OPINION 7



Staff Editorial: Reject private counselors for school resources





Low-drama ceremony caps exciting and historic Oscars





Into ASSIST, supporting students outside the classroom

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Upperclassmen to get 'Tangled' at iconic seaside attraction

BY AvaniKongetira

For the first time in years, prom will be held at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk's Cocoanut Grove as part of a combined effort by the junior and senior class offices. The event, inspired by the Disney animated film "Tangled," will take place on May 20 at 7 p.m. Tickets will go on sale on April 17.

While ticket prices have not yet been finalized, senior class president Allison Tan is confident that they will be much cheaper than in

previous years thanks to the affordability of the

"We were fortunate to have a cheaper venue, so we can focus more money on things like the DJ and really invest in the add-ons," she said.

Each ticket includes a sit-down dinner, transportation to and from the venue, exclusive access to three amusement rides (the Big Dipper, bumper cars and the Haunted Castle), two photo booths and multiple food options.

>> **PROM** on pg. 4



25 years later: No. 16 Falcons' epic CCS upset

BY Nikhil Mathihalli & HowardShu

Police cars rolled up to Seaside High on Feb. 26, 1998, as the final buzzer sounded for the Saratoga vs. Seaside CCS boys' basketball game. The scoreboard read 62-58 and the Falcons sprang into celebration with the 10 friends and 15 parents who had come along to cheer for them. Looking at the scoreboard, the Seaside fans who packed the rest of the gym stood stunned. There was no crime, except for that the undersized Falcons had just robbed the heavily favored Seaside Spartans of a game almost everyone was sure they would win.

By the end of the game, it was close to bedlam," history teacher and 1998 basketball coach Mike Davey said. "The police took us to the locker room and escorted us to the bus because there were threats against us for beating Seaside."

The No. 1-seeded Spartans were the favorites to win the CCS championship and cons knocked off the No. 1 seed, just like

higher league than the No. 16-seeded Falcons, who had gone 16-10.

Davey said CCS officials had to change the next round's location after the game because they had already planned for the Spartans to play their next round at Monterey High.

"The police escorted us because there were threats for beating Seaside."



COACH Mike Davey

Beating all odds, the No. 16 seeded Fal-

came into the game with a 21-5 record in a Fairleigh Dickinson upsetting Purdue in this year's March Madness.

The scrappy, sharp-shooting Falcons went back and forth with the Spartans throughout the game and separated in the second half to a 62-58 win. Though the Falcons fell short in the next round, losing the quarterfinals 68-49 against No. 8-seeded Capuchino, their Seaside win is still possibly the greatest underdog story in CCS

"This game will always be the biggest upset in CCS history," Davey said. "I don't think it will ever be duplicated."

The Falcons started that season 5-0 before their star player, small forward Mike Black, the 1998 athlete of the year, sprained his ankle and the team's expectations shifted from winning the El Camino League to just making CCS.

In getting to that first playoff round, the Falcons first had to beat Los Gatos in a CCS play-in game. Since they beat the Wildcats 60-40 in an away game earlier that year, the

Falcons boasted home court advantage and won 49-48 in a packed gym and electric win-or-go-home atmosphere.

"I was kidding with the Los Gatos coach at the time: We were saying, whoever loses owes the winner a dinner because we'd have to go get our tail blasted by Seaside," Davey said.

The Seaside team featured a Division Icommitted senior, 6' 6" Shawn Patterson, who averaged 16 points, 14 rebounds and 6 blocks a game, and two players who went on to play at the junior college level.

Saratoga had no college prospects whatsoever. Seaside had multiple 6-foot plus players who could dunk; the undersized Falcons made their points from the 3-point line, and not above the rim as the Spartans

The Falcons were outmatched in every way: speed, size, strength and athleticism.

>> **UPSET** on pg. 22

District to reconvene alignment work groups

ву Avani**Kongetira** & Shaan Sridhar

The school board gave approval for the district to move forward with the alignment of graduation requirements at a special meeting on Feb. 13, following in steps of the recommendation from a previous work group in November 2021 and in anticipation of AB 101, which requires students in the Class of '30 and onwards to take an ethnic studies course before graduation.

The district hopes to convene work groups composed of all stakeholder groups between March and November 2023 to discuss aligning graduation requirements across Saratoga High and Los Gatos High as well as how to implement the ethnic studies requirement at both school sites.

>> ALIGNMENT on pg. 6

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Organizers hope to boost Grad Night attendance

Every year, senior parents and staff organize Grad Night, a party to celebrate the graduating senior class. While 194 out of 308 seniors have bought Grad Night tickets, organizers hope that at least 90% of the class will choose to attend the all-night post-graduation celebration.

This year, Grad Night will be held at the school on June 8, from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. The check-in time will be from 10 to 10:30 p.m. at the main entrance of the quad.

Historically, there has been music, senior photo compilations, ziplining, inflatables, henna and photo booths at Grad Night, with plenty of food and drinks.

To attend, students must first fill out a liability form, which can be found at shsgradnight.weebly.com. Tickets cost \$285 through PayPal and \$275 through Zelle or by check, which can be turned in at the box labeled "2023 Grad Night" on the admin counter. The ticket covers the price of food, drinks, activities and the Grad Night T-shirt, which students must be wearing to enter Grad Night.

To ensure security, there will be parent volunteers supervising the event and no backpacks are allowed. The organizers also recommend bringing warm clothes and a blanket.

"High school is kind of like the foundation of the seniors' journeys," Reddy said. "For us parents, it's going to be very nostalgic. For some of us, it's the last child leaving the house, so it will be sad and exciting." ◆

School plans SAT during spring break

Hoping to help students who are hard pressed to find a nearby local testing center, the school is again hosting its own SAT on April 12 during Spring Break.

The school has been hosting these at-school tests for the past three years to help with the lack of available testing sites. "I am glad they are hosting an SAT," junior Shrey Jain

said. "Last time I had to go all the way to Santa Cruz and it was difficult because I had to wake up really early to get

The school divided up registration into different portals depending on grade. Juniors were given priority while sophomores and freshmen were placed on a waitlist.

Students will need to be ready at the school at 7:30 a.m. and the test is scheduled to end at noon. The event will be run with the help of parent volunteers who do not have children actively taking the test that day.

"I'm ready to do my best in a few weeks," Jain said. "I have studied a lot and I think it will run really smoothly." ◆

— Neal Malhotra

Class officers announced for 2023-2024

Class officer elections for 2023-24 have come to an end with close elections and landslide victories — more candidates running than in recent years.

The incoming freshmen held their class officer elections in late February at Redwood Middle School. They elected Sina Mahtaj-Kharassani as president, Katie Yang as vice president, Seabert Mao as treasurer and Isabell Jadali as the class representative.

The Class of '26 elected Jena Lew as president, Anthony Tran as vice president, Samvrith Bandi as treasurer and Bryan Zhao as the class representative.

The Class of '25 had an unusually large number of candidates for both the treasurer and class representative races. Langdon Huynh was elected president, Amy Pan was elected vice president and Caitlin Lee was elected class representative. In the treasurer race, two of four candidates tied, so the school hosted a rare runoff between sophomores Tanuj Siripurapu and Justin Choi, with Choi coming out on top.

The Class of '24 elected Paul Hulme as president, Margaret Laver as vice president, Anannya Raman as treasurer and Sahar Noor as class representative. ◆

— William Norwood



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Career Counseling | A group of juniors listen attentively as a parent volunteer describes the process of going through dental school during the Career Fair held in the large gym on March 22 during tutorial.

Students explore various career options during school-hosted Career Fair

As college applications end for seniors and loom ahead for juniors, the pressure on upperclassmen to decide on a major and ultimately a career increases.

To help with the process, the school recently held a career fair directed mainly at juniors and seniors, but open to all students, Brad Ward said.

There have been other careers fairs at the school hosted in past years that involved the whole school, with presentations held in all classrooms in a single

This year's event was a scaled down version: It took place on March 22 during tutorial in the gym, and was attended by roughly 80 students with around

25 invited volunteer speakers. The event replicated career fairs have hundreds of businesses pitch- can be. ing themselves, but was reduced to

a high school scale. als in their field volunteered to her with more insight into the capresent information and answer reer itself. questions about their careers for

These parent volunteers presented various career paths, in- for what I can do later," Ahuja cluding law, accounting, STEM, information technology, sales, professional sports, UX design, cyber security, software engineering, dental studies, medicine, nursing

Additionally, Silicon Valley Tech Education and representatives from the Marines also ap-

Ward strongly encouraged students to attend the fair, especially because she said it could make their future choices easier.

She encouraged students to ask questions like what the presenters'

like, advice on course choices or what skills they should work on.

Coming out of the event, students gained information on various career choices after speaking to the volunteers.

Many students already had an idea of what they were interested in and were able to get specific questions answered to solidify College and Career counselor their interest in their respective fields of interest.

> Junior Simarya Ahuja entered the event already having a prior interest in medicine. However, she wanted to know more about the specifics of the

During the fair, Ahuja spoke to a parent who worked at Kaiser, and gained information about how to get into nursing and the flexibility of that career.

Ward

Ahuja also spoke with the physician from Stanford, who told her still have a lot of time to pick a Speaking with the physician

overall solidified Ahuja's interest Parents who are profession- in the medical field and provided "I always wanted to go into biology, but this gave me more of a concrete plan and more options

> said. "There's actually so much vou can do as a bio major." After the career fair, Ahuja said she sees various possibilities of what her career could be: nursing, clinical research or even psychia-

Junior Emily Ta also had a similar experience. She went into the fair with a focus on careers that were either business or mathematics related, and she said she spent the most time at the accounting and sales tables hearing from the representatives.

At the accounting table, she lot of time to figure it out." ◆

ternships at big companies such as Kaiser and realized she was interested in the communications side of accounting

Ta asked questions such as what the professionals do in their day-to-day jobs.

There were multiple people at the sales booth, each with their respective specialties in the business

This variety was something Ta found useful in regard to helping her pick a specific major in the fu-

"Even though there were two or three people at one table, their jobs were so different, and that was really helpful because business is such a broad field," she said. "I didn't realize how much diversity there could be in some day-to-day

Though the goal for students was to investigate a major for college, Ward pointed out that they

She herself did not get into college counseling until her 30s, leading her to emphasize that students should maintain an open mind to the broad variety of available ca-

"I didn't realize how much diversity there could be in day-to-day jobs."

JUNIOR Emily Ta

"There's a different timeline for everybody," Ward said. "I think there's a lot of pressure to figure out what your career is going to be, and I'm trying to kind of reduce that pressure and say you have a

Students achieve success in science and math contests, qualifying to invitationals

April 7, 2023

The Saratoga Falcon

Like past years, dozens of students participated in STEM contests hosted by the school's clubs, with some qualifying for prestigious Olympiad rounds.

The school's math club hosted the Amer-

ican Mathematics Competitions (AMC 10/12) in mid-November; qualifiers then took the American Invitational Mathematics Exam (AIME) on Feb. 7. Science club also hosted the preliminary USA Biology Olympiad (USABO) online open exam on Feb. 2 and the F=ma physics exam

on Feb. 9. Results for many of these competitions were released in early March. Of the 50 students who qualified for AIME from the AMC 10/12, 11 were invited to take the USA Junior

Mathematics Olympiad (USAJMO) or USA Mathematics Olympiad (USAMO) near the end of March. Six students qualified for the USA Physics Olympiad (USAPhO) from F=ma, and seven qualified for USABO

Registration for the U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad (USNCO) local round is ongoing; as of March 6, there are six signups out of 32 available spots. The test was originally scheduled to be held March 28, but then temporarily canceled after problems were leaked. It has since been rescheduled, to be held four days later on April 1 from 1 to 3 p.m. in chemistry teacher Janny Caha-

High number of AIME qualifiers

The AMC math contest series consists of several rounds of testing, beginning with the AMC 10/12, which consists of two 75-minute, 25-question multiple choice tests held in November. Around 5% of competitors nationwide then qualify to take the AIME — a challenging 3-hour, 15-question exam.

According to junior math club treasurer Advaith Avadhanam, of the 80 students who took the AMC contests, 50 advanced to take

the last few years.

"It's nice to see how well Saratoga does," he said. "AIME only takes around 5,000 kids annually, so our one high school gets 1% of representation?

Scores for the AMC and AIME contests came out earlier than usual due to this year's new online portal, which allowed local contest managers — assistant principal

Matt Torrens for AMC and guidance department chair Brian Safine for AIME — to scan students' Scantrons and automatically grade their answers online. In past years, Scantrons were mailed in. While Avadhanam noted that it

was somewhat of a logistical hassle to help set up the system and chase down individual students for online registration and payments, he feels that the instant grading is a net positive.

'This was a completely new system that's a lot more localized and requires area coordinators to take more individual responsibility," he said. "It was a little bit more logistically complicated to implement and there was definitely a learning curve to figure it out. But we got the job done."

Cutoffs for the next round, the USA(J) MO, were released on March 9. Of the 50 students who took AIME, six students — Redwood Middle eighth-graders Andy Lu and Vivian Zhong, freshman Lawson Wang and sophomores Ishani Agarwal, Alan Lu and Skyler Mao — qualified through the AMC 10 to take the USA(J)MO. In addition, five upperclassmen — juniors Avadhanam, Victoria Hu and Nikhil Mathihalli and seniors Nilay Mishra and Anthony Wang - were invited to take the USAMO, out of around 500 students total nationwide.

The exam is a proof contest and was administered March 21 to 22, consisting of six problems to be solved across two days. Students who perform exceptionally well have the opportunity to attend the nation's summer training camp, which then selects and trains a team to represent the U.S. in the

High achievers shine in science exams For the science exams, registration has

remained consistent with past years, according to senior science club vice president Isha Goswami. Nineteen students signed up for the USABO Online Open Exam, which was proctored by biology teacher Cheryl Lenz on Feb. 2 in her room. Students logged into the Art of Problem Solving (AoPS) site to access the fast paced 50 minute multiple choice exam.

"I think it's really cool that Saratoga offers these tests," Goswami said. "It motivates people to learn more about subjects like biology than their classes might teach. It's encouraging for them to study for these tests and perform well on them."

Seven of the school's test takers performed within the top 10% of the country, making them eligible to take the USABO Online Semifinal Exam on March 16 nearly double the number of last year's four qualifiers. They are freshman Ethan Pan, sophomore Grace Liu, juniors Avadhanam, Emily Hung, Grace Li and Alyssa Liu and

senior Lisa Fung. After taking this 2-hour exam. if they place within the top 20 fi-

entire country, they will have the chance to attend the biology one of four spots representing the U.S. at the quick coffee run with her dad. International Biology Olympiad in July.

Another 33 students signed up to take F=ma, a 75-minute multiple choice exam focusing on algebra-based mechanics held and proctored by physics teacher Matthew Welander in his room

The top 400 students across the country were then invited to take USAPhO, a 3-hour free response test that will be hosted on April 4, covering all introductory physics topics such as electricity and magnetism in

Among the nation's top 400 are six Saratoga students: sophomore Alan Lu, juniors Avadhanam, Arinjay Basak, Medha Ravi and Aiden Ye as well as senior Anthony

"I think it's really cool that Saratoga offers these tests. It motivates people to learn more about subjects."

SENIOR Isha Goswami

"I'm really proud and thankful that I qualified for USAPhO," Ravi said. "I was pleasantly surprised, given that the cutoff of 18/25] was relatively high this year."

Ravi began learning the concepts and topics needed for F=ma during winter break, and sat down to seriously prepare around two weeks before the exam date. She said she feels extremely grateful for her father, who spent a minimum of 3 hours daily after work to help

calls how she studied for 6 hours straight summer training program and compete for two days before the test, only stopping for a

> Now, she is studying for USAPhO in the remaining month before the test. She hopes to understand what topics are behind the problems in USAPhO and looks forward to seeing what areas of physics the test writers can merge in the questions.

"Looking back, [preparing for F=ma] was a really fun experience, even though I doubted myself every step of the way," Ravi said. "I'm looking forward to taking USA-PhO and my goal is to just have fun with the questions."

Science Bowl to head to D.C. after regionals win

& Anthony Wang

For the first time in school history, the Science Bowl team has qualified for the national tournament and will travel to Washington, D.C., from April 27 to May 1 to

The school's Science Bowl A team earned the bid after winning a regional tournament at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) on Feb. 11. In Science Bowl, co. petitors from two teams buzz in as quickly as possible to answer questions about chemistry, biology, physics and mathematics.

The A team, consisting of senior co-captain Nilay Mishra, junior co-captain Advaith Avadhanam, seniors Adam Xu and Anthony Wang and sophomore Skyler Mao, defeated 27 other Bay Area teams including reigning champion Lynbrook High School at the competition at Stanford.

Avadhanam attributed the A team's success to a combination of teamwork, diligent practice and the supportive coaching of Chemistry Honors teacher Kathy Nakamat-

"Because most of the other teams were coming off COVID-19 years, they weren't used to the fast pace of in-person tournaments," Avadhanam said. "To some extent, neither were we. But Ms. Nakamatsu trained our strategy to buzz aggressively and get them by speed.

Avadhanam also stressed the importance of the team's camaraderie — he said that teammates were very supportive of each other for both the school's A team and B



A-team members senior Adam Xu, senior Nilay Mishra, junior Advaith Avadhanam and senior Anthony Wang listen attentively as the round's questions are being read by the proctor.

In Washington, D.C., they will compete against the top 50 teams in the nation.

"It's really encouraging that Bay Area teams typically do well," Avadhanam said. "Of course, we will continue practicing, we will continue studying and we will hopefully

Nakamatsu, who has been coaching Science Bowl here and at a previous school since 1997, will accompany the team. She is confident in the team's chances.

"I've always known that the team was

capable of winning [regionals]," Nakamatsu said. "We just needed the right circumstances, the right mix. I don't want to jinx it, but I think we've got a pretty good shot [at na-Nakamatsu also believes that the win

will provide a boost to the team's visibility and prominence in the school, which will help recruit new members. She has noticed that more successful programs garner more attention and thereby more participation she hopes this win for Science Bowl will have the same effect.

This year's B-team consisted of juniors Nikhil Mathihalli and Levana Lai as well as freshmen Arjun Krish, Quinn Gifford and Nolan Woo. They placed fourth in their division, ending with a record of 3-3 while losing to Lynbrook, Harker and Gunn.

"Of course, we will continue practicing, we will continue studying and we will hopefully win."

SENIOR Advaith Avadhanam

With its younger members, the B-team struggled with traditional gameplay concepts in their first in-person Science Bowl.

The pandemic eliminated the opportunity to play against other teams and have buzzer-races to answer questions — teams had a fair chance to answer every question

without the opportunity to interrupt. In fact, this was the first time the tournament was held in person since February

Although next year's team will suffer the loss of three seniors to graduation, Nakamatsu hopes that the possibility of attracting new potential Science Bowl players along with the talented younger members already on the B-team will bring future success.

"We've got good momentum going," Nakamatsu said. "It would be great if this continues next year." ◆

PROM

continued from pg. 1

Choosing a venue was one of the most difficult aspects of the planning process due to cost, capacity and location constraints. The class offices examined several venues before landing on the Boardwalk.

"Our venue is really beautiful," Tan said. "It's somewhat made of glass and overlooks the water and the beach. And it fits the theme well too."

Because the venue is so close to the beach, activities director Kristen Cunningham expressed some concern with student safety. She hopes students will abide by restrictions about not leaving the Boardwalk area and venturing to the beach or other nearby locations.

Aside from this potential challenge, Cunningham is optimistic about prom. So far, the organization has been smooth, with minimal communication issues and big improvements from last year.

Choosing a venue was one of the most difficult aspects of the planning process due to cost.

Attendee superlatives are a new addition to the event. Students will be able to vote for two of their peers in each category: Best Dressed, Best Duo, Best Hair, Best Moves and Best

"Our school doesn't do prom king and queen, so we thought this would be a fun addition," Tan said.

Another deviation from previous years is the elimination of the Prom Dress Page, where students would show off their dresses. Administrators were opposed to creating a school-affiliated page because they were concerned that it promotes toxicity among girls.

The class officers split up the preparation among themselves, with each handling a certain aspect, such as communication with the venue, booking the DJ and coordinating with a decorator.

Working with the junior class office has been a pleasant experience for Tan. She feels that organizing the prom has helped create a stronger bond between the upperclassmen.

"They're super fun to work with," she said. "And they're really good at providing insight without being overpowering," she said.

After fundraising for four years with the ultimate goal of planning senior prom, Tan feels pressured but excited to pull off an unforgettable

"We really want to make this prom memorable, especially since we're with the Class of '24," she said. "But I'll be happy as long as I know people are having fun."



Junior violist Tejas Tirthapura and senior violinist Shannon Ma, both pictured here with their instruments, were selected to tour with the prestigious National Youth Orchestra for the **United States** during the 2023 summer. Both students went through an intense appli-10% acceptance rate to be a part of this 800 member vouth orchestra.

Courtesy of TEJAS

Junior and senior selected to tour with National Youth Orchestra

ву Anika**Kapasi** & Divya**Vadlakonda**

Being accepted into the National Youth Orchestra of the U.S. (NYO-USA) is a goal many aspiring young musicians pursue every year, with only about 100 making the

That's why when junior violist Tejas Tirthapura found out he had been accepted in early February, he was filled with disbe-

"When results came out, I found out I had gotten in when [one of my friends] posted about [their acceptance] on Instagram," Tirthapura said.

I didn't even see [the acceptance] in my email until then and I immediately told my

Organized by Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute, NYO-USA is a program that brings together the "brightest young players from across the country" to "embark on a tour to some of the great music capitals of

After his family, the first people Tirthapura told were music teacher Michael Boitz and senior violinist Shannon Ma.

Ma had helped Tirthapura with the application, as she was accepted into the orchestra last summer and this year as well.

The youth orchestra will be touring North America this summer with two celebrated orchestral violinists: Hillary Hahn and Gil Shaham.

"We're playing with the best conductors that anyone could ever play with." Tirthapu-

"I'm most excited to play with the soloists and it's really awesome that as a high schooler, we have the opportunity to do that." The prestigious program comprises a multi-week training residency followed by a tour across North America alongside distinguished conductor Andrew Davis.

The residency will take place in Purchase

weeks, involving sectionals, full orchestra rehearsals and several workshops.

The orchestra will play four pieces: Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique," a new work by Valeria Coleman commissioned for NYO-USA's 10th anniversary, Barber's violin concerto with Gil Shaham and Tchaikovsky's violin concerto with Hillary

They will perform at the Groton Hill Music Center in Massachusetts on July 13, Carnegie Hall in New York on July 14, Le Festival de Lanaudière Joliette in Quebec, Canada, on July 16 and the Grand Teton Music Festival in Jackson, Wyoming on July

The tour will close out with the orchestra playing at the Rady Shell at Jacobs Park in San Diego on July 28.

"NYO will [give me the opportunity] to get to know the top orchestral professional musicians," Tirthapura said.

"I think [the program] is a great step to doing something [similar to] this in the future, like playing in a professional orches-

Applicants for the program were required to submit around four to five excerpts specific to their instrument, a solo piece to showcase the players individual talent, a written essay regarding why they wanted to attend NYO and a video essay that offered some lighthearted and fun prompts to answer, such as if they could travel anywhere in the world, where would the applicant

For the video essay, Tirthapura wrote the experience was invaluable. how he wanted to travel to New Orleans and try the beignets at Cafe Du Monde.

"I love food, so in the video." about how I used to bake and cook when I was younger," Tirthapura said.

"I don't think they are looking for somebody who is the best writer or has the most interesting story, [rather NYO] wants

College and span over the course of two someone who they believe will be a good, well-rounded person.'

Ma used a different video essay prompt and talked about what she enjoyed doing outside of music, including clips of her dancing and discussing how she loved to

For the written essay, she wrote about her passion for orchestral playing, and utilized her past experience touring with them the

"The thing I love most about music is how even though playing solos are great, playing in an orchestra is where you find your community and become a better person as well as musician because of the energy that an orchestra brings to you," Ma said.

However, touring with NYO over the 2022 summer did not influence Ma's acceptance in the following year.

The members are chosen through a "blind audition" process, ensuring an ideal group of musicians for their tours without taking into account previous experience.

"When I heard that [this year] was a North American tour, I originally thought it would not be as exciting as the [2022 summer Europe tour]," Ma said.

"But after they told us the venues that we're going to perform, I know that it won't

Although Ma acknowledged that the acceptance looks appealing on college applications, she gained a significantly different perspective after attending the program last year, stating that the wealth of knowledge and relationships that she gained through

"If I had to say the one thing that makes the experience really worthwhile, it would be the people," Ma said. "It's not just getting to play in an [nationally-recognized] orchestra, it's meeting people from all over the country who are just so good at their instrument that you're going to be endlessly

Dance team takes home back-to-back trophy without coach

BY MinsuiTang

The dance team recently placed 3rd in Large Pom and 6th in Large Jazz division in the open category during the annual Nationals competition in Anaheim.

The team of 15 girls flew to Anaheim on March 16, competed in small lyrical competitions the next day and competed in the rest of the dances, including large pom, large jazz and medium and small hip pop on March 18.

Similar to last year, the team took on this competition without a coach. Two months prior to Nationals, Namaad Jackson, dance

team's newly hired coach starting April 2022, stepped down and was never replaced. In response, the captains had to increase the rigor of their practice schedules, including having more frequent Saturday practices, typically from 8 a.m. to noon, to run through and clean up competition dances.

Senior captain Risha Desai thanked her fellow captains — seniors Avani Gupta and Kiana Compeau — and their "strong leadership" that had helped keep the dance team together in their coach's absence.

"I think it's important the [dance team] gets a new coach next year," Desai said. Having been through two years without a consistent coach, she felt that all responsibilities fell to the captains, and the team would need "really good" leadership next year to "keep the team together."

Despite going into the competition season without a coach, the dance team still had little issue developing and strengthening their friendship with one another.

After wrapping up their final competitions, the dance team enjoyed an entire day in Disneyland and concluded their day with the entire team going on the "Guardians of the Galaxy: Mission Breakout" ride.

Although their competition season has officially ended, dance team will continue to perform until the end of the school year for the upcoming rallies on April 7 and May 18. On their own, Compeau, Desai and Gupta have already choreographed for both days.

Despite the difficulties the dance team has faced in their past seasons, sophomore Anisa Taymuree still applauded the team for

"Due to the constant change in leadership throughout the years, our team has never felt a sense of stability," she said. "But we still overcame our adversities by working together to become the best team we can despite the circumstances. And I have full faith we will continue to thrive in the future." ◆

Green Committee encourages recycling by running drive for used SHS merchandise

The Saratoga Falcon

April 7, 2023

The Green Committee, an initiative separate from the club known as Green Team, announced a merchandise drive on Jan. 4 via Instagram to collect gently used school merchandise to wash and resell at school events. Currently, the committee set up a white bin outside the Activities Office to collect apparel such as sweats, hoodies, shorts, T-shirts and hats, aiming to raise money for new trash cans and sorting bins around campus.

"By recycling and reusing apparel, we are shining a light on the issue of fast fashion while keeping items out of the landfill," parent and Green Committee adviser Ilaria Ke- team hoodie they only used for a year, they ogh said. "If you go to local thrift stores such can drop it off at school instead of at Goodas Goodwill and Savers, you will find

which will, unfortunately, end up unsold and discarded." After seeing similar programs reselling merchandise at her kids' old schools, Keogh suggested the idea to

implement the same program at the

many [Saratoga High] items, most of

The committee's goal is to integrate the drive into the school's culture by making it an ongoing initiative. Thus, when students want to get rid of a

will or trashing the item. They plan to spread the word through Friday Newsletters, announcements, digital displays and social media.

Though the committee was not able to contact alumni who were home for the holidays during winter break, they are planning to reach out with the help of ASB on Instagram during the next few breaks. So far, the drive has collected

roughly 30 pieces of merchandise. They

started selling during Electives Night on

substantial, saying that she expects to have a "small but steady trickle in" as more students hear about the initiative.

In the future, the committee plans to hold more drives geared at thrifting, such as clothing and book drives, in order to minimize the school's contribution to fast fashion and waste. They also plan to have an e-waste collection and yard sale.

"By initiating these projects, like pushing for the passing of green policies such as reusability, we can further promote our message," said senior Carolyn Pyun, the group's

Activities director to leave current position for administrative role at new district next year

After teaching for the past two years at the school, leadership teacher and activities director Kristen Cunningham recently announced she plans to change school districts for the upcoming 2023-24 school year.

Cunningham will move with her family to Plaster County at the end of the school year, and will take on the position of assistant principal at Buljan Middle School in

Cunningham said she is excited to return to a middle school campus, as most of her educational career has been with middle

in 2021, Cunningham worked at Student Support Services at Valley Christian High

Joining the staff amid a pandemic was a

unique experience that brought her closer to her colleagues and students, Cunning She had taken on activities director when

the position opened after Matthew Torrens's transition from leadership teacher to assistant principal.

Connecting with my leadership class, and especially coming out of a pandemic, is one of my favorite memories," Cunningham said. "That was when we first all got togeth-

Prior to her hiring at Saratoga High er and decided how we can bring students during the event.

"Connecting with my leadership class is one of my favorite memories."

TEACHER Kristen Cunningham

She said her favorite project she saw through was her very first event at the school, the Falcon Food Truck Fest in 2021. She remembered how special it was to see the Homecoming reveal come together my sweet spot." ◆

While her time at the school was cut short, she said she will continue to keep in touch with her friends in the area and "continue [these friendships] beyond when I'm

Cunningham said she will miss all of the students she has met along her teaching journey at the school.

"It was never my plan to move," she said. "But I am in this position to be moving on at this point, away from Saratoga High. I have absolutely loved serving here. And I feel that this more than anything I've done in my 22 years of education, that this is like

Keys granted leave of absence for next year

Because English teacher Amy Keys' husband, sociology professor Steve McKay, is taking a long-delayed sabbatical from his teaching duties at UC Santa Cruz, she is taking a leave for the '23-'24 school year and plans on returning the following year.

"[College professors] are allowed to take a sabbatical every 7 years to conduct research, and then write it up in public," Keys said. "He's never taken a sabbatical because our kids have always been around, so now that we both can, we thought it was the perfect time to take a small break."

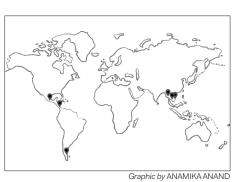
"I'm excited for this new adventure and to learn more about so many different

ENGLISHTEACHER Amy Keys

Keys requested a leave of absence for the year from the district, and it was recently approved. With her year off, she has several plans to travel to multiple countries with her husband and expand her understanding of different cultures.

She has been teaching here since 2011. In recent years, she has taught English 11 Honors and Creative Writing; she is also the current department chair. The two plan to visit Argentina, Costa Rica and Mexico as McKay conducts his research. Her main plan in South America is to take Spanish courses and gain a greater understanding of Latin American culture.

"I really like languages," she said. "I al-



The countries that Amy Keys plans to travel to.

ready have a teaching credential for German and English, and I know Indonesian because I lived in Indonesia for a while."

For the first semester, McKay and Keys will be staying in South America, but when second semester starts, they will be visiting several Southeast Asian countries: Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam.

"We're going to be staying in Vietnam for the longest, because I am a fan of many Vietnamese and Vietnamese American literature and writers," she said.

To learn more about the stories behind her favorite writers, like Viet Thanh Nguven, Keys wants to visit the places she's read about in novels, as well as significant sites from the Vietnam War. At the same time, her husband will be conducting more research about masculinity, labor and identity, with a university connection in Thailand.

"I'm excited for this new adventure and to learn more about so many different cultures," she said.

Next year, another English teacher will have to teach the English 11 Honors classes Keys has taught since 2012, but Creative Writing will not be offered because of a lack of signups. •



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The staff of The Saratoga Falcon is com

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resenting the diverse talents, cultures and viewpoints of the Saratoga High

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Drama leaps into preparing for 'Mamma Mia!'

ву Anamika**Anand**, Lena**Aribi** & Divya Vadlakonda

As the lights dim and the stage lights up, the drama program will fall into the story of "Mamma Mia!," a heartfelt tale about a mother and daughter duo, Donna and Sophie, whose relationship is tested when Sophie invites three men who she thinks could be her father to her wedding.

Last summer, junior Ashly Henry suggested "Mamma Mia!" as a possible spring musical, which struck up many positive responses and was later approved by a drama board of upperclassmen and drama manager Benjamin Brotzman.

The show will have the two casts switching roles every show; performances will take place on April 28 and May 5 at 7 p.m. and April 30 and May 6 at 2 p.m.

One cast consists of senior Joanna Beiar as Donna, sophomore Diya Iyer as Sophie, senior Allison Tan as Tanya, senior Amrita Gopal as Rosie, senior Dustin Peng as Sam, senior Irene Frazier as Harry, freshman Nila Venkataratnam as Bill and freshman Beni

"Everybody's pushing themselves really hard to be the best they can."

SENIOR Joanna Bejar

A second cast consists of sophomore Niraali Garg as Donna, senior Anastasia Ramirez as Sophie, junior Ashly Henry as

Tanya, senior Ananya Gupta as Rosie, senior Uma Phalke as Sam, freshman Ben Davies as Harry, sophomore Kat Aldrete as Bill and senior Olivia Smith as Sky.

Throughout all the shows, the cast members will be alternating between playing their parts and being in the ensemble. In other words, cast members have to learn the show twice — the ensemble part and their own lines as major parts, Bejar said.

"Everybody's pushing themselves really hard to be the best they can," Bejar said. 'It's a lot of hard work, but it's also fun and it definitely pays off."

There are 27 songs total in the musical and as the lead role of Donna, Bejar will be singing a large handful of them, including solos, duets, truetts and ensemble songs. Bejar mostly runs her songs at home, listening to recordings and practicing them over to

perfect notes that are difficult to hit, so that she can be comfortable singing on stage. Due to most of the soundtrack consisting of ABBA songs, Bejar has found it easier to memorize the songs as she has heard them before. The musical accompaniment has not been finalized, however, Brotzman is currently looking for enough members to form a pit orchestra. As for lines, Bejar described the environment of group practices as energetic and fun, overall motivating everyone to keep getting better.

Reflecting on the success of other high schools in the Bay Area like Prospect High after performing "Mamma Mia!", Henry said she anticipates that the SHS shows will be sold out as well.

"All these people are learning these new skills and putting in effort to do new things they've never done before," Bejar said. ◆

Robotics team seeds ninth and outreach lead wins

MSET Robotics team was eliminated in the third round of playoffs by just one point at the San Francisco Regional held from March 16-19, falling short of qualifying for their goal of the world competition. They were seeded 9th heading into competitive rounds.

Junior outreach lead Cameron Nguyen was also nominated as Dean's List Finalist, an award for leadership in both community outreach and technical subsystems. Forty-two teams competed in the tournament, and only five advanced to worlds, three through robot games and two through outreach initiatives.

Since January, the 60-member team has been working on their robot in preparation for this first competition. Within the allotted 10 weeks, the team designed, prototyped, manufactured, programmed, wired and tested their robot. However, the team was met with a tough schedule: An abnormally high number of adult mentors were unavailable, leading to a backlogging the robot parts that needed to be manufactured and electronics wiring and software

"We did the basic wiring over about a week, but because everything was on a time crunch due to delayed manufacturing and a lot of pressure from software to finish, we were limited on working hours," sophomore electronics member Sameera Kapur said.

Nevertheless, the electronics team was able to finish and hand the robot off to the software team which rushed to test autonomous actions, driving and other essential robot functionalities.

lems, primarily on Friday, the day of their practice matches. The robot aims to pick up cube and cone pieces to place on heightened platforms on the field. However, starting with an unusually slow drivebase and unexpected difficulty picking up scoring elements, the team had to clamor to make all the necessary code changes. In-match, the claw, the mechanism used to pick up game pieces, was damaged — but in a dramatic improvement from last year's season, the hardware and electronics subsystems pushing back the robot assembly, remained relatively robust.

In competition, the team encountered their fair share of prob-

> efforts, they were eliminated in the third round of playoffs and failed to win any other awards that would have also qualified them for the World Championships. Nguyen, on the other hand, was individually recognized and will be entered as Dean's List Finalist against other regional finalists at World Championships to compete for one of ten spots as Dean's List

"This year, we focused on optimizing each part for strength while keeping it low weight, such as our long arm tubes, which were partially-pocketed [a process in which metal is removed to form a depression] to keep strength whilst cutting weight in the process, and prioritized mechanisms that would not need to extend outside the bumpers," hardware lead junior Naveed Kasnavi said. In addition, the hardware team

designed their mechanisms to be easily replaceable to make fixes simpler. Each mechanism can be taken off the robot simply by removing a few well-placed, easily-accessible screws. In the end, despite the team's

This is a disappointment in



Throughout the match, the team's robot collected and deposited game pieces from across the field. At the end, it balanced on the charge station.

M-SET qualified for the World's Championship via an outreach award, and former member senior Druthi Palle won Dean's List recip-

Before their next competition, the Silicon Valley Regional in San Jose from April 5-8, the team will be improving their robot in all subsystems.

Électronics will be working at replacing WAGO connectors and comparison to last year, where two LED controllers, hardware the much harder competition."◆

will be adding an intake that picks up from the ground and raising bumpers and software will improving their autonomous actions, programming the new ground intake and fixing errors in LED dis-

"A ground intake and other optimizations will add up and sigificantly reduce our cycle times, Kasnavi said. "I'm confident that we will rank high at SVR despite

ALIGNMENT

continued from pg. 1

The groups will present a recommendation to the board from December 2023 to January 2024, with the goal of implementing any new policies by August 2025, in time for the 2025-26 school year.

The new timeline follows the work of the Curriculum Pathways Alignment Work former superintendent Michael Grove in order to examine the differences in curriculum pathways between the district's two school sites. When the group presented to the board in November 2021, three members of the former school board voted in favor of graduation requirements alignment, while two members voted for full alignment of all core course pathways. The meeting was contentious, drawing strong opposition from dozens of teachers and parents, and the district ultimately tabled the topic to revisit it at a later date.

With new superintendent Bill Sanderson in charge and the board reshaped in the November election, the district brought back the topic in light of AB 101 and the board's current strategic goals, which include finishing discussions of curriculum alignment. The board expressed some skepticism toward the topic at first during the meeting, a significant departure from the previous board; guidance was clear that any continuing efforts would concern only graduation requirements alignment and not course pathways alignment, in keeping with the in the district. Assistant superintendent

DIFFERENCES IN GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN SHS AND LGHS —

	LGHS	SHS
FRESHMAN HISTORY REQUIREMENT	None	One semester of World Geography or Ethnic Studies
FRESHMAN ELECTIVES	Two extra electives	World Geography requirement and Health/Driver's Ed
THE ETHNIC STUDIES COURSE FULFILLS	No graduation requirement	World Geography requirement

original work group's recommendation.

Multiple members asked why the issue was still relevant and why the district should spend its resources working through the issue. While Sanderson said misalignment of graduation requirements is not actually affecting the education value of students at either school site, he attributed the importance of the issue to AB 101 and legal liabilities (a parent could theoretically sue a school site for noncompliance if the district policies are not properly updated, he said).

The board also spent a significant amount of time discussing the future implementation of the state ethnic studies requirement

Graphic by SHREYA RALLABANDI of curriculum and instruction Deepka Mukheriee explained how the requirement affects the graduation requirements discussion as well: At Saratoga High, the ethnic studies elective satisfies the World Geography graduation requirement, while at Los Gatos High, the ethnic studies class is not required because there is no freshman history requirement.

The graduation requirements at SHS and LGHS are almost identical with the minor exception of freshman history. At SHS, freshmen must take a semester of either World Geography or Ethnic Studies and a semester of Health and Drivers' Education to fulfill their freshman history and health graduation requirements, while freshmen at LGHS have no such requirements. Because of this, LGHS students are required to take two semesters more worth of electives than Mukherjee stated that the current

one-semester ethnic studies class at both schools is not the only way the district can satisfy the state's requirement. Other options she noted included incor-

curriculums and creating a year-long class — the only restriction is that the ethnic studies content must be the "primary" content of the course for at least a semester, according to state rules.

The board directed the district to consult staff and the community in the upcoming work groups to discern the best option for

Mukherjee emphasized that the district wants to involve staff and community stakeholders as much as possible throughout the graduation requirements alignment and ethnic studies process in order to make sure they are following the best options. She added it is vital staff are excited about the changes and that neither ethnic studies nor graduation requirements alignment becomes a burden on staff.

"I want our teachers to be excited about this opportunity, and not just look at it as 'how is this going to disrupt what we already have," she said. "I think we have the beginnings and potential for more exciting work forward in many ways, if we can get folks

Swap private counselors for CCC services

school's former community of several colleges, following the area's rebrand to the College and started as a new initiative to help seniors through the increasingly challenging college application process and to introduce high schoolers to new potential ca-

> However, just like its location, this program is still underrated and underutilized. And despite the constant barrage of emails, many students have never attended a single college-related session, usually because they view it as simply yet another school initiative, rather than a useful opportunity they should

most cost-effective way to perform well in the admissions process, as opposed to paying thousands of dollars to overpriced private admissions counselors. The CCC creates a welcoming environment that humanizes what is, for many, a convoluted process.

Of course, like lemmings going over the cliff, many students will continue to hire private admissions counselors, hoping that such guidance will give them an edge in the college admissions process. Often, the role of such counselors is to help students essays and supplementals on dundant for students who take school. advantage of its offerings.

This year, the walls of the even unethical. Others have been uously toward "research" projects others. Yet, according to the Atlantic, college counselors in the Bay Area — the epicenter of the admissions rat race — charge up to a jaw-dropping \$400 per hour.

Simply put, the CCC is the

come under fire in recent years for being incredibly pricey and

faulted for making illegal guarroom were plastered with posters antees. Much of the advice they give, pushing students disingen-Career Center (CCC). The CCC and "nonprofit" organizations, can often be actively harmful to

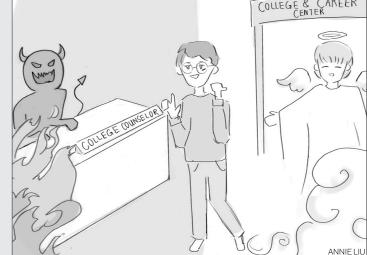
The school's new college counselor, Brad Ward, has more than a decade of experience with the college admissions industry and is every bit as knowledgeable as those in the private sector. Furthermore, the four guidance counselors provide individualized support to their assigned students in addition to letters of recommendation.

And how much does the school charge for having a national-level expert such as Ward and a dedicated team of experienced counselors? \$0. Whether by hosting open

hour sessions for parents of upperclassmen, by diligently helping students with essays and college selection choices or by inviting admissions officers from dozens of colleges to speak on campus, Ward creates opportunities that provide students with more clarity in the college admissions process.

And while some of these initiatives, such as college represenfinalize a college list, finish their tative visits, may have received flak from The Falcon previously, time and provide guidance for they are a potentially importpicking a final college. The CCC ant resource that other private covers each of these bases, ren- counselors simply cannot replidering a private counselor re- cate without the backing of the

Furthermore, the CCC ac-Some organizations in the tively provides students with an private admissions industry have environment that is not only engaging and productive, but also humanizing and genuine.



Often, in "pay per hour" or 'pay per session" schemes, or during trial runs, counselors give advice that is compromised by conflicts of interest. If the counselors are able to convince students that they are inadequate or won't be able to handle the admissions process alone, then they could potentially convince the student to sign up for more hours or sessions. In contrast, because the CCC is free to use, it can open students' minds to appropriate schools that are not so highly ranked, and even destigmatize community college — something that private coun-

losing their reputation. In addition, the CCC has resources extending beyond college admissions, giving stu-

selors struggle in due to fear of

dents insights into nontraditional paths after high school. While most students here elect to pursue a 4-year college, the CCC works with those thinking about nontraditional paths such as entering the workforce early or joining the military. As many students have not yet been exposed to options like these or are struggling to find competent resources to help them, the CCC is a great place to start.

Ultimately, regardless of what the CCC is used for, students should give the new initiative at least one try before diving straight into costly private services. While this was its first year of full-fledged operation, it is students themselves who must take full advantage of the CCC's range of vital services. ◆

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-Chief Nidhi Mathihall

Opinion Editors Avani Kongetira Nilav Mishra

Writer Nilav Mishra

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 17-15 in favor of this article.

Don't dismiss new curriculum alignment efforts

BY Shaan**Sridhar**

It's official: The fiery curriculum alignment debates are back. Sort of.

ways to make both schools in the district run on parallel tracks in areas such as graduation requirements and classes and pathways offered to students.

But this time, I predict it's not ng to be so fiery. When the Curriculum Alignment Work Group was convened and ended in November 2021, the community was asked to explore a topic that seemed both unnecessary and insensitive given the lingering effects of COVID-19 and the crisis students and staff were still in. But now, there is a reason for aligning graduation requirements and the board and district are right to revive the conversation.

In fact, they should push it a

The previous work group was a blatant disaster, one of many within a short period of time so much so that the Falcon published a vote of no confidence in the school board. But things have changed; most notably, the board is not the same at all: Two former teachers and a current parent joined two sitting members and replaced two former parents.

The community's collective

criticisms of the previous board about its stakeholders," read the previous editorial — were addressed by the voters, and quite The previous effort tried to find pointedly fixed.

We're also looking at a completely new district administration. Almost every level of leadership at the district level brings fresh eyes and a wealth of experience to their positions.

So now, after more than a year, why return to this hot-button topic? Because it's important to the pedagogical transparency and direction of our schools and because the current system is flawed. The last work group issued a final recommendation after months

of compromise: Skip "full alignment," skip "no alignment" and just do alignment of graduation requirements. It's about time the district finally acts on that recommendation, as it's what the community wanted. More importantly, the two schools' graduation requirements reflect the district's core pedagogical values. That's not a school-site specific philosophy. It's a high-level edict that should be the same across both schools, especially in a district like ours that only has two schools in two fairly intertwined communities.

In truth, the differences in graduation requirements between Saratoga High and Los Gatos

— "this school board doesn't care freshmen are required to take a semester of history (either Ethnic Studies or World Geography) and a semester of Health and Drivers' Education. At LGHS, there is no such requirement, but students must take an additional year of

> As superintendent Bill Sanderson noted in the board's meeting on Feb. 13, there could be legal of-sync requirements, as parents could sue the school for noncompliance with out-of-date district requirements.

The board has given reassurances that this won't blow up in our faces like last time.

In addition, all public schools are facing a looming requirement from the state's AB 101, which mandates the addition of ethnic studies class in the next few years. (SHS has already implemented a version of the class as an option for freshmen).

In all honesty, we can and should take alignment further than just graduation requirements. The current requirements are incredi-

High are fairly minimal. At SHS, bly basic and don't even mention what courses qualify for each credit, leaving that up to each school. This is an issue I've brought up before within the original group itself and in a previous Falcon editorial as well: İt's simply not fair or pedagogically reasonable to allow AP European History to satisfy the world history requirement at Los Gatos High, but not at Saratoga So, while there may be appre

hension among staff and parents that this doomsday topic is coming back, there isn't any need to fear. The board has given reassurances that this won't blow up in our faces like last time. The direction is solely to focus on graduation requirements and ethnic studies, and multiple board members made it clear they didn't want the district reopening the pandora's box of curriculum pathways alignment or, even more controversially, alignment of course pathways and frameworks. I think it's fair to trust the district leaders at their word.

So, yes, alignment is back. But it's not curriculum pathways — it's just graduation requirements. We can all take a deep breath and relax: There's nothing crazy to worry about here, and we must let the process work itself out. If you really want to help, try to join the work group and become part of

Affirmative action fundamentally misunderstood

BY Anthony Wang

In 2018, court documents filed in the case Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v. Harvard alleged that Harvard University officials lowered their internal personality scores for Asian American applicants in an effort to reduce Asian American enrollment in its undergraduate class.

The court case, filed in an attempt to combat race-based affirmative action, will be decided by the Supreme Court later this year, perhaps reversing decades of prece-

Canonical opposition of affirmative action points to unfair practices like those of Harvard aiming to show the so-called "positive discrimination" actually leads to unnecessary inequity against qualified applicants. Other arguments claim that the problems affirmative action tackles can be solved more effectively by boosting socioeconomically disadvantaged students instead.

But this stance misses the true goal of affirmative action for elite schools like Harvard: Not to form a truly holistic and ultimately meritocratic system where the most deserving gain admission, but rather to produce a carefully calibrated student body to uphold their public image and money-making business

For example, the original complaint by SFFA points to differences in Asian American enrollment between Harvard, which takes race into account in admissions, and the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), which does not.

Harvard's percentage of Asian American enrollment stayed flat, while Caltech's cers truly believe that its system of "posi-

In the recently released new course

framework of AP African American Studies,

topics about the queer Black experience and

radical Black activists were removed largely

to the political interests of others is a form

of historical revisionism, which is sadly

becoming more common within College

College Board currently offers four his-

tory courses: AP United States History, AP

European History, AP Art History and AP

World History, with the recent proposed ad-

jor controversy in Republican Gov. Ron De-

Santis's Florida, and as a result, Florida's De-

partment of Education rejected the course,

citing a lack of educational and historical

value. The course was then altered to fit

Not surprisingly, the course caused ma-

dition of AP African American Studies.

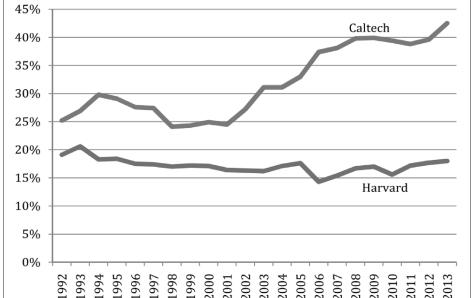
Board and in American society in general.

Removing aspects of history to appeal

because of right-wing political pressure.

& Sarah**Thomas**

Asian American Enrollment at Harvard and Caltech



College Board cracks under the pressure of GOP-led attacks

COLLEGE BOARD

dramatically increased between 2000 and 2010, purportedly proving that Harvard's use of race-based affirmative action causes it to deviate from the (implied) "ideal," in which students are selected based on academic merit alone. Regardless of whether these differences positively or negatively reflect on Harvard's admissions process, they demonstrate that Harvard takes extreme care to have a precise racial makeup for its class, in contrast to Caltech.

So do Harvard and its admissions offi-

tive discrimination" makes Harvard a better place to study?

But ultimately it does not matter because Harvard believes that delicately balancing its undergraduate class and advertising itself as a bastion of "diversity and inclusion" help secure its place as an elite Ivy League insti-

In a similar way, Harvard has come under fire for its practice of legacy admissions, in which the relatives of alumni, especially well-heeled donors, are more likely to be ac-

The original complaint by SFFA alleges that Harvard uses a special admissions list called the "Z-list," from which around 20 to 50 students are selected each year, to admit overwhelmingly white, legacy, wealthy and academically worse applicants.

However, regardless of whether Harvard actually cares to help those who are less fortunate by giving them financial need-based admissions boosts, rewarding the alumni who donate to Harvard actively encourages other wealthy individuals to give money as

As a result, Harvard's actions say that the school is willing to admit a few dozen less deserving individuals if it means that they will continue to receive large donations. In other words, Harvard puts its success as a business above other factors.

Thus, arguments, like those in the Supreme Court case, that treat affirmative action as a purely ethical issue on the best way to combat the past abuses of discrimination ignore the root cause of the issue: The fact that schools like Harvard are incentivized to make a profit. Actually "fixing" affirmative action, then, requires a dramatic shift in how private colleges are viewed, away from selling a certain education (and its corresponding degree) for a price and toward preparing all people for the world.

But this is a cultural rather than a legal shift - perspectives must change before laws can. Before then, attempts to fix the consequences rather than the causes of affirmative action, even those handed down by the Supreme Court, will be much ado about

Wellesley college should listen to students and staff and change their outdated gender policy

On March 14, more than a third of Wellesley College students, traditionally all-female school, voted on the Gender Inclusivity Ballot Question. It asked whether students supported decreasing the school's use of gendered language and opening admissions up to transgender men.

Ninety percent of students voted in favor, but the results were nothing more than a symbolic show of support for the change. The final decision rests with school officials, who seem to be leaning in the direction of ignoring the will of the student body.

Wellesley should choose demands and be more

In an email response to the initial ballot

Wellesley's current gender policy states

as female but later transitioned during their time at Wellesley, the constant use of gendered language at the school disregards this gender-diverse population.

First and foremost, Wellesley needs to listen to its students, alumni and professors to not only ensure that their university is safe and inclusive for all, but also an institution that exists to, as Johnson said herself, "challenge the norms and power structures that too often leave women, and others of marginalized identities, behind."

Cutting down on use of gendered language in university policy and websites, providing gender-neutral bathrooms and recognizing transgender and non-binary alumni will bring Wellesley closer to this goal, as will slowly opening up admission to transgender men and other minority gender applicants who do not consistently identify

As of 2021, more than 1% of Wellesley's student population does not identify as female, and following Johnson's email, some of those students reported increased transphobia, misgendering and alienation. In an interview with The Wellesley News, senior Melina Rowin expressed their reaction to the email.

"After this email I felt betraved because I wasn't being seen or respected as a trans student who's very active on this campus,"

Even before the vote on the ballot question, students, professors and staff alike showed their support for the measure by promoting numerous sit-ins around cam-

and non-binary students who have always existed as integral members of the College

As an institution that, at its inception, was designed to provide an education and platform to students marginalized and disenfranchised because of their gender, Wellesley should choose to listen to their students' demands and be more inclusive of their transgender, non-binary and LGBTQ+ students. It's time for Wellesley to honor its history and gender diversity, and modernize its once-groundbreaking gender policy. ◆

to listen to their students' inclusive.

question, university president Paula Johnson reaffirmed the administration's stance on keeping Wellesley as a women's college, thereby excluding male transgender men and non-binary students in the process. This needs to change.

that applicants must "live as a woman and consistently identify as a woman" to be eligible for acceptance. While this policy does not apply to students who initially identified

100-word rant: phone policies are pointless

When I step into a classroom, my eyes often land on a dark blue calculator caddy with pockets that fit our cellphones perfectly — I become overwhelmed with a sense of dread.

Though phones can make some students less productive, students should be allowed to take more responsibility for their own learning.

emphasis on students taking initiative for their own learning and mimicking the rigorous college environment, the restrictions placed on cell phones middle school vibe. If teachers want to build such an environment, why don't they give students the independence associated with one as well? ◆



For a school that places so much



Meta's Metaverse is currently a financial flop

pus on March 7. At these protests, students

put forth a list of demands, which focused

on reducing bias toward transgender and

non-binary students, presenting the college

and overall creating a safer space for stu-

dents of any gender.

in a way that better reflects its student body

And as a referendum signed by nearly

700 alumni asserts, the best way for Welles-

ley to move forward in the present political

climate — when transgender rights are be-

ing threatened by anti-trans bills active in

46 states — is to "fully embrace the trans

At one point, Facebook was so confident their Metaverse would become the next big thing that they changed their name to Meta. Since then, the stock has seen a revolu-

tionary drop from about \$350 per share to \$200 per share. Across the past 1.5 years of work, Meta's Reality Labs has seen great financial losses, as they wasted \$4.28 billion in the last quarter while seeing virtually no progress in terms of development. In total, they've dumped \$36 billion into the project. The Metaverse only made up 2.3% of their earnings despite eating up their profit margin by around 40%.

The Metaverse uses the powers of virtual reality (VR) to display a simulated world for its users. Its goal is to create a VR universe where people can hold meetings, visualize 3-D structures, teach classes and perform aspects of life from the comfort of their

Recently Meta launched a flamboyant new advertising series Are We There Yet? in Camouflaj, Beat Saber and more to bolster efforts to promote their new product — the Metaverse.

However, customers have come to a general consensus that Meta is far from delivering on their promises. Even now, most of the preset avatars are cartoonish, low resolution and have no working legs. In other words, the Metaverse is a buggy mess.

Furthermore, Meta has still yet to deal with the plethora of problems that await them in the VR world, from cybersecurity issues to phishing and child grooming. By any measure, their product is objectively terrible.

With Facebook's bad reputation for solving security issues, it's hard to see the company putting effort into ensuring online safety in the Metaverse.

In a virtual world, in which predators and other malicious individuals can hide behind an online avatar, the risks for children and other vulnerable groups increase

Initially, after seeing minimal results but enormous spendings, Meta decided the most logical plan was simply to buy other VR companies such as Armature Studio,



gone smoothly.

Several months ago, Meta was finally able to purchase Within Unlimited, another VR company, after winning a lawsuit against the Federal Trade Commission's attempt to block them from purchasing the company in fears of monopolization. Their solution to being unable to make any progress is to purchase the work of others — a flex of their financial resources. However, they are now feeling the bite of this poor financial invest-

In comparing Meta to a similar competitor, VRChat, Meta is clearly behind. VRChat, founded by Graham Gaylor and Jesse Joudrey, is an online platform where people can interact with each other via virtual reality, expressing themselves through custom-made avatars — the very product Meta wishes it could produce.

Despite having less than 1% of Meta's funding, VRChat has much cleaner movements, graphics and fluidity among its avatars, and is working on improving finger tracking to benefit the sign language community who play their game.

The active player counts are also blatant their VR presence. Even this plan has not proof of Meta's failure. VRChat garners over 2 million active players each month, but Meta's flagship project Horizon Worlds struggles to get 200,000 users per month, and that number is dropping as Meta reported a 33% decrease in player counts over the past year. These failures resulted in Meta's recent layoff of 11,000 employees — about 13% of its workforce.

Meta has also quietly shifted toward focusing on LLaMA, a new AI program meant to rival ChatGPT, and away from supporting the Metaverse, not wanting to admit how much of a failure it has been.

Ultimately, these issues all stem from how Meta bit off more than it could chew. While they spouted grand plans about NFTs and other buzzwords, none of them were realistic, and the results certainly show it.

The only thing "meta" about the Metaverse was the advertising budget that tried to prop it up. Now that ChatGPT is popular, Zuckerberg and crew want to jump on the AI bandwagon, but if they don't step back and assess what they can and can't do, they'll get burned again. And that's a reality that will really sting. ◆

standards set by its opponents. College Board's goal is to make money rather than focus on the betterment of truthful, equitable education.

Why is a "not-for-profit organization" involved in political agendas to the extent that it is willing to revise and censor its own courses? And why are students' educations, supposedly handled by a neutral third-party organization, beginning to reflect biases from the G.O.P. radicals like DeSantis?

The reason for this sellout is quite simple:

College Board's goal is to make monev rather than focus on the betterment of truthful, equitable education. Although the organization is registered as a 501c nonprofit with the IRS, the organization's CEO made \$2.1 million in 2020. In 2019, the entire organization had a revenue of \$1.1 billion while still continuing to claim to be a "not-for-profit organization."

College Board also holds a monopoly

over most standard testing within the U.S. and has continued to alter its courses to be accepted by conservative audiences and other right-leaning detractors. Through its actions, it has become complicit in fitting the narrative that conservative policymakers hope to broadcast for political points, rather than broadcasting the truth behind

These detractors have listed various reasons for disapproving of progressive history courses. For instance, Florida asserted that AP African American Studies was "a vehicle for a political agenda" and said it would block schools from adopting the course unless "problematic" topics like Black queer studies, intersectionality and radical Black activists were removed.

State officials also took specific issues with the possibility of the course covering Black Lives Matter, the reparations movement and Critical Race Theory (CRT), which have since been removed from the

The history of Black Americans is vital and is under-taught in high schools na-

tionwide. The College Board engaging in conflicts of interest with lawmakers only exacerbates this problem. The decision to change the course content is deplorable, and raises questions of whether College Board its profits. censored its own material just for simple

The history of Black Americans is vital and is under-taught in high schools nationwide.

The original curriculum was not perfect, but it was relatively comprehensive and covered many aspects of Black history, from the inception of the U.S. to issues today. Contrary to what Florida politicians claimed, the curriculum's more "controversial" aspects were not indoctrinatory or intended to sway children's political beliefs — change for marginalized groups in history required

radical thinkers. By removing so much of the original curriculum, dozens of people, cultures and social changes are being discarded so that College Board can maximize Even if you ignore the obvious violation of constitutional rights that banning the

teaching of these aspects of history results in, educators and students around the country should be more aware of what they're teaching and being taught. When an organization that makes such

immense amounts of profits is allowed to alter its educational standards to appeal to a wider customer base, academic integrity and honesty is sacrificed for financial gain.

This issue isn't exclusive to this singular course. As ethnic studies courses and others centered around the history of marginalized groups begin to be incorporated into high schools throughout the nation, it's important to prioritize truth over profit. Education should never be about making the most money, especially if a person is forced to sacrifice integrity in the process — and College Board should be held accountable.

School should enhance its storm response in preparation for future climate-related issues

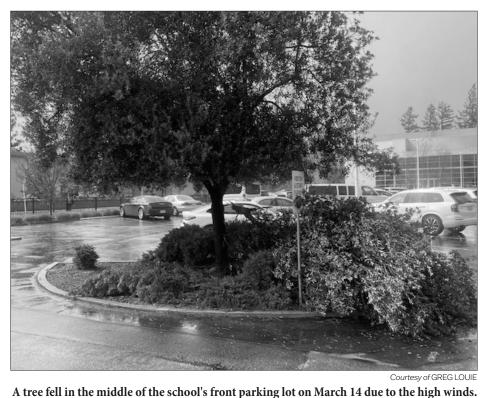
This winter, California has experienced weeks of heavy rain and high winds. Students carried umbrellas around school, and those who didn't walked into class sopping wet. In fact, the storm on March 29 marks the 13th atmospheric river of the season, a record high number. Trees collapsed across Saratoga and road conditions worsened in these storms. Over 65,000 residents experienced power outages in the Bay Area, and although it did not directly impact classes, the school lost power on March 21.

March is not the first time this has happened — California experienced one of its largest storms in years in January as well, with many areas experiencing days of continued rainfall. The earlier storm caused severe issues across the state, including prevalent power outages that have affected around 120,000 residents. The school also lost power on Jan. 10, and many students and teachers have been impacted by the power outages as well.

Changes in climate and more sporadic weather events forecast more extreme storms to come for California in coming years. As climate change continues to impact the extremity and frequency of storms, reconsidering policies has the potential to yield considerable benefits.

The school's efforts to mitigate the effects of the storm were commendable, with minimal hassles and issues. Despite this, the school should closely consider the possibility of more future storms and try to adapt their response accordingly through increasing student safety and other quality of life

It is clear that student safety should be the first priority. There have been dozens of deaths and many more injuries across California as a result of the rain. Fortunately, none have occurred nearby, but caution is advised. Having students come to school during power outages and hazardous road conditions can create risks to their safety



and additional liability for the school.

Thus, in addition to the school cancellation due to power outages, the school should also base such a decision on the severity of the storm conditions outside. If the storm is too intense and road conditions become dangerous (e.g., collapsing trees and mudslides), school should be canceled in order to ensure student and staff safety.

However, some argue that it is safer for students to be at school when there is power rather than be at home without power.

This may apply to some students, but if the school wishes to open during hazardous conditions, over a thousand students or their parents must drive here under dangerous conditions — something that may cause more problems than it prevents.

For example, teachers and students who

live in Santa Cruz County can have a tough time reaching school, as CA-17 becomes very dangerous during storms with mudslides and severe accidents common.

Although there haven't been any student injuries during the recent storms, there have definitely been elevated risks. In the future, this policy reconsideration can greatly ben-

What should the school do if storms drastically increase when school is in session? Despite severe storms and high winds creating dangers for students, the school appears to have no "lockdown" procedure for weather emergencies.

The school has procedures for earthquakes and fires, so creating a similar procedure for heavy rain and high winds will almost certainly be helpful due to the increasing frequency of storms.

In addition to these procedures, another point to be addressed is student awareness. Many students are not completely sure of plans the school has in place during storms. Although emails containing instructions for these situations are usually sent right before school, students often feel a lack of awareness of what will happen, especially during

The school has sent out emails and coordinated efforts, but making the situation more clear would benefit more students. A clear guide on school cancellation policies posted in an accessible web page or emailed to students would be a good first step in ad-

The school should also improve other minor issues with regard to rain to improve student quality of life. For example, traffic is often an exacerbated issue during rain days.

With honking cars, clogged roads and difficult conditions, students often arrive at

The traffic personnel at school do the best they can to handle this situation, but the dropoff and pickup lines are still chaotic. Thus, putting more people on the duty and devoting more resources to help with traffic would allow for a smoother school day. In addition, some have voiced that the school should be more lenient with tardies to compensate for the tough traffic situation.

Furthermore, the cafeteria is often packed during rainy days. Increased administrative monitoring to limit the chaos would also benefit the student environment. While minor, these improvements to the school could greatly improve the functionality of the school during rain days.

School officials have done a decent job dealing with the rain — they have opened the Student Center, sent out guiding emails and helped deal with chaos.

However, an enhancement of this effort along with a reconsideration of policies would be critical in helping the school deal

Whoever puts 27' instead of '27 should be rescinded

If you commit to a university, surely you would be intelligent enough to know comes before the year, not after — right?

As senior class president (they made me put this), I have been burdened with the agony that comes alongside scrolling past one of my peer's Instagram profiles and seeing yet another [insert college] Class of 27' post. No, you are most definitely not enrolled at Harvard as the graduating class of 2720.

Call to action: If you see someone's Instagram bio with 27' in reference to their graduating class, please take all necessary measures to screenshot it as evidence of tomfoolery and email the admissions office of their school demanding they be rescinded (Disclaimer: Don't actually do this). ◆



To maintain teacher quality, board should ask voters to renew and raise parcel taxes

Teaching is one of the most important of all professions, providing key developmental factors to society and underpinning the future of future generations. The career path, especially in a high cost-of-living place like the Bay Area, is falling behind current economic standards and living re-

The average starting teacher salary in the average liveable wage - which takes into account basic needs such as food, childcare, healthcare, housing and more - of \$50,249. In the Bay Area, the median income for teachers is much higher at \$79,500, but it's still low in relative comparison to the Bay Area's extreme cost of living. Average teacher pay in LGSUHSD is higher than the Bay Area average at just

Justifying the district's current salary because it is high relative to the state and national average is not valid given the higher local costs of the Bay Area. It makes more sense to compare the district to neighboring comparison districts. That means comparing LGSUHSD to districts like Mountain View-Los Altos, Santa Clara

salary of \$74,700, which is surprisingly less than the Bay Area's median teacher income. Although there is a \$6,000 pay in-supported and stay for the long term crease after the first five years on the job, the district's pay rate pales in comparison to neighboring districts like the Moun-

tain View-Los Altos High School District, which has a starting salary of \$97,092.

The district needs to take action to support teachers by increasing teacher wages, an initiative that can be funded by asking voters to raise its current parcel tax.

Considering the high local cost of living, the district's pay has been falling behind for many years. Teachers often travel where housing prices and rents are cheaper than the immediate area

Teachers often travel to the school from counties like Santa Cruz where housing prices are cheaper.

While many veteran teachers in the district entered the housing market when housing costs were lower, allowing them to save for and purchase a home, it is now difficult for young teachers to do the same because Bay Area house prices are too high; many young teachers see a future of continuing to pay thousands of month for rentals in far-away locations.

A rise in pay is the obvious and simple The district provides a starting base fix to this issue. Not only would it ease the growing burden of rising housing costs, but it would also ensure that teachers feel something that is vital to the growth and development of students.

According to a report by American

University, high teacher retention rates increase student engagement and enthusiasm for learning. Because long-term teachers serve as role models and mentors, consistent teacher turnovers can be discouraging for students and undermine a school's mission. However, it is impossible for any school district to increase pay without funding. So how can the district afford to to the school from counties like Santa Cruz pay their teachers a salary that would compete with other top local districts?

The district receives a parcel tay on each property parcel within the district — of \$49 per parcel within the boundaries of the district. The parcel and other similar taxes are the only way districts like ours can remain competitive in pay and benefits.

This current tax expires in 2025. In order to support and raise teacher pay, it is critical for voters to be able to renew and raise it to at least \$99 per parcel. This isn't a radical proposal in any way, especially in comparison to the Los Gatos Union School District (LGUSD), which has a tax of \$290 per parcel, and the Palo Alto Unified School District, which has a tax of \$836 per parcel with 2% annual adjustments.

While this proposed tax is still comparatively low, the added revenue would go a long way to make LGSUHSD competitive again. Throughout American society, teachers are constantly undermined, but they deserve so much more for the work

Both the state and district have a responsibility and imperative to support teachers in every way possible — and keep them here for the long term. ◆

lifestyles





The incredible story of two rescued rabbits

TWO WILD RABBITS BUILD AN UNFORGETTABLE BOND WITH EACH OTHER AND CONNECT WITH THEIR RESCUERS

ву Andy**Zhu**

April 7, 2023

In August 2019, due to the extreme summer heat, my family left our backyard door open, and a small creature — a lean, dark taupe-colored bunny that appeared to be no older than 2 months old — took the opportunity to take shelter in our home.

My dad noticed this friendly intruder and gently led the bunny outside on the lawn, only to be left confused that it didn't move a single inch. Looking out for the animal, he picked it up and placed it in a bush for cover, hoping it would find its way back

Later that day, my dad went to check if the rabbit had moved. To his surprise, the little fellow remained. It seemed that fear had paralyzed the bunny's ability to move around, and my dad started getting worried that it wouldn't be able to survive on its own.

After some pondering, he brought the bunny inside and kept it inside a storage box with towels for warmth and bedding. When my sister and I arrived home that day from school, the strange box caught our eyes im-

Initially, I was hit with confusion. Why is there a transparent box on the floor? Wait, is something in there?

I approached the box, and the mysteri-

ous object inside appeared to be moving. My dad explained everything that happened; needless to say, we were thrilled to have our first "real" pet — one that wasn't a non-responsive fish.

Before our sparks of hope could grow into a blaze, however, our dad poured us a bucket of cold water.

"This is just a baby rabbit," he warned. "We're not even sure it may survive. We need to make sure it can live first."

The connections I made with these wild rescued rabbits will forever be one of the most special moments of my life.

With that in mind, I promptly began my research. I investigated everything from their living conditions to what they eat and their behaviors. I was determined to keep the rabbit healthy and make sure it had a good time during its fostering.

We named the little guy Puffy. I remember the first time we witnessed it eating carrots: It was through an Arlo video camera



Puffy and Fluffy growing up in a different environment than the wild after being rescued.

while our family was away, and Puffy was nibbling gently on sliced carrots.

My entire family was so happy and felt assured that it was going to survive. As Puffy grew, his home grew from a small cage to a 4-feet playpen with little accessories like chew toys, ropes, hide-outs and pillows.

Eventually, we bought and customized nim a four-level rabbit house and his favorite place to relax was the hammock my dad made for him. A few months later, another rescue rabbit joined the family. Its story is a bit different from Puffy's.

This one came right up our doorstep. Our neighbor — who had heard of our rescue rabbit tale — brought it to us. We named it Fluffy.

Fluffy was much different than Puffy. He was very energetic and lively, unlike Puffy, who was very reserved. I could tell Fluffy was going to be harder to calm down, but he was going to be fun to take care of. This time around, we were more confident in our abilities to keep it safe and well after months of taking care of Puffy.

Lucky for him, he never had to stay in a small rescue cage, thanks to Puffy's old

We raised Fluffy until he got bigger, and then we introduced him to Puffy.

The two first acted like they didn't see each other and cautiously stayed very far apart. But as time went on, they became comfortable and soon became good friends.

As they kept growing bigger, we realized they needed more space. It was a tough and debated decision, but we decided to let them free. However, this did not mean the end of our time together.

We continued to see Fluffy and Puffy in the areas around our house, and occasional ly even fed them treats that we used to give

Although we see them around less often now, we are still able to tell whenever they do visit us. Puffy has a darker spot on one of his feet, and Fluffy's right ear has been slightly nipped since we got him.

This was my first experience having a real pet. The connections I made with these wild rescued rabbits will forever be one of the most special moments of my life.

I always think back to when Puffy and Fluffy lived with us, and I am reminded of the great times that I had taking care of, and growing up with them.

My unexpected partner in crime: remembering his legacy

THE REAL LIFE DON OUIXOTE — BUT INSTEAD OF FIGHTING WINDMILLS IT'S FIGHTING ANTS IN MY BATHROOM

BY JonathanSi

I hate bugs. As the self-designated bug killer at home, it's my job to confront and slav every insect I see — sometimes I wish I got paid. But one fateful afternoon changed my entire outlook on bugs — or at least some of them.

Fluffy and Puffy became friendly and grew accustomed to their new home and family.

Imagine: summer vacation, you come back home after an exhausting trip to the library to work on college application essays. You go to wash your hands, and... ants. All over. The trail leads all the way to the bathroom and into a small, obscure hole in the

Rather than calling my parents or alerting anyone of this infestation, I was determined to win this battle myself.

Tip for anyone fighting ants: use tape specifically paper tape because of how easy it is to tear. It's like a paper towel, but there's home, kill every ant in sight — maybe do-

no chance of any stubborn survivors wriggling their way out, and it's carcass free! It also serves as an easy way to block out any small crevices in the wall. So there I am, armed with my trusty roll

of tape exterminating individual ants all over the bathroom, and as I pan around the room, a pile of ant corpses catches my eye. A spider, the lonesome soldier fighting

on his own against the advancing colony, sits on his web in the corner of the room, littering my bathroom floor with his neatly wrapped, bundles of joy. My first instinct was to crush and tape it

up with the other aggravating insects, but the compassionate side of me said otherwise. We had a common goal, and besides, it was just one, cute little spider in the corner!

So there we were, tag teaming and removing the ants one by one. I would come

rinse and repeat. As ineffective as it was, I had already found and covered the hole that I presumed most of the ants were crawling out of, so all I had left were the stubborn, little stragglers. But unfortunately, about a week later,

my mother decided to do her spontaneous cleaning sprees around the house.

After she ran out exclaiming she found a couple of ants in the bathroom, I tried to assure her the situation was under control. She, of course, like the many times she

impulsively made decisions for me, didn't believe me. Not only did she begin doing my job kill-

ing the ants (could she be any more shameless, stealing from an unemployed young adult?), she paraded the room with no sense

So when I realized the little spider was

nate a few to my fellow exterminator — and still left there unattended, I knew it was over. A feeling of impending dread washed over as I saw my mother approach the mass of corpses in the corner.

"What is all this!" she exclaimed. And before I could even open my mouth to explain the situation, she crushes the lit-

tle guy with a wad of toilet paper. Oh the Never before have I been so devastated at the loss of a mere arthropod; I even thought

of replacing my friend with a random spider outside, but deep down, I knew it was irreplaceable. It wasn't just some random creature I

used to kill bugs — it was a friend.

I still hate bugs. If I ever see an ant on the ground, or god forbid in my house, I will kill it. But spiders will always hold a special place in my heart. I still might kill them though, just a little less maliciously.

"ONLY 10 MINUTES TO GET A 'FREAKISHLY ACCURATE' DESCRIPTION OF WHO YOU ARE AND WHY YOU DO THINGS THE WAY YOU DO."

-16Personalities

From online quizzes to horoscopes, I have always been skeptical of voodoo personality pseudoscience. No, I don't think BuzzFeed can tell that I'll have five kids just because I like orange juice and, no, Taurus my tendency to walk into poles — maybe true; while I don't think I'm the type to spondoesn't mean anything other than an overglorified cow. It's not that deep.

However, I decided to put aside my skepticism and give the Myers Briggs Type Indicator Test (MBTI) a try. Since it groups you into one of 16 personality types that are each divided into two subtypes, I figured that the results would be much more specific than your average Hogwarts house sorting.

It didn't come as a surprise that I was categorized as an introvert instead of an extro-

Recently, for the purpose of the fourth-period newspaper's double page, our edi-

tors-in-chief forced all staff members to take the

MBTI test, so I found myself facing yet another

The torturous questions on the Achieve-

Works Personality® assessment had diagnosed

me as an INFJ (introversion, intuition, feeling

landed in the middle of the spectrum for most

categories, except for judging and perception,

where I leaned heavily (accurately) toward

Personalities that I was an ESTP (extroversion,

and judging) and seemed accurate enough — I

round of almost 100 silly questions.

you're blind as a grandma. Someone could be waving at me and yelling at me from 5 feet away and I probably wouldn't notice.

What I was surprised by was that I got the I'm judging the MBTI test right now. feeling trait instead of thinking. I like to consider myself someone who uses their brain to make decisions, but my results say that I don't do that 60% of the time.

I also got the prospecting trait over judging, and then I Googled what "prospecting" from "praise and positive feedbego stroking goes a long way! ◆

sensing, thinking and perceiving) — the exact

personality, I needed to figure out which MBTI

confirmation that I was one of the earlier two

accuracy of all three tests I've taken, I took the

MBTI test on Human Metrics, and it changed

the Personality Data test told me something

again. This time I was an ISTP. Unexpectedly,

Instead, I became an ESFJ. Doubting the

In order to write this story about my true

opposite of my original MBTI.

Entrepreneur SARAH ZHOW

vert, considering my love for solitary activities like reading and binging dramas. MBTI my vocabulary. Based on the test, rather also classified me as being more intuitive than working with plans and backup plans, than observant, which makes sense given I'm more of a flexible person. I guess this is intuition comes more naturally to you when taneously go on road trips, I do see myself rearranging my schedule all the time to make more room for procrastination. I'm not that judgmental, either, if you ignore the fact that

> On the positive side, the results page called me generous, open minded, creative and passionate. I guess they predicted (accurately) that for someone who "lights up" from "praise and positive feedback," a little

On many separate occasions, I've been told

how I would classify myself, but I can say the

by different people that I was "definitely an ex-

trovert" or "so introverted!!" I'm not really sure

I'm sleepy or annoyed, I probably won't talk a

lot, and if I'm in an unenjoyable class with peo-

ple I dislike, I probably won't speak at all. But, since three of five tests I've taken told me I'm an

As for the sensing and intuition category,

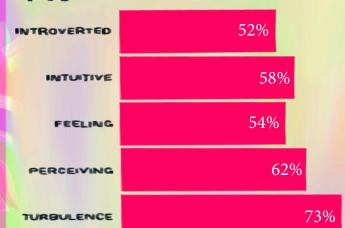
I honestly don't really understand what either

"E," I guess I'll go with it.

Can this well-known test capture your entire personality?

FALCON STAFF The majority of the period MBT I STATS

4 Falcon staff (33) got...



THOUGHTS FROM OUR EDITORS-IN- CHIEF

"Since our deadline nights are so chaotic, I'm not surprised our staff is turbulent."

Shaan Sridhar (ENFJ-A)

"This is untrue. I think we are more extroverted than we are introverted. I'm the exact opposite of this."

- Nidhi Mathihalli (ESTJ-A)

THE 16 PERSONALITIES

Intuitive (N) and Thinking (T) personality types, known for their



Intuitive (\mathbf{N}) and Feeling (\mathbf{F}) personality types, known for their empathy,



Observant (**S**) and Judging (**J**) personality types, known for their

practicality and focus on order, security, and stability

Observant (S) and Prospecting (P) personality types, known for their



Courtesy of 16PERSONALITIES

Yet, a little over a year later I was told by 16 completely different — I was actually an ESTJ. category means. My five senses are still working, though, so I guess that's good. ◆ See where I'm going with this?

LOGICIAN Tara Natarajan INTP-T

I was — ESTP or INFJ? I decided to take the Trusty MBTI test, expecting I would receive mood and the people or places I'm around. If

While many assume that being an introvert means shying away from interactions with others, being introverted doesn't necessarily mean being antisocial, but rather being more fulfilled by solitary activities than so-

I feel perfectly satisfied reading a book or bored. a movie on a Friday night alone instead of going out with friends. I also enjoy golf, which is more of a solitary sport rather friends. I also enjoy meaningful connections personality well.

ly uncomfortable with the unknown, relishing the idea of stability and rigidity to min-

For example, working as an accountant of preferring novelty might fit me. However, might not be the wisest solution.

On the other hand, being intuitive is a I wouldn't drop out of college even if I really 50/50 situation because of the fact that I have wanted to try a different path, because I still extreme anxiety. On one hand, I am extreme-value stability and rigor and fear things I can't predict or control.

Although "Thinking" makes me sound imize risk. On the other hand, I hate being robotic, I think this is 75% accurate. I often let emotions take over in certain social situations or episodes of distress, but I find it would probably provide great stability, but I normally leads to disaster. When I'm able, I dread the idea of working a job that isn't inthan a team one, although it's fun to play with tellectually stimulating — I would prefer not be efficient, but it isn't always a good thing. to have a boring and repetitive job. That's why For example, if I'm in a group project, I ofwith the small group of friends I have. These I am more inclined to work in fields such as ten feel the urge to finish everyone's work if I are all examples of introversion that fit my research or journalism. This is where the trait think they're falling behind, even though that

togatalks

How accurately does the MBTI test reflect your personality?



"The individual

but the test is too

senior Shannon Wang (ENTP)

vague."

can be applied to anyone."

"It's an ego boost

but very vague and



senior Anjini Mani (ENFP)

"The MBTI shouldn't be treated as if it were significant. I had fun but it doesn't define me."



junior Tejas Tirthapura (ESFJ)

A Hollywood ending: Low-drama ceremony closes exciting and historic Oscar season

Before the 95th Academy Awards aired on March 12, I remarked that this year's Oscars have no reason to fail like previous

Marred in recent years by slap scandals and poor production — an awards plague that also ransacked sister shows like the Golden Globes — this year looked different, with a lot of positive outlooks on deck. And, luckily, it delivered a true Hollywood

Hosted by late-night comedian Jimmy Kimmel and produced by television veterans Ricky Kirshner and Glenn Weiss, the show was a return to form and proper pres-

Critically acclaimed (and actually popular) movies took home the top prizes, while four actors with emotional stories rocked the Dolby Theater stage. And the production, though still long, moved at a better pace than ever before, incorporating every award plus some new pieces with great fu-

Oscar award winners prove worthy

Yes, there are those who will undoubtedly complain about this year's show for whatever multitude of reasons they can create, but the reality is that this telecast was the best of any Academy Awards in recent history.

It's supported by data too: 18.8 million people tuned into the Oscars, a 13% increase from last year and the highest rating for the show in three years.

In my preview, I declared that "Everything Everywhere All At Once" was the by far and away best movie of last year and the most deserving of Best Picture.

The Academy agreed: The film took home seven Academy Awards, including the prestigious top prize of Best Picture, with its directors (Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, known as The Daniels) also winning Best Director and Best Original Screenplay.

The performance of "Naatu Naatu" was underwhelming because of the lack of Tamil and Indian talent on stage.

"Everything Everywhere All At Once" also made history as the most awarded movie in history, according to an analysis

And I couldn't be happier for the film. When it first came out in March 2022 — it was actually released before last year's Oscars, but fell into this year's nomination and Tom Cruise were unable to take window — most disregarded its chances at — the time to attend.

But, much like the theme of the movie and the cast and crew involved, "Everything Everywhere All At Once" overcame the

The movie is weird, quirky and arguably insane, but it's also mainstream enough to cross appeal. This isn't a typical film, and it's worth seeing just to see it.

The Daniels weren't the only to benefit from the Best Picture bump. Even the film's editor, Paul Rogers, won Best Editing for his chaotic work, which he completed using basic Adobe Premiere Pro software on an old

Michelle Yeoh ("Everything Everywhere All At Once") bested Cate Blanchett ("Tar") to win Best Actress.

She made history by becoming the first Asian woman and second person of color after Halle Berry to ever win the award — not to mention her career-defining performance in the film and superstar body of

Ke Huy Quan ("Everything Everywhere All At Once") took the award for Best Supporting Actor, completing what he emotion-

ally proclaimed "the American Dream."

Quan first acting as a child in "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" opposite Harrison Ford, but soon lost his guild health insurance and was put out of work in a Hollywood that didn't support many Asian actors, only to triumphantly return at the Oscars — and give Ford a huge hug on stage.

His performance wasn't just the best supporting performance of the year (he was the emotional core of his film): it represented one of the best success stories Hollywood

Lastly, Jamie Lee Curtis ("Everything Everywhere All At Once") bested her own costar Stephanie Hsu and powerhouse Angela Bassett ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever") to win Best Supporting Actress.

Unfortunately, while Curtis is a fantastic actress — and an even better awards speech giver — her performance simply paled in comparison to Bassett, who was the favorite heading into the night; Curtis wasn't even the best supporting actress in her movie that would be Hsu.

That being said, given Curtis's body of work, it's not an egregious error on the Academy's part.

In the Best Actor department, Brendan Fraser won for his role in "The Whale," beating out my personal favorite Austin Butler in "Elvis" — both actors were great, but both

Fraser completed a first-time winner sweep of the acting categories, as he, Curtis, Quan and Yeoh all took home their first

To be honest, there isn't much to complain about the awards themselves, especialthe major category winners.

The only questionable awards were those given to "All Quiet on the Western Front," which won Best Cinematography, Best Production Design and Best Score, despite not deserving the latter two at all.

In addition, "Women Talking" won Best Adapted Screenplay for its script that really focused on *most* screenplay than *best*.

The movie lives up to its title and truly is 104 minutes of women talking in a room "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery" was a far more deserving pick here.

Now turning to the show itself: not bad,

Mediocre show production quality

This year's Oscars focused almost exclusively on running a smooth show and preventing disasters rather than trying to do anything special.

You can't blame them for this direction — and, for the most part, it worked out too.

Unfortunately for the show, major A-list guests James Cameron

gitimate reason, even if all Hollywood insiders are pointing otherwise.

But considering both Cameron and Cruise positioned themselves as saviors of the industry when their films "Avatar: The Way of Water" and "Top Gun: Maverick," respectively, were released, it's pretty crappy that they couldn't bother to attend the industry's celebration.

Kimmel, in his third rodeo as host, hit the right notes in his monologue, which successfully produced laughs without disrespecting any of the nominated films or the industry itself.

Some may prefer a Ricky Gervais-type host, but at a show honoring the film industry's best, it feels dis-

respectful to have a host that rips the industry apart — Kimmel chose the right path.

The award presenters also may have added some chuckles throughout the night, but they single-handedly burned the show's





Top: Ke Huy Quan won an Oscar for his role in "Everything Everywhere All At Once." Bottom: "Everything Everywhere All At Once" was nominated for 11 awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Original Screenplay and Best Film Editing.

Sure, bringing out celebrities to introduce the awards helps make the show more interesting and allows producers enough time to prepare the stage, but it also takes up a crazy amount of time.

It's hard to justify cutting off winners' speeches when presenters are rambling for twice the amount of time before the

> More specifically when the winners' speeches were often far more moving and interesting than the presenters ever were.

The performances throughout the show were also disap-

The performance of "Naatu Naatu" — the dance sensation from "RRR" that deservedly won the Best Song award — was under-

Adding on, the "Everything Everywhere All At Once" song (which I don't remember and don't care to learn about) was downright horrible.

On a more positive note, this year's Oscars were directed by television veterans Kirshner and Weiss, as noted at the top of the story. With previous years being di-

rected by members of the film industry, Kirshner and Weiss brought noticeable change. The transitions were

smoother and the show ran much faster — this year's telecast included three more awards and new promotional features, but still clocked in around the same time as last year's telecast.

Furthermore, in an attempt to boost viewership, the Oscars began including advertisements from major movie studios di-

This included Disney's "The Little Mer-

maid" live-action remake trailer and Warner Brothers's 100-year celebration montage, exciting many viewers.

You can call these inserts a cash grab, which considering they costed between \$7 million and \$10 million each, they are. But they have serious potential.

Trailers are a huge deal and they attract significant attention; just look at the Game Awards, which has built a major show from the ground up, primarily due to trailer and first-look participation from major game studios. This year was just a step, but I do hope they continue in the direction of incorporating more trailers into the show.

These trailers shouldn't be studio celebrations, and they shouldn't only come from Disney, the parent company of ABC.

It's just simple: An Oscars with new trailers and footage from "The Little Mermaid," "Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning," "Oppenheimer" and "Guardians of the Gal axy Vol. 3" is far more exciting than an Oscars without. And that brings me to the end. With a great show and even better winners, the Oscars have a lot to look forward to.

But they're still irrelevant in modern pop

The Oscars are simply no longer a major event, and they need something to entice people to watch them.

It's not an exaggeration when I say I was the only person among my friends and fam-

The show delivered on all its expectations plus a little more.

But come next year, the Academy and Oscar producers need to begin making the show more exciting for everyone.

You can only have a Hollywood ending if people see the movie in the first place. ◆

'Where are we going, Dad' is horrible 10 years later

& Sarah**Zhou**

mas or reality TV

The Saratoga Falcon

From watching "Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf" (喜羊羊) to reading "Journey to the West" (西游 while snacking on Haw flakes (山楂片) and Chinese Rice Krispies (沙琪 玛), almost all Chinese American children have also indulged in C-dra-

at least once in their life. brainshows storming that define our childhood, the first thing that comes to mind is "Where Are We Going, Dad?": a Chinese reality TV show based on the original South Korean reality show In the show, five male celebrities take

their children to different spots in China to complete tasks in order to strengthen their Here's a brief rundown of how each sea-

son goes: First, interviews are conducted with most of the participants.

The adults repeat the usual sentimental

growing up while the children scream incomprehensibly — all of this accompanied by the occasional "boing" sound effect, a 2013 equivalent to the Vine boom sound.

> each episode, each family is shown riding in their fancy cars with a personal driver — the dads wearing matching sunglasses with their kids to add to the swag - and drones zoom out to show cars speeding on a rural highway

At the beginning of

action movies. Then, the host greets the participants at a destination (usually a rural village in the middle of nowhere) and is met with whining, more cringe-worthy sound effects and unenthu-

with the speed-up and

slow-mo combo of

run around smooching each other, exclaiming how much they've missed each other. The participants are then whisked away in black and white Infinitis, all filmed by

siastic clapping by the dads as the children

drone. We're typically greeted by a timelapse of the sunset and sunrise as the iconic but repetitive — way for the show to tell us a day has passed.

After this, you're in for an hour of listening to crying and whimpering due to children losing challenges, getting wet from the rain and being confronted with the idea of being separated from their dads for 15 min-

Of course, there are also lots of heartwarming moments in each episode — such as the children bonding with puppies who live with the villagers and seeing them willing to sacrifice some of their own treasures (like a lollipop or the money to buy a new pair of shoes) in order to help their fellow friends — that make us wonder what in our childhood education went so wrong that we don't have the patience and maturity to handle situations as well as they do.

Let's be honest: If we were to go from iving in a luxurious cityscape mansion to a bucolic cabin, we'd probably have cried and begged our dads to withdraw our contracts with the show.

From the portions of Season 2, the least favorite character is quickly identifiable — 曹华恩 ("Grace") who is arguably one of the most annoying children to walk the planet

Her nickname 姐姐 (older sister) comes

constantly wants others to look up to her so she can boss other kids around since she's so obviously spoiled at home.

But given her young age of 3, everything she does is cute and means she has the exclusive privilege to sit back and watch other kids burn in hell to complete challenges.

Of course, there are also lots of heartwarming moments such as the children bonding with villagers' puppies.

When we were younger, we idolized everyone on the show and secretly cried ourselves to sleep wondering why we weren't born into a famous family so we could have fun on these reality shows.

But in retrospect, most of the dads' hilariously bad attempts at trying to take care of chores, their unintentionally funny comments made when insulting their kids to encourage them to finish their challenges and the close-up shots of the crying children really make this show an enjoyable and perfect candidate for when you are in the mood to laugh at silly kids for hours straight. ◆

'Bojack Horseman' proves it's definitely worth watching

BY Divya**Vadlakonda**

Editor's note: This article contains spoilers for "Bojack Horseman."

When I started "Bojack Horseman" during the summer of 2022, I did not know what to expect from an anthropomorphic horse and his group of friends.

I assumed that the show would follow the classic mold of an animated comedy, with its fair share of absurd situations and one liners. But after watching it, the show completely subverted my expectations, even changing the way I think about animated shows in general.

The show revolves around Bojack Horseman — a former '90s TV show star — as he tries to make a comeback to his former stardom.

Through its six seasons, the show expands on Bojack's struggles with addictions and depression, while simultaneously giving viewers insight into the lives of other characters of the ensemble cast — Mr. Peanut Butter, Diane Nguyen, Todd Chavez and Princess Carolyn - who all have their own fair share of wants, needs and fears.

The show's six seasons are filled with running jokes that never fail to make me laugh. Whether it's Mr. Peanut Butter yelling "Erica!" across the room at public gatherings every chance he gets, the cameos of Esteemed Actress Margo Martindale or the "Hollywoo" sign — the "D" was stolen by Bojack

— the show's running gags never

get old. However, what sets the show apart from others is the tone that it sets. The first few episodes may be lighthearted, but the storyline takes a turn when the viewer is left with not a punchline, but rather a pit in their stom-

The episodes draw their humor from darker themes and issues such as mental illness, addiction, depression, self-esteem

In exploring these themes, I was mystified by the authenticity and complexity of the relationships Bojack creates with ful way that not many shows can. ◆

the other characters. For example, while Bojack's relationship with Diane does encounter a brief prospect of romance in the first season, they later grow to become best

They experience the best and the worst in each other, resulting in a toxic and enabling dynamic. Though Diane and Bojack have a long, codependent connection, the show ends with Diane moving to Texas with her new husband, severing her relationship with Bojack forever.

This is one of the instances that sets the show apart. The end of Bojack and Diane's relationship hurt. Where other shows may force their characters to come to some wholesome understanding, the show's writers are not afraid to face the reality that some relationships in life should end for a chance at a brighter

future for both parties. Yet, through the show's many dark themes and conflicts, it also depicts a common goal for every character on the show- a constant pursuit of happiness. Princess Carolyn hopes to achieve happiness through dedicating herself to her work, Bojack seeks happiness through substances and Diane aims to find happiness through meaningful relationships and experiences.

This relatable theme for me, so clearly depicted through the five characters in such diverse ways, makes the characters all the more fleshed out and realistic. I have always thought about car-

toon shows as surface level episodes with jokes every 30 seconds. Most follow the same mold of some variation of a dysfunctional family who get themselves into typical shenanigans.

However, the show completely changed all expectations I had of a typical animated show and sitcom structure. It proves that animated shows have the capacity to be nuanced and the ability to reach an audience at a deeper level.

The comedic aspects of the show are matched only by their ability to connect with an audience in a unique and impact-

'You People:' How not to make a romantic comedy

BY Vinay Gollamudi

I was looking forward to watching "You People" when it was released Jan. 27 on Netflix. The movie features several renowned actors: Lauren London, Jonah Hill, Eddie Murphy and Julia Louis-Dreyfus. With the latter three especially known for their comedic talent, "You People" seemed like a surefire winner.

Boy, was I wrong.

Here's a quick summary of the lowlights: Hill plays a Jewish broker, Ezra, who cohosts a podcast on the side and dreams of podcasting full time. He meets a Black fashion designer, Amira, who often faces workplace discrimination because of her race and gender in an industry dominated by white males. The two agree to marry early on, and the rest follows the culture differences between their families and how they deal with them. Unfortunately, much of the film centers on the conflict between Akbar (Amira's father, played by Murphy) and Shelly (Ezra's mother, played by Lou-

Akbar is a stoic, strict father who rarely laughs - a stark contrast from Murphy's usual comedic roles - while Shelley lacks any sort of tact and tries too hard of Louis-Dreyfus's no-nonsense character Elaine in "Seinfeld." Aside from the strange personalities of these characters, the film frequently veers from the main plot and tries to incorporate pop-culture references, throwing off the rhythm of the story.

In one particularly difficult-to-watch scene, Ezra and his podcast co-host discuss "Take Care Drake" vs "CLB Drake". And the film's strange obsession with hiphop doesn't stop there — Ezra's father, who barely talks in the movie, somehow manages to bring up Xzibit in every conversation he's a part of.

In another extremely cliche scene, Akbar brings Ezra to a barbershop in a Crip neighborhood while Ezra is dressed in red, a color that is frowned upon in that neighborhood. Ezra subsequently shows off at a basketball court in the neighborhood while a surprised Akbar goes live on Instagram. All of these scenes try too hard to be "cool" and cater to younger viewers, but they completely miss the mark. A 40-year-old Jonah Hill rambling about Drake for two solid minutes is likely relatable to very few, and funny to an even smaller subset of viewers. with this little tact and care. ◆

But despite the cringey moments, perhaps the film's biggest flaw is that none of the characters are likable. A good rom-com will have the viewer on the edge of their seat rooting for the relationship to succeed, but Ezra and Amira's dysfunctional relationship is so painful to watch that one almost wishes for the opposite to happen.

From the get-go, romantic moments between the two are left off-screen in favor of dining-table discussions between Akbar and Shelley, which often seem more like a competition of who can say something more politically incorrect. One of the worst scenes features the two having a back and forth concerning slavery and the Holocaust. The idea that parents in real life would be this inconsiderate and obtuse is far-fetched for most and frightening to imagine.

Rather than work through their differences, the families just spiral into rude remarks and outright racism.

"You People" feels almost satirical at in every situation — the polar opposite times, but never completely crosses the have worked better had it been one. The exchanges between parents and their children are flat out unbelievable for much of the film. More than once I found myself asking "Who actually talks like this?"

Sure, at times, "You People" is funny. It's hard not to laugh at least a few times with a cast of this level, especially when Murphy is allowed to deviate from Akbar's character and poke fun at Ezra. But these rare comedic moments don't justify its nearly 2-hour runtime, especially when nothing is happening for the bulk of the story.

The film attempts to acknowledge the difficulties of a relationship between people of different cultures. However, rather than work through their differences, the families instead opt to spiral into a cycle of rude remarks and outright racism at times, negating any insightful commentary the film makes on race relations and making it uncomfortable to watch — never a good sign for a romantic comedy. Films with the subject matter of "You People" are especially necessary today, but not if they're executed

Females for Finance plans specialty magazine

& Sarah**Zhou**

The Females for Finance (F4F) Club and Design Club announced a partnership to create a school finance magazine to show off students' financial literacy, with a tentative plan to publish the magazine online by the end of the school year.

The magazine will cover topics such as the fintech industry and creating social impact through financial investments. The publication will also feature interviews with

The five officers of F4F — seniors Sarah Frederick, Noor Khan, Eva Ruemmler, Elizabeth Stoiber and Samantha Stoiber — will edit all articles in the magazine and hope to content is credible. receive additional guidance from their F4F mentor, Safia Williams, if possible.

"There isn't much emphasis on the humanities in the Bay Area so it's nice to have an opportunity to get involved."

SENIOR Samika Agarwal

The magazine layouts will be created using Adobe InDesign by five members of the Design Club: freshman Jena Lew, sophomores Hillary Gonzalez, Yana Kappor, İsabelle Wang and junior Sarah Thomas.

Ruemmler, the president of F4F, said her goal with the magazine was to give club

Traditionally, the F4F officers spend the first semester teaching basic financial literacy to their members, as most new club members do not have any background knowledge.

F4F opened up signups for the magazine's articles in February through a link on their Instagram account and an announcement in principal Greg Louie's Friday newsletter. Prospective writers were asked to give a topic idea and briefly explain the contents of their article. The officers have not yet begun editing the articles, but Ruemmler said they would approach the editing in a style similar to the journalism program. She added that they are requiring writers to list all sources so the officers can ensure all the magazine's

Ruemmler and the F4F officers were inspired to create a magazine from a previous partnership between Design Club and Astronomy Club, which worked together to create a school astronomy magazine -Nova Spatia — last year. She said that many other high schools and universities around the nation also produced finance magazines, so it seemed like a natural step for the club.

The magazine will only be available online due to high printing costs, a lesson Ruemmler said she learned the hard way from ournalism programs like Soundings and The Falcon's senior magazine.

Ruemmler reached out to Design Club co-president senior Kasie Yang for the partnership, hoping to emulate the previous partnership between the club and Astronomy Club. According to Design Club vice president senior Samika Agarwal, Design Club members will have a lot of artistic freemembers an opportunity to showcase the dom with their pages, but the club will first



Members of the Females for Finance Club during a lunch meeting in room 409 on March 28.

work out a mood board to provide members with a general theme to follow, drawing inspiration from Pinterest styles and group

During regular bi-monthly Design Club meetings, members will have opportunities to seek feedback from officers, and each page will also be individually critiqued to ensure continuity in style and theme. "I hope Design Club mem-

bers get a chance to build an [art] portfolio and practice their design skills," Agarwal said. "There isn't a big emphasis on arts or the humanities in the Bay Area, so it's nice to have an opportunity to get involved; even if

you don't want to pursue [design] as a ca-Apart from working with F4F and As-

tronomy Club, the Design Club has also created posters for the Green Committee and TEDx Club, as well as built a sensory pathway — decorative floor art meant to stimulate children's five senses for Saratoga Elementary.

Yang hopes the Design Club's end-of-year magazine collaborations will become an annual event. She plans to host a speaker series later this year for students interested in art and digital design to learn more about the field. Similarly, Ruemmler hopes that the F4F magazine can become a yearly tradition

"I hope people find value in [the magazine] and see it as an opportunity to expand their learning with financial literacy and start to find a passion in finance." ◆

Fung named scholar in Regeneron competition

& Anthony Wang

Over the summer, senior Lisa Fung attended UC Santa Barbara's Research Mentorship Program. After spending 6 weeks immersed in research in mathematical optimization — with breaks for activities such as snorkeling and surfing — she discovered a new method for using data to model human movement during

natural disaster evacuation. Her project, "Data Fusion for Movements Analytics: Evaluating Mobility Patterns During Wildfire Season Using Coupled Matrix-Tensor Factorization," has earned her recognition as one of the top 300 applicants in the 2023 Regeneron Science Talent Search.

the greater Los Angeles area, Fung singled Talent Search. To her surprise, she placed out variables such as the distances to wildfires. She then used a coupled matrix-tensor factorization (CMTF) algorithm to find the hidden factors that influence human movement. Her research would aid in simulating human movement for natural disaster evacuation, depending on factors such as time of day and weather, she said.

Fung was initially inspired to research applications of CMTF after meeting with her mentor Evgeny Noi, a Ph.D. student at UC Santa Barbara, to discuss the different possibilities of using algorithms to study mobility data. Fung was also motivated to try the algorithm on wildfires because of their recent prevalence in California.

Due to the complexity of her research, Fung first spent a few weeks annotating papers and teaching herself the mathematical theory behind her project. While she studied data fusion and tensor decomposition, her mentor helped her with his background knowledge about the field, and she met with him several times a week at UCSB to learn how to apply geographic visualization to mobility data.

Afterward, she shifted to application, employing her knowledge of programming

languages like Python to tweak various open-source algorithms to mathematicaldevelop CMTF to work on her data. By this time, she met with her mentor once a week via Zoom as the program at UC Santa Barbara had ended. The time she spent working on her project totaled up to 50 to 60 hours per week when she was in the program. Fung described the program as "a

> huge time crunch," which was especially challenging as it was her first time doing research.

"I was trying to ensure my algorithm works correctly," she said. "I was scared of getting results because it seems so final. You're like 'oh my gosh, I have to make sure I do everything right.' So I had to overcome that fear, and just go for it."

In November, she submitted Using SafeGraph's geographic data of her results to the 2023 Regeneron Science among the top 300 semifinalists of nearly 2,000 applicants across the U.S. and other countries, earning \$2,000 in prize money for herself and another \$2,000 for SHS.

> "It's like 'oh my gosh' I have to make sure I do everything right. So I had to overcome that fear and just go for it."

> > SENIOR Lisa Fung

Having completed the application portion of her research over the summer, Fung also continued working on her CMTF algorithm throughout the school year.

In the fall, while juggling college applications, classes and extracurriculars in addition to her research, Fung felt that she made "less progress than she wanted to."

"There are definitely some tough spots [in research], but once you get over them, they are the most enjoyable moments." Fung said. "It's the feeling of 'I solved it." ◆

Liu fuses neuroscience with meditation in research

& HowardShu

At age 10, senior Bryant Liu started lying on a mat daily for 15 to 30 minutes of mindfulness. Amid busy days filled with schoolwork, he has learned to value this time as an imperative part of his routine. Experiencing the stress-reducing result

of meditation and reading studies proving that it changes brain structure led Liu to pursue a project linking meditation and cognitive science at the 2022 online Scholar Launch summer Liu wrote his research

paper in August before presenting his work online to two conferences in China: the 2022 International Communication Engineering and Cloud Community Conference in October and the 2022 International Conference on Computing and Big Data in November. His original goal was

to create a program to track people's progress in meditation through brain changes, but he found finding and analyzing actual brain data to be too ambitious; instead, he switched to measuring changes in the Brain-Computer Interface (BCI), an external device that

picks up on the brain's electrical activity and allows the user to control devices such as a wheelchair purely with Since BCI can be affected by meditation, Liu looked to use deep learning mod-

els to capture its precise effects. Previous

research had found that people are better

at controlling BCI when doing meditation, and Liu dived deeper into comparing the accuracy of meditation versus normal BCI.

"For models, it took longer actually learning about it than actually writing it, he said. "Writing it didn't take that long."

Liu's research is relatively unusual as it is not a continuation of previous work, but rather original work stemming from his own interests. The only elements he borrowed from others' research were

the datasets his Scholar Launch deep learning neuroscience mentor Ganesh Mani available paper published by the Oxford University Press. Liu used this data to train his model. "[My project] lays the foun-

dation for future deep learning models that people want to apply to BCI and annotation," Liu said. For people just starting with research, Liu recommends getting a mentor or connecting with an experienced researcher for guidance in developing their idea and planning how to carry it out. In the future, Liu hopes to see more applications of ma-

chine learning models to improve curacy tain more specific results on meditation's im-

pact on the brain. "I'm looking forward to researching in computer science and mind-related areas in the future or something else related to applying tech to cognitive science," Liu said. "This experience taught me to take risks and avoid losing focus when things

added that the teachers' care and the resources in the space make it extremely comforting. Alec said he also has trouble staying in a single environment while listening and learning, so moving between the ASSIST classroom and therapist's portable helps him focus. His IEP also allows him access to certain accommodations, including an external therapist and family counselor through the

"I've been going to these therapists and it's really helpful to have someone to talk to outside of ASSIST, because it allows us to process trauma or go through different coping mechanisms without having to go right back to the classroom afterwards," he said.

with additional outside support.

can provide support.

Alec also noted that the kindness sion offered by his peers in ASSIST is a major difference between ASSIST and general education. In ASSIST, Alec feels, students form bonds and interact with one another regardless of personality; their underlying commonalities trump smaller differences. "In general education, I was always hes-

disorder, which catalyzes mania and inter-"With ASSIST, I'm able to do self-paced online classes," Alec said. "I don't have to worry about getting behind in classes or go-

ing too fast and not having anything to do Alec's IEP allows him access to online classes on Cyber High. Since all of Alec's current courses are online, he ends up spending all of his class time in the ASSIST

Lee and therapist Laura Swan form faculty

Wraparound program, which provides Alec

ASSIST program supports alternative pathway

Alec feels that therapy in ASSIST is much

more lighthearted than external therapy, because it is geared toward orienting a student so that they are in a state to reenter the classroom and be productive. In situations where students are distressed, need someone to talk to or even need an inpatient service, an onsite therapist

of teachers and the sense of inclu-

itant to make friends," he said. "I thought they'd think I'm weird or mental. But in AS-SIST, there really are no separating factors." While Alec said he started with Cs in his

freshman year, he is now achieving high As in every one of his classes and feels that he is doing "incredible" with his learning. "I was seriously thinking, 'I'm just going to drop out.' But now that I have these re-

sources, I'm excited to go to college," Alec said. "I don't care if I go on campus or online. I just know that I have the ability to go to college because I was given an alternative style of education that worked for me."

Slover — who alongside teacher Trisha



the kind of space it is. Her job as a teacher, instead of direct instruction, focuses on helping students stay on track for graduation and work toward their academic goals.

"I try to be uplifting and positive," Slover said. "And I make sure the students know I'm there to support them. My favorite part is getting to know all my awesome students. look forward to being here and seeing them when they walk through the door."

"Taking care of my mental health is not a waste of time because in the end, it helped me with my education."

SENIOR Erika

Slover also helps coordinate students' IEPs, which can include features such as Alec's Wraparound, extensions on assignments and extended test-taking time.

Slover aims to make ASSIST a "home away from home" and a place where students can feel "comfortable to just relax

when they need to." She enjoys leaving little surprises for students, and loves seeing how they connect with one another, citing a conversation where students bonded over experiences in therapy and psychiatry.

Special education is daunting for a lot of kids I know — they think that means they have a hard time with learning," Slover said. "Our group of students are very cognitively bright and motivated and just need a different environment to be successful."

Erika, a senior who has been in ASSIST since the second semester of her sophomore year, credits ASSIST as a key part in her college journey. Due to her experiences with ASSIST, she has realized that there is not just one solid path to embark on when pursuing higher education, and that the path that works best for some may not work best for others. The program also aided her and her parents in finding schools to apply to that offer similar accommodations, a primary factor in determining Erika's college list.

"I used to neglect my mental health and I thought school was more important," Erika said. "I realized, if my mental health gets too bad, I can't even do school. It's helped me realize that taking care of my mental health is not a waste of time because in the end, it actually helped me with my education." ◆

MAP students' video helps promote SHS Foundation

& StephanieSun

The Saratoga Falcon

BY ShrevaRallabandi

for students in this story.

Editor's Note: Alec and Erika are pseudonyms

nior, enters a portable building on the far

west end of the school and goes into a room

with individual desks lining the walls, a cou-

ple of recliner couches smothered in blan-

kets and pillows, tables housing art supplies

and puzzles and an adjacent kitchen with a

kettle usually running. The portable build-

ing across from this one houses a therapist

gram (IEP) allows him access to such fea-

tures, among many others, of the Achieving

Student Success with Intervention Support

and Therapy (ASSIST) program.

According to ASSIST teacher Kerri

Slover, the program works to reha-

bilitate students who have suffered

from mental health issues or trau-

ma. Students may be recommended

to ASSIST by a teacher or adminis-

trator for difficulty focusing or emo-

tional issues. In general, though, the

ASSIST's full-time therapist

helps students work through issues that

are affecting their ability to make academ-

ic progress. The program currently serves

10 kids. ASSIST offers a place for students

to check in and out throughout the day as

needed for support, a quiet place to work "or

the second semester of his freshman year.

He "cannot stand the consistency of general

education," a trait he attributes to his bipolar

room — something he does not mind. He

Alec has been a part of the program since

just get away from it all," Slover said.

feres with his learning

when I'm in a manic episode

primary reason is low attendance.

Alec's Individualized Education Pro-

available throughout the day for sessions.

Every weekday morning at 9, Alec, a ju-

April 7, 2023

As students gathered around the entrance to the track field on March 9, junior Kai Otsuka held up both his camera to film a group of students saying thank you to the SHS Foundation, a scene for a promotional video — which he had to film twice.

"It was a challenge since the first time, suka said. "I also had to film the audio with my phone since the camera was so far away [that it] couldn't pick anything

Principal Greg Louie posted the promotional video on March 10. Filmed and edited by Otsuka and senior Miranda Yee, the video sought to raise awareness for the Foundation among students and parents. The video features

interviews with students around campus, as well as text overlays explaining what the foundation is and recent projects it has funded like new classroom desks, iMacs in classrooms and outdoor lunch tables. According to Foundation president

Tom Cobourn, the group mainly funds classroom equipment, campus improvements and social-emotional programs using funds raised from parents. Teachers and administrators can submit grant requests using a Google form found on the website; every month, the Foundation's Board of Directors — made up by parents and Louie — decides which grants to fund.

The creation process of the video first began back in October 2022, when MAP English teacher Jason Friend introduced the idea in a MAP leadership meeting, which is hosted every few weeks. After volunteering to take up the project, Otsuka and Yee spoke to Cobourn about foundation goals and what points they should since we only got four or five people," Otinclude in the video. During filming, they walked around campus during tutorial to interview students. Yee then

cut some footage and put it in the right order, finding the "specific sound bites that [she] wanted." Finally, Otsuka cleaned up the cut and added the final text in the video. Cobourn empha-

sized raising awareness for parents since he said some wonder why the Foundation is needed. Although the district gets funding from sources like local property taxes, Cobourn said after paying for salaries, bills and maintenance, there's "not much left."

In the end, Yee, Otsuka and Cobourn all found the video very successful.

"The video was attention grabbing, imaginative and even humorous at points, yet very informative" Cobourn said. "They did a really professional job, which should be no surprise coming from students in our

preserving rare languages BY Anamika Anand

Junior recognized for work

At a young age, Zeyneb Kaya realized that technology can be used for much more than people realize, such as documenting endangered languages to keep them alive as the number of speakers worldwide decrease over time. With this cause in mind, she has worked to develop an organization specifically to promote diverse voices.

During the weekend of March 11 junior flew to North Carolina for the awards ceremony of the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) Award for Aspirations in Computing. Kaya was one of 40 students selected nationwide for this award, which recognizes individuals for their achievements in the field of technology and computing

In her application for NCWIT, Kaya was required to explain her passion and how she used technology to make an impact with that passion in mind.

"For me, that was looking at the intersection of language and technology, and working to promote diverse voices and minority languages by taking advantage of the current digital age," Kaya said.

One of Kaya's significant efforts was creating a nonprofit organization called Romeyka Everlasting that works to keep the language Romeyka alive. Romeyka, a Pontic Greek dialect spoken in areas near the Black Sea such as Turkey, has only several thousand speakers left, Kaya said.

Kaya describes Romeyka Everlasting as a digital Rosetta Stone, using Natural Language Processing (NLP), a branch of artificial intelligence that implements computational linguistics to enable machines to interpret languages as humans do. She has spoken with researchers and speakers who have also been working with Romeyka, and so far she has documented five hours of people speaking the language. Being a winner means that Kava was recognized for

> the work she has done to preserve Romeyka. She was in disbelief that all her effort paid off in the award.

"It was really, really shocking," Kaya said. "I had to read the email five times because I'd seen some of the people who had won in previous years, and I was really intimidated."

As a winner, Kaya received an engraved award, a medal, a certificate, scholarship and internship opportunities, merchandise and more.

The awards ceremony itself was a new and exciting experience for Kaya, and travel was completely paid for. The weekend was also filled with workshops where winners could meet and discuss their individual passions that all stem from computing. She also got to explore the city and meet Bank of America representatives.

"Everyone else was super different because they're all interested in different parts of computing, but we were all passionate and had this common thread," Kaya said. "Honestly, [getting that recognition] is nothing like I've ever felt before." ◆



CHOOSE YOUR

2 ALUMS FORGO STEM PATHS IN FAVOR OF TEACHING

OWN PATH

& Beverly**Xu**

As the symphonic wind ensemble prepared for their 2019 end-of-year concert, the group struggled to master James Barnes' "Symphony No. 3" during rehearsals. Music director Jason Shiuan was nervous whether the piece would be a success in concert.

When the students finally played the piece on stage, Shiuan, a Class of '11 alumnus, recalled how, in that moment, everyone "truly felt like they were making music."

Two of his students ran up to him after the concert, exhilarated. They expressed their amazement at managing to execute their piece; Shiuan recalls one of them telling him, "I'm so glad I did this."

Although the two students played in band throughout high school, he was never sure if they truly enjoyed being a part of the music program.

However, after the interaction, he understood the profound effect their musical education had on them

The interaction embodied the joy he has found in teaching. "There is no pay that would make me happier than hearing something like that,"

Shiuan, like Class of '19 alumna Alex Ruemmler, started as a student at the STEM-focused school and took an unconventional path to enter the public service field to become a teacher.

Alumnus declines Fulbright scholarship and becomes teacher at SHS

Shiuan knew he wanted to be a teacher going into the summer before eighth grade at Redwood Middle. At the time, his older brother, Class of '06 alumnus Kevin Shiuan, was entering his first year of college as a bioengineering major, which led Shiuan to seriously consider what he wanted to pursue in the future.

When Shiuan realized that music was his passion, he had to grapple with the pros and cons of teaching in comparison to playing professionally. He knew he didn't have the intensity to be a professional performer, but because he enjoyed being around people, teaching seemed like the perfect "logical next step" for him.

instruments], technique was always some- efited from.

thing that took me a long time to grasp,' Shiuan said. "But the musical side of things always came very naturally to me. My musical maturity was always way ahead of what I could do technically.

As a music teacher, he wouldn't necessarily need to know the specifics of the technique required to play each instrument, but being able to understand the musicality behind each piece helped him easily give guidance to students.

Even though the school's competitive culture and like-minded parents tend to push graduates toward jobs at Google or in professions such as medicine, Shiuan stayed committed to his dream of teaching music when he picked his major at Northwestern

"I was lucky that the pressures didn't really ever affect me," Shiuan said. "My parents were pretty supportive of what I wanted to do and it defi-

> nitely helped that this was something I was aiming to do since middle Along the way, Mi-

chael Boitz, his high school music teacher and now fellow music director, Shiuan's decision to go into teaching. In his sophomore year, Shi-

uan had what he described as an "oh my god musical moment" while playing the transcribed band piece, "Sleep," by Eric Whitacre. The rehearsal still sticks with him today as remembers how special it was to be able to influence a group of musicians and work with them to achieve a delicate and beautiful sound.

In 2013, two years into his undergraduate degree, Shiuan went to volunteer in India helping teach various middle and high school classes in English, History and Eco-

He returned to India in January 2016, right after graduating, and was an artist in residence under the program Arts Ignite, originally known as A-Step, teaching piano, choir and voice lessons to all ages of students as well as elementary school music.

Shiuan recalled how access to "things as simple as water and electricity" offered to him back home was a privilege that many of his students did not hold there.

Seeing how fortunate he was to have music and education be a prominent part of his life, he was thankful for all the seemingly "When I was playing piano and [other small but influential opportunities he ben-

He also found importance in the community as the school Shiuan taught at in India consisted of smaller class sizes and students who grew up alongside each other

"After the first time I walked on campus, the teachers and community had immediately brought me into the family," Shiuan said. "There was a very palpable sense of community because the school was really small and I think that creating that sense of family is a really important aspect of what teachers do, especially in the music pro-

"Taking the scholarship and being away sounded fun, but being away from teaching and music didn't."

MUSIC DIRECTOR Jason Shiuan

However, Shiuan didn't plan to teach in Saratoga so soon after graduating college. He hoped to step out of his comfort zone and push himself in a new direction before

In pursuit of his dream to teach internationally, Shiuan applied to the prestigious U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program, where accepted participants receive a grant that allows them to pursue graduate study, teach specifically English abroad or conduct re-

Shiuan would have taught mostly English abroad, but he knew he would have been able to work out a way to teach music simultaneously.

Originally waitlisted from the program while in India in February 2016, he flew back home the month after and ended up interviewing for teaching positions at Redwood Middle School and SHS. A week after his first interview here, he was accepted into the Fulbright program.

This was an important turning point for Shiuan: On one hand, the Fulbright was a prestigious opportunity to travel and teach internationally, eventually earn his masters and see what new teaching positions would open up afterwards.

But on the other hand, a teaching job offered much more stability - and more importantly, would allow Shiuan to continue working in music. Ultimately, he chose to forgo the Fulbright.

"It forced me to really have a heart to

heart with myself and question what I wanted to do," he said. "Taking the scholarship and being away sounded fun, but being away from teaching and music didn't."

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He found it took a lot of questioning his own desires and dreams to find that turning down the scholarship was the right move and he never looked back. However, going into public service does raise concerns, one of the most prominent being relatively low wages while living in a high-cost area.

Fortunately for Shiuan, he has been able to live in Saratoga with his parents as he pours dozens of hours into his job each

Shiuan notes that many of his colleagues make long commutes from Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay to their teaching jobs, and are also extremely frugal in order to keep up with the cost of living.

While the district is not the lowest paying school district in Santa Clara County, in a place as expensive as Silicon Valley, the pay doesn't stack up to the cost of living.

The school district has a salary average of \$105,500, while just a few miles away, the Mountain View-Los Altos school district has an average teacher salary of \$152,500, the highest average teacher salary in all of California. In Silicon Valley, a software engineer in a first-year position averages just

Even with the obstacle of pay, Shiuan has never regretted becoming a teacher as he cherishes the opportunity to watch his students grow from their freshman to senior

As an ambitious high school student, he never expected that teaching would allow him to play such an important role in the lives of future generations of students.

Class of '19 alumna navigates student teaching at Vanderbilt

Ruemmler is in her final year student at Vanderbilt double-majoring in chemistry and education, while balancing being a sophomore chemistry student-teacher at Hume-Fogg Magnet School, a high school specialized in advanced academic courses in Nashville, Tennessee.

Ruemmler grew up in a family full of public service professionals: Her maternal grandmother was a teacher and her maternal grandfather was a civil engineer for the city of Los Angeles.

Their influence empowered Ruemmler to feel more confident in choosing a service-oriented profession as well. However, she faced pressure at SHS to pursue a higher-paying career due to her academic profi-



Jason Shiuan performs a saxophone solo alongside jazz band at the 2021 Winter Concert.

ciency in STEM classes. But excelling in these classes and being a teaching assistant for history teacher Faith Daly solidified her goal to become a teacher.

"I really enjoyed being in [Daly]'s class and seeing how she very intentionally planned things out to help us learn," Ruemmler said.

She chose to be Daly's teaching assistant because she found her to be a strong example of an effective teacher, from whom she could gain a background in general education before focusing on chemistry.

Despite teaching history requiring vastly different skills than chemistry, Ruemmler learned skills transferable to all aspects of

Although Daly left the most impactful impression, Ruemmler was also inspired by other staff at SHS who spent their time helping students succeed, including chemistry teachers Kathryn Nakamatsu and Janny Cahatol.

"Teaching students who are about to become a real part of society is an appeal of teaching high schoolers."

ALUMNA Alex Ruemmler

Ruemmler's choice to become a high school college prep chemistry teacher boiled down to two criteria: flexibility in teaching material and impact on her students' lives. Being an Advanced Placement (AP) teacher would have required Ruemmler to stick to a rigid schedule to fulfill College Board requirements, whereas teaching regular chemistry enabled Ruemmler to pace the course herself and tie in real world applications.

Additionally, Ruemmler was interested in being a high school teacher as she wanted to become a positive influence during a major turning point in her students' lives.

"Teaching students who are about to become a real part of society is definitely an appeal of teaching high schoolers," Ruemmler said. "It's a big shifting point in their life."

Entering Vanderbilt as a double major in chemistry and secondary education, Ruemmler was one of only five students in the entire university, and the only one in her grade, with this combination of majors.

Vanderbilt's teaching program requires students to double major in teaching and the subject they want to teach in order to earn accreditation.

There has also been a national decline in From 1970 to 2020, the number of bachelor's learning there." ◆

>> falcon**figures**

% decrease in avg.

salary since 2010

% of teachers who were dissatisfied with

their jobs

Post-pandemic national teacher

turnover rate

Million public school

teachers in the United

national teacher

degrees in education plummeted more than 50%, results which experts chalk up to stress or "burnout," restrictions on teaching material and low wages.

All three are obstacles that Ruemmler has witnessed in her year of teaching at Hume-Fogg and anticipates having to work around as she prepares to graduate and enter the

Ruemmler stressed the importance of a work-life balance for teachers who take on additional responsibilities like volunteering at after-school events and advising clubs, on top of classroom teaching.

'I spent [one day] from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with the Science Olympiad team, and I loved it," she said. "But if you're taking on a lot of those kinds of extra roles, it's really easy to get burnt out."

Nevertheless, Ruemmler has also seen how teachers can maintain a healthy work-life balance even with additional responsibilities.

For instance, her mentor teacher, who is in charge of the Environmental Science Club. tries not to take on too many extra roles — as a result, the students have taken on a lot more organizing responsibility for the club, learning to become more independent.

Ruemmler also wishes to use her platform as a teacher to be a driver of social change. Unfortunately, she said restrictive laws in Tennessee make it more difficult to provide students with perspective outside of their

However, she believes that with widespread access to the internet, students are less affected by restricted access to the books presented to them in school.

Nonetheless, Ruemmler has already found that these laws impact where her fellow student teachers choose to continue their ca-

She hopes to return to California after receiving her degree to be closer to her family and enjoy the fewer limitations California imposes on teachers. California also has the third-highest average teacher wages of all

In contrast to many of her high school counterparts who may be pursuing higher education in STEM fields, Ruemmler is entering the job market by the end of this year.

No matter how her path diverts from her peers, she feels continued motivation to pursue teaching and avoid burnout.

"I hope that I can sustainably be in this career for the rest of my life, or until I retire," Ruemmler said. "I'm ready, and I'm excited. I think I've spent my last four years really learning as much as I can about the teaching profession, so I'm ready to jump in and the number of collegiates pursuing education. get some of that experience and further my

% decrease in

education majors

since 2000-2001.

teacher salary in

thousands.

Median public school

Median hours worked

per week by teachers

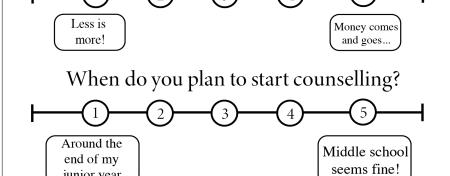
% of teachers quit

within the first 5

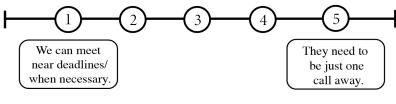
COLLEGE COUNSELOR COMPATIBILITY

Not sure which type of college counseling is right for you? Use this handy quiz to find your perfect match!

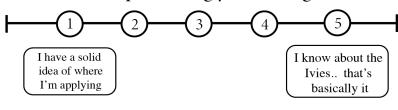
How much are you prepared to spend?



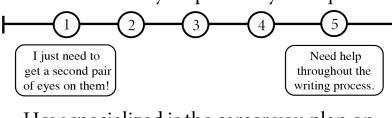
What level of involvement would you expect from your college counselor?



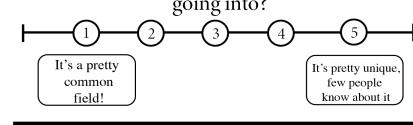
Need help building your college list?



How much essay help would you require?



How specialized is the career you plan on going into?



THE RESULTS

0-12: public

Looks like you should make an appointment with the CCC ASAP! 13-25: private We think that a private counselor might be best for your college needs.

Data from NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS

Infographic by SARAH THOMAS

Alex Ruemmler smiles with history teacher Faith Stackhouse-Daly at her 2019 graduation.

BASEBALL

Inconsistent execution brings close losses

When the Falcons were down 2-0 against Milpitas at home on March 27, sophomore southpaw pitcher Aiden Chen knew he wasn't playing to his full potential.

"With everyone watching when I was pitching, I was getting a bit nervous and second guessing myself," Chen said. "I had a harder time throwing strikes than I usually do and felt less in control."

However, Chen and the team settled down as the game progressed and started executing better offensively and defensively. Heading into the seventh inning, they were down 2-1, but Milpitas jumped on a few poorly executed pitches by sophomore relief pitcher Samanyu Ram, resulting in a 5-1 loss

After four league games — the 5-1 loss to Milpitas, a 5-0 home loss to Cupertino on March 16, a 10-5 win in an away game over Monta Vista on March 23 and a 3-2 win home against Fremont on March 30 — the baseball team, coached by Vinny Augustine, holds a 2-2 record, placing them third in the



Sophomore Samanyu Ram pitches at home during a game against Milpitas on March 27.

El Camino League as of March 31.

Knowing that the team could have per-The team's losses have disappointed a formed better during games, Chen believes group that expected to win early and often. if each player puts in the time and effort for

extra reps and keeps focus, they will be able to turn their season around.

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"I also think once the weather and chaos settle down and we start to get to know our opponents a little bit better, we will be able to perform a lot better," Chen said.

Junior pitcher Shane Timmons said the team's recent losses were against teams that they could have beaten. In each game, he felt the team was making easily avoidable mistakes, including not fielding catchable ground balls, fly balls or not making the

With an already small 15-man roster, key players are out battling injuries, including periodic shoulder problems, thumb injuries and players recovering from and sustaining labrum injuries. The Falcons are counting on their ace pitcher Lucas Dennis to better improve their performance for their upcoming games and make CCS.

"We have to start hitting better and stop making [individual] errors [to succeed in our games]," Timmons said, "We know what we have to do and I know we can win [and

Falcons soar to 6-2 record

After a resounding 13-1 win against Prospect on March 27, the softball team held a 6-2 record as the month ended.

Before that, the Falcons lost 5-3 against Carlmont on March 25 after a 13-5 win against Kennedy the same day. Currently third in the El Camino League, the Falcons saw their four-win streak snapped with a 4-1 loss against Fremont on

For senior co-captain Lily Guzman, who plays first base, the most memorable experience this season so far came against Palo Alto on March 22, when sophomore pitcher Saira Ramakrishnan pitched a no-hitter in a game the Falcons

One aspect Guzman feels the team of 16 girls could improve is their self-motivation, noticing their attitude depended largely on their current performance. She also noted that the team lacks confidence at times despite their heavy weekly practice schedule.

"In our first game [against Leigh] on March 7, you could really feel the energy just go down,"

after the captains — senior catcher Irene Frazier and junior third baseman Vivienne Brooks — en-

The Falcons began playing better after the game against Leigh, and they won 13-3 against Monta Vista on March 15. However, Guzman said this victory did not feel "as rewarding as the game against Leigh" - although their opponents weren't "nearly as competitive" as Leigh, Guzman said everyone didn't put their full effort during the game because it seemed that "Monta Vista took [the game] as a joke."

Guzman attributes their success so far to the extra-close bond she felt the teammates have shared



The team celebrates senior Lily Guzman's game-winning hit against Prospect.

a team as much as I did this year," Guzman said. "This year, all of our players are motivated to run rather than simply trying to get through too." •

"I've never felt like I was part of the season, and our coach actually talks to us to motivate us to win. I really felt the difference this year — maybe because it's my last year

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

Four consecutive sweeps raise team's CCS chances

As the volleyball plummeted from the heights of the gym, freshman outside hitter Brennan Pak soared up over the net. spiking the ball straight onto the ground in front of Fremont's players. Such plays happened continuously through this game against Fremont on March 17, and the Falcons won 3-0 behind Pak's nearly 15 kills.

As of the end of March, the team, led by coach Lori Gragnola, has a 5-1 record with four consecutive 3-0 wins, their most recent one coming at home against King's Academy on March 30.

In the last few games, Pak played a large role, constantly putting up shots and scoring points.

Pak's excellence in the sport began at age 12 when he started off playing at the City Beach volleyball club, and joined the Redwood Middle volleyball

In middle school, sophomore Ryan Backhus and juniors Eric Norris and Duvvuri, three current varsity volleyball players at the school, recommended that he train at the volleyball club they attended, Bay to Bay, to improve his skills.

Pak listened, and his Bay to Bay 14s under the spotlight while I play."

and placed fifth at nationals.

Coming into high school, Pak had to quickly adapt and learn to cooperate with e upperclassmen on the team. With his relatively tall height at 5 ft 11 combined with his speed, high vertical and powerful spiking ability, he was immediately placed onto the varsity team.

"At first it was a little nerve wracking, but after being introduced to everyone, the environment felt really cool," Pak said.

With the team coming off an underperforming, injury-plagued 0-14 season, Pak believes the Falcons should aim for CCS this year after coming on with a much better start. Along with team goals, Pak has the personal goal this year of

getting the NorCal freshman of the year award and advancing his ambition of playing Division I volleyball in college.

Despite the competitiveness of the sport, at its core, Pak enjoys how it has taught him to work with people and build relationships

"I like the lessons that team sports teach you and also being able to set goals for myself," Pak said. "I love the feeling of being

Team reaches midpoint of season with just one victory

BOYS' GOLF

son, the boys' golf team has struggled when David Gragnola said. "We had a few playit has managed to play. As of March 31, ers who were looking hopeful to join the they had a 1-5-1 record after a 211-222 loss against Los Gatos on March 30.

The Falcons' sole victory came against Cupertino on March 27, ending with a score of 205-214 behind sophomore Oliver Pott's best round of the season, 2 over 36.

"There aren't particular people that are necessarily lacking, but a couple of players each match who perform below expectations and can flip the results," sophomore Aidan Smith said.

He attributed underperformances to a lack of experience and practice from all members coming back into the season.

The team competes with their top six players, dubbed the "travel team," and within those six, Smith currently leads the team with a 40.5 scoring average, followed by senior Howard Shu with 41.0, senior Sunny Aswani with 41.0, Pott and senior Cameron Sy with 42.0 and sophomore Nicholas Okada with 42.5.

Two losses to Palo Alto on March 22 and Los Altos on March 20 had scores of 197-186 and 207-201, respectively. A face-off against Lynbrook on March 16 ended in a can grow all together." ◆

"The team was poised to beat Lynbrook After multiple rainouts to start the sea- the first time we played them," head coach travel team and were looking to turn things

> "Almost all of the team is the same as last year, but we still haven't been performing."

> > SENIOR Cameron Sy

So far, five of their seven matches have been away and Smith feels that some of their bad performances may be due to unfamiliarity with the course. However, he feels that the team lacks overall consistency, rather than a single player's abilities.

"Almost all of the team is the same as last year, but we still haven't been performing," Sy said. "Due to an erratic practice and competing schedule, we haven't yet found our groove in the season and routine. I hope that we only get better from here and **BADMINTON**

Freshman talent provides boost

ву Mitchell**Chen**

As the birdie sneaked over the net from Palo Alto's side, a pang sound from freshman Ishir Gupta's racket followed as he returned the shot with a netdrop to the side just inbounds. With multiple wins complimenting Gupta and his partner Avik Belenje's doubles win against Palo Alto on March 16, the Falcons went on to

win the match 19-11. On March 23, the team captured an 18-12 win against Monta Vista, one of the stronger teams in the league, bringing their record to 3-2. Already they have more wins than they did last season.

The Falcons were scheduled to face off against Lynbrook on March 21, but due to a power outage the match had to be rescheduled to April 26.

Currently, seniors Jason Liu and Evan Oaklander as well as sisters, junior Sannidhi Boppana and sophomore Samanvi Boppana, are not only just dominating the courts, but also helping coach the newer players.

The Falcons' new coach, Thomas Ching, is focusing on getting familiar with the players and their skill, along with preparing the team for CCS. Upon losing key senior players from last year, especially Adrian Mar, the badminton team has been identifying and cultivating new underclass-

strong performance in CCS. Gupta is one such underclassman, and currently plays varsity doubles.

Gupta was first introduced to badminton at age 12 and began playing club badminton at Bintang Badminton, a local training facility. With experience from playing club badminton once a week, Gupta is now one of three freshmen — and the only boy —

on varsity. The other two freshmen are Eliza Lin and Kritika Kalani.

everybody and fitting in more as the season progresses," Gupta said.

ed, Gupta has mainly been playing doubles with Belenje, with their chemistry steadily improving as they

school team." ◆

men talent in hopes of making a

"I'm still growing on

Since the season start-

adjusted to each other's playing

As the season continues, Gupta has the goal to win at least 75% of his games, hoping that next year he can improve to be one of the star players. Among chasing these goals, however, Gupta recognizes that he has made many friends and hopes to make lasting memories with his badminton experience as he continues pushing for CCS success with his team.

"It's really fun to be able to meet new people and bond with them while enjoying the sport," Gupta said. "It's nice to see my previous efforts paying off on the

Falcons ramp up training for mid-season invitationals

& George**Hu**

In the late afternoon of March 24, runners from Saratoga and Wilcox lined up for the 100-meter dash event. As the gun fired, senior Yuvraj Singh leapt off the starting blocks to a strong start, a visible gap forming between him and the competition. Moments later, he handily crossed the finish line in first place, achieving a time of 11.36 seconds

This dual meet against Wilcox was their most recent one; the varsity boys team won 66-54 while the varsity girls won 87-30. They hope to continue their success during their upcoming April 6 meet against Santa Clara and Monta Vista.

(Due to print deadlines, The Falcon cannot cover the April 6 meet in the April 7 print edition.) The team's March 29 meet

against Cupertino was postponed to a currently undetermined date due to rain, hurting the team because their training the day prior was intentionally light to prepare for the meet, not knowing that it would be canceled. Luckily, the team still held practice on the original day of the meet, minimiz-For most of the team, the fi-

nal meets will be the El Camino League Trials occurring on April 26 and League Finals on April 28. Although no athletes have qualified for CCS as of March 31, some top athletes including Singh, senior thrower Mika Tippetts, senior sprinter Issac Loke and se-



Senior Yuvraj Singh takes off in the 100m against Wilcox on March 24.

nior hurdler Jalyn Harrigan are team's ranking or top athletes' strong candidates who may qualify for the SCVAL and CCS meets.

In preparation for these endof-season events, coaches Ian Tip petts, Archie Ljepava and Rick Éllis have transitioned from shorter running intervals with plenty of rest breaks to ramping up both aerobic and anaerobic training.

"We are shifting towards longer distances, more repetitions, and shorter rest times," senior sprinter Isaac Loke said. "At the beginning of the season, we did a lot of 100-meter strides. Now we are upping the distance to 150-meter and 200-meter strides, with more repetitions each practice." With this more intense train-

ing schedule, the team has performed well recently despite occasional setbacks from the weather conditions canceling practice. The team's stellar dual meet

performances have gotten their

athletes selected into prestigious

invitationals. Although these

invitationals do not impact the

CCS chances, their difficult competition allows for athletes to set personal records. Tippetts competed in the high-

ly selective St. Francis Invitational on March 18 and placed 8th in the shot put and 2nd in the discus, setting a personal record of 112 feet, 9.5 inches in the latter. Additionally, the athletes will participate in the Last Chance Invitational on April 15 and the CCS Top 8 Invitational on April 21.

Even with the team facing tough opponents, the Falcons have held their own and look to carry on their mid-season mo-

"The competition has definitely gotten tougher with 400m runners from other schools running three or four seconds faster than last year," said senior Jason Cheng, who runs the 100-meter dash, 200-meter dash, and 400-meter dash. "Despite this, the team is performing well and I am looking forward to league trials."

Injury-riddled roster gets back into winning groove

& Skyler**Mao**

While dealing with a rainy start to their season, the boys' tennis team is slowly settling into a groove and ended March at a 3-3 overall record. The Falcons started with a 4-3 loss against Los Altos on March 2, but managed to pull in two more wins: 4-3 against Homestead on March 7 and 5-2 against Mountain View on March 9.

After these early wins, the team sustained two more losses — a 7-0 thumping at played against seasoned opponents to a talented Cupertino team on March 16 and 5-2 loss to Gunn on March 20.

On March 21, they grabbed a 4-3 win

against Los Altos, which raised their spirits for the second half of the season.

The Falcons are a younger squad, with the only senior being captain Julian Berkowitz-Sklar. The new freshman additions to the varsity roster, Somei Ogata and Nikhil Śrivatsa, play two of the four singles spots and are leading performers on the team.

No. 1 singles player Ogata had a 2-4 record at the end of March. As the top player in the team, he has such as the No. 3 ranked U-16 play

Srivatsa, playing in the No. 2 singles slot, said. "We were all expecting his return and win at CCS." ◆

held a record of 4-2 as the month ended, in part due to his solid ground strokes keeping opponents under constant pressure.

Outside of these two, the Falcons have been injury-riddled: Junior Shrey Jain experienced a non-tennis related foot injury in the middle of February and Berkowitz-Sklar has a lingering basketball injury. Jain returned on March 24

"Even though he lost, his presence brought fire into the team," ju-

No. 4, but lost a tough match.

against Los Altos, playing singles

he will add some more depth to the roster." Despite losing some matches, coach Flo-

rin Marica's team is far from dejected. With weather conditions likely improving in April, they hope to practice more in order to jump back from a rough start.

During their Monday to Thursday practices, Marica has pitted players against each other to improve their abilities and determine match seeding. In May, they hoped to be among the teams seeded for the playoffs.

"We haven't missed CCS in a while," Pattanayak said. "Our main rival right now is Cupertino, and we need to be more focused er in the March 16 match against Cupertino. nior doubles No. I player Samik Pattanayak with our training and listen to [Marica] to

SWIMMING

Fitness, filling spots make winning meets challenging

BY MitchellChen & Kevin**Yang**

The swim team landed their first win on March 17 with the varsity girls beating Gunn, but the boys have yet to achieve their first victory. So far, they have swum against Los Altos on March 3, Gunn on March 17 and Palo Alto on March 24.

In addition to the swim teams, the diving team — which consists of juniors Tashi Vasudeva and Riley Alves — practices with the Los Gatos team as the school's swimming pool does not have diving boards and competes for Saratoga on Thursdays while swimmers have competitions on Fridays.

Senior Zeynep Tokuz and freshmen Kelsey Zhang and Emma Geng have already made CCS cut times for the girls in their events, with Zhang even making states in the 200 IM. For the boys, only freshman Taewon Yim has qualified for CCS in the

As a whole, this year's team has fewer members than in previous years due to a lack of participation from mainly underclassmen. This not only hurt the boys' team but also led to not fielding a JV girls' team. Even with the smaller number of girls, however, junior Meher Bhatnagar said their significant improvements and hitting personal bests have buoyed spirits.

senior Channie Hong is hopeful the boys can earn more points in future meets.

"Everyone is still trying to not just recover from the off-season but to be faster."

SENIOR Channie Hong

"Many of us are out of shape from last season, especially if we didn't join a swim club," Hong said. "Right now, everyone

While the girls team has been stronger, is still trying to not just recover from the off-season but to be faster."

Lower participation has certainly hurt the boys' team since they have just enough swimmers to fill their roster, but have fewer swimmers to win points compared to other schools — meets are scored based on the number of placers in each event. Still, Hong believes they can overcome this with improvements from the members they do have and achieve some wins.

"We definitely have the potential to beat some of the other teams such as Monta Vista [which also has a smaller team]," Hong said. "I also want to see how many people we can send to CCS and how we do there." ◆

TURNOBACK THE CLOCK

CCS UPSET

continued from pg. 1

Other than 6' 6" backup center Adam Weiskal, who did not get significant playing time, the tallest Falcons stood around 6' 1."

Adding to the obstacles, Davey lacked scouting tape because none of the teams in their league shared videos of their game play — he only had one video from a college coach he knew who filmed a game to scout out their college-recruited players.

"He sent me a video an hour before the game and I was just fast forwarding through the video, trying to catch anything that would give me a glimmer of hope of what to do," Davey said.

All over his scouting report, he scrawled descriptions such as "ball handler," "scores inside," "big time driver" and "big shooter," but also occasionally noted "out of control at times" and "lose vision of their men."

Noticing Seaside was a bit carefree with the ball, Davey decided to play a two-thirds court 1-2-2 press on defense in hopes of tralize the Spartans' athleticism in transi- early."

"They were a transition, super athletic, dunking the ball, run and gun type team," Davey said. "We were not that way, and we were able to set the pace of the game that we wanted early. I think they just were in utter disbelief that we would press them," Davey unprepared" for it and threw careless pass-

"I wanted [my players] to be more scared of me than they were the other team."

HEAD COACH Mike Davey

However, 90 seconds into the game, the Falcons' play and gameplan execution wasn't working: Seaside built a quick 4-0 ute mark, Class of 1998 all-league shooting lead, dunking on a Saratoga player and forcing two Saratoga turnovers in. At the time, even Davey thought the game could turn into a blowout, especially seeing his players' fear of the large, hostile crowd and the Spar-

"I called timeout and screamed at our disbelief. kids because they were so scared," Davey said. "I wanted them to be more scared of me than they were the other team. My goal at that timeout was not to correct them, but to chew them and say, 'This is who you are, end up making first-team all-league the foland this is not who you are right now."

It worked. Black scored a hook shot off a flex cut quickly after the timeout. The Falcons started executing the game plan, suc- ers like LaMotte and Luke Weger in the corcessfully slowing the pace with their press ner, where they could spot-up for a 3-pointand limiting turnovers on offense with Class er every time their defender helped on a of 1998 point guard Ryan Anderson facili- drive. This strategy keyed the epic upset, as

"It was a pretty intelligent group of play- five in the second half.



Scan this code to watch game footage from the Saratoga vs. Seaside CCS first-round upset on Feb. 26, 1998.

Where are they now?





Mike Black Runs own construction 14 points vs. Seaside

California High School varsity basketball Works as physical therapist

Jason Ng

Works at Apple

assistant coach

ers that we had," Davey said. "They were normally poised and knew how to run the game. I think we had some confidence going in having beaten Los Gatos right before that, slowing down the pace of the game to neu-so we didn't crumble when we went down

The rest of the first half, the Falcons hung around, always keeping the deficit to single digits. Saratoga trailed 35-28 at halftime. According to Davey, the Falcons' press was not intended to force many turnovers, but it did anyway because Seaside was "obviously es such as long lobs intended for dunks that instead flew out of bounds.

The Falcons went on a 19-10 run to begin the third quarter behind three 3-pointers from Class of 1999 shooting guard Geoff

"We knew we could play with them," said LaMotte, who lives in the area and now works at Google. "When we made that third quarter run, we really believed we could win this game. It was, 'Let's do what nobody thinks we can do."

The Falcons carried the momentum in the fourth quarter, and around the 3-minguard Luke Weger hit his second fourth quarter 3-pointer out of the corner, while his brother, Class of 2000 guard Micah Weger, banked in a pull-up jumper on back to back possessions. The Falcons' lead ballooned to 8, with the crowd looking on in

Luke Weger led the team with 15 points, while Black scored 14 and LaMotte drained four 3-pointers for a key 12 points off the bench. Micah dropped 9 points and would lowing year and win El Camino league MVP

All season, Davey had placed pure shootthe Falcons hit eight 3-pointers including

In the locker room after the game, the players dumped ice water on Davey in celebration and some cried tears of joy. LaMotte was one of the players who cried tears of joy with his teammates that day.

"We had to be darn near perfect to win that game. And we did it," LaMotte told The Falcon. "The joy in the locker room afterward was really special."

The Falcons did not gain their edge from miracle shooting performances or any physical advantage, but rather by the experienced, senior-heavy roster playing a measured and controlled game, Davey said. The seniors had "been through the war before" and understood that a lower scoring game with fewer possessions for each team would raise their chances to win, and accordingly they never rushed to get their shot.

"We probably shot as well as they did, but we got better shots that game," Davey said. "We executed much better than they did with setting screens or running plays." For Davey, the milestone upset still serves as a representation of what an underdog can achieve. In the 1980s, Saratoga basketball had not won 10 games in a year for over a decade. They broke the streak in the 1992-93 season, going 14-10 in Barry Mendenhall's second year as head coach. The year after, a young Davey took over and began emphasizing playing smart.

"We can be successful at this sport because we are bright and educated as a school," Davey said. "[Our success] is just a testament to our students' work ethic. We aren't the most athletic and we aren't the biggest, but we can succeed at anything if we give it our effort and we believe in ourselves. There's a lot of metaphors in that team for what Saratoga High was back then and what it is today still.

"We had to be darn near perfect to win that game. And we did it."

CLASS OF '99 ALUMNUS Geoff LaMotte

The 1997-98 team's ideology and inspiring underdog story created a longstanding shift in Saratoga's basketball culture. The 1998 season was the first year the Falcons played in CCS as a Division III — in 1997, the team placed 6th in their league and did not make CCS. In 1996 and previous years, the team played in the less competitive Division IV.

After success in 1998 from focus and methodical game planning, the Falcons brought back the same mindset for years to come. The two years after, the Falcons won the El Camino league, placed higher seeds in CCS and advanced to the second round again in 1999, further expediting the program's winning culture.

This idea of producing basketball success through intelligent play is still present today. On paper, the Falcons did not necessarily belong in the boys' basketball A-league this year since the school is the smallest school in the league by over 700 students, Davey said. Still, the team still went 6-6 and enjoyed a fairly successful season.

Luke Weger, who now coaches varsity basketball at California High, also still remembers this game fondly. Although the odds were stacked against the team, he felt proud about each player's full commitment to the concepts Davey had preached.

Weger attributes the outcome of the game to the team's coachability. The team was willing to try any game plan that Davey set forth and were confident in it.

Weger also credits the win to the clarity of the team dynamic — no player set out to score 30 points per game or average an outstanding statline. Each game, the team's only objective was to win.

1998 Boys' Varsity Basketball Team

Coach: Mike Davey (winningest boys' basketball coach in SHS history with 243-154 record)

Assistant Coach: Rusty DeHorn

Starting lineup (all seniors): point guard Ryan Anderson, shooting guard Luke Weger, small forward Mike Black, power forward Cory Schwaderer, center Oliver L'Abbe

Seniors: Mike Black (1997-98 firstteam all-league), Luke Weger (1997-98 second-team all-league), Ryan Anderson, Jason Ng, Matt McKenna, Jeremy Devich, Cory Schwaderer, Ol-

Juniors: Jack Chiang, Geoff LaMotte (1998-99 first-team all-league), Arthur Akimoto, Matt Garapollo, Adam Weiskal, Andre Sorba

Sophomores: Micah Weger (1998-99 first-team all-league, 1999-2000 league MVP), Paul Zebb

Ultimately, the result of the game impacted more than just the future of the Saratoga men's basketball team — alumni members of the 1998 boys' basketball team still live by many philosophies that stemmed from the

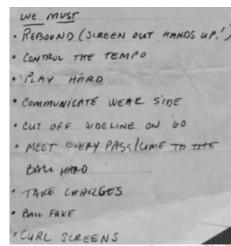
The result of the game taught LaMotte the power of teamwork and the importance of proper leadership and brought him closer to Davey as well as many of his teammates. In fact, Davey is even the godfather to LaMotte's daughter.

"In my work and as a parent, everything stems down to how you can build something that is greater than individual parts and how you cannot make it about yourself, but something bigger," LaMotte said. "The win against Seaside was a byproduct of thinking in this way."

LaMotte recalled that even though Seaside had better individual players, they lacked proper teamwork and began to point fingers as the game progressed after they made a few mistakes. On the other hand, LaMotte said the Falcons had stronger leadership under Davey, who "set examples as a great coach," and a higher level of maturity among team members.

For LaMotte, however, the greatest lesson he learned from the game was the importance of maintaining faith and staying confident in matters where it may seem impossible to do so.

"I'm a man of faith and that game [against Seaside reinforced my faith and some of the prayers leading up to the game," he said. "It was an important lesson that the odds were stacked against us, but we had to fundamentally believe that we could win. Otherwise we wouldn't have stood a chance." ◆



Head coach Mike Davey devised a game plan based on videos a college coach sent him.

Alumni shine as professional athletes and influencers

Carrie Steinseifer: Olympic gold-winning swimmer

In her sophomore year, Class of '86 alumna Carrie Steinseifer won the gold medal for the 100-meter swimming sprint at the 1984 Summer Olympics held in Los Angeles. Finishing with a time of 55.92 seconds, she tied with American swimmer Nancy Hogshead for the medal. That same year, Steinseifer went on to win two other gold medals — the 4x100-meter freestyle relay and the 4x100-meter medley relay — as part of the U.S. relay teams.

Being among the best swim-

mers in the world, Steinseifer shattered local records. In fact, she broke the school's 100-yard freestyle in her freshman year with a then-record time of 56.5 seconds at

Steinseifer's other notable athletic achievements include her participation in the 1983 Pan American Games in

Venezuela and 1985 Pan Pacific Swimming Championships in Tokyo. She won gold medals in the 4x100 medley and 4x100 freestyle relays in Venezuela and the 200-meter freestyle, 4x100 freestyle relay and 4x200 freestyle relay in

During this time, she was sponsored by Arena, a sportswear company and trained with the West Valley College Aquatic team. Unfortunately, her strict training schedule often forced her to sacrifice school and took a huge mental and physical toll on her. Due to the constant chlorine exposure, her skin dried out and nerves sometimes prevented her from focusing on her

But despite the challenges she faced, she is remembered as the school's most



Alumna Carrie Steinseifer hugs Nancy Hogshead after tying for the gold medal in — *Nidhi Mathihalli and Stephanie Sun* **the 1984 Olympics 100-meter freestyle.**

Patricia Adura-Miranda: Transcendent bronze-medalist wrestler

During her time at Redwood Middle and SHS, Class of '97 alumna Patricia Adura Miranda — seven time U.S. national champion in women's wrestling — became the first female to join her middle and high school wrestling teams in all of California. She went on to wrestle with Stanford University's Division I roster which was comprised of only men at the time — from 1997 to 2002. In her senior year, she became the second woman in NCAA history to defeat a male athlete in an open competition.

After graduating at Stanford, Miranda was accepted to Yale Law School, but deferred her admission to train for the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece. Focusing on wrestling full-time, she had an outstanding 2003-2004 wrestling season and when she won the 2004 U.S. Open, Miranda earned the top seed for the first U.S. Olympic Team Trials.

She advanced directly to the best-ofthree series, winning both of her matches against Clarissa Chun, and was invited to represent America at the Olympic Games know myself before I die. Mentally,

the first Games to include women's wres- am." tling and Miranda won a bronze medal competing in the 48 kg women's weight

her career through representing the U.S. at four World Championships in women's freestyle, earning silver medals in 2000 and 2003 and a bronze in 2006. Miranda also participated in the Pan American Games, placing first in 2002 and first and third in 2003.

However, Miranda's groundbreaking accomplishments didn't come without hardship. When she committed to having a wrestling career in high school, Miranda embraced it as an essential part of her identity.

In a 2019 Falcon interview, she said, "I came up with a basic principle that at the very least, I want to

with three other women wrestlers. It was emotionally, physically - know who I

Miranda knew she wanted wrestling to be a significant part of her life, but her father refused to let her continue with the sport her freshman year. Miranda's parents emigrated to escape Brazil's military dictatorship in the 1960s, taking refuge in Canada before immigrating to the U.S..

Her father constantly scratched out her name from wrestling tournaments and even threatened to sue SHS to keep her out of wrestling, believing that education, not sports, was the only way for Miranda to be successful in life. Miranda, however, eventually

came to an agreement with her father: As long as she maintained a 4.0 GPA, she could continue wrestling. That agreement put her on a path for an outstanding career and helped her pave the way for the future of women's wres-

Although her athletic career ended after she lost to Jessica Medina at the bestof-three series at World Team Trials in 2009, her wrestling legacy has continued through The Miranda Medal.

"I came up with a basic principle that at the very least, I want to know myself before I die."

ALUMNA Patricia Adura-Miranda

The Open Mat, a resource for men and women's college wrestling, awards this accolade to the best women's college wrestler annually. Most recently, she was a prominent voice in reversing Stanford's decision to cut its wrestling program at the end of the 2020-21 academic year.

— Anika Kapasi

Mark Suciu: Skateboarding superstar films groundbreaking videos

"The store clerk asked me, 'hey what do One video he made in collaboration with skate as much. you wanna be when you grow up?' and I Thrasher Magazine, which features him was like 'pro skater' and he was laughing' skating around a destination location for 6 anymore." Sucju said in his interview with was like, `pro skater,' and he was laughing." Class of 2010 alumnus Mark Suciu said on The Nine Club podcast with Chris Roberts episode 196.

Now, Suciu, the 2021 Thrasher Skater of the Year with 226,000 Instagram followers, has become a prominent figure in the skateboarding scene, in both content creation and competition. Since he began skating at age 6, he made waves by producing more skateboarding videos and magazine interviews before graduating high school than most pros do in their entire career. He posts weekly videos with stunning backgrounds and impressive tricks over all kinds of street obstacles.

"He released tons of incredible video parts which seemed more like he was filming with friends than working on a project," fellow skater Lui Elliot said.

He garners hundreds of thousands of views on YouTube videos he's featured in.

minutes, received 1.5 million views.

In addition to being a popular content creator, he is currently ranked 254th in the world in competitive skateboarding and 144th in street skating. He began his competitive career at age

14 in The Game of Skates, a head-to-head skateboarding tricks battle, and eventually won a few local ones. Before he graduated high school, he received a welcome email from Habitat Skateboards to join their team. When entering college, Suciu committed to skating

full time professionally. Unfortunately, he soon injured his ankle and was forced to take a break from skateboarding. During this time, he studied Temple University. After two years Suciu story it tells. moved to New York City to attend The

New School. In these few years of schooling, he noted being burned out and not wanting to but faced a pivotal decision between the

Elliot. "I was bummed at the idea that my body would still want to skate."

During the transition period from graduating college and going into professional skating, Suciu jumped into stardom with his video Cross Continental made with Thrasher Magazine. His "classic, raw, street skating" style eventually earned him Skateboard Mag's 2012 "Year's Best AM" title and a spot on the Adidas Skate team.

Over the coming years, Suciu made other big projects, signing with other career. sponsors like RVCA and Thunder. But his biggest video came out in 2020, Verso.

The video, produced by filmmaker Justin Albert, offers stunning visuals alongside impressive skating. It is different from most other skate videos in that the video does not try to focus on Suciu's face — it Creative Writing and Literature at is all about the tricks themselves and the

> ed in the Street League in 2019 and placed second in the U.S. Olympics qualifying,



going on at the same time. Ultimately, he chose the latter, giving up his Olympic dreams and pursuing his content creation This choice ultimately panned out, as

Olympics or the Thrasher Trips that were

he became Thrasher's Skater of the Year in

Suciu has not competed since 2021 but is still active on social media making skate videos. He currently has multiple sponsorships from big companies such as Adidas Footwear, Spitfire Wheels, Thunder Trucks, RVCA Clothing, Jessup Griptape As for his competitive career, he skat- and Atlas Skate Shop in addition to riding for Habitat Skateboards.

— Neal Malhotra

All graphics by NIKHIL MATHIHALLI and HOWARD SHU

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51



The Falcon Crossword: Places Around Campus

15

18

29

43

33

53

37



14

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23

28

40

42

49

64



ACROSS

- Large deciduous tree from the mint family, or its namesake prized hardwood Tossed by Rosencrants and
- Guildenstern
- Carne
- Skye, who played Diane Court in "Say Anything'
- _, a Tibetan dog Lhasa breed
- Star Wars villain
- March Madness org.
- Remain undecided
- Tax-dodger's greatest fear
- Next to the school swimming pool 23 to injury
- "Hoot," "Chomp" and "Scat" novelist Carl _
- Nuclear Energy Institute (abbr.)
- 29 Smidgen
- Existential question behind "to be or not to be": to die
- Bread bakery
- Person, place, thing or
- Contains foosball and air hockey tables
- First four letters of vacation rental company
- Soccer player _
- Communist dictator
- 46 Subculture associated with depression
- Makes conscious (of)
- More malicious 51
- Cars allowed, but not students
- Digital memory storage for rapid retrieval
- I wasn't _____ yesterday!

- Sport on campus
- C standard library function that converts string to int
- First name of the owner of
- Cut off
- Unit in P.E. 65
- Clutter

DOWN

- Adventure hero of Belgian
- Dawn-of-mammals epoch West African folklore character who takes the form of a spider
- Reeves
- AP Diploma program based on AP Seminar and AP Research
- International oil cartel
- Colloquialism: "Money __ object"
- One way to say, "Obviously!"
- _: Way of Water"
- City just north of San Francisco
- Framework to reduce
- workplace discrimination _ of war
- Prequel to the Odyssey
- Grande
- Small dish paired with entrée
- They lived happily _
- Teachers' org.
- Bills with Alexander Hamilton
- Las Bellas
- Penguin Random House and HarperCollins
- Style of dance
- 36 Venue
- Trolly cars
- Many a dictator's problem
- Sports: forty-_
- 40 Science class at Los Gatos

58

57

- High 43 Work experience trainee
- Contract for confidential info.
- Maroon (verb)
- Goes explosively with Coke
- 50 Nearby body of water

45

50

59

62

65

- First name of the prince in "Coming to America"
- Spanish for "photo"
- Short for "program"
- High school regional sports
- playoffs "That's it!"
- 58 Company head honcho

(Solution will be posted on saratogafalcon.org) (DM @thesaratogafalcon with solutions. First five submissions will get a shout out) ◆

Much-needed tips for Falcons with no game when it comes to finding love

HOT TAKE: DATING AT OUR SCHOOL IS LIKE DIGGING THROUGH THE DUMPSTER

Alli-so bad at spitting rizz



Allison Tan

As senior class president (they made me include this), I must announce that an unforgivable disease has infected our high school and it's not COVID-19. I cannot verbalize the outright disgust I feel every time I see underclassmen mingling and shouting "the Rizzard of Oz." Enough is

The hard truth is that Saratoga has no game and if they want to improve, they need to finally take initiative and talk to their romantic interests. People have become so embarrassed

to approach people organically because of the ever-evolving online culture that they'd rather stalk their crush's snap maps and astrological compatibility than talk to them in person.

I promise you are not going to find your next relationship as a Discord kitten on Valorant.

I trace this lack of social skills to a hyper-academic culture, where students must sacrifice going to school dances in order to catch up on a hefty load of homework assigned over break.

Oftentimes, students here do not balance their social life with their academic life, resulting in suppressing their emotions and neglecting their love life.

On the other extreme, the people that do have the confidence to talk to other peers romantically are typically notorious for spitting the most outlandish game. "That is river rat behavior," I often find myself thinking out loud to my friends when they explain

yet another offensive and borderline perverted pickup line sent to their DMs.

What ha pened to good old-fashioned chivalry? The best present you're going to get from a significant other from our school is heartbreak, a heart attack, a waste of time or a janky promposal brainstormed on the school toilet and drawn on a very small scrap of poster paper made by your best friend during tutorial.

Now that I'm (kinda) done complaining, I'm here to offer solutions:

1. Go on real dates (not middle school type hangouts in Downtown Saratoga because you both don't have cars).

2. Talk to someone you are interest-

ed in one-on-one and not exclusively in

3. Don't listen to crappy advice your friends give you, like waiting three days before responding to

someone's snap (your Snap with the broccoli filter over it is not worth the wait).

4. Avoid the classic Bay Area viewpoints at Mt. Eden and Skyline and instead go on creative dates to make things exciting. I suggest you take a gander about an aquarium or botanical garden, or partake in silly antics such as baking cookies from scratch or heading down to BJ's on \$4.99 pi-Tuesdays zookie

(share a chocolate

chunk pizookie with one spoon). 5. Or ignore all my previous points and date someone from a different school. Warning: Success is not guaranteed!

(Evidence: me).

Graphic by ALLISON TAN

This is a desperate call to action for all Falcons and community members: Please, for the love of God, brush up on your game before we all die alone.

topten

MOST INTERESTING SENIOR TRIP IDEAS

- 10 Channel Islands National Park. There are no transportation services, buildings or stores on these islands. If you liked "Lord of the Flies," you can truly live the
- Mars (one-way trip). For all the seniors whose lives are doomed to begging for money on the streets after only getting into a top-30 college instead of a top-10 college, this is the solution. Your otherworldly talent will certainly get you into $\dot{\text{Stanford}}$ now ... as long as you also have a 4.9 GPA and cured cancer.
- The North and South Poles. Maybe polar coordinates will be useful here.
- The college you got into. A very unique idea to demonstrate your school spirit!
- The local Planet Fitness. This is where people use machines in revolutionary ways, like doing push ups on the assisted pull-up machine. You might even get to use the machines by waiting through their 10 minute breaks between sets.
- England (city). You can walk around yelling "1776" and enjoy quality British delicacies like beans on toast. Watching American sports at 3 a.m. also hits dif-
- Arizona. Taking "let 'em cook" way too literally.
- Gotham City. We said most interesting, not best. The Riddler might blow up your whole apartment complex for 10 gifted subs on his Twitch stream.
- The Caribbean. Reward yourself with an extremely overpriced trip to Turks and Caicos ... or sneak on a ship and hope you end up there.
- **The Journalism Room.** There's no better vacation than enjoying the food at Deadline Night!
- >> Kavya Patel and Howard Shu