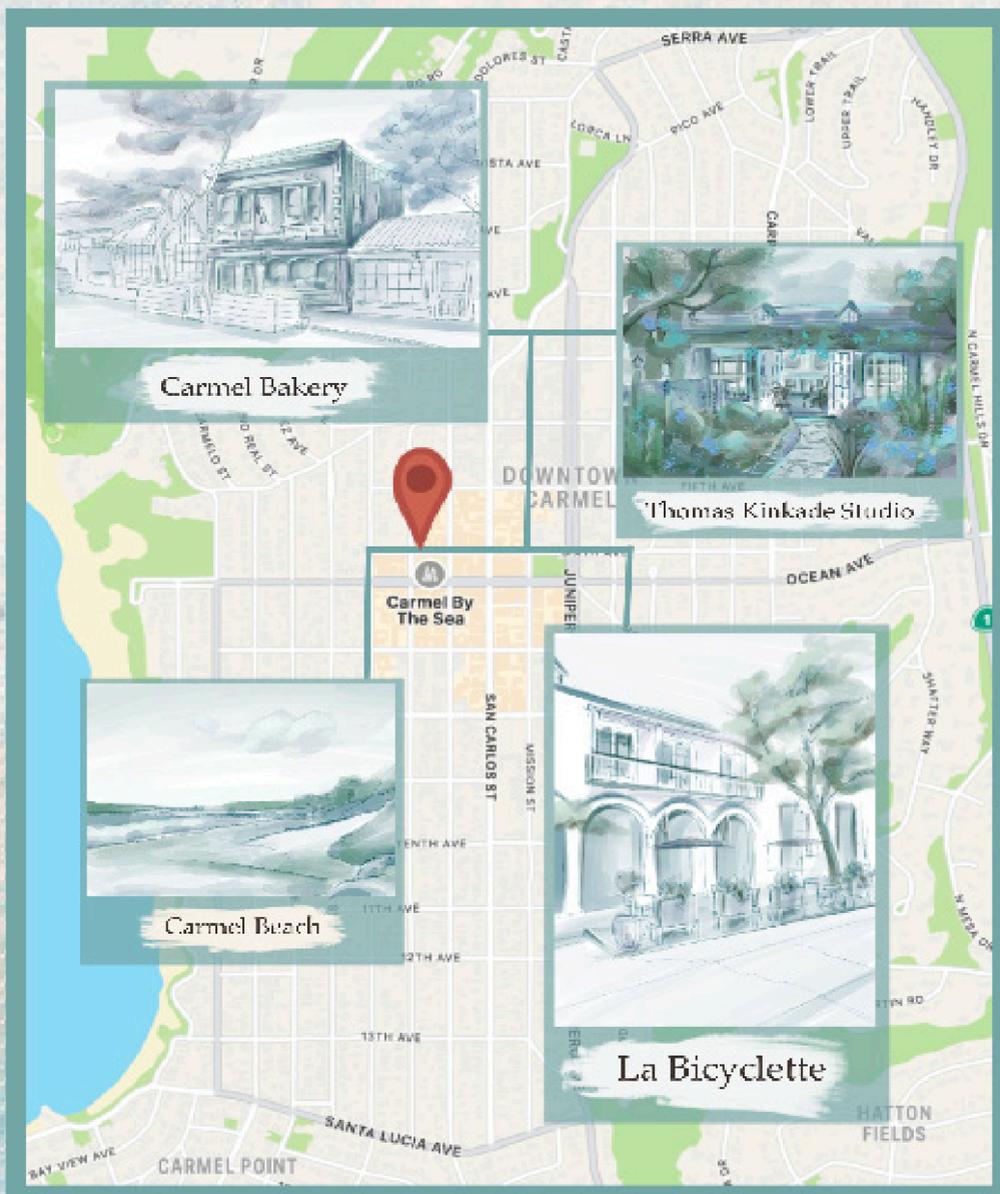
The color red represents the beloved and wealth. A mix of spicy skin and sweet meat grants people a feeling of accomplishment after an eventful year. No matter how delicious the braised carp is, there will always be leftovers, symbolizing the surplus of wealth and knowledge people will have that year.

With families all gathered around the dinner table, these holiday specials taste more warming as ever and bring joy to the rest of the year. The lesson: Dishes always taste better when families are together. ♦



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

# 48 HOURS in CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA



by Nikhil Mathihalli & Neal Malhotra

Carmel-by-the-Sea, a quaint little town of just over 3,000 people, just south of Monterey with beautiful views and calming beaches, is the perfect place to spend your February ski week or Spring Break. You can find delectable food and a bustling downtown less than 90 minutes away — it's the perfect way to spend two days (or more) with your family.

Say you have 48 hours in Carmel — and don't know what to do? Here is a game plan that is sure to result in unforgettable memories:

Upon arrival, we recommend staying at a beach-side rental — looking at a few locations on Airbnb or Vrbo can give a good idea of high-quality and relatively affordable locations.

DAY 1 **9 a.m.: Carmel Bakery**

Carmel is known for its pastry shops. Once you smell the sweet aroma of cinnamon just outside the door, you know you're at the Carmel Bakery — one of the town's best bakeries. This bakery has been serving sweet treats for over 30 years and is a must-visit for anyone with a sweet tooth.

It offers a wide variety of unique and delicious treats, from pistachio cannolis to cinnamon flat crisps. Made with high-quality ingredients, the pastries are truly unforgettable.

To complement the euphoric taste of its pastries, the bakery has seating inside, and we highly recommend you utilize it: You can enjoy your treats while relaxing in the charming streets of Carmel.

DAY 1 **10 a.m.: Kinkade Studio**

After a big breakfast and a brisk walk, visit the beautiful Thomas Kinkade Gallery for a visual feast. The late painter, also known as the "Painter of Light," has amazing pieces that are displayed all over the gallery.

Kinkade specialized in popular realistic, pastoral and idyllic subjects, such as quaint cottages nestled in lush landscapes and tranquil countryside scenes. His paintings are known for their warmth and inviting tones.

In addition to the paintings on display, the studio also sells specialized gifts, from sculptures to nightlights. For those who want to take a piece of Kinkade's art home with them, these gifts are the way to go.

DAY 1 **12 p.m.: La Bicyclette**

La Bicyclette is a charming, cozy French bistro located in the heart of Carmel. Their menu features a variety of classic French dishes, with an emphasis on fresh, locally-sourced ingredients, such as freshly caught fish.

One of the must-try dishes at La Bicyclette is the champignons provençale, an appetizer with five individual mushroom caps, drenched in a hazelnut-garlic butter sauce with a medley of small herbs and spices.

La Bicyclette is a great choice for an authentic French lunch. With its delicious food and friendly staff, it's sure to be a trip highlight.

**5 p.m.: Visit to Monterey Bay Aquarium**

Heading up north before dinner is a nice way to finish up the activities for the first day. The famous Monterey Bay Aquarium is a must-go if you are in the area — it's only a 15-minute drive from Carmel. The Aquarium features many unique marine animals, for example, multiple playful sea otters, flashy fishes, mesmerizing jellies, and swirling sardines. Many of the animals are residents of Monterey Bay.

One of the newest exhibits, the "Into

the Deep" exhibit, puts a spotlight on lesser-known marine life. It focuses on the animals living in the deep sea. In addition, there are multiple other exhibits like the Sea Otters exhibit, the Splash Zone and Penguins exhibit, the Giant Pacific Octopus exhibit, and many more.

Visitors could spend a whole day here, but if you just want to check out 2-3 exhibits, a couple of hours are fine before you head out for dinner.

**8 p.m.: Dinner at Montrio Bistro**

With just a short 10-minute car ride from Carmel, you can visit the just as charming town of Monterey. A highly frequented spot, it has some great cuisine including the Montrio Bistro.

The Montrio Bistro features New American cuisine at a high price point: It is certainly fine dining, but also a great way to conclude an eventful day. With a homely yet beautiful brick architecture, the place feels cozy and upscale at the same time.

If you hadn't had enough of the seafood

from lunch, this place offers even more sustainable seafood. Everything is green-certified: They want you to "feel good about what you eat!"

Everything there is delicious and for the truly adventurous, they also offer certified Angus and wagyu cuts. After all that food, you won't want to miss out on the homemade Creme Brulee or Bread Pudding.

Then you can take a stroll downtown afterward. It's a quick way to burn off some calories you consumed.

**12 p.m.: Lunch at Pangea Grill**

Pangea Grill is an exciting restaurant with its own flair. The restaurant's interesting name has its own unique story that is very in tune with the restaurant's philosophy — it wants to act as a place to bring people together with its wonderful cuisine. Its name alludes to the fact that we should all come together as one again.

The restaurant has comfortable seating options and beautiful paintings on the walls,

with beautiful star lamps hanging down to illuminate the delicious food and nice ambiance.

They have a large variety of food options ranging from dumpling soup to a wonderful Eggplant Napoleon. There are also many specialty meats like beef or pork. But the seafood is where the place shines. Being right by the beach, the seafood is delivered daily, fresh from the Pacific Ocean.

**2 p.m.: Visit to Carmel Mission**

Carmel Mission, also known as the Royal Presidio Chapel, is a must-visit historic landmark: It was founded by Spanish friar Junipero Serra in 1770 and has served as a center of worship for over 250 years.

The mission is a prime example of Spanish colonial architecture and a currently active Catholic church. Visitors can take a guided tour of the mission, and learn about its rich history and its role in the early development of California. The tour includes the main sanctuary, the museum and the cemetery. The interior of the mission is adorned

with intricate tile work, frescoes and sculptures that are sure to impress.

The Royal Presidio Chapel is also home to many religious artworks and artifacts from the mission's early days. The most famous piece of the collection is the "San Carlos Borromeo," a painting of the patron saint of the mission attributed to the artist Esteban Munras.

Visiting the mission is a contemplative experience, surrounded by the natural beauty of the area. The mission also offers an elegant garden where you can sit and meditate.

**5 p.m.: Go Horseback Riding**

End your two-day vacation on a high note with a horseback ride that showcases the stunning views of the area. There are several companies that offer this activity, but for a truly memorable experience, we recommend Pebble Beach. They will lead you on a tour through the prestigious Pebble Beach golf club and along the stunning Pebble Beach.

As you make your way through this breathtaking landscape, you will be surrounded by a myriad of flowers that add to the already stunning scenery. To make the

most of this experience, we suggest scheduling your ride for around sunset.

Horseback riding is not just a breathtaking way to see the sights, but it also offers an unparalleled perspective of the local area. Explore the diverse landscapes of Carmel, from lush forests to sandy dunes, picturesque golf courses, and the stunning beach, all from the back of a horse or a pony. This intimate activity is the perfect way to create lasting memories and leave a lasting impression before your vacation comes to an end.

As you end your visit, you're sure to find that Carmel-by-the-Sea is a one-of-a-kind experience.

As frequent visitors of the cozy town, we highly recommend indulging in the historic

and cultural parts of the town. The beautiful views alone are astonishing. The feeling of letting your dogs out in the sand is one of the best feelings in the world.

Trust us — it's worth it. ♦

**togotalks**

What is your favorite getaway spot in CA if you had 48 hours?

"I would go to Lake Tahoe because I ski a lot. But otherwise, I also like to eat hot pot with my family in a cabin."



senior **Sihan Ma**

"I like the northern stretch of Highway One because there are a lot of Redwood trees there. It's really pretty and has nice vibes."



junior **Jarrett Singh**

"The local library is an easily accessible getaway spot that welcomes everyone and anyone, with or without a card."



junior **Carine Chan**

# Behind the scenes: How the BnB videos recognize long-time senior participants

BY NIKHIL MATHIHALLI

Each year, the Indian Cultural Awareness Club (ICAC) organizes Bombay in the Bay (BNB), a Bollywood-themed fundraising event where students around the school sing and dance to well-known Bollywood songs. A typical BNB show consists of 18 dances — grade-level dances and specialty dances including Tamasha, Classical, Singing and Bhangra — paired with an ongoing skit throughout the show.

Of the many seniors who perform during the show, a handful of them also participate in the All-Girls Dance (AGD) or the All-Males Dance (AMD).

Those in AGD and AMD practice a 9-12 minute dance that they will perform at the end of the show. Right before their performance, a 5- to 10-minute video that introduces each member of the two dances is played to the audience as a tribute to the graduating seniors who performed in BnB for all four of their high school years (due to the pandemic, only three years are required this year).

According to senior ICAC club officer Avani Gupta, the video for the AGD members was recorded over the weekend of Feb. 4, after the majority of the girls learned the dance. Unlike in previous years, where the video centered around themes like “The Bachelorette” or “The Avengers,” the female

ICAC officers decided to not have a theme for the video.

Each senior has a 10- to 15-second feature with a name attached to it that encapsulates a certain personality trait that relates to the general theme. In previous years, the videos ended with a sign-off on the “iconic McAfee step scene,” a key tradition where the video closes with all the girls climbing up the steps of the McAfee Center and turning around to face the camera.

**“I think that the videos are a great way to get the performers to show a little bit of their personality.”**

SENIOR Ishir Lakhani

However, Gupta and the other officers want to shift away from that scene. Instead of typically wearing all-black to close the scene, the officers decided on wearing lehengas, a traditional Indian dress. She and the other ICAC officers have arranged for senior Darren Guo, an avid filmmaker, to edit the video.

Additionally, Gupta said that the girls have decided to include some form of trib-

ute to “thank the parents” of those in AGD for their support over the last four years. In the AGD dance, each member’s costume will include small pins representing their parents in some way.

The video aside, Gupta said that she is mainly focused on teaching the dance to members of AGD than editing the video.

“We have a total of 15 songs and the act is almost nine minutes long,” Gupta said. “Since it’s so long, we finished the choreography over the summer so that we would have more time to teach the dance.”

Although AGD does not have a theme this year, the AMD dance and video will revolve around the TV show “Phineas and Ferb.” The officers started making the AMD mix last July with hand-picked quotes from “Phineas and Ferb” episodes, senior officer Anand Agrawal said.

However, AMD also decided to implement major changes of their own — unlike before, the AMD dance is open to anyone who is willing to join and learn the 11-minute-long dance.

The video, however, is only open to those who have participated in BNB for the last three years — those who haven’t will have a significantly smaller role in the video.

“We see no point in limiting the dance to a set of people in order to promote inclu-

siveness within the show,” Agrawal said.

Another significant change Agrawal and the other male officers implemented is the use of props within the AMD dance — in addition to their video, they are incorporating a mini-skit within the AMD dance and according to Agrawal, “[they] will end up presenting an incredible show.”

While the process can be hard, especially for the organizers and dance choreographers with inconsistent attendance, tight deadlines, and logistical concerns, Agrawal said that the officers hope for a smooth show.

“We honestly just want to present a funny, entertaining show to bring the community together and showcase what BNB is really about,” he said.

Senior Ishir Lakhani called this year’s video theme “nostalgic,” a perfect closing chapter to years of leading and choreographing BNB.

“I think that the videos are a great way to get the performers to show a little bit of their personality and help the audience connect with some of the people that they’re going to see dancing,” Lakhani said. “It’s a good way for the performers to enjoy themselves and really get together before they head off to college and go their separate ways. I think it’s a beautiful thing.” ♦



Lakhani

# New Works Festival spotlights student talent

BY ALLISON TAN

Senior Drama Club officers Ananya Gupta and Amrita Gopal remember standing proudly as they watched the play they had written, “Lost in Translation,” come to life at last year’s New Works Festival. Gupta said the show always brings her excitement, especially since it’s the Drama Club’s last show of the year where students display unique and different skills.

New Works is a festival of students’ written, directed and acted plays that are held in the ThermoDrama Center every year; this year it is on March 17 and 18. Organized by Drama Club, the event is open to anyone interested in participating, regardless if they have



Gupta

drama experience or are in the drama class.

Students have already begun to prepare for New Works by writing their own pieces or preparing for auditions happening on Jan. 31 from 3 to 5:30 p.m. in the ThermoDrama Center.

Acts were selected by the Drama Club officers after submission earlier in the year, leaving a handful of finalists. There are usually 40 participants from a range of student writers, directors and actors as well as lighting and sound technicians. The festival features eight performances, some of which include original absurdist plays, realist plays and comedies.

“It allows us to do shows that are chosen and written by us, while giving us this inde-

pendence to tell the stories that we think are important to be told and explore so many different genres,” Gupta said.

New Works enables students to experiment in different fields within the scope of theater that they don’t normally turn to. Students interested in multiple jobs, such as senior Dragon Neal, can code work on the light board for their own directed shows.

According to Gupta, the informal nature encourages students to try new things and become “so much more comfortable fulfilling different needs in drama.”

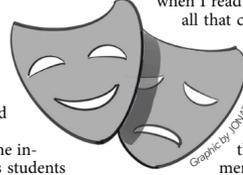
The New Works Festival is also open to

all grade levels, allowing underclassmen like freshman Nila Venkataratnam to highlight their work.

“We just started, but I’m really excited because it’s my first time directing and, when I read the play, I was thrilled to see all that could be done with it because it’s super cute and can be widely understood,” Venkataratnam said.

Because New Works features students in a more casual and avant-garde way, the showcase allows for enjoyment for anyone who attends.

“[Writing a play] was the funniest, coolest thing ever, so the New Works Festival has always been the best memory for me,” Gupta said. ♦



Graphic by ANAMIKA ANAND

# ‘It Ends With Us’ popularizes glamorization of abuse

BY NIDHI MATHIHALLI

After relenting to peer pressure, I finally downloaded Instagram last summer. This decision opened the floodgates and soon VSCO, TikTok and more resided on my phone. Of course, my short attention span prevented me from keeping the social media downloaded for more than two weeks. But even during these two weeks, one specific TikTok genre soon earned my wrath: BookTok, which focuses on book reviews on fan-favorite books.

And as an avid reader, I saw BookTok promoting excruciatingly bad writing styles. Worse yet, the platform seems to normalize the romanticization of domestic abusers, murderers, bullies and more.

One of BookTok’s most popular books is “It Ends With Us” by Colleen Hoover. While the book may seem like an innocent romantic tragedy, its underlying tones are harmful to the future of romance books, especially with the trope of an abusive boyfriend.

The book follows the main character Lily

Bloom, who struggles with her past involving domestic abuse. As she navigates Boston, she falls in love with neurosurgeon Ryle Kincaid. While their initial reactions are innocent and point to a beautiful ending, things take a dark turn when Kincaid begins to abuse Bloom. Although the book itself may not romanticize abusers per se, its social media presence has become increasingly alarming. While some readers understand that these topics should not be glamorized, many viewers advertise the book as a “dark romance.” This increased viewership led to Hoover creating a coloring book on “It Ends With Us,” further glorifying the trauma and romanticizing domestic abuse in the book. As Twitter user HastiReads says, “Colleen Hoover creating a coloring book for a novel that’s supposedly about [domestic violence] and [sexual assault] is just profiting off of the subjects.”

Bowing to this pressure, Hoover eventually stopped the development of the coloring book, which had already been written but not yet published. However, the precedent of romanticizing abuse in fiction is

hardly novel or OK.

In 2019, singer and songwriter Madison Beer said in an Instagram Live Q&A session that her favorite book was Vladimir Nabokov’s 1955 novel “Lolita.” The book is written from the point of view of a middle-aged literature professor, who in the book goes by Humbert Humbert, who is obsessed with Dolores Haze, a 12-year-old girl. Humbert becomes Haze’s stepfather, following which he kidnaps and sexually abuses her. The book follows Humbert’s journey from place to place, with the book critically acclaimed for its literature and style choices.

**The platform has normalized the romanticization of domestic abusers, murders, bullies and more.**

Beer went on to state how she “definitely romanticized” the novel. But while it led to lots of backlash, Beer herself did not face consequence for promoting the book, in-

stead growing her social media presence since then.

This idea of romanticizing abuse and pedophilic tropes is horrible, and with the veil that social media presents, it is having a stronger online presence than ever. This great presence exemplifies the even greater need for authors to stop writing such books and for social media users to stop romanticizing them. While “Lolita,” can and should be considered as a standard for true literature, its praise should start and end at Nabokov’s writing style. Romanticizing the book, as Beer did, is far from the book’s purpose, both contributing to the cycle of the “domestic abuse” trope while devaluing Nabokov’s true purpose.

Domestic abuse is not love — it should never be mistaken for love and should not be a source of profit for authors and celebrities with an online platform. And even more importantly, we as readers should not encourage this behavior.

So please — if you have an iota of respect for the victims of sexual assault or domestic abuse, don’t read books like “It Ends With Us” and contribute to their financial success.

Romance is fine to glamorize; abuse is not. ♦

# I just cannot finish ‘The Big Bang Theory’

BY SARAH ZHOU

Editor’s note: This article contains spoilers for Seasons 1 through 6 of “The Big Bang Theory.”

I haven’t finished watching all 12 seasons of “The Big Bang Theory.” After stopping at the middle of Season 7, I can confidently say I will never make it to the end of the CBS series that debuted in 2007.

This contradicts my usual habit of finishing every show series I start, and I’m usually fine with anything from beheadings to Phil Dunphy’s jokes.

When I first started watching the “Big Bang Theory” last semester, it was because one of my teachers referenced the show to illustrate concepts learned in chemistry.

At first, I enjoyed the show’s flat, sarcastic and unintentional humor.

The plot circles around four original main characters.

Sheldon Cooper (Jim Parsons), Leonard Hofstadter (Johnny Galecki), Howard Wolowitz (Simon Helberg) and Rajesh Koothrappali (Kunal Nayyar) — who try to find love while feeding their passions for video games and science.

From the very beginning, Sheldon has Asperger’s-like characteristics.

He is unable to comprehend or interpret most human emotions — is made fun of and constantly put in situations uncomfortable for both him and the viewers.

Though Leonard often justifies Sheldon’s actions, which frequently come off as offensive, he becomes rude and impatient with Sheldon after Season 2.

He constantly making jokes about Sheldon’s unnamed disability while still claiming to be Sheldon’s best friend.

At first, Sheldon is able to laugh off others’ biting comments about him, but even-



Graphic by LEYNA CHAN

tually, he becomes evidently tired of explaining to his friends that they need to stop calling him crazy and making fun of things about him he cannot control.

Jokes about Sheldon aren’t the only discriminatory commentary the show makes about disabilities.

Raj’s selective mutism around women is also the subject of many cruel jokes from other characters, while his anxiety about it is constantly written off.

Additionally, the show routinely mocks various conditions such as depression, speech impediments, attachment disorders and obesity, adding in laugh tracks every time a joke about one is made.

Moreover, women in the show are basically treated as a joke. They are frequently

the subject of Sheldon’s misogynistic criticism (though he also just thinks he is above everyone, not just women).

Females are depicted as either not as deserving of their achievements or as dumb blondes who need to learn more about STEM and Star Trek.

Bernadette, Howard’s girlfriend and later wife, is stereotyped as an over-controlling, overbearing brat who hinders her husband from reaching his potential.

Penny, stereotyped as a dumb-blonde, is shamed for having a long list of men whom she has slept with.

However, Howard is admired for bragging about being a creep and spending the night with dozens of prostitutes — showcasing an obvious double standard.

Furthermore, the “Big Bang Theory” also depicts male feminism in a negative light.

While producers glorify Sheldon, Howard and Leonard’s toxic masculinity, Raj’s self-expression is constantly responded to with disparaging comments about men “acting like girls.”

At times, Raj, the only main character who is a person of color, seems only to serve as a way for others to make racist jokes.

Several characters indulge in making fun of Raj’s “exotic” Indian accent, Indian culture, Indian religion and ways of life.

There is an episode where 10 minutes out of 20 is spent mocking Raj’s pronunciation of words.

In addition, the majority of the jokes Howard, who is Jewish, makes are self-deprecating and centered around negative stereotypes of Jewish masculinity and family dynamics.

That’s it. The show is mediocre at best.

Originally, the show’s jokes about science were worth sticking around for, but even those become sparse in the later seasons.

**In recent seasons the only character arc is that: either they don’t change for a decade or their bad habits get worse.**

The show’s focus shifts more toward relationships and only occasionally throws in a scientific achievement for one of the guys.

Overall, the writers’ determination to incorporate offensive jokes into seemingly every second of the show made watching it unbearable for me, and a hard no for anyone who asks if I recommend it. ♦

# Love is in the air — but not in dating shows

BY BEVERLY XU

Excited singles, a not so deserted island, a reward for coupling up and — the best part — drama, drama, DRAMA. This compelling plot was the gist of “Single’s Inferno,” my favorite reality dating show produced by Netflix.

But despite all the participants who went in with hopes of finding a long-lasting relationship, the show left almost all of them sorely disappointed. In the first season, all the participants feel ridiculously fake.

No conversation is truly honest, such as when Jin-taek tells So-yeon, “you’re the only woman for me,” but then turns around to flirt aggressively with Ji-yeon, another female contestant.

It feels like everyone is leading each other on and pursuing people who don’t return their feelings — and part of that blame should be placed on the structure of the show itself. Both seasons of “Single’s Inferno” have activities where participants can talk with other participants of their choice, but that choice is continuously based on first impressions — looks-wise. With each first conversation, all participants inevitably become interested in one person, and get to know that one person better. No matter what, those first impressions always seemed to stick.

Even if two participants manage to couple up and go to “Paradise” — a luxury resort off of the island — the show has a ridiculous amount of unbearable misunderstandings.

The magnitude of first impressions and lack of communication come together to prevent the show

from producing any couples that, outside of the show, continue to have a long-term relationship.

Because of the short, 10-day timeframe during which the show takes place, even the couples that were together from start to end, like Seo-eun and Yoong-jae from Season 2, do not have a lasting public relationship, if at all. “Single’s Inferno” is by far not the only dating show on Netflix that values competition and drama over a long-lasting relationship. Netflix also produces “Love Island,” “Too Hot to Handle,” “F Boy Island,” “The Ultimatum,” “Dating Around,” “Sexy Beasts,” “Dated and Related,” “Why Knot” and “Love Never Lies” — all of which, in some form, fail to create a permanent link. There are some exceptions, like “Dating on the Spectrum,” “Indian Matchmaking” and “Love is Blind,” but the latter show pushes contestants into a marriage and still catalyzes drama. Over-looking all the problems in “Single’s Inferno,” I still enjoyed the drama, sparse genuine moments and comedic awkwardness of the participants trying to find their partner.

When my favorite couple, Seo-eun and Yoong-jae, stayed up all night to have an honest conversation on their last day on the show, I could feel some semblance of a strong relationship growing.

But for the majority of the show, that was not the case, and same goes for other Netflix reality dating shows — you can really only enjoy them if you can find something other than solid relationships to root for. As the saying goes: Come for the hopeful singles, stay for the juicy inferno. ♦

# Two romantic comedies that are absolute works of art

BY ANIKA KAPASI

The unexpected meet-cute, expected happy ending, first heart-skipping-a-beat kiss and moment where they realize they loved each other all along: Romantic comedies are the most superior genre to ever exist.

As a total sucker for rom-coms, I’ve watched so many I have lost count, but I have loved every single one of them — even the most cliché and artificial ones. However, there are two rom-coms that will forever hold a special place in my heart:

“How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days” and “10 Things I Hate About You.”

**“How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days”**

In the 2003 film, advertising executive Benjamin Barry, played by Matthew McConaughey, confidently bets he can make any woman fall in love with him in 10 days. Getting set up with magazine columnist Andie Anderson, played by Kate Hudson, he has no idea that the woman he’s looking to date is working on a new column called “How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days” and does everything she can to drive him crazy.

Andie literally tries anything to push Benjamin away, from talking to his mother behind his back, making him get a soda in the most crucial moment of a Knicks basketball game, to even getting him a dog who pees all over his apartment.

Hudson perfectly portrays

her character: a perky, endearing journalist, who doesn’t back down from a challenge. All of her embarrassing and cringe-worthy actions, the ones that would make any sane person insane, never fail to make me laugh and make her an unforgettable actress, especially when she sings “You’re So Vain” off-pitch and crazily in front of her colleagues.

When Benjamin comforts Kate at his parent’s house, it marks the moment they really fell in love with each other and it is hands down one of the best heartfelt and genuine scenes in the movie.



Graphic by ANAMIKA ANAND

**“10 Things I Hate About You”**

“10 Things I Hate About You” perfectly captures the iconic enemies to lover’s arc as abrasive and social disaster Kat Stratford, Julia Stiles’ iconic character, crosses paths with the rule breaker and overconfident Patrick Verona, played by Heath Ledger.

A family rule forbids pretty

and popular younger sister Bianca from dating until her older sister Kat does. So in an attempt to win over Bianca, Cameron, a potential boyfriend played by Joseph Gordon-Levitt, desperately attempts to set Kat up with Patrick.

Even though the film came out over 20 years ago, it’s yet to lose its touch, even with a recycled plot idea regarding the exaggerated, fan-favorite, cliché high school experience — boy takes a bribe to ask a girl to prom, discovers he loves her and she loves him, and then it all blows up in their faces when girl finds out about the bribe.

In the paintball scene, it’s so refreshing when the two headstrong characters finally let their guard down in front of each other, sharing their true feelings and first kiss. Stiles especially is such a powerful character through her interactions with her English teacher in the classroom, showcasing her rebellious, feminist side.

And the supporting cast is absolutely fabulous at creating a feel-good movie I could rewatch any day. Rom-coms, especially “How To Lose a Guy in 10 Days” and “10 Things I Hate About You,” never fail to leave me emotionally invested in the actors and their relationships.

The puddle of feel-good feelings that consume me every time I rewatch the two movies have helped turn me to a world of predictable and heartwarming experiences to escape an exhausting reality. ♦

# CAMPUS NATURE

THE CAMPUS IS HOME TO A MYRIAD OF PLANTS AND ANIMALS

by VictoriaHu & SarahZhou

In his day-to-day work, maintenance supervisor Paul Weir sees a variety of animals around campus. He recalls that when school was remote during the 2020-2021 year, he would routinely notice a coyote on the baseball field.

Weir is not alone in observing wildlife that inhabit or intrude on the school's 40 acres. Alongside other staff members, he has taken note of the habits of birds, rabbits and other species that live in the school's rooftops and bushes. Large tree canopies between hallways also provide a convenient bridge for raccoons and mice when they are overgrown.

Weir recalls seeing a family of Canadian Geese last year that nested above the administration building and frequently walked the building's roofs. When the geese chicks grew old enough, they left their rooftop nest to wander the school's hallways.

Other staff members report similar wildlife sightings, particularly during the year of online learning during the pandemic.

Math teacher Audrey Warmuth, who frequented campus, noticed a greater animal presence when the school was devoid of students.

"The campus had a really different 'feel' because there was hardly anyone here," Warmuth said. "One of the few positives was that there seemed to be more birds. These geese must have had a nest on campus or close to campus because I saw them often. Seeing them always brightened my day."

Additionally, throughout the years, students in the quad have been subjected to seagull poop if they were sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time, journalism adviser Michael Tyler said.

Other prominent birds on campus include a large

population of crows, which school resource aide Raquel Kirby described as being especially "smart and crafty." Kirby also remembers seeing a bird flying around in the The Learning Center last spring as well as a brown bunny by former athletic director Tim Lugo's office, which she crossed paths with on the track.

College and Career Center (CCC) Specialist Brad Ward recalls chasing out a crow that had walked several feet into the CCC building when she left the doors wide open.

"The crows on this campus are nuts," Ward said. "Just watch the trees by the quad towards the end of lunch, and then when the bell rings and students begin to return to campus, how 100 of them swoop down to scavenge anything."

In addition to crows, the area around the CCC is home to hummingbirds on both

the front and back sides of the building with a reptile habitat in the rocky area on the side by the music building, she said. Other birds sometimes try to nest on the roof overhang and fly into the windows, which Ward has tried to prevent by papering her windows with flyers.

Other miscellaneous animals on campus, according to assistant principal Matt Torrens, include rabbits living in the bushes by the gym and dance studio, raccoons that scamper onto the roof in the math quad and gopher snakes that leave behind their skins in various places around campus.

Torrens has heard reports of bald eagles and golden eagles flying overhead, alongside deer which come up from the creek to approach campus.

English teacher Meg Battey has seen skunks roaming the hallways early in the morning, and squirrels frequently jumping from tree to tree. A small lizard also visited math teacher Lisa Ginestet-Araki's room a few times this year, leading to her stopping class to catch it with students to put it back outside.

Frequent sightings of birds and other wildlife have piqued the interest of staff members such as administrative assistant Alison Montgomery, who enjoys interacting with colonies of crows, chestnut-backed chickadees and mated ravens that live on campus.

"The mated ravens are just as intelligent [as crows], and if you watch them fly, they can do more acrobatics in the air, so they're very cool to watch," she said.

Montgomery has also helped rescue injured birds at school, which she then sends to the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley, located by Alum Rock Park in San Jose, for rehabilitation. Once, when assistant principal Brian Thompson noticed an injured crow fluttering in the parking lot, Montgomery was able to catch the bird using a blanket that she keeps in the back of her car and later sent it to the rehabilitation center.

"I like animals, so I do a lot of research on animals when I see them — we're all about the birds in this office," Montgomery said. "Every day when I come to work, I just look at the birds and I'm fascinated by them."

reflect different cultures of the student body. Many of these trees have been growing for decades, the oldest of which is a Redwood growing between the football field and the sports court, inherited from the farm that the school was built on. Other Redwood and Cottonwood trees, planted in the quad when the school was established, have now grown up to be over 100 feet tall.

However, many of these trees are getting near the end of their lifespans, leading Weir to create a landscape plan to substitute new trees for some existing trees. Additionally, many trees in the school corridors only have trunks visible, with the majority of the canopy above the roof. This creates extra work for the maintenance crew when trees drop leaves and acorns, and the crew also prefers to have smaller, less mature flora on campus that are actually visible, rather than just trunks, Weir said.

With the recent winter storms, making the maintenance crew's job more difficult. Following the storms, the maintenance crew removed 20 yards of debris from the campus walkways and also routinely monitored the storm drains to ensure that they didn't back up, leading to mini floods in the hallways.

"When you see all the limbs on the ground, bushes torn up, debris everywhere — we clean that up," Weir said. "The winds snap off weaker branches and leaves, so it becomes a job to pick up everything that breaks off."

Everything the maintenance team's work with landscaping and tree upkeep, Weir has noticed a gradual improvement in the campus's visual appeal.

"When I first saw Saratoga High [in 1975], it looked like a prison," said Weir, a longtime resident of the area who graduated from the school. "To me, it was the cinderblock tiles that were all squared up in front and on one level. But over the years, I've seen it soften and the landscape mature." ♦

Groundskeepers monitor tree growth

Located by the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the school's campus spans 40 acres — built atop a former prune yard when the school was established in 1959.

In the early 1950s, Saratoga had little urban or even suburban development and under 1,500 residents. Farms and orchards were common sights. Then post-World War II construction of single-family homes began at warp speed, turning the town into a desired community for families. By the time the school opened its doors a decade later, the building boom had resulted in more housing and a population of roughly 14,000 residents.

The city's flat landscape nestled between hills is still synonymous with its topography today; since the school's beginning, the city's population has increased to more than 30,000.

Despite the farmland's conversion to suburban lots for housing, species of trees continue to flourish on campus.

Redwood, Cypresses, Hollywood Juniper and Pepper are the most prevalent types of trees on campus. According to Torrens, a variety of species, such as palm trees and Japanese Maples, were chosen to

reflect different cultures of the student body. Many of these trees have been growing for decades, the oldest of which is a Redwood growing between the football field and the sports court, inherited from the farm that the school was built on. Other Redwood and Cottonwood trees, planted in the quad when the school was established, have now grown up to be over 100 feet tall.

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POST-COVID INCREASE IN CRIME IN SARATOGA LEADS TO IMPLEMENTATION OF CAMERA SYSTEM ACROSS THE CITY

By Saachi Jain

On the night of Nov. 8, 2022, two burglars kicked down the front door of Saratoga resident Paul Corsbie's house when he was out of town. The burglars quickly ransacked his bedroom and hauled away a 300-pound safe — effectively evading security precautions he had installed such as alarms and cameras.

Though the police responded quickly, the suspects were gone by the time they arrived and were never caught.

This break-in was part of a post-pandemic increase in residential burglaries in the area — one that many residents say needs to be curtailed through the use of security cameras that capture license plate numbers and other identifying information about potential suspects.

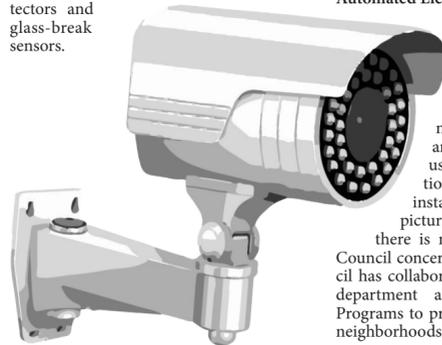
During the pandemic, residents stayed home for prolonged periods, drastically reducing the number of home burglaries.

However, following looser pandemic restrictions and more residents returning to their workplaces in the past year, crime rates in Saratoga have risen again. Residential burglaries continue to be the most common form of crime in the area, mainly occurring between 5 p.m. and midnight on Fridays and Saturdays — periods when many people aren't typically home. Crime also increases during the summer months, when residents tend to go on vacation.

Neighborhood Watch: preventing crime

After crime rates reached an all-time high in 2016, the Sheriff's Department collaborated with the City Council to raise awareness regarding Neighborhood Watch programs, nearly 60 of which have been established around the city. Many Neighborhood Watch programs emphasize a tightly knit community of neighbors who look out for each other and work with local law enforcement to report suspicious activity. Though they rarely include the implementation of cameras or security measures across a neighborhood, signs posted on roads often deter potential criminals from acting in an area.

In addition to these watch programs, many homes in Saratoga are protected by security systems from companies like Ring and Google that equip houses with basic alarms, motion detectors and glass-break sensors.



But in cases like Corsbie's, those measures aren't always enough.

"My home is equipped with home alarms and multiple cameras, and we were all working when this burglary took place," Corsbie said. The system was unable to deter the thieves or catch them afterward.

While Corsbie did not receive much benefit from these safety precautions, many Sheriff's deputies have seen their effective use. Ricardo Urena, Commander Captain of the West Valley Patrol, said, "A lot of folks who have an alarm system also have a video camera system around the exterior of their home. These cameras have motion-activated lights, and if someone is coming to your front door, we've seen crooks run away because they think someone is inside."

Many burglars look for houses that appear vacant. Hence, some homeowners utilize timers when they are out of town for prolonged periods to make their homes appear occupied.

These timers cycle lights on and off in various portions of the house throughout the day, and the television automatically switches on for an hour or two in the evening. Urena has seen cases in which the opposite occurs as well.

"Homes have been breached because they appeared unoccupied, but there were in fact people inside who then confronted the burglar," he said.

**"We cannot continue to let criminals invade our safe places, especially our homes."**

RESIDENT Paul Corsbie

Even when you are home, Urena said it is important to remain mobile, whether that involves periodically switching rooms or making noise to indicate that your home is occupied. A lot can be done to prevent such crimes from taking place at all, but many efficient methods such as Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) have emerged, allowing for a quicker resolution from law enforcement after a crime has taken place.

**Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR)**  
Following a spike in burglaries around Highway 9 in the Quito neighborhood in 2022, the Sheriff's department increased the number of patrol cars in the area and caught two suspects using new license plate detection technology, cameras that instantly capture and process pictures of license plates. Though there is no commission in the City Council concerning home safety, the council has collaborated with both the Sheriff's department and Neighborhood Watch Programs to promote safety precautions in neighborhoods.

"A lot of crimes are committed with the assistance of a vehicle," council member Mary-Lynne Bernald said.

"License plates give the sheriff's office actionable and objective leads that they can act on."

The city council proposed a \$20,000 one-year pilot program in which seven ALPR rental cameras from automation company Flock Safety would be installed in streets around the city.

The program was enacted last February and completed in August. Following the one-year plan, the City Council plans to assess the cameras next fall or winter. To capture high-traffic roads, the ALPRs were placed at busy intersections that lead into the city like Saratoga Avenue, Highway 85, Fruitvale Avenue and Highway 9.

While citizens in other counties such as Fairfield and Sacramento have criticized the accuracy of their ALPR data, proponents say the ALPR system has often succeeded in capturing suspects.

For example, a suspect in Fairfield who impersonated a police officer and a perpetrator of a hit-and-run involving a bike were both caught using ALPR cameras.

Urena described several such incidents in Saratoga as well. A few months ago, a lady in Southern California suffering from the early stages of dementia boarded a flight from Los Angeles to Cupertino.

Together with the woman's daughter, the department found her driving in Saratoga with her license plate number, he said. Similar success stories have led Urena to conclude that the program's benefits outweigh any of its downsides.

"Occasionally, lighting conditions or the angle of a photo have produced inaccurate results compared to when we look at the license plate ourselves," Urena said.

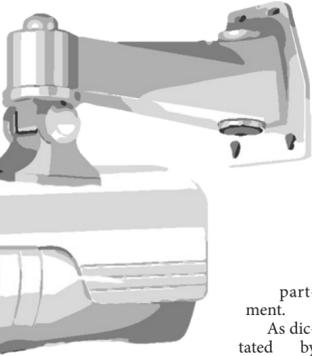
"However, there have also been countless incidents where a dire situation was resolved with the cameras, so the main hurdle of the system — efficacy — has already been overcome."

Privacy concerns from residents

The city has also implemented other systems to ensure the privacy of citizens. Though maintenance for the cameras is sub-contracted to the Flock company, which complies with the FBI's Criminal Justice Services, only select deputies can access recorded content.

Furthermore, all data is stored in a Department of Defense-approved cloud system and wiped after 30 days unless it is being used in an investigation. That means a car that passed by a camera two months prior would be forgotten.

Data is also prohibited from being downloaded, printed or transferred unless it has been flagged as in use during an active investigation, a marking which also requires approval by deputies within the Sheriff's De-



partment. As dictated by the ALPR policy, the cameras will also be used to locate stolen and wanted vehicles.

Additionally, they can locate individuals with arrest warrants, aid in rescue efforts such as AMBER and Silver Alerts or locate victims and witnesses of a law enforcement investigation.

Though the technology allows for a quicker response to many developing crimes, the ALPR system does not negate such protocols in place following the identification of a suspect regardless of search or arrest warrants.

Another concern for many residents is the use of residential cameras with the city-approved ALPR system. The program allows for data to be gathered from a different model of a Flock camera and processed in the same manner as the ALPR.

In consideration of these worries, Flock Safety ensures that residents' systems aren't used for purposes such as immigrant identification, traffic enforcement and anything besides an active investigation. Even so, many residents have voiced concerns regarding personal safety and privacy.

"There are going to be concerns about privacy," Urena said.

"All the ALPR does, though, is take a picture of the license plate, without any drivers or passengers visible.

No information is provided about the photos unless we explicitly use them in an investigation, and in those cases, all access and its purpose are recorded."

Though the program has only been active for five months, it has already proved helpful in capturing suspects and decreasing residential crime rates.

For example, a car that was driving through Saratoga at 3 a.m. one day in the fall matched the description of a wanted suspect, and the driver was arrested for vehicle theft and drug-related charges, according to Urena.

For residents like Corsbie who have experienced burglaries, programs like the ALPR appear to be a tool worth using.

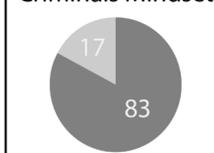
"Burglaries in Saratoga are on the rise, and we cannot continue to let criminals invade our safe places, especially our homes," Corsbie said.

"This program will be beneficial to everyone living in Saratoga, and I have no issues with the use of this technology." ♦



Urena

Criminals Mindset



According to a study by the University of North Carolina, 83% of burglars checked for an alarm system before breaking in.

SARATOGA'S HIDDEN TREASURE  
HAKONE GARDENS

AMID RENOVATIONS, THE LOCAL LANDMARK REMAINS IMPORTANT IN PRESERVING JAPANESE CULTURE AND NATURE

By Beverly Xu

Hakone Gardens, located on Big Basin Way off of Highway 9, was founded by Isabel Stine, a San Francisco philanthropist who was inspired to build Hakone after being captivated by the Japanese Pavilion at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. Hakone was originally landscaped by master gardener Naoharu Aihara, and built by architect Tsunematsu Shintani.

After its construction, Hakone was used as Isabel and her husband Oliver Stines' vacation home, where Isabel would go on to host cultural events, operas and even her wedding to Francis W. Leis after her husband's passing. In 1966, after being passed through many hands, Hakone opened to the public as an official Saratoga city park.

After more than half a century as a public park with the same infrastructure that had served only a small family, the Hakone Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the funding and operation of the garden, is committed to bringing it up to date to showcase its beauty for a growing number of visitors.

Now the oldest Japanese garden in the Western Hemisphere, Hakone Gardens is considered a national heritage site, and is maintained by the Foundation. The foundation's leadership involves an executive board that runs the foundation, a board of trustees to manage the foundation's assets, a group of independent honorary advisors and a dedicated staff for the garden led by executive director Shozo Kagoshima.

Jacob Kellner, Hakone's head gardener, has worked in grounds maintenance at Hakone for over 14 years. Kellner visited Japan in October of 2015 to study Japanese gardening as part of the Sendai volunteer garden-building program and has seen how irreplaceable Hakone is to Bay Area residents and visitors from all over the world.

"My volunteer landscaping work in Japan really helped to remind me of the passion held by landscapers of this style," Kellner said. "Much thought and detail is put into the location and position of each stone, plant and water feature to create a Japanese style garden."

Kellner believes that, like all Japanese gardens that require utmost thought and detail, Hakone provides a place for people to relax and "commune with nature" as a breath of fresh air during their busy days. He hopes that visitors feel a sense of peace and refreshment.

Under Kagoshima's leadership, Hakone has been working on several projects and making plans for future refurbishments. With funding from Santa Clara County, Hakone is currently repairing and restoring the upper garden pathways that have yet to be renovated in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). But due to the large-scale garden construction, the paths will be fixed under these guidelines, allowing the garden to be accessible to a wider range of visitors. According to Kagoshima, the steps will be rebuilt with recycled granite from San Francisco, which will not only divert pounds of granite from the landfill, but will also decrease the cost of construction overall.

**"Much thought and detail is put into the location and position of each stone, plant and water feature."**

GARDENER Jacob Kellner

The second project they are pursuing is replacing the roof on Mon, the representative main gate displayed in brochures and wedding photos. The old shingles have already been removed and scheduled to be replaced with new cedar shingles.

Once the renovations in progress are completed, the garden is working toward implementing the Hakone Master Plan. In 2022, the garden attracted 62,000 visitors, and now aims to renovate the once-private, one-family garden to be able to accommodate the large number of visitors.

The plan is split into four phases:

- Renovating and restoring the Koi fish ponds and the surrounding area.
- Renovating existing buildings and structures.
- Constructing a new visitor entrance and improving customer services.
- Renovating the Cultural Exchange Center

In total, the project is estimated to cost \$27.3 million, although the price tag will likely be lower: Since Saratoga is a public entity, it makes more sense to set a high estimate to account for unforeseen circumstances.

Phase One, the Koi fish ponds, is third in line for renovations after other renovations not part of

the Master Plan — so far, \$1.1 million out of a necessary \$3 million has been raised to provide greater protection for the koi from predators and heat. Already, a new pump house has been installed to increase oxygen levels in the pond and make all areas hospitable for the fish, while running a remarkable \$300,000 below budget.

"The pond is an original feature of the gardens and is over 100 years old. It now leaks water due to severe cracks in the lining," the Hakone Foundation stated in an FAQ about the pond renovations. "We are losing over 15,000 gallons of water on a weekly basis. Even if we weren't in a drought situation, this is a terrible waste."

While the educated estimate for the first phase of renovations was about \$4 million, Hakone was able to plan adequate renovations within a \$3 million budget. The money will also be directed at preventing loss of a considerable amount of water, recontouring the surrounding hillside and renovating the pathways that run alongside the ponds to meet ADA requirements. The reconstruction is set to begin in fall of 2024, and finish by the summer of 2025.

"The gardens provide visitors the opportunity to experience a little bit of Japan, without having to actually go to Japan," Kagoshima said.

To paint a fuller view of Japan for visitors, Hakone holds cultural activities, such as Hina Matsuri (Japanese Doll's Day or Girl's Day), Tanabata Festival (Japanese Star Festival), Toro Nagashi (Japanese Floating Lantern Festival) and the Lunar New Year Festival throughout the year.

"Offering events such as the Lunar New Year Festival is an opportunity to present different types of Asian cultural activities," Kagoshima said.

Junior Minh Do, an inter-district board member of LEO, organized a few activities for the New Year Festival at Hakone: picking up jelly

beans with chopsticks and giving away hóng bao (Chinese red envelopes typically holding cash) filled with chocolate coins and candy. Later on, the school's LEO club also plans to teach an art class at Hakone focusing on Japanese arts and crafts.

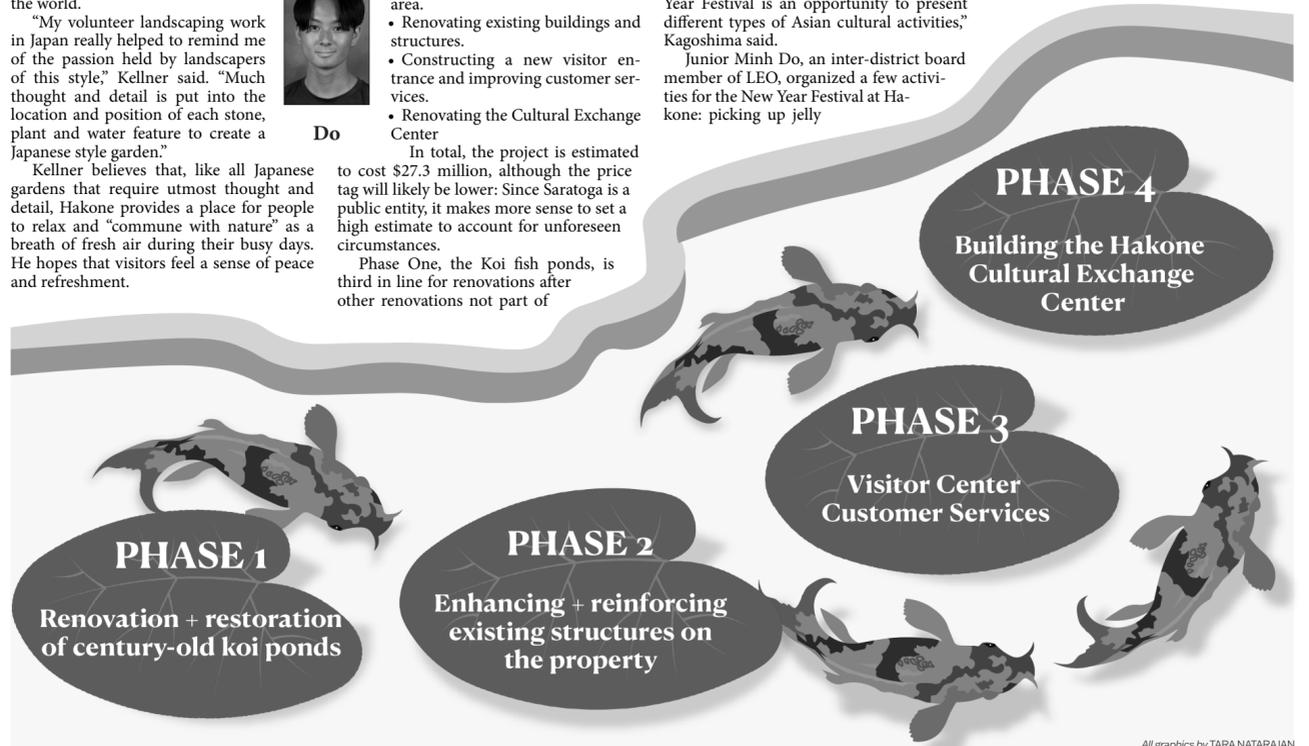
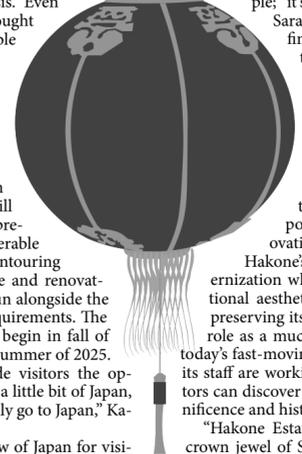
Since he was a child, Do recalls enjoying the Koi fish ponds, walking through the beautiful bamboo forest, attending Hakone's springtime Cherry Blossom Festival and savoring the Chinese New Year dim sum.

"Hakone is really a staple; it's like a landmark of Saratoga," Do said. "And we find it's really important to spread more awareness, not only about Japanese culture, but about Asian culture as well with this Lunar New Year festival."

These continued traditions are juxtaposed with recent renovations, representing

Hakone's move towards modernization while maintaining traditional aesthetics and values. While preserving its natural beauty and its role as a much-needed respite from today's fast-moving society, Hakone and its staff are working to ensure that visitors can discover Hakone in all its magnificence and historical value.

"Hakone Estate and Gardens is the crown jewel of Saratoga's parks. It is a historical asset that has been a part of the city for over 100 years," Kagoshima said. "The Foundation's goal is to ensure the gardens are here for at least another 100 years not only for the residents of Saratoga, but also visitors from around the world to enjoy." ♦



## BOYS' BASKETBALL

## Wildcats deal major blow to Falcons' CCS chances

by Neal Malhotra &amp; Andy Zhu

In a key game for CCS qualification, the boys' basketball team fell at home 63-52 to a strong Los Gatos team on Feb. 8. As of Feb. 9, the Falcons ranked fourth in the De Anza division with a 4-6 record.

After starting the game with a rough first quarter, the Falcons quickly came back in the second quarter, cutting the Los Gatos lead to two points.

The Falcons subsequently missed several free throws and went into halftime down 32-25 after a buzzer-beating 3-pointer from junior guard Bryan Wang.

In the second half, the Falcons struggled against the Wildcats' full court press, which forced several turnovers that contributed to Los Gatos's 45-29 lead heading into the fourth quarter. The Falcons made one final push in the fourth led by senior point guard Nick Tjaden, the team's leading scorer.

With about six minutes left, junior forward Kali Duvvuri stole the ball and scored a quick two-pointer, bringing the score to 55-50.

Tjaden kept the team's momentum going with another mid-range jump shot, but ultimately the Falcons were unable to close the gap and were forced to commit intentional fouls before the final buzzer sounded.



Senior guard Julian Berkowitz-Sklar gets ready for a key defensive possession late in the team's game against Los Gatos High on Feb. 8.

Despite this tough loss, the Falcons were determined to focus on their remaining two games. On Feb. 10, the Falcons played at Palo Alto, and against Los Altos on Feb. 13 at home for their senior night. (Because of printing deadline, The Falcon couldn't cover either game in the print edition.)

Senior guard Niveydh Pai, one of the team's captains, said players struggle in games because of mental lapses in the second half, stemming from minor details like bad passes or turnovers that shift the momentum of winnable games.

Head coach Mike Davey wants the team to keep pushing to the finish line, whether they make CCS or not. Additionally, injuries

have been a season-long problem that they could not avoid — every player missed some time during the season.

Starting center senior Mateusz Palusinski came down with COVID-19 and was out for the whole week of Jan. 30.

At the same time, Duvvuri pulled his finger and junior center Raghav Chakravarti was diagnosed with plantar fasciitis, but both continued to attend practices and games.

The team still has multiple injuries, but they are all playing through the adversity.

"Everyone's dealing with injuries but we're still trying to push through the last few weeks," Pai said. "Overall, I've been satisfied with this year's season." ♦

## GIRLS' BASKETBALL

## Difficult season comes to a close

by Victoria Hu &amp; Annie Liu

The girls' basketball team stood at 2-9, ranked seventh in the De Anza league as of Feb. 10. Their most recent games were a 39-27 loss against Lynbrook on Feb. 9, a 71-56 loss against Los Gatos on Feb. 7 and a 60-48 win against Homestead on Feb. 2 — a win that broke a 5-game losing streak.

With losing preseason and league records, senior point guard Tanya Ghai said she is doubtful that the small eight-player Falcon roster has secured enough wins to qualify for CCS. Despite two key victories against Homestead — 60-48 on Feb. 2 and 45-42 on Jan. 12 — the team lost most of its games and now stands at a 6-17 overall record.

She attributes their losses to the instability caused by the team's constantly changing roster, such as when the varsity and JV teams were merged due to a lack of players.

"I think our team faced a lot of adversity this season," Ghai said, "With showing up and not knowing how things are going to go. But I think we did a really good job of putting that past us and trying hard every game, to see if we could get a good outcome. Sometimes we did, and sometimes we didn't, and that's just how the cards fell."

The team ended its season with their senior night against Los Altos at home on Feb. 14. (Due to



The Falcons face off Homestead High in an away game on Jan. 12.

printing deadlines, the Falcon cannot cover the results of the Feb. 14 game.) Definitive results for CCS qualification were expected to be released on Feb. 15.

The team's starting lineup consisted of Ghai, junior guard Zineerah Ahmed, junior center Priyanka Meduri, sophomore guard Urvi Iyer and sophomore center Riley Adler.

Despite their losses this season, Ghai is proud of the team's growth. After spending all four years of high school on the team, she said playing her final games as a Falcon is bittersweet.

"I think it was a good season," Ghai said. "Obviously, we didn't get a lot of games, but we all grew and learned as basketball players. I think that's the most important thing." ♦

## GIRLS' SOCCER

## Freshman proves to be key player for girls' soccer team as they look to finish in the top four in league

by Anika Kapasi &amp; Kavya Patel

Over the course of the girls' soccer season, the ability to be tactically flexible and quickly adjust from a 4-3-3 to a 5-3-2 formation on the field has greatly benefited the team: Shifting to a 5-3-2 when the opposition is stronger has provided greater discipline to the defensive line and has given better coverage to senior goalkeeper Angelina Hong.

Playing in a 5-3-2 formation, however, means the Falcons lack a third offensive player and makes it more difficult to advance toward goal with multiple players. Some of this disadvantage has been neutralized by the emergence of powerful freshman striker Sahaana Potti; her offensive game has allowed coach Ben Maxwell's 5-3-2 formation to be effective.

Potti has been a crucial part of the offense, working extremely well with freshman striker Keatyn Spendlove up top and scoring 12 out of the team's 28 goals this season. Her attitude and desire to play her best and hold her teammates to the same standard boosted her team's success after moving up to the De Anza league.

Last year, the team went undefeated in the El Camino league and advanced to the CCS semifinals, ultimately losing 5-2 in an away game to Santa Cruz.



Freshman Sahaana Potti dribbles the ball down the line in a 3-2 victory against Gunn on Jan. 27.

As of Feb. 10, the Falcons are placed fourth in the league and must finish in the top four to guarantee a spot in the playoffs. With a 1-1 tie home to Homestead on Feb. 3 and a 3-1 win away to Palo Alto on Feb. 8, the team needs another win on their senior night against Santa Clara on Feb. 15 to make CCS quarterfinals on Feb. 18. (The Falcon

was unable to cover this game in its print edition because of printing deadlines.)

However, with injuries to the starting line-up and limited recovery time between games, Potti asserts that the team's collective mentality has been ever-more important to the outcomes of their games.

"I think our mentality [during some of

our games] has been a setback towards advancing in league because of the losses that we've had against teams that we shouldn't have lost against like [the first time we played] Homestead," Potti said.

Transitioning from playing at a national level, high school soccer has challenged Potti's physicality and given her the opportunity to showcase her leadership skills in the offense.

Along with making strong bonds with upperclassmen, Potti notes that in club soccer, she has to compete not only with other teams, but also her teammates for recruitment and starting spots. She has found the competition in high school to be easier than in club because the rivalry is focused between teams rather than between intra-team competition between players.

Compared to the first game during preseason against Westmont on Dec. 3 and now, Potti has noticed that the team chemistry has really grown over the course of the season.

"During the first game, there weren't many passes and more people trying to show individual skill rather than playing as a team," Potti said. "But, in the second [away] game against Mountain View [on Feb. 1], even though we lost [5-1], you can see how much we've improved as a team [in regards] to passing and ability to build up through the back." ♦

## BOYS' SOCCER

## Boys' soccer ties 2-2 on their anticipated senior night

DESPITE PRESEASON SUCCESS, THE TEAM FEELS THEY DIDN'T FULLY FULFILL THEIR POTENTIAL WITH A 2-5-4 RECORD

by Anika Kapasi

At halftime on their Feb. 7 senior night game against Lynbrook, the boys' soccer team was amped up: They were leading 1-0 after senior winger Luke Wheeler assisted senior winger Yuvraj Singh on a header in the last five minutes of the first half.

However, the Vikings quickly upset the Falcons' momentum, scoring two goals. Later, senior striker and center back Gavin Wheeler scored an equalizer shot into the top right corner near the end of the second half and the score ended tied at 2-2.

"[Senior night] was a little underwhelming because we did end up tying and I thought we could have won," senior captain and right back Dylan Sinton said. "We had some chances where we could have [scored] but I'm just glad it's not a loss as it has been in previous years."

As of Feb. 10, the team, coached by head coach Max Sterling and assistant coach Conner McGoldrick, is sixth in the El Camino league and will not make CCS. Their last

game of the season was away at Los Gatos on Feb. 14 where the team expected to see positive results and hoped to "spoil [the rival school's] senior night," Sinton said.

(The Falcon could not cover this game in the print edition because of printing deadlines.)

**"Out of all the other team, we had the highest potential. No other team [in the league] really had the [level of] talent we had."**

SENIOR Nathan Lim

For Sinton, being a captain was an honor — with the opportunity to lead and encourage his team to perform their best, he did his best to boost morale on the field, during warm-ups or in pregame talks.

However, even with the team's strong

chemistry, they often struggled to reset after a loss.

"As a team, whenever we lost a game, the disappointment turned into a snowball effect for the next games," Sinton said. "I think we have pretty good chemistry, but sometimes we just lose passion and it ends up [hurting us]."

Senior goalkeeper Nathan Lim said that even though players went into games with a positive mentality, their string of losses at the beginning of the season derailed their chances.

"Out of all the other teams, we had the highest potential," Lim said. "No other team [in the league] really had the [level of] talent that we had."

He pointed out that if the Falcons put in players off the bench, they would have performed just as well as their starters.

And for Lim, senior night was evermore important because it was his chance to play on the field, rather than need to stay in their net to be goalkeeper.

"I felt like my entire senior year was lead-

ing up to that game," Lim said. "It was a little bittersweet because I was happy that I got to play on the field, but I wish I had gotten more opportunities [to do so]."

The season was mentally tougher than years before, as Lim's first choice of position was not goalkeeper.

He often felt that getting scored on was solely his fault during the season, but developed the mindset that even though he didn't always want to play in the goal, he would do his best and push through to support his team when the starting whistle blows, no matter the condition. Given a 3-2 preseason record, the Falcons' overall season was a bit underwhelming, especially for the seniors.

"I'm glad that injuries weren't as big of a problem like last year and we were all able to work with each other," Lim said. "And I was just happy to spend my last season with all my friends because I had been playing with many of them since my freshman year." ♦



SENIOR Nathan Lim

## Students react to 49ers' NFC Championship loss

by Nikhil Mathihalli &amp; Kavya Patel

Going into the 2022-23 NFL playoffs, many local fans expected the San Francisco 49ers to return to the Super Bowl.

With a young and strong roster including key players like rookie quarterback Brock Purdy, all-pro tight end George Kittle and defensive MVP candidate lineman Nick Bosa, plus a massive mid-season addition in running back Christian McCaffrey, the San Francisco 49ers were among the top teams to win Super Bowl LVII, riding a massive 10-game win streak to finish the regular season.

However, after cruising past the Seattle Seahawks in the wild card round and edging the Dallas Cowboys in the divisional round, the 49ers ran into a brick wall of bad luck when they traveled to Philadelphia on Jan. 29. After seeing Purdy injured and unable to throw in the first series of the game, they lost 31-7 to the Eagles — the top team in the NFC — in the NFC championship game, continuing their recent streak of falling just short of the Lombardi Trophy. In the 2021-22 NFL playoffs, the 49ers also lost in the NFC championship to the Los Angeles Rams, and in 2019-2020, they made it to Super Bowl LIV but lost to the Kansas City Chiefs.

These recent events have left many 49ers fans at the school disappointed. Many superfans across the school, such as juniors Emily Ta and Josh Ta and senior



Juniors Emily Ta and Josh Ta with their family and friends at the 49ers' home playoff game on Jan. 22.

Max Timmons, believed the 49ers could win it all this season. However, despite the loss to the Eagles, they remain hopeful for the future of the team.

As super fans of the 49ers for around 13 years, Josh and Emily believe that the major reason behind the team's loss is the team's "bad injury luck and the lack of a quarterback."

The Ta family has been season ticket holders since Levi's Stadium first opened in 2014, and hosts

tailgate events before every home game, inviting family and friends to hang out before getting ready for the football game.

When watching the NFC championship game against the Eagles, Josh was disappointed at the unfolding of events but said that it was understandable considering the situation the 49ers were placed in. "I'm definitely sad that we lost and did not like the way we went out," he said. "But I'm glad that we even made it this far with Brock Purdy. The fact that we even made it this far is a miracle."

The 49ers' original starting quarterback, Trey Lance, suffered a broken foot early in the season and was ruled out for the season. Their second-string quarterback, Jimmy Garoppolo, broke his fibula

and tore his deltoid and syndesmotric ligaments and was ruled out for the season in September. As a result, Purdy — previously known as Mr. Irrelevant due to being the last draft pick in the 2022 draft — became the team's quarterback.

Emily was happy that the 49ers were able to make it to the NFC championship game but saddened by the result of the game.

"I feel like we didn't even get a chance to play with Purdy and several other players getting hurt so early into the game," she said.

Bosa was also hurt, as he suffered a knee injury early in the game which caused his play to

worsen as the game went on.

Overall, however, both Emily and Josh are optimistic for the team's future — they hope that the team's new defensive coordinator, Steve Wilks, is effective and that the team will acquire solid cornerbacks to make another title run next year.

Timmons and his family have been 49ers fans for over a decade. They have been season ticket holders since 2012 — when Timmons fell in love with football.

Timmons felt that the loss against the Eagles was "tough, mostly because the team went through four quarterbacks," which was "hard to watch."

He was also disappointed by the string of late losses in previous years: Timmons and his family attended Super Bowl LIV against the Chiefs in person, which the 49ers ultimately lost.

"I was feeling pretty good until the 3rd quarter," Timmons said. "Then things started going south. It's one thing to not make the playoffs every year, but it's another to make it every year and get eliminated. It just sucks."

Regardless, Timmons believes the team's situation is "ideal" and is set up for success in future seasons.

"I think our two-quarterback situation isn't bad," he said. "I think Lance will be our main guy next season, but if things don't work out we can also go with Purdy, who was great this season. Regardless of what's happened, I'm excited for [the team's] future." ♦

## WRESTLING

## Wrestling hopes to increase team size in future years

by Nikhil Mathihalli

The wrestling team this year has only five members — an extraordinarily small team even for a group that annually fights to attract participants.

Those five members recently competed in their league tournament on Feb. 4.

While senior captain Sohum Bhan, the only varsity member of the team, did not place in the tournament, he hoped to place top 16 in the regional qualifier for the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League on Feb. 11 to qualify for CCS. (The Falcon was unable to cover this meet in its print edition because of printing deadlines.)

The only returning members to the team

apart from Bhan, sophomore Rebeca Bossow placed third among the female JV wrestlers and freshman Elizabeth Kline placed fifth. The team operates under head coach Taylor Wilson, who, according to Bhan, has a relatively laid-back approach.

As a senior, Bhan said his main goal for the season was to recruit as many new athletes as possible. To his disappointment, he could only get senior Tony Fernandes to join.

"Although I was slightly unsuccessful, I expect our three returning members to bring along new members with them and expand our wrestling program," Bhan said.

The only returning members to the team

this year were Bhan and Bossow. Kline and Pastega are new members of the team this year but learned the basic skills relatively quickly, according to Bhan.

**The only returning members to the team this year were Bhan and Bossow.**

"Wrestling is a sport where you can't really fake your way through the season, so I really like the way [Taylor Wilson] coaches," Bhan said. "We're all working to improve

our individual skills, and it's more effective to work at your own pace."

Over his four years on the wrestling team, Bhan developed a connection to the sport and those who participate in it. Since he is the only varsity wrestler on the team, he is often unfamiliar with wrestlers from other schools. During the league tournament, Bhan did not know any other wrestlers, but still found the wrestling community welcoming and comfortable.

"[Other wrestlers] allowed me to warm up with them," Bhan said. "Overall, the whole wrestling community is encouraging and it's not toxic like many other sports. I've definitely enjoyed my last four years." ♦

# BRINGING THE SPRING SCOOP

Graphic by HOWARD SHU

## SOFTBALL LOOKS TO RETURN TO CCS

**Head Coach:** Mike Davey  
**Last year's record:** 14-7  
**Recap:** The team finished third in the El Camino league and moved onto CCS, where they lost in the first round.  
**Key Matchups:** Cupertino and Gunn  
**Star Players:** Seniors first baseman Lily Guzman and catcher Irene Fraizer, juniors third baseman Vivienne Brooks and pitcher Saira Ramakrishnan  
**Key losses to graduation:** Pitcher Morgan Curtis, centerfielder Erin Wu and right fielder Arya Taymuree  
**League:** El Camino

**Prognosis:**  
Following a CCS qualification last year, the softball team features many returning players and a similar roster, especially after seeing lower freshmen participation during tryouts on Jan. 30.

With some of their athletes occupied with winter sports, the team currently only has 17 available players attending practices. Additionally, because head coach Mike Davey also coaches boys' basketball, softball practices are currently run by assistant coach Barry Mills.

Senior co-captain Lily Guzman said that there currently aren't enough play-

ers to fill both a varsity and JV team, and they are trying to get at least 22 players for that purpose: 11 for each team.

Despite a lack of newcomers, Guzman is still confident in the team's performance, especially due to many of the returning, experienced players.

Currently, the team practices mainly consist of drills and conditioning. To get back into the sport, the athletes will be practicing fundamentals such as hitting, base running and fielding. The team will play their first game on March 7 against Leigh.

After making it to CCS last year, senior co-captain Irene Fraizer said one of their goals is to repeat that this year, though she "has no doubt in [her] mind that they will." Throughout the season, she aims to build a strong team bond and sisterhood environment for the newer and returning players.

"It's high school and the main goal I want for these girls is to have fun and fall in love with the game like I did," she said. "If the girls enjoy the game, they will naturally want to get better." ♦

— Jonathan Shi



Junior Caitlin Weber prepares to bat during a scrimmage in a team practice on Feb. 9.

## BASEBALL SET FOR SUCCESS WITH NEW FIELD

**Head Coach:** Vincent Augustine  
**Last year's record:** 9-6  
**Recap:** With growing team chemistry, the Falcons made it to the second round of CCS before losing 5-2 to Gunn.  
**Key Matchups:** Gunn, Fremont, Los Gatos and Lynbrook  
**Star Players:** Seniors shortstop and pitcher Lucas Dennis, outfielder and catcher Max Timmons; junior pitcher Shane Timmons  
**Key losses to graduation:** Anthony Sherman, Derek Hsu and Som Teymouri Leigh.  
**League:** El Camino

**Prognosis:**  
Due to delays in the renovations on the batting cage and baseball fields, the baseball team is temporarily hitting and practicing at night time on the Los Gatos High field. However, the team hopes to start the season strong, playing on a new field with turf, a flat surface and no divots after the renovation.

Senior shortstop and pitcher Lucas Dennis said the old field had a few problems and safety issues with many rocks in the dirt and an "excessive amount of divots in the grass."

The new field will be more reliable for practices, as the previous field had drainage issues that barred the team from practicing on rainy days.

According to Dennis, turf allows the ball to move faster and bounce higher — although he was initially concerned that this would affect the team's play, many players on the team already have experience playing on turf fields. He said that "there won't be much adjusting to do."

Hoping to have the Falcons reach CCS once again, Dennis expects practices, once the team officially begins their season with their Feb. 23 game against

Silver Creek, to be lively with a main focus on improving the underclassmen's game. He said the team especially strives to improve its infield defense.

"We are also really trying to encourage consistency during training within the team, especially since we are all to stay fit and exercise regularly in preparation for the season that is underway," Dennis said.

"We should make it to CCS and have a productive season."



SENIOR Lucas Dennis

Another shift for the team has been the numerous changes in coaches from last year. However, having gone through a coaching change process once already, the team is not worried that they won't be able to adjust if worse comes to worst.

This year's head coach is Vincent Augustine, who, according to Dennis, knows what he is doing on the field and is both "organized and positive." Dennis believes that with the addition of a fresh field and new coach, the team will be able to strive and reach full potential.

"I can't wait to see what this season has in store for us, I think considering the factors, we should make it to CCS and have a productive season," Dennis said. ♦

— Lena Aribi

## TRACK BEGINS WITH LIGHTER TRAINING SCHEDULE

**Head Coach:** Archie Ljepava and Ian Tippetts  
**Last year's record:** 2-4 (varsity boys), 4-2 (varsity girls)  
**Last year's recap:** Even though the team sometimes struggled to stay competitive and didn't fill every slot in dual meets, almost every athlete was able to set a personal record in their events.  
**Key Matchups:** Wilcox, Mountain View  
**Star Players:** Seniors Yuvraj Singh (100m and 200m), Mika Tippetts (Discus and Shot Put), Isha Goswami (200m and 400m) and Jason Cheng (200m and 400m)  
**Key losses to graduation:** Harrison Dance (1600m and 3200m) and Giulio Morini Banzino (High Jump and Long Jump)  
**League:** El Camino

**Prognosis:**  
The track coaches kicked off their season with lighter training this year, placing a larger emphasis on avoiding peaking too early. Archie Ljepava and Ian Tippetts want the athletes to hit their season's best time in late April in the El Camino

League finals, with the goal of moving on to SCVAL finals and CCS.

The team starts each practice with a two-lap warmup before splitting up into three groups: distance runners, sprinters and throwers.

Currently, the distance runners' training regime consists of aerobic (easy pace) runs every day along with strength training twice a week that targets the hips, core, hamstrings and quadriceps.

The sprinters are similarly doing strength training exercises that target the same body parts three times a week, along with daily short interval repeat sessions.

Meanwhile, the throwers have been exercising upper body and focusing on throwing technique to establish good habits. During practices, each athlete attempts to focus on a weakness that is holding them back from setting better marks.

"During training sessions, I focus on my starts as that's my biggest weakness," senior sprinter Yuvraj Singh said. "My top speed is good and during the races, I am



Sprinters perform warm-up drills such as high knees to kick off their practice on Feb. 3.

usually the fastest in the heat but my start is letting me down."

The team currently has more members and is more underclassmen-heavy than in recent years. However, the roster is not finalized, and the coaches may need to make cuts due to the larger turnout.

With a bigger team, they still look to continue their supportive culture, pushing each other to meet their goals while also

making the experience more enjoyable for each other.

"Doing track has helped me make many friends, including kids who are much older and younger than me," senior thrower Mika Tippetts said. "I feel like in track everyone is working on their own goal but they all want you to do well." ♦

— George Hu

## BADMINTON RELOADS WITH NEW COACH AFTER LARGE LOSSES TO GRADUATION



Junior Avik Belenje and freshman Ishir Gupta play a doubles badminton match together during a practice on Feb. 9.

**Head Coach:** Thomas Ching  
**Last year's record:** 1-9  
**Recap:** The Falcons finished second in CCS led by senior star player Adrian Mar, who also placed first in boys' singles individually.

**Key Matchups:** Palo Alto and Wilcox  
**Star Players:** Seniors Jason Liu, Evan Oaklander and Tony Guo; junior Sannidhi Boppana; and sophomore Samanvi Boppana

**Key losses to graduation:** Adrian Mar and Enoch Jung  
**League:** El Camino

**Prognosis:**  
After head coach John Li didn't return the team, the Falcons are adjusting to new

coach Thomas Ching, who also coached girls' volleyball earlier this year.

As Ching is unfamiliar with the state of the team, he is currently assessing players as they compete in drills and practice matches that they would like to play during the season.

Additionally, Ching wants to have set positions, something that Li did not have in previous years.

After major losses to graduation, many returning players are unsure what they will be playing or who they will be playing with, especially with a larger influx of freshmen this year.

The team mostly consists of novice-level players who have been only playing for

a year, though there are a few individual standouts. They hope that their top-end talent can lead them to CCS again this year.

Their first match against Wilcox on March 7 will provide a clearer picture of their abilities with their many newcomers.

"The team has seen some rising talent and hopefully as we keep players continuing in the same event throughout the season, it will lead to more success," Samanvi said. "Between losing key players, and maintaining a strong novice presence, I think we will encounter many setbacks but CCS is not out of reach." ♦

— Nikhil Mathihalli and William Norwood

## SWIM TEAM BOASTS TALENTED ROSTER DESPITE LOWER PARTICIPATION

**Head Coaches:** Christian Bonner, Mike Allegretti and Kristen Thomson  
**Last year's record:** 0-7  
**Recap:** The team finished sixth in the De Anza league and sent 14 swimmers to CCS, with one entering the CCS finals.  
**Key Matchups:** Los Gatos, Monta Vista and Los Altos  
**Star Athletes:** Seniors Zeynep Tokuz, Mark Liu and Channie Hong and freshman Kelsey Zhang  
**Key losses to graduation:** Ethan Chan, Brooke Huynh, Byron Jin, Sherry Lin, James Paine, Ryan Moore, Mahi Ravi and Alex Yang

**League:** De Anza  
**Prognosis:**  
The swim team began practices on Jan. 31 with 50 swimmers on the roster. They are currently focusing on sharpening techniques such as underwater kicks pushing off the wall.

After losing 10 seniors to graduation, the team faces lower numbers and is mainly composed of freshman and senior newcomers — many juniors and sophomores have also opted out this year, according to senior breaststroker Zeynep Tokuz.

"The turnout is definitely interesting," Tokuz said. "We have fewer members this

year on the girls' team than we've had in a while."

While fewer Falcons may be in the pool overall this year, many newcomers have significant experience and should be competitive.

"It's going to be the same as last year for the guys' team," senior freestyler Mark Liu said. "We have a lot of new talent coming, so I'm not particularly worried about [numbers]."

The first non-league meet happened on Feb. 14 against Prospect, and the team's first official meet will be March

3 against Gunn. Their main hopes are to continue working toward maximum CCS qualifications and for each swimmer to meet his or her personal goals throughout the season.

"Our goal is for a good amount of people to go to CCS this year because I think we have a strong team," Tokuz said. "I definitely also want to create some more team bonding events and get to know our teammates better." ♦

— Stephanie Sun

## BOYS' VOLLEYBALL REVIVES HOPE FOR SUCCESS IN LOWER LEAGUE WITH HEALTHY PLAYERS

**Head Coach:** Lori Gragnola  
**Last year's record:** 0-14  
**Recap:** Suffering injuries and missing key players like Class of '22 alumnus Andy Tran as well as current juniors Eric Norris and Kali Duvvuri, the 2022 team ended winless.  
**Key Matchups:** Los Gatos and Los Altos  
**Star Players:** Senior libero Nathan Lim, junior setter Kali Duvvuri and junior opposite hitter Eric Norris  
**Key losses to graduation:** Outside hitter Andy Tran  
**League:** El Camino

**Prognosis:**  
Following a winless season in 2022, the Falcons look forward to a better 2023 season with all their players healthy.

Junior setter Kali Duvvuri, the team's primary star player, missed the majority of last season and believes the team will have better outcomes with his play this year.

"This year we dropped down to the lower El Camino league, so we will have an easier time than last year, especially now that we have better players," Duvvuri said.

Duvvuri said that strong freshmen coming in will provide a boost for the team, allowing head coach Lori Gragnola to formulate more game plans and strategies which have players rely on each other's strengths. Specifically, he believes freshman Brennan Pak and Jeremy Si will be major contributors.

Players like junior setter Sam Kau said that, despite the league drop, the team's mentality needs to improve.

"We need to go into games with more confidence and trust in ourselves."

JUNIOR Sam Kau

"We need to go into games with more confidence and trust in ourselves and our teammates," he said. "We need to work to-

gether and encourage each other to be the best versions of ourselves so that we are stronger collectively."

Kau said that a majority of the losses last season were self-inflicted — opposing teams were not necessarily better, but their lack of chemistry left them struggling to compete. Regardless, Kau is hopeful that these issues will be fixed come the end of the season.

"I'm very excited for the new season to start," Kau said. "I can't wait to see the progress that players have made since last season, as well as the new blood we're going to get." ♦

— Andy Zhu

## NEWCOMERS BOLSTER BOYS' TENNIS ROSTER

**Head Coach:** Florin Marica  
**Last year's record:** 6-4  
**Recap:** A solid regular season with a relatively young roster advanced the team to CCS, where they ultimately suffered a tough loss in the semi-finals to Cupertino.  
**Key Matchups:** Cupertino and Monta Vista  
**Star Players:** Kosei Ogata  
**Key losses to graduation:** Ben Bray and Anthony Zhang  
**League:** De Anza

**Prognosis:**  
The boys' tennis team is excited for their revamped roster despite the loss of seniors Ben Bray and Anthony Zhang to graduation. Most spring sports held tryouts the week of Jan. 30, but head coach Florin Marica postponed tryouts one week to grant players an extra week of preparation.

The team hopes for the return of previous No. 1 singles player junior Kosei Ogata. Although he left the school for online homeschooling before the fall semester, he and Marica requested for special permissions to return and play for the team.

"We are very optimistic," junior doubles player Samik Pattanayak said. "He will add a significant amount of fire-

power to the roster."

In addition to the possibility of Kosei returning, his younger brother, freshman Somei Ogata, is set to join the roster.

"We have a pretty deep roster this year," Pattanayak said. "The Ogata duo could be great and even apart from them, the back half of the roster has also improved due to practicing in the off-season."

In addition to the younger Ogata, freshman Nikhil Srivatsa is another strong newcomer to the team. Both freshmen regularly compete in tournaments all over the Bay Area.

Senior captain Julian Berkowitz-Sklar, who is playing basketball in the winter season, looks forward to seeing the influx of younger players and hopes to serve as a mentor whenever needed to maximize their growth on and off the court. The Falcons' first match is scheduled for Feb. 28 against Gunn.

"My personal goal would be to make sure I'm there for my teammates," Berkowitz-Sklar said. "If they need any help or have any questions, whether it's about tennis or not, I want to make sure that I'm there for them." ♦

— Neal Malhotra

## BOYS' GOLF STRIVES FOR CCS FINALS

**Head Coach:** Dave Gragnola  
**Last year's record:** 6-5  
**Recap:** The team placed second in their league final despite losing most of their star players such as Michael Burry and the Jing brothers to graduation in 2021. Although they narrowly qualified for CCS, none of the members with the exception of No. 4 player Cameron Sy progressed to CCS finals.  
**Key Matchups:** Monta Vista, Lynbrook, Palo Alto and Los Gatos  
**Star Players:** Seniors Howard Shu, Sankalp Aswani, Cameron Sy; junior Ryan Lin; sophomores Oliver Pott and Aidan Smith  
**Key losses to graduation:** Nicolas Chang  
**League:** De Anza League

**Prognosis:**  
Last season, the team had to rebuild due to five of their six starters — Albert Jing, Geoffrey Jing, Akshar Sarvesh, Nathan Murthy, Michael Burry — graduating the previous year. They welcomed a wave of younger but skilled players who, despite the challenges of building a new team in the face of post-pandemic time constraints and adjustments, took the team to CCS playoffs.

This year, five of the six starters from last year return to the team: Seniors Howard Shu, Cameron Sy and Sunny

Aswani, and sophomores Oliver Pott and Aidan Smith. Freshman Miles Sy is poised to be a strong contender for the sixth spot, which fluctuated last season between sophomore Ryan Lin and senior Nicolas Chang.

Aswani, who joined the squad last year as a Lynbrook transfer, hopes that they make it past the first round of CCS as a team, as well as build stronger connections with each other and "[come] out of the season as better versions of ourselves."

Unlike previous years, the team was unable to make it to CCS finals because many new players were unprepared for the conditions at Laguna Seca Golf Ranch, where the tournament is held. Their home course, Saratoga Country Club, is a compact course consisting mostly of par-4 holes, while Laguna Seca is much longer from tee to green. However, the experience was valuable and they enter this season on a high note.

"I'm confident [the team] has improved their golf game since last season — [we] have been playing together over the summer and throughout the school year," Aswani said. "I'm excited about the potential the team has." ♦

— Tara Natarajan

# Falcon Bingo: predicting your SAT Score

BY SarahZhou

**Instructions:**

- 1) Get a pen
- 2) Mark all squares that include traits that are applicable to you.
- 3) Count the number of squares that you have crossed out and find the number that corresponds to your predicted SAT score.

- 4) Come back in two months and try to super score, if you aren't already at 1600.
- Predicted SAT Scores:**  
 0-5 squares: 1050 (Sorry, you're below average).  
 6-10 squares: 1120 (you made the California average, which is nothing to proud of at our school, unfortunately).  
 11-15 squares: 1440 (you achieved the school average, but this is still a WeChat failure).  
 16-20 squares: 1550 (you're almost there ... just take this four more times for the perfect super score).  
 20-25 squares: 1600 (looks like your \$1,500 Jay Koo class paid off!).  
 The Saratoga Falcon is not liable for SAT scores. ♦



Graphic by SHREYA RALLABANDI

# Senior class president addresses Class of '23 hoodie controversy

## Ally is definitely not an ally

Allison Tan



Every school year has brought the same dilemma for my class: Will we have a hoodie? The answer to that, I cannot tell you. However, I can complain about the trials and tribulations that need to be taken into account when pushing a class hoodie from design to purchasable merchandise while serving as a class officer.

It began freshman year, when I came to the unfortunate realization that it is impossible to please 300 classmates. Sprung on to design a class Homecoming T-shirt in less than a few hours by assistant principal Matt Torrens, I scraped together a sub-par design that I still hear complaints about to this day.

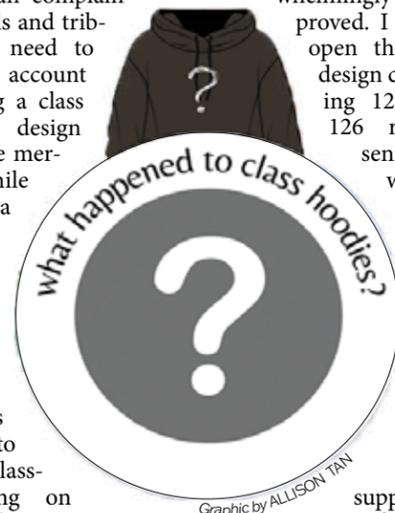
I was pestered with the never-ending ... "Ally, why did it have to be forest green, why couldn't it have been a darker shade?" Girl, I don't know, ask Custom Ink why they have zero options: I'm balling on a budget.

Tainted by that experience, I was determined to make every-

one miserable and not have a class hoodie. Then sophomore year came around, and we had online school: I used the classic "unprecedented times" as an excuse for not doing one. During our junior year, I was too busy racking up prom funds from Ten Ren boba fundraisers to give it a thought.

Class hoodies seem great in theory, but designs are overwhelmingly hard to get approved. I was shocked to open the Google form design contest to a striking 12 options. With 126 responses from seniors stating they would purchase one of the hoodies, class officers noticed teams of people banding together to advocate for a specific design.

What was supposed to be a successful season of class hoodies for our final year of high school turned into full-on war. If I can't make everybody happy, I might as well make no one happy, right? Just kidding! But seriously, it is hard to please a massive group. If senior class officers are to move forward with the class hoodie contest, seniors must accept that the majority vote is the ultimate design. The bottom line: Your senior class officers cannot accommodate everyone's differing opinions. ♦



Graphic by ALLISON TAN

# I have a problem with losing my phone

I LOST MY PHONE THREE TIMES. I SHOULD NOT BE TRUSTED WITH EXPENSIVE TECHNOLOGY.

## We love Mathihalli



Nidhi Mathihalli

I lose my phone a lot. It's an actual problem. But I can't seem to stop losing it. Every time I tell myself to pay attention to my phone, I just can't. As I write this, I don't even know where my phone is right now.

The first time I really lost my phone was the first month of 6th grade. It was the first time I had gotten a phone, and I was super excited. Little did I know, I was also extremely — extremely — careless.

After finishing my core class, I accidentally left my phone behind. With no real emotional connection to my phone (yet), I carried on throughout the rest of the day and even went home that afternoon, carefree.

It was only when I got home and my father asked me if I had seen the text he had sent regarding how I would get "immense luck" if I sent the text to 10 other people (aka, chainmail) that I realized my phone was nowhere to be seen. I went through everything I did but was still unable to remember where I left it. However, Apple's amazing technology was able to find my iPhone in Ms. Dovala's core classroom. After being scolded by my parents for my "carelessness," I got a good-night's sleep, knowing that my phone was safe and sound.

This was just the beginning. About a month later, I went to Kevin Moran Park with a friend. There, I forgot my phone. Again. That night, before going to bed, I searched for my phone everywhere: the car, dining table, sofa and my dog's corner where she keeps

valuables she finds around the house and guards them with her life. It was nowhere to be found.

So at exactly 11 p.m., my mom drove me to the park and both of us checked trees, under branches, the playground and more. Just as we were about to give up, we sat down on a bench and lo-and-behold: There was a phone that looked exactly like mine with a Post-It attached to it saying, "To whoever lost their phone, here it is."

Yet again, fate intervened and I was saved. But my luck wouldn't last forever.

For the entirety of 6th and 7th grade, I was enrolled in middle school track and field, a consequence of my father saying that I should "be more active" under the incorrect impression that walking from my desk to the refrigerator to get food wasn't enough physi-

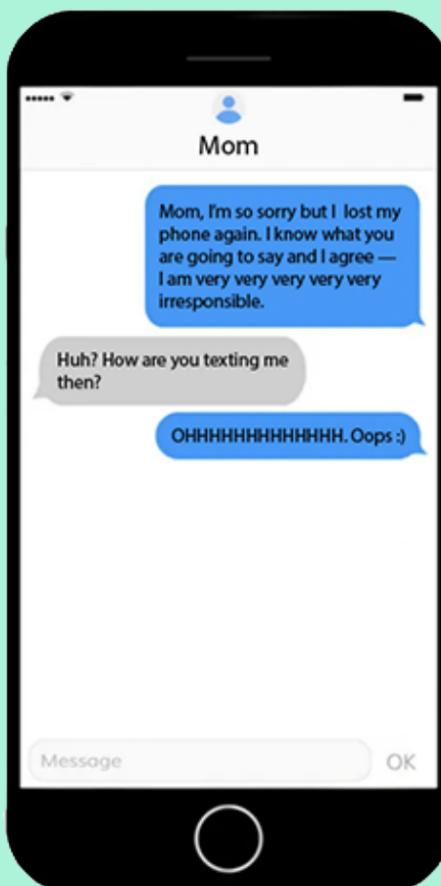
cal activity for a day. It wasn't my fault — my laziness prevented me from doing anything more than what was required to keep me alive.

So, I took part in the least-intensive activities as part of the sport. When participating in one meet, I left my phone unguarded for around 30 minutes. Sadly, this time, it was gone forever. I searched for hours. I searched the stands, my backpack, others' backpacks and the car, but I was unable to find my phone.

By this point, I was pretty attached to my phone, so when my parents told me that I would not be getting a new one, I was quite sad, but at the same time, I understood that it was a consequence of my carelessness.

Finally, in 8th grade, I got a new phone after my parents upgraded their phones, giving my brother and me their old ones. Perhaps surprisingly given my history, I have never lost my

phone again. That being said, I should probably go look for my phone now. ♦



Graphic by NIDHI MATHIHALLI

## topten

VALENTINE'S DAY SONGS

- 10 "Romeo and Juliet by Dire Straits. Maybe all high school relationships are destined to end.
- 9 "All Girls Are The Same" By Juice WRLD. My editor wanted this here because he sings this song while crying in the shower.
- 8 "ARE WE STILL FRIENDS?" by Tyler, The Creator. Yes!! Spend your Valentine's questioning that Situationship!
- 7 "this way!" by shakes and Reesh. It may not be about love, but it's definitely made with love <3.
- 6 "Love You Like A Love Song" by Selena Gomez & The Scene. If you watched this music video on Disney Channel, you'll understand why this song made this list.
- 5 "Cotton Eye Joe - Line Dance Remix" by Rednex. The melody, bass and dance in accompaniment is where the love of the track lies.
- 4 "White Girl" by Shy Glizzy. I know half of y'all relate to this one.
- 3 "Kiss Me Thru The Phone" by Soulja Boy and Sammie. To all the long distance couples, this song is for you.
- 2 "Country Girl (Shake It For Me)" by Luke Brian. Face it: Nothing spells out love like a little bit of honky tonk.
- 1 "Green Eyes" by Coldplay. Take a steaming hot bath in the not-so-steamy words of Chris Martin and wallow in your misery.

>> Shreya Rallabandi