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AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

APES trip to Costa Rica was an unforgettable experience



Friday, October 6, 2023 Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA Vol. 64, No. 1



# At oceanside vigil, friends honor memory of senior

BY MeherBhatnagar

In the late afternoon on Aug. 22, as my friends and I staggered down a steep hill near Bonny Doon Beach, we spotted some of our classmates in the distance, with the melodies of songs by Lana Del Rey and Billie Eilish echoing in the background.

Those songs and everything that followed that night were in remembrance of our friend, senior Katherine "Katie" Schneider. A week earlier, we learned of her death at age 17. Authorities said she died in a solo car crash near Castle Rock State Park. She was reported missing on July 5 and a widespread search began shortly after. News of her disappearance and then her death, which was reported nationally, confirmed our worst fears.

When we arrived at the beach, we were greeted by the familiar faces of her older sister, Class of 2021 alumna Anna Schneider, and some of her closest friends. They were already setting up a candlelight vigil, carefully lighting each wick and placing it on a rock formation so that the wind wouldn't blow the lights out.

On a blanket laid out by the rocks was a mound of flowers brought by attendees, alongside a scrapbook her best friends -Lena Aribi, Sabrina Manea, Anna Meier and Emily Overton — created, which honored the beautiful memories they shared

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# E-bikes rise in popularity, creating safety concerns

ву Grace**Lin** & Ruiyan**Zhu** 

In day-to-day school traffic, hidden among the busy mom vans sliding open, cautious new student drivers turning into parking lots and friends chatting and walking to school, electric bikes (e-bikes) can be seen zooming around the parking lot.

Despite their high price — the bikes start at \$300 and can rise up to \$8,000 for high-end versions — e-bikes have become increasingly popular among teens because of their convenience.

"Since we're in a small town, you can go anywhere with it," a sophomore boy who e-bikes told The Falcon. "You also don't need a license to have one."

Though they're convenient and simple to use, critics say e-bikes can also be dangerous. According to the California Highway Patrol (CHP) riders have a higher chance of getting severely injured or killed in a crash since e-bikes are much heavier and faster than regular bikes. In addition, a recent New York Times article states that the risk of injury and death to riders rises sharply at 20 mph.

Another sophomore boy interviewed by The Falcon said he can reach 30-40 mph on his e-bike when going to school. At such speeds, e-bike riders operate more like motorcycles, which require driver licenses. However, per the California Vehicle Code, e-bikes are classified as conventional bicycles and do not require a license.

Another risk is that many young riders do not wear helmets. "I hide it from my parents, but I think they know already," the

sophomore boy said. "Don't do anything stupid, and just stay safe. Wear a helmet if you're doing tricks, but if you're going

straight, I think it's fine." Neither sophomore boy wears a helmet regularly when e-biking. And both said they have had their fair share of accidents and near-accidents while riding their ebikes, ranging from a close call with a motorcycle to a full-on car crash.

### E-bike riders have a higher chance of getting severely injured or killed in a crash.

"I've been hit by a car three times; last school year, I was riding and crashed, and I flipped over someone's windshield," one of the sophomores said. "I wasn't driving safely, though, because I was swerving on the road. My parents want me to wear a helmet and try to be safer."

He was sent to the hospital by his parents shortly after fracturing his ankles and wrists. In addition, just two weeks after school started, a car hit the sophomore while he was biking home from a football game. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, e-bike injuries have escalated 70% from 2017 to 2020. Following these accidents, the sophomore said he is paying more attention to where the cars are on the road.

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Sixty members of the Class

performed coordinated backflips.

**SENIORS** 



### 33 in the Class of 2024 National Merit Semifinalists

Last fall, 1.6 million juniors took the PSAT. Among those who scored highly enough to earn the honor of being National Merit semifinalists were 33 SHS seniors.

To qualify as a National Merit semifinalist, a student's junior year PSAT score must place in the 99th percentile in the state and the top 1.25% in the nation. For California, this year's selection index cutoff was 221, which translates to a 1,480 out of 1,520 on the PSAT. Over 16,000 semifinalists nationwide will advance to the National Merit Finalist stage based on their academic excellence, demonstrated in an online application. The finalists then compete for over 2,500 scholarships of \$2,500 each.

The Class of 2024 National Merit Semifinalists are Advaith Avadhanam, Sam Bai, Avik Belenje, Lynn Dai, Sophia Deng, Sanjoli Gupta, Yanis Herne, Victoria Hu, Emily Hung, Madeline Hung, Yashom Kapoor, Zeyneb Kaya, Dev Krishnamoorthy, Katelyn Lee, Bryan Li, Xiaoran Li, Andrew Lin, Alyssa Liu, Jonny Luo, Nikhil Mathihalli, Eric Miao, Uttara Natarajan, Samik Pattanayak, Dhilon Prasad, Dhrithi Rachepalli, Rushil Saraf, Jarrett Singh, Anais Sobrier, Shaolun Sun, Nidhi Vadlamudi, Joseph Wang, Aiden Ye and

This year's number of semifinalists is similar to those in recent classes. The Class of 2023 had 28 semifinalists and the Class of 2022 had 38. ◆

- Skyler Mao and Lawson Wang

### New Mac lab for MAP replaces aging equipments

In June, the Media Arts Program upgraded its lab with new 2023 models of the 24-inch iMacs. They were funded by the MAP Boosters group, which provided \$45,000, and the Career Technical Education (CTE) program, which provided the remaining \$15,000, said Joel Tarbox, MAP 11 media arts teacher and technical coordinator. The \$60,000 was just enough to cover 32 computers, including new keyboards and mice, Tarbox said.

For subscription-based software, such as Adobe Creative Cloud, and the latest Apple updates, the machines needed a solid state drive to run programs like Photoshop, Illustrator and Premiere Pro. Solid state drives are able to hold more storage and transfer data faster.

These old computers that MAP used for the past five in the 2023 models enhance security. While MAP projects won't see significant differences in their workflows, the new iMacs will make the editing and learning process smoother and easier, a huge benefit for MAP students and teachers. ◆

— Annika Gho

### New tardy policy penalizes excessively late tardies

The district updated its tardy policy this year to distinguish tardies over 30 minutes, designed to discourage students from being excessively tardy. Excessive tardies now count as unexcused absences when calculating for disciplinary consequences such as Treasure Toga campus maintenance sessions after school

The enforcement of tardies remains mostly the same, now including excessive ones as cuts. Students who have three unexcused absences, three excessive tardies or five tardies under 30 minutes, will receive a Treasure Toga and must complete two 1-hour shifts of community service in an assigned week. As in the past, students who are over five minutes late to a class are encouraged to stop at the attendance office, so that attendance clerk Mandy Armes can update their tardy status in Aeries rather than interrupting the teacher's class.

"If it's more beneficial to a teacher in their classroom to send the student down to the office, they are welcome to do that," Cunningham said. "It's really up to how the teacher wants to operate, but this is an option so that they don't have to worry about it. ◆

— Saachi Jain



www.saratogafalcon.org







Captivating Cars | On Sept. 22, senior Homecoming royalty Sannidhi Boppana and Victoria Lin rode in front of cheering crowds in a red Vintage Ford Thunderbird rented from Santa Clara Valley Thunderbirds.

## Environmental Club advocates for new legislative policies to improve health

BY IsabelleWang & FlorenceWei

As she stepped up onto the podium in the Civic Theater of Saratoga City Hall on July 5, junior Neha Tadikamalla cleared her throat and began her short speech in hopes of convincing the city council to pass a ban on artificial

A few weeks prior to this city council meeting, Tadikamalla and juniors Aiden Chen and Nicole Lee began drafting the ban artificial turf campaign — which stops the use of harmful plastics — as part of the school's new Environmental Action Club.

The Environmental Action Club aims to make the planet more environmentally friendly by focusing on state and city-level legislation, Tadikamalla said. The club has written articles on change.org about banning artificial turf and emailed them to board members, attended city council meetings and created petitions with other environmental groups.

So far, they have worked with the Sierra Club, Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action Team, Bay Area Youth Climate Action Team, Santa Clara County Medical Asso-

"We're currently working on bills about banning artificial turf and a night sky bill to limit the excessive light usage outside [in lamps]," Tadikamalla said. "We're cancer. trying to enact these bills to make them a part of our schools and cit-

### "We wanted Saratoga to be a healthier and safer environment for everyone."

JUNIOR Nicole Lee

Lee was inspired to create the club in freshman year at the Sierra Club, a national environmental organization dedicated to promoting practical and responsible use of resources. There, she attended city council meetings and made public comments about their campaigns. A couple of weeks later, Tadikamalla and Chen joined Lee in the

Near the end of their sophomore year, the three created the Environmental Club, a schoolwide club modeled after the Sierra Club to reach out to students who were interested in joining.

So far, the club has made four petitions: AB1423 banning toxic PFAs (a type of plastic), AB38 reducing light pollution and SB499 supporting heat mitigating materials, such as replacing artificial turf with real grass.

The AB1423 bill aims to ban the manufacturing, distribution and sale of products containing poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAs), which have numerous health impacts such as cancer, developmental problems, birth defects and kidney damage. It also doesn't biodegrade and is extremely toxic to the environment.

The SB499 bill would mandate California schools to replace heat absorbent materials, like cement and artificial turf, with non-heat absorbing materials, like wood chips and natural grass. This makes the environments cooler as turf with grass. the heat absorbent material go up to 180 degrees Fahrenheit, causing heat exhaustion. In particular, the bill aims to replace all turf with real grass, as the synthetic turf includes PFAs that causes

The AB38 bill reduces excessive use of outdoor lighting, which affects billions of migrating birds, by mandating government agencies to optimize their outdoor lighting with automatic shut-offs.

"We wanted to focus our efforts on campaigns that are more closely tied with Saratoga," Lee said. "We wanted power in numbers for our campaigns to be heard."

The Sierra Club also provided tips to the three officers to aid their first campaign, banning artificial turf. The campaign included research about the effects of artificial turf on people's health and the

They began their project by meeting over this summer once a week with a Sierra Club member to

### −>>≝ bigidea

### **Environmental Action Club**

How many bills were created Four petitions with over 400

Who have they worked with Sierra Club, Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action Team, and Santa Clara County Medi

Goal for the school year Reach out to more students to participate in city meetings.

advise them, along with a few Los Gatos parents who were interested in helping. Together, the team began to plan what they wanted to achieve over the summer, starting with attending many city council and board meetings to give public comments about their bills.

To gain more recognition for the bills, Chen also created petitions for each. Since June 25, the club has received over 400 signatures for AB38 (light pollution), 38 for SB499 (heat mitigation), 55 for AB1423 (banning toxic PFAs) and 47 for SB499 to replace artificial

Additionally, Lee also wrote an article about banning artificial turf fields at Saratoga High for the Sierra Club. On Sept. 4, Lee's Letter to the Editor was also published on Mercury News.

"Since this is a topic that affects us students, we wanted Saratoga to be a healthier and safer environment for everyone," Lee said. "Hopefully, we can set an example for other cities to also adopt these environmentally friendly chang-

Throughout the summer, Chen, Lee and Tadikamalla contacted the school board and PTSO members with their campaign to ban artificial turf. The campaign included an official letter to the board signed by the Sierra Club and the Santa Clara County Medical Association, giving more credibility to their bills so that it would be taken seriously with more support.

"We're hoping for more people [from the club] to attend public comments," Tadikamalla said. ◆

Woody, Buzz Lightyear, Hamm, Bo

Mrs. Potato Head. The rest of the participants, totaling around 50, wore pink Barbie aseball shirts.

Peep, Andy, Mr. Potato Head and

of '24 participated in the perfor-The performers followed the stomance this year, 10 more than last year's turnout. Seniors went to the ryline of Andy and his toys through high school. The ending includextreme to wow the crowd: For example, volleyball players Eric Nored part of the Barbie movie's plot which featured characters includris, Samuel Kau and Edmond Hsu ing seniors Taylor Chu as Barbie showed their athleticism when they and the Lamp and Paul Hulme and "I think there was definitely Ethan Canahuati as Ken.

more spirit this year because people started to realize it was their last year," senior Paul Hulme said. The skit featured several characters from "Toy Story," including "It was really cool to see so much

"Our skit group tripled this year and there were more participants in every dance," said senior Margaret Laver, who played the slinky dog.

involvement this year."

In previous years, the Class of 2024 was disqualified in their sophomore year and severely penalized in their junior year for inappropriate dancing, so they were determined to leave a good final impression this year. This year, however, they weren't.

Judges' scores were announced at the Homecoming dance on Sept. 23 with the seniors placing first, juniors placing second, sophomores

"Seniors are always supposed to have the best performances and we were motivated by the impressive performances from the underclassmen to do better," Chan said. ◆



Seniors Michelle Wan, Taylor Chu and Erika Anderson perform during the all girls' dance on their quad day performance on Sept. 22.

# Juniors showcase impressive dances despite roadblocks

ву Skyler**Mao** 

As the music crescendoed to a beat drop during their quad day performance on Sept. 21, junior performers Steven Ning, Caleb Yu, and Dylan Wilson leapt into the air, each hurdling over three of their fellow performers beneath them as part of a stunt dance.

This choreographed scene was just one in a series of dances, stunts and skits for the Class of 2025. Themed after the Disney movie "Cars," the performance featured students playing several characters from the movie, including Lightning McQueen, Doc Hudson, Mater, Sally and Fillmore.

The production followed Mc-Queen, who was challenged to represent Saratoga in a race against Cupertino, the opponent in the Homecoming football game. Mc-Queen's journey throughout the production was represented by a collection of dances and skits.

With more than 70 participants, preparation for the performance began in early September. Despite having sufficient signups and three weeks to prepare, the juniors struggled to get everyone together often enough to be fully

Because it's junior year, a lot of things aid. "A lot of things" of people are ditching practice were put together hastily, and we because they're really busy with weren't really sure if we were going



Junior performers crowd together as they cheer under blue powder at the end of their spectacular Homecoming quad day performance on Sept. 21.

school and extracurriculars," said Jasmine Liu, one of the choreographic heads for the performance. "We had poor attendance for some dances and it was really

Therefore, the juniors had to cut out several dancers in their performance to make it run as smoothly as possible.

This lack of attendance for rehearsals made the preparation for the dance very difficult to manage. "The preparation was really, really stressful," skit head Tim-

to be able to do it."

Despite these struggles, the juniors were able to pull through with their commitment and resolve during the few days before homecoming, leading to a successful performance. Leung noted that the quality of the performance during Quad Day exceeded that of

the practice dances. "We all felt really committed and the last couple practices and also did last minute tutorial practices to make sure that everyone got it," Leung said. "It definitely was a big challenge, but somehow we pulled through and I'm really

# Sophs step-up during quad day

BY Annie Liu & Ruiyan**Zhu** 

The sophomores' dynamic dances themed after "Monster's people who showed up for dec-Inc" wowed the guad on Sept. 20.

With an estimate of 30 people participating, the skit included characters like Boo, played by Lavanya Bose; Randall, played by Nila Venkataratnam; Sulley, played by Blue Chankhunthod; and Mike, played by Sophie Qin.

The performance featured Boo getting kidnapped by Randall, Sulley and Mike.

The sophomore class officer group began their preparations for quad day in August. Having learned from

last year's experience,

where they were poor with time management, the officers created calendars to coordinate dance practices and decoration sessions

for participants. Despite the early planning, the sophomore class still struggled with low participation.

"Last year it [participation] shot up after some last-minute signups," sophomore treasurer Samvrith Bandi said.

"There really wasn't much interest [at the beginning], which makes the dances really hectic as to increase participation." ◆

orations — but the sophomores were nearly disqualified when one of its members threw a red paintbrush at a roof.

Not only was the participa-

tion for decorating poor this

year — there were only about 10

[people] sign up later."

The sophomores were faced with another problem after finding out they were only allowed to have five dances, which only applies to sophomores and freshmen. As a result, they had to

change their initial plans. "We had to decide between K-pop and Bollywood, but since the K-pop dances had more progress, we removed the

Bollywood dance," sophomore class president Jena Lew said.

In addition, some choreography was also delayed due to song changes, as seniors and juniors got priority

for picking their songs. Ultimately, the sophomores came up with many ideas at the last-minute, but they eventually came together and managed to score higher than the freshmen.

"I'm pretty happy with it. It was a really fun experience," Bandi said. "Next year, we'll try

# Freshman class makes strides during first performance

In a Quad Day performance themed after the Disney movie "Inside Out" on Sept. 19, the Class of 2027 displayed a series of intricately choreographed dances while dealing with technical challenges revolving around a dysfunctional microphone system and flawed sound and their status as the "newbies" of the school.

The freshmen Quad Day dances featured a standard group dance, Bollywood, K-pop, all-girls and all boys dances, for which practices started shortly after the first day of "I think we have a lot of participation

and excitement, especially coming in as freshmen," freshman class vice president Katie Yang said. "We were able to get a lot of support for our all boys dance."

Aside from having over 40 participants, the freshmen were also able to kick off a strong Homecoming week with the help of their robust funding and outreach efforts. Freshman class president Sina Mahtaj

Kharassani said the freshmen received a huge head start for Homecoming by raising over \$3,000 at their opening parent night and around \$500 at the food truck

fest in August. Along with selling 118 class T-shirts, more than any other freshman class in at least 10 years, the freshman class budget coming into September was the highest for any freshman class at that time in recent

"My favorite part about quad day is foming new bonds and meeting a lot of new people in my class."

FRESHMAN Devika Nair

Kharassani also attributes the respectable turnout to proactive outreach efforts such as speaking with numerous classmates and employing social media, which alerted lessaware freshmen to the quad day activities, the Homecoming football game against Cupertino and the dance over the weekend.

"My favorite part about quad day is forming new bonds and meeting a lot of new people in my class, especially with those coming from different middle schools," said



Freshmen point skyward during their K-pop dance routine for their quad day on Sept. 19.

Devika Nair, a dancer and skit actor.

To cap off an exciting week, freshmen are preparing to enjoy their first Homecoming football game and dance.

"For the football game, a lot of the fresh-

men are really excited about it," Yang said "For the dance, word has not gone around yet, but I think once it does, people are going to be really interested and super hyped up for it." ◆

### **E-BIKES**

continued from pg. 1

Concerns about e-bikes are also rising in the community. As people gain more awareness about the associated dangers, more efforts advocating e-bike safety have been made by both communities and government organizations like the CHP.

For those who follow safe driving practices — wearing a helmet and going at a reasonable speed e-bikes are nevertheless a relatively safe and convenient option for transportation.

Freshman Eva Cleland uses her e-bike to get breakfast at Star-

"I've seen many people get pretty close to cars and it's very scary for me to watch," Cleland said. "My parents are definitely concerned about it, but I think I've earned their trust enough since I use my bike responsibly; [e-bikes] just offer a lot more free-

Campus supervisor Archie Liepava thinks there should be more regulations regarding e-bikes, like controlling their speeds and making sure riders have a permit to operate them. He said most accidents he knows of involve riders who lost control or were on a

"I think they're good for the environment," Ljepava said. "Just bucks with her friends before know that if we see accidents, we will crack down on them." ◆

### REMEMBRANCE

continued from pg. 1

Later in the night, everyone gathered around the rocks to spend some quiet time looking into the distance, captivated by the glowing sun that dominated the sky that evening.

It was a sunset unlike anyone had seen; tears were shed and hugs were shared as everyone stood on the beach next to one another taking in the breathtaking landscape.

"Her favorite thing to do was go to the beach at night," Overton said, explaining why the ceremony was held at Bonny Doon Beach, a 45-minute drive from Saratoga. Overton recalled that Katie was excited anytime the beach was brought up and that she was always willing to go along for a day by the water.

Later, as stars illuminated every corner of the sky, attendees gathered around a firepit to observe moments of silence for Ka-The ceremony ended with Ka-

tie's best friends thanking everyone for taking the time to come out all the way last minute to the The 50-plus attendees then went around the fire pit sharing

their favorite memories about Ka-

tie, letting go of past sorrows and

honoring the beauty of her life. Memories of her experiences in the Media Arts Program were shared by teachers Suzanne Her-

zman and Natasha Ritchie, as well as fellow classmates who remembered her as the quiet girl with a sweet personality.

Overton noted that Katie was quiet around most people. Although she was reserved, there was another side to Katie that others didn't always see - the fun, bubbly person who would always make Overton and friends laugh to the point of tears.

She recalled Katie having ambitious goals for herself in life. Her dream was to live in Australia and pursue cosmetology, Overton

For those who went, the memorial at Bonny Doon Beach was a beautiful tribute and a reminder of how much was lost with Katie's

# Despite short practice, faculty dance succeeds

The faculty kicked off Homecoming week on Sept. 18 with a "Finding Nemo" themed quad day

ed in the finale, and their excitement and passion shone through their wacky dances

English teacher Marcos Cortez appeared in a turtle suit, while others donned starfish

The performance featured four all-staff dances to songs "Baby Shark," "Cake by the Ocean," "Astronaut in the Ocean" and "Surf

The faculty's skit centered around interactions between Jason Friend (Marlin) and Megan Laws (Nemo). Friend played the role of an overprotective father, and Laws was a new freshman.

The skit was primarily written by guidance counselor Eileen Allen.

Beyond just the dances and jokes, the faculty also sported matching blue T-shirts designed by MAP teacher Joel Tarbox.

"Last year we had 'Incredibles-themed shirts, and it was kind of like a new tradition," said Kristen Thomson, AP Environmental Science (APES) teacher and dance choreographer. "I think he [Tarbox] did a great job designing it."

Notably, all the faculty dancers had less

More than 30 staff members participat-

and plentiful props.

headpieces.

in Safari."

### "We only had a week to practice, so we had practice during lunchtime every day."

"I just got back from Costa Rica the week before, so I hadn't really put anything TEACHER Kristen Thomson together until I got back," Thomson said. "We only had a week to practice, so we had practice during lunchtime every day until

> Thomson said her daughter and senior Taylor Chu both had a helping hand in the teachers' performance, providing song ideas and choreograph tips such as in the "Cake by the Ocean" dance.

Teacher Kristen Thomson dances to "Baby

Shark" during faculty quad day on Sept 18.

time to prepare for their quad day dance

than usual, as Thomson was leading the AP

Environmental Science field trip prior to

Despite the rushed preparations for the dances and some audio problems, Thomson said she enjoyed seeing a lot of the staff come together to put on a successful per-

"We want to have fun, but we also want to be a part of the whole Homecoming," she said. "I think it's fun for the kids to see us, and going out of our comfort level and being around others who also want to dance a little is pretty cool." ◆

# Nostalgia reigns as HC court rides in old cars

After her dance team's halftime routine. senior Homecoming Monarch Taylor Chu quickly disappeared from sight to change from her cheer outfit into her sparkling red Homecoming dress.

peared on a vintage Ford Thunderbird, holding a bouquet of flowers and smiling at the cheering audience. Getting to sit in the Thunderbird, a fun

and exclusive tradition for the Homecoming royalty, was a long awaited experience "Once I actually stepped into the car, I was really excited because everyone was

cheering, and the experience was overall an adrenaline rush," Chu said. This long-awaited tradition, which started in 2010, is appreciated by parents, students and staff members alike, and it's put

together by the school's spirit commission. Leadership teacher Kristen Cunningham helps the spirit commission by reserving the vintage cars through Santa Clara Valley Thunderbirds, an organization dedicated to the enjoyment of the classic baby birds, which includes the '55, '56 and '57

"It's a nice way for our Homecoming court to be escorted during the halftime show," Cunningham said.

Patti Carr and Larry Johnston, one of the car owners at the Homecoming game, said that a lot more goes into the preparation of the cars than most students may

Johnston's car needs regular maintenance to make sure it keeps running. He and Carr are vigilant about their car's maintenance, even going as far as wiping down fingerprints after a show.

students to sit on.

the right mechanic is a big must," Carr said. Prior to game day, Carr and Johnston have to prepare the car for the show by wiping it down and bringing a blanket for the

brought their car to other shows and parades, such as the annual San Jose Veterans Only a few moments later, she reap-Day parade, the December Toys for Tots drive in San Jose and the Santa Cruz for Birds on the Wharf event at the end of Sep-

"My favorite part of the night is seeing the excitement of the students and listening to their plans for the future," Carr said.

Previously, Carr and Johnston have also

The Homecoming halftime parade was again an entertaining and exciting event, with the Thunderbird tradition being one of its largest components that students, parents and staff look forward to.

"Homecoming is a great tradition where everyone comes together. I was really excited to ride in the car this year. " Chu said. "It was awesome being on court with my friends, and I loved seeing people cheer on the field and in the stands. It was such an amazing experience for me!" ◆



The cars at the halftime show line up

# Concert 'MAGIC' raises \$30,000 for Maui fire victims

ву JessicaLi & Kavya**Patel** 

Music and Good in Concert (MAGIC), a non-profit organization founded by senior Vidur Sanghi, held its second school concert in the McAfee Center on Aug. 27. The event was held to raise scholarship funds for youth impacted by the devastating wildfires

With the help of sponsors and donors including Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT) and Affinity Solutions, Sanghi's organization managed to meet its fundraising goal of \$30,000, which will fund a few scholarships for kids impacted by Maui wildfires. In the past, funds have gone to several organizations serving different causes including Off the Plate, Heart Care Foundation of India and Best Buddies.

The concert consisted of a series of vocal, instrumental and dance performances, featuring many of the school's aspiring singers, dancers and musicians — including violinists, cellists, flutists and saxophone players — totalling to 21 acts within the 3-hour show.

The event drew at least 200 attendees. Several SHS groups performed at the event.

Sanghi founded MAGIC in 2020 with the intention of raising money for frontline pandemic workers. Since then, it has expanded to help with a variety of struggles including mitigating the financial burdens of senior citizens, teachers, disadvantaged children, restaurants, individuals impacted by the Ukrainian conflict and adolescents in India who experienced financial strain from paying for medical "When the pandemic paralyzed

our world, I was heavily impacted by the sudden loss of interactions with friends and family," Sanghi said. "Using my passion for music, I created MAGIC to remotely collaborate with others during the pandemic, in hopes of spreading good, helping our beneficiaries and creating a sense of purpose and community.

The concert promoted the organization's objective of inclusivity and diversity through a vast range of cultural music and dance acts, along with an influx of performers coming from different locations within the area. Around 30% of the performers were from outside SHS.

"Since we've mostly had all SHS partic-

ipants in the past, it really highlights how much we've expanded our reach," Sanghi

The officer team working alongside Sanghi includes seniors Taylor Chu, Mohit Gandluru, Shrey Jain, Kabeer Minocha and Kavya Patel as well as junior Diya Iyer. Their main job is to help recruit performers, lead ticketing and set-up backstage.

The team is also planning to run several more concerts and events this year, including some potential fundraising competitions that companies would be able to par-

"I've stuck with MAGIC from start to finish, and it's formed such a large and diverse community while having so much fun," Sanghi said. "I'm so grateful for all the money we've raised for the less fortunate, and I couldn't be prouder of our progress." ◆

said. He knew little about behavioral therapy before, but his teaching progressed quickly. When he worked as a paraeducator, an

Keeling uses skills from his previous jobs to help his students grow academically, socially and emotionally. He introduces them to SVCTE, or Silicon Valley Career Technical Education, a program "I like solving problems. I like helping that prepares students for future endeavors.

students feel comfortable in class," Keeling

instructional aide for a special education class. Keeling helped teachers better support students by providing resources that would be difficult for just one teacher to provide. For example, Keeling worked with nonverbal students so he had to provided extra support, as students didn't always tell him when they were upset.

"I enjoy that as they grow, they get more independent, they're able to function, and it's less about me instructing them and more about them using the tools they have

> Keeling uses a variety of activities to help his students grow independent. One such activity is the interactive notebook, in which students reflect on their work to learn how to better use available tools. For those in sequential math, the lets them reflect on various math topics. Cornell notes are also used to teach students how to analyze what they're learning.

to complete assignments," he said.

Keeling said that he enjoys working at Saratoga because a smaller school district allows for a smaller class size, letting him to connect with students easier. Currently

Keeling has 13 students in his biggest class, something he is grateful for, as in previous school districts his largest class had twenty five people. Through working at smaller school districts, Keeling has picked up skills on how to treat parents and students in various situations.

"Especially when it comes to students, you have to explain things in a neutral way,' he said. "It's not about personal opinions."

Keeling went to college in Florida where getting an associates degree basically free or very low cost doesn't exist; however, in California, Keeling said young adults have the opportunity to go down any path they wish.

'There's so many opportunities that didn't exist when I was in high school and I want them to know that there are options other than just college," he said. ◆

# Biology teacher returns to SHS after 3 years at LG

Special ed teacher works to expand student growth

ву Florence**Hu** 

paraeducator in 2013.

The Saratoga Falcon

In the corner of the Special Education

Keeling teaches Independent Study Skills

math wing, new specialized academic in-

structor John Keeling enters his classroom,

ready to help his students however he can.

as well as Sequential Math 1 and 2 for grades

9-12. His class, Sequential Math 1, focuses

on Algebra 1 concepts while Sequential

Math 2 builds off of that and begins to de-

After seven years of working as a behav-

ioral therapist at Tucci, a company dedicated

to helping children and adults with develop-

mental difficulties, Keeling started working

at Santa Clara Unified School District as a

velop the fundamentals of geometry.

October 6, 2023

BY Amelia**Chang** 

From 7th graders to seniors, Jennifer Lee has taught a wide spectrum of students across a range of subjects including math, physics and biology in her 17 years as a teacher and mentor. She is now teaching four classes of freshman biology after spending the past three years as a science teacher at Los Gatos.

A 2002 graduate of the school, Lee came here six years ago to teach biology and anatomy and physiology for a couple of years, filling in an open spot.

"It's really hard to say no when positions open up in a territory and they don't come up very often," Lee said.

When COVID-19 hit and class enrollment went down, she joined Los Gatos High teaching math, physics and biology classes. Although she wasn't teaching at SHS, Lee remained the club adviser for SHS's robotics teams. When science classes opened up this year, she returned once again to teach biology and also be the school's WASC coordinator for its mid-year report. (WASC is the school's accreditation process.)

As a former student, Lee observed that

community at Saratoga High is still around — she is among several teachers who have returned to teach at the school they once attended. However, she's also noticed that the pressure to perform well academically and e well-rounded has intensified.

AP classes or how many summer internships we do— those weren't non-existent when I was a student, but I think the pressure to do more of that has certainly increased."

"I think a lot of students feel the need to

To ease the pressure, Lee's message is

the loyal campus culture fostered by the straightforward: talk to her. She empha sized that there are many ways she can offer support in helping students balance their schedules. Last year, she had students who started regularly coming in to ask questions because they've realized the benefits of actively getting their questions explained.

"We'll answer all your questions and take on more," Lee said. "Like the number of will give you full credit because you made the attempt and you reached out and you let me know that you're going to come get help," Lee said. "Advocate for yourself, ask for things and oftentimes there's a solution

# New social studies teacher draws on life experiences

BY Zack**Zhang** 

While juniors walked into their AP U.S. History class in Room 701 recently, new social studies and MAP 10 teacher Toby Remmers handed out little paper slips with images of either an agricultural or mineral item on them. The day's topic was the Columbian Exchange, and Remmers set up stations around the room for them to discover where their item was originally from and how the Columbian Exchange brought them from the opposite side of the world.

Interactive lessons like this are the results of Remmers's six previous years of teaching at Mission San José High School.

"The idea that we have some kind of agency or role to play in the world to bring societal change intrigued me."

TEACHER Toby Remmers

Though he started as an international business major at San Diego State University, a near-fatal car accident in his early 20s caused him to question his life goals. So, knowing how fragile the human body can be, he changed his major to kinesiology, the study of both anatomical and neuropsychological principles in the mechanisms of movement. Just a year after switching to kinesiology, he found a new interest in history and changed his major to political science.

"When I looked at the world around me in my 20s and started to realize how our lives are connected to the history before us, the idea that we have some kind of agency or role to play in the world to bring societal change intrigued me," Remmers said.

After graduating from college, Remmers spent a year traveling around the world to see the various countries and regions he studied in class, exploring first-hand their histories and politics. During his time in Central America (Nicaragua, El Salvador, try to become the best that you can be." ◆

Honduras and Guatemala), Europe (France, Switzerland and Iceland), the Middle East (Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Turkey) and Hawaii (Oahu and Kauaii), Remmers learned how different political systems affected people's daily lives.

For example, he saw a protest taking place at a historical site in Honduras because the local people were fed up with the political corruption there. Remmers was fascinated by present day issues, namely the late '60s and '70s Honduras and Middle East civil wars that led to the unstable society and economy today.

The journey not only solidified Remmers's love in history and social studies, but also inspired him to pass down his knowledge and share the newly formed views he experienced during his travels. After returning to the U.S., Remmers

moved from his hometown in Minnesota to Michigan before coming to the Bay Area. Remmers became a history teacher at Mission San José High School in 2016 and later started teaching a film elective class there. Even with six years of teaching under his belt, Remmers still recalls how much his lifestyle changed when he became a fulltime high school teacher.

"I've had other jobs that are either more physically labor-oriented or intellectual at a desk on a computer," he said. "Teaching is in some ways individual because you are the only adult in a classroom, but one thing that's cool about Saratoga High is that there's a lot of friendly connections and support between departments and teachers."

Remmers particularly finds gratification when former students visit him to provide a life update and reflect on how his classes influenced their growth. Thanks to his unique life experiences, students find lessons more relatable. Though he has been studying history for many years, Remmers still finds himself learning new things every year.

"History repeats itself yearly," Remmers said. "There's always something I can pull out every year and go back to make those same lessons richer. There's no perfection in teaching; I believe it is a skill that you should





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The staff of The Saratoga Falcon is com

mitted to objectively and accurately rep

resenting the diverse talents, cultures

and viewpoints of the Saratoga High

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The Saratoga Falcon welcomes all signed

editing for length, accuracy and grammar

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## **Activities director Cunningham** takes on new administrative role

When Kristen Cunningham went home for summer break on June 8, she was prepared to never return to Saratoga High. Having worked as the activities director and leadership class teacher for the past two years, she planned to sign on as an assistant principal at a middle school in Loomis, Calif., a city north of Sacramento where her family was planning on moving over summer to support her aging father-in-law. They had already bought a home and were prepared to leave Saratoga.

However, in an unexpected turn of events, she found herself interviewing for a newly opened part-time assistant principal position at the school later that month. Former assistant principal Brian Thompson, who was a full-time administrator, left the district at the end

of the school year. When Cunningham's family had decided not to move for a multitude of reasons, she found herself slightly relieved.

"I love my job here, and I love what I do," she said. "I love the students, I love the community. If anything, it was making me so sad to leave my job here."

Long before her family had begun their move, Cunningham always knew she wanted to eventually move into administration. In August 2022, she earned an administrative credential from San Diego State University.

I knew I was going to want to pursue an administrator position, but I was just waiting for the right opportunity to come up," Cunningham said

Cunningham began working at the school in 2021 as the activities director and leadership class teacher. This role was a 0.8 FTE (full time equivalent) job, meaning roughly 80% of her work time was spent in these roles. She spent the remaining 20% teaching students in the Edgenuity program who were learning from home in the 2021-22 school year. In the 2022-23 school year, she main-

tained her activities director and leadership teacher positions.

When Cunningham heard about the opening as an assistant principal, she said that she found the role quite appealing. The school was offering her a 0.6 FTE activities director and leadership

teacher and a 0.4 FTE administrator position, requiring that she interview for the role alongside other outside candidates.

"I was really excited because I love Activities and Leadership and not having to leave those was a draw for me, and it would also allow me to get my feet wet in administration," Cunningham said.

Cunningham previously was at Valley Christian Junior High School for eight years as the Student Support Services Director. Though not an official adminis-

trator, she found herself gaining invaluable experience which has

> already helped in her official role. Despite this unofficial experience working in administration, Cunningham recognizes the steep learning curve she will have to overcome during her first year as assistant principal.

By holding two simultaneous

roles, Cunningham foresees time management as being her biggest challenge. For example, she spent 70 hours total on campus during Homecoming week last year. Now, in addition to taxing weeks like that, she is occupied with administrative tasks such as overseeing the Visual Performing Arts and World Language departments. She is relying on her fellow administrators — principal Greg Louie and full-time assistant principals Abra Evanoff and Matt Torrens — to help her ease the load.

As she finds her footing balancing a new role with her ongoing commitment to the leadership Cunningham looks forward to how she can learn and grow in her first year. "I want the staff, the commu-

nity and our administrative team to feel like I am putting in the work and learning and growing as an administrator because I am so new to it," she said. "On the activities side, I just want to continue to be a light in the class. For my leadership students, bringing community and fun to the school is so incredibly important. My goal is to create that environment here and balance the roles the best I can." ◆

## Wellness Center welcomes ex-teacher as new therapist

BY Jex**Popov** 

Following the departure of Wellness Center therapist Naomi Burke last year, therapist Taylor Greulich stepped up to take on the role of counseling school students and helping run the Wellness Center.

Coming from San Diego, Greulich utilized her passion for mentoring students as an elementary school teacher at St. Rose of Lima School, teaching fourth and fifth grade for four and one years respectively.

'The school I taught at didn't have any mental health support, so I found myself naturally gravitating towards that role," Greulich said. "I saw how much student mental health impacted their learning at school, and I wanted to get more involved in being that support for students."

She then got her master's degree in school based clinical counseling at the University of San Diego, training at Mt. Carmel High School for a year before coming up to northern California to work at Saratoga High.

"I love getting to know each student's unique personality and getting to the point where I can develop a relationship with them - where they feel comfortable, and where they can really be their authentic selves," Greulich said.

Greulich's previous experience with teaching at a high school involved schools with populations of 2,000 to 2,500 students, which she said did not have the same

sense of community that a smaller school like Saratoga High pro-

"Saratoga feels like a community, it feels very comfortable. I love the size — it being a little bit of a smaller school, and everyone here has just been so welcoming," Greulich said.

"I love getting to know each student's unique

THERAPIST Taylor Greulich

Greulich also expresses the cultural shock at the difference in mindset between Saratoga and her last school, remarking that academic stress is a large factor here.

She said that she was shocked at the demanding schedules and expresses concern about the stress levels students are undergoing, but encourages students to take a moment and breathe in between stressful assignments.

"It can be really easy when you've got big goals to feel like 'if I take a break or stop, that's going to hurt me," she said. "But taking that break — whether it's doing some mindfulness, doing some deep breathing, going to play with your dog or stepping outside and walking around the block — will energize you and recharge you in a way that will, in the end, make you more productive and a bit calmer and way more relaxed." ◆

# Speech and debate team dives into coming season with a new junior leadership team

ву Emma**Fung** 

Over the summer, the speech and debate team's debate coach, Steve Clemmons, conducted rounds of interviews with 14 candidates to decide this year's leadership team. Though the large number of applicants made the decision a longer, more tedious process, it was a sign of hope to coaches and students alike that so many were interested in speech and debate.

The two selected club presidents, Goswami and Leung, are both highly accomplished competitors who have seen success at numerous tournaments, including the Tournament of Champions in Kentucky and the National Speech and Debate Tournament in Arizona. The club's vice presidents are juniors Leonardo Jia and Kinnera Potluri.

"Historically, this club has not had very strong leadership," Goswami said. "It meant a lot that [Timothy and I were trusted with this club], especially because we care so much about speech and debate, and we want this activity to be spread and shared with other people

The team has a few main goals, the most important being to win at least one of the three major tournaments: the TOC (Tournament of Champions) in late April, held in Lexington, the NCFL (National Catholic Forensics League) Grand Nationals in late May, held in Chicago, and the NSDA (National Speech and Debate Association) Nationals in mid-June, held in Des Moines.

"I think that having new young blood hungry to win at the top makes leading the club very important, especially since this is the first year that we have an all-junior president and vice president structure, so everyone is still very much determined to win," Goswami said.

Although last year's leadership team aligned with ours," Leung said.



The speech and debate team sells cake pops, popcorn during Homecoming reveal on Aug. 15

helped run logistics fairly smoothly, Goswami and Leung both felt that not much else was done past the bare minimum, meaning that the club is starting with a lack of funds.

Club leadership is looking to combat this by proactively planning and executing fundraisers throughout the year — for example, at the Homecoming reveal, they held a home-made cake pop fundraiser where they raised over \$200.

These profits were directed to help hire their new speech coach, Jenny Cook, whose presence in the club has already been felt by many. Cook's experience includes being a member of the National Speech and Debate Association hall-of-fame as well as the founder of a renowned premier debate summer camp, Summit Debate.

"Her passion for forensics is through the roof — she advocates so much for finding your voice and succeeding, and her goals are

Cook will be at tournaments to support and advise competitors in between rounds and work one-on-one with students during practices to improve their speeches. She also plans on coordinating meetings with the student leadership team along with debate coach Steve Clemmons to further plan out ways to improve the speech and debate team

The team has already begun practices with an orientation on Sept. 12, where the club, which now boasts a roster of more than 70 members, met its officer team and coaches and participated in fun introductory activities. During their weekly practices on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-8 p.m., the team is preparing for upcoming compe-

"Everyone is very passionate about what they do, so I am really excited to see how all the effort plays out in our competition results," Leung said. ◆

### Help Support SHS **Publications**

We need your help to reach our \$30K fundraising goal this year. Your support is crucial for:

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# opinion

# It is time to study eliminating artificial turfs

During a minor fire incident on Aug. 23, students were evacuated onto one of the school's two turf fields. As murmurs spread during the evacuation, the lower field was so hot that some students were moved from the field and rested on the track instead.

When the school was founded in 1959, all three of its fields were made of real grass. In 2004, however, the school replaced the football field with artificial turf. In 2015, the upper field and softball fields were also replaced with artificial turf even though - according to a Falcon article — many members of the softball team said they wished the field hadn't been turfed, claiming that it is more dangerous to play on

### High water demands that counteract the purpose of switching to artificial turf

Now not a blade of grass exists as a playing surface for the school's sports. As the lifespan of the artificial turf on both the upperfield and softball fields are drawing near their ends, it's time to ask serious questions about the continued costs and safety of these fields. Maybe it's time to consider going back to real grass.

### Dangers of turf: heat and high water consumption cause harm

While artificial turf supposedly has a lower cost of maintenance and conserves water (important in California's drought-prone climate), these claims are misleading.

Proponents of artificial turf often cite its ability to stay green without having to be frequently watered. Yet there are many cases where artificial turf also needs to be watered as often as — if not more so than — real drought-tolerant grass.

In addition, the National Recreation and Park Association points out artificial turf may need to be heavily watered before games in order to maintain the blades and lower the surface temperature for a short period of time. It also needs to be replaced every 8-10 years, costing as much as \$12.33 per square foot each time. These costs can easily run of dollars.

Meanwhile, the living properties of real grass allow it to be continuously used for limitless years if maintained well. A study by

Cornell shows that, over the long run, approximately 2 acres of real grass costs \$50,000-\$600,000 to install and \$4,000 and 250 hours of labor a year to maintain and approximately two acres artificial turf costs \$600,000-\$1 million to install and \$5,000-\$22,000 and 375 hours of labor a year to

After they also tested the heat-retaining properties of real grass versus artificial turf, the SAO/NASA Astrophysics Data System (a collaboration between NASA and the Center for Astrophysics by Harvard and Smithsonian) found results that prove this point. While the real grass was measured to be around 35.3 degrees Celsius, the neighboring artificial turf was measured to be around 62.5 degrees Celsius.

More importantly, found that to counteract these high temperatures, irrigation of the turf fields is needed, which leads to high water demands that counteract the purpose of switching to artificial turf to save

There is a reason why even Santa Clara Valley Water District, a state of California Special District, does not support switching to artificial turf to conserve water. The SAO/NASA Astrophysics

Data System research also found

that when artificial turf is not watered regularly, it contributes to the urban heat island effect where urbanized areas that experience higher temperatures than outlying areas. In some cases, playing on synthetic turf can even melt shoes, blister hands and feet and induce dehydration

and heatstroke.

According to the University of Plymouth, artificial grass can also contribute to global warming by absorbing significantly more radiation than living grass and by displacing living plants that could remove carbon dioxide through photosynthesis. Not only is this aspect of artificial turf terrible for the environment, but paired with the increased risk of floods from because it lacks dirt's water-absorbing properties and because it can't either host or support natural wildlife, artificial turf does not bode a positive future for the Earth.

### Turf rubble pollutes waterways

In addition to its pricey and water-reliant nature, artificial spread non-biodegradable plastics. Turf itself is usually made of plastic with rubber crumb spread beneath it to keep the plastic blades standing up. These rub-

ber crumbs are also easily transported off the field, furthering its

rmful impact.

Both the rubber crumbs and plastic blades eventually break down into microplastics which contain toxic perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that will never break down within our lifetimes. These PFAs are also extremely harmful to the human body - inhaling or coming into contact with it poses a fume hazard.

### Feet, ankles and knees absorb the force, which makes severe injury likely to follow.

Perhaps worst of all, institutions may have no actual way of recycling the turf. Instead, some reports suggest it is sometimes apparently sold to third-party resellers, who in turn sell them to unknowing property owners.

### Turf is conducive to injuries

Turf is also worse on athletes' bodies. According to the NFL Players Association, there is less give on synthetic surfaces, meaning feet, ankles and knees absorb the force, which makes severe injury more likely to follow. Last June, the school's turf failed the GMAX test — which shows the ability of the playing surface to absorb the "shock," or kinetic energy from a collision. Meanwhile, real grass and dirt naturally and effectively absorbs the

impact of players landing on it. For example, junior Anika Kapasi, a Falcon newspaper staff member who also plays on the school's soccer team, suffered three separate concussions while playing soccer on turf. She especially emphasized the fact that the degree and frequency of her

concussions were exacerbated as

a result of the artificial turf field's

failure to aid in impact absorp-

tion like real grass can. There is

a reason that most — if not all - NFL players prefer playing on Difficulty changing back to turf

According to superintendent Bill Sanderson, the district and board decided on keeping the artificial turf fields as switching to natural grass would decommission the football field from use by the school band and renters for at least two years due to the layers and drainage system below the field.

In addition, the board shared concern with how quickly natural grass would be ruined with this extremely high level of use and shared concern with a possible need for pesticides to main-

We commend the district for trying new available technologies to save time and money to spend in other areas of the school, but we believe that we have had enough time to judge the value of artificial turf. But the negative aspects of turf are already glaringly clear. When turf fields on campus need to be replaced, it's time the board strongly considers bringing back real grass. •

### **Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board**

Editors-in-chie Lynn Dai Jonny Luo

Sam Bai Sarah Thomas

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 32-3 in favor of this article.

## >>falcon**figures**

### **EXPLORE THE DARK UNDERSIDE OF TURF**

**Multiple Replacements** 

**3rd Degree Burns** 

**High Maintenance** 

between artificial turf replacements

degrees Celsius hotter artificial turf is when compared to real grass

125 more hours needed to maintain artificial turf than real grass every year



Imagine making an advertisement for

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and then getting backlash so aggressive you

feared for your life. This was the harrowing

tive influencers, including Ben Shapiro, one

Conservatives called for a boycott of the

brand. Soon after, a viral video of American

singer Robert James Ritchie, more common-

ly known as Kid Rock, showed him shooting

up cases of Bud Light with an Ar-15. Sing-

er Garth Brooks, who supported LGBTQ+

movements, was criticized on social media

for mentioning that his bar would continue

On July 12, Mulvaney released a TikTok

The backlash is far more overblown

video where she said, "It's sad I had to leave

my country to feel safe," alluding to wide-

spread transphobia and death threats.

of the right's main voices and podcasters.

# It's time to limit use of electric bikes on campus

BY William Norwood

Each day, as I head off campus for lunch, I seem to always see the same thing: Freshmen on electric bikes (e-bikes) head-

Once, I was driving to Starbucks, and, lo and behold, to my left were three people crammed onto a single electric bike.

This may seem to be all fun and games, or an opportunity to mock freshmen for thinking they're cool by breaking school rules about leaving campus for lunch, but it's not. It's a real safety hazard, with consequences if somebody were to be hit or fall

For example, a freshman, who wishes friends have been in accidents that didn't involve cars.

"Most of the accidents include going over speed bumps too fast, or failing to brake in time," she said. "The parents are aware of these incidents, but I believe the parents trust their children to be safe."

Even with the regulations the federal government has placed on e-bikes — up to 20 mph without pedaling — most bikes, including the most common brand at Saratoga High, can go as fast as 28 mph in off-

As a result, students around campus, and on their way off campus are able to get upwards up 25mph in the bike lane and sometimes higher.



The ability for nies to get around the regulations simple. According to

York Times, the electronic governor that limits speed controls on e-bikes can be easily eliminated by cutting a wire or changing the limitation with a smartphone app. Such workarounds show that these laws are simply ineffective at protecting against the use of high-speed electric bikes.

Despite these lax laws, no one government organization has claimed jurisdiction over electric bikes, leading to a lack of any effective laws being made to limit the use of these bikes. As a result of the high speed, they fall under the jurisdiction of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, instead of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Something, however, must be done to to stay anonymous, told me some of her limit the use of the bikes, or at least the speed, to protect children.

One solution would be to provide a requirement for the education of road safety surrounding bikes and humans on the

Within the U.K., for example, most schools use a program named Bikeability to teach students how to properly ride a bike and navigate the roads. A similar program, along with tighter laws surrounding the speed, would help to increase safety.

Safety information should be provided to e-bike users as well as pedestrians and student drivers, as many accidents involve only a bike and pedestrian.

As of right now, the only thing the school can do is tighten their rules and regulate the use of bikes on campus.

In particular, the administration should more tightly enforce the no-leaving-campus rule for underclassmen during the school day

This increased enforcement will help prevent underclassmen from putting themselves in danger on e-bikes during school

# Bring Your Own Device: inconvenient at its best

BY Alan**Cai** 

A labyrinth of wires criss-crosses the linoleum floor. Furious typing from noisy, clunky computers echoes across the room. Click clack!

These noises aren't echoes from a distant dystopian society; they are the reality for many classes at the school plagued by the distractions and inconveniences of the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy.

The policy, which originated from a lack of district funds to keep funding cyber insurance for aging computers, often doesn't

Many classes such as band and biology don't require devices at all. As such, I frequently find myself using my laptop only twice or three times a week despite hauling it to every class daily.

Far too often are students compelled to lug cumbersome computers by foot or bike all the way from home only to return after the school day with the device untouched, in the meantime risking damage and loss

### Distractions in class

During the few classes that actually require students to regularly bring their own devices such as English, computers frequently act as a hindrance to productivity.

Personal computers serve as the mechanism from which near-unrestricted digital access to social media, video games, television and other non-productive activities are easier to access than ever.

Furthering this problem, the district WiFi doesn't really prevent access to dangerous or unproductive sites and are futile deterrents to electronic device abuse.

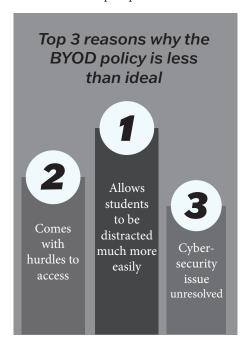
Under the guise of promoting education, the BYOD policy has served a trojan norse for non-educational related materials to spew into classrooms and corrupt an engaging education environment.

Prior to the policy's institution, students were able to access centralized classroom functions such as printing and completing writing assessments from classroom laptops that stayed in specific rooms.

Students who are forced to bring their own device must constantly keep their laptops and tablets charged or face a trip to the library to borrow one, or worse, charge their device in class, creating trip wires all over the classroom

Students who forget or are unable to bring their device on an occasion in which it is required must similarly obtain a Chromebook

The Bring Your Own Device initiative is here to stay, but it's still a less-than-ideal solution to a complex problem. •



reactions to the new drop-off situation.

The changes to the parking lot this year

include only one "lane" available to parents,

meaning that parents can no longer drive

toward the football field to drop off their

kids, and can only drive toward the McAfee

ents have to drop off their kids in the same

amount of time with half of the space to do

revert to the dropoff situation that had been

used the 2021-22 school year (and years be-

In my view, the administration should

This means the same number of par-

Center and exit onto Saratoga-Sunnyvale.

# Parents: follow the rules, don't clog the parking lots

BY Sarah Thomas

Changes to the dropoff system confused many parents and students at the start of the

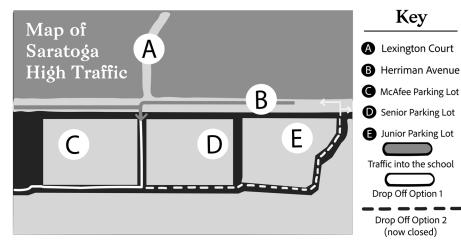
In an email addressed to the community, principal Greg Louie announced modifications to the traditional dropoff path.

Previously, there were two dropoff paths — cars could enter across from Lexington Court and take either a left toward the football field (Drop Off Option 1) or they could take a right turn toward Saratoga-Sunnyvale (Drop Off Option 2).

Starting in August, the leftlane option (the one that allows parents to exit back onto Herriman Avenue) was closed. While the update aimed to make the dropoff system less confusing for parents and prevent traffic jams, the unintended consequence has been that parents seem to have taken up a permanent residence in the senior parking lot near the exit onto Herriman Av. and Lexington Ct.

Every morning, without fail, I've been cut off by a parent eager to drop off their student in the student parking lot to avoid the

Herriman Ave.



long parent dropoff line.

This scofflaw move on the parents' part makes it exponentially harder for me and others to park (something I already struggle with anyway).

Additionally, trying to leave the parking lot at the end of the day is a futile task.

Even if you manage to reverse out of vour spot, the chances are the never-ending flow of parents leaving the parking lot.

This makes it difficult for student drivers to exit in anything approaching a timely manner.

I have just one small request from

game the system, use the designated dropoff line and make life easier for your child as well as other students.

I know what you're thinking now: But Sarah, what do you think parents should do? And I understand.

Most parents have better things to do than work their way through a dropoff line every morning. I understand that adults who use the parking lot as an easier drop off option are doing so out of necessity, not out of a inner drive to antagonize kids.

Even though these interactions are incredibly frustrating, I can only image

fore then) — even if it was slightly clunky, it's much better than the situation we're in now. The new dropoff situation has led to all manner of crazy driving by parents For example, many parents seem to have

> decided to take up residence in student parking lots, let out their children on the road on the way to school, cut off students while entering the parking lot and in the most extreme situations, go in the wrong direction (the arrows serve as an indicator

> > of which way traffic should go, FYI). At the end of the day, I don't blame parents for their daily driving offenses. In fact, I empathize with them.

And their struggles are exactly why we should revert the dropoff situation to the way it used to be to preserve both student drivers' mental health and the safety of our



received was largely a result of angry influencers choosing to dogpile pent-up anger regarding the LGBTQ+ movement on the company without a truly valid reason. The support of LGBTQ+ influenc-

than it should be. The hate that Mulvaney

reality for transgender influencer and Tikers is a step in the right direction, and Tok star Dylan Mulvaney after promoting Mulvaney is not at fault. There's nothing Bud Light in a controversial advertisement. wrong with advertising for a company On April 1, Mulvaney, who had 10.7 milthat supported her community. Howlion TikTok followers, released an advertiseever, given that Anheuser-Busch, Bud ment for Bud Light on her 365th day iden-Light's parent company, has kept sitifying as a female. The contents of the ad lent about the topic, it's clear that the were a simple endorsement of the beverage company doesn't want to risk any to support the final games of March Madmore economic damage. ness, but it caught the eye of many conserva-After sponsoring Mulvaney, An-

heuser-Busch is obligated to stand and protect her. If executives were planning to support her only to the extent that they wouldn't come under criticism, they shouldn't have offered the opportunity at all. After the endorsement, Bud

Light's retail sales dropped 26%, taking it out of the spot as America's No. 1 best selling beer. Compared to last year, the company's revenue has fallen nearly \$400 million, not to mention Anheuser-Busch's market value dropping \$28.7 billion.

Ironically, as a result of the boycott, consumers have begun to buy more Coors Light, which has been supporting the

LGBTQ+ community for more than two decades. It seems these consumers are listening more to mass media and influencer opinions, rather than doing their own research before they buy.

This approach of bandwagoning on trends based on incomplete information from social media is ultimately dangerous to both consumers and companies. Often biased and unreliable sources such as Twitter, Instagram

> or TikTok should not be considered "news sources," at least not without cross-checking. It's difficult to regulate social media, so the burden of confirming truth lies upon us. Consumers in our society make

rash decisions based on one advertisement. As customers, we need to take the time to consider which companies we support. This incident is just another

reminder that the oversensitive cancel culture developed through media generally is toxic. While cancel at odds

culture is typically associated with left-wing criticism of "racist" remarks, it's actually just a result of widespread fear mongering that isn't specific to one side. The growth and criticism of "woke" culture, such as this Bud Light incident, is another example of how the right and left wings are constantly

## > falcon**figures**

million people following Mulvaney and her commercial

29 billion dollars of market value lost by Bud Light's parent

billion dollars have been lost in Bud Light's market value

million dollars lost in Bud Light's revenue

Today, social media, influencers and cancel-culture run rampant on both the political left and right, limiting growth and forcing companies to be extra cautious with every action they take. Instead of jumping sider the full picture. ◆

# Climate change causes plummeting in home values, insurance problems and buyouts affecting minorities

Bud Light's controversial advertisement

highlights worrying social media trend

BY Sanjoli**Gupta** 

to serve Bud Light

As most of us remember, wildfires ravaged California in 2020. The skies around the Bay Area turned red from the smoke, and as homeowners and communities scrambled to recover, even more devastating news occurred. Large insurers started dropping insurance coverage for homes in high-risk zones that were likely to be impacted by climate disasters such as wildfires and flooding, causing difficulties in both buying and selling properties.

As early as 2017 and 2018, insurers began dropping out of areas due to wildfire risks, which can lead to lower-income residents being stuck uninsured, vulnerable if disaster strikes. California had to ban them from making these risk assessments and basing insurance values basked on them.

In 2020, however, California reversed course, passing new state laws that prevent insurance companies from price discrimination based on perceived future climate issues. That led companies to drop clients entirely. For example, AllState and State Farm stopped offering new insurance policies in parts of California post-wildfires.

As increasing numbers of private insurers dropped out, state legislature passed the FAIR plan: an insurance option for people who cannot get insurance elsewhere. However, this may lead rates to grow. In 2020 the FAIR plan increased their rates by 15.6%. The high insurance prices led home val-

ues to drop, leading to buyouts and lack of

proper safety infrastructure, which hits low income and minority groups the hardest. The rise of insurance costs and property value creates another staggering statistic: 39 million properties in the U.S. are at risk of

growing uninsurable in the next few years, according to the First Street Foundation that's a quarter of all properties in the U.S. It's imperative that at both the federal and local level, governments start planning for mass migration due to climate change. States and local counties should subsidize or

encourage new and improved infrastructure in low impact and insured areas. This will prevent new homeowners from choosing atrisk properties, where their only option may be expensive state insurance. For homes in at-risk areas, governments

need to plan for possible relocation. As residents may not be able to afford moving, fairly-priced buyouts and new housing in safer areas needs to be developed. While not a straightforward and all-encompassing lion climate migrants internationally by solution, even a discussion about these issues could be the start for a push for change.

the average annual home insurance cost in the state \$6,000, compared to the national average of \$1,700. These high prices push out lower-income residents in at-risk areas, leading to a "climate insurance bubble," where property values are expected to plummet as insurance leaves at-risk areas.

Elsewhere, Lake Charles, Louisiana, is of 6.7% due to storm risk. High risk of flooding due to being in a floodplain and difficulty to place climate forward infrastructure has led to a lack of action to protect local communities and a push for buyouts to convince residents to move elsewhere. Ever since 1989, 40,000 of 13 million residents in Louisiana have opted to take the buyouts.

However, buyouts have historically targeted low-income residents and minorities. Their homes have been left to be destroyed without any protection or alternatives, while have alternatives to live in. For example, wealthier white communities have received reducing construction and development in the infrastructure option of protecting their

Climate migration is a growing issue, with the United Nations projecting 1.2 bil-2050. Those who are forced to move due to climate-related pressures are now also fac-This is not just a problem in California. ing insurance pressures causing them to be than later to protect climate refugees. ◆

In Florida, the threat of hurricanes makes unable to recover from climate disasters. Possible solutions need to start being considered seriously. This includes limiting development in areas with extremely high risk that would not be eligible for insurance and helping predict and plan for migration out of insurance ineligible areas.

Charting possible climate migrations can help plan for areas where there will be experiencing high outward migration rates an influx of migrants, and track areas where climate risks threaten development, safety and insurance for citizens.

State governments could plan for such migration on a smaller scale and the federal government could work to chart it out across the country; this will allow infrastructure projects to be approved according to the safety of an area and the likelihood of it receiving insurance.

This will help with infrastructure planning and ensure migrating communities floodplains and fire risk areas can help ensure communities can find insurance in the places they can live.

Climate migration is a major problem that will only grow as climate change worsens and the list of risk areas grows. Governments need to start planning sooner rather

### Impacts of Climate Change on Housing in the United States



**BILLION** 

**Estimated amount** of climate refugees by 2050



25%

The amount of properties at risk of being uninsurable



15.6%

Increase in insurance rates under the FAIR plan

Graphic by SARAH THOMAS

NOW!

\$8.20

\$7.83

The Saratoga Falcon

# Although climate change exacerbated Maui fires, faulty power lines were primary cause

On Aug. 8, a series of fires rapidly spread through much of the community of Lahaina, Maui, killing more than 100 people, destroying over 2000 structures around 1500 of which were homes and forcing thousands to evacuate. Much of the coverage following the fire had focused on its effects: the residents at risk and how the tourism industry is suffering. More of the coverage, however, should've

examined the direct cause of the fire. On the day of the devastation, strong

winds blew down several power lines, which ultimately sparked the first fire. According to Fortune, bare electrical wire that could spark on contact and leaning poles that could have been prevented with proper maintenance were both possible causes of the devastating fires. And yet, ironically, Hawaiian Electric still blamed Maui County for most of the devastation caused by the reignition of the company-caused fire that afternoon.

Increased media coverage of the actual party at fault, Hawaiian Electric, would force electric companies to acknowledge their mistakes and find ways to make sure similar accidents don't happen again.



The wildfires in Maui had a destructive effect on the infrastructure and residents nearby.

Until federal investigators were sent to Maui, reporters were unaware of the exact cause of the first fire. Even after two weeks, many - including CBS News still failed to account for downed power lines in their reported cause of the fire.

Currently, a lawsuit has been enacted by Maui County to Hawaiian Electric for failing to respond to warnings foreshadowing the incident and not fortifying their power lines in the years prior. These claims are still in the process of being investigated. Numerous news outlets mainly fault-

ed climate change, poor access to roads, droughts, hot weather and strong winds. As a result of the relative lack of coverage on these companies, there was little public pressure asking them to change anything, as opposed to the seemingly boundless public attention showered on climate change and the island's distance from the rest of the U.S.

This is not the first time power lines have caused devastating damage to citizens and the environment around us. Faulty power lines also were to blame for fires that caused 19% of the area burned from 2016-2020, including the Tubbs fire, the Bobcat fire, the Dixie fire (California's second largest wildfire) and the Zogg fire.

Although a growing population has started recognizing the disastrous effects of climate change on recent natural disasters, comparatively few acknowledge the significant role of utility companies. If the power lines and electric companies were monitored more closely, many of these fires could have been avoided. Why should we linger on the environmental factors if we continue to ignore the other immediate causes that could've been prevented?

On the part of the electric companies, one solution to this problem could be undergrounding power lines. While they are more susceptible to insulation deterioration, they are much better protected against weather and other conditions that can impact overhead power lines, thereby reducing the chance of common wildfires to spark from the poles. ◆

# Less is more — Cutting clubs just makes sense

During this year's Club Rush, the quad was more packed than ever. Students tripped over each other in an effort to visit as many club tables as they could, learning more information about them and collecting various treats each club offered.

There are nearly 80 clubs on the ASB roster, including 10 new ones established this year. With so many clubs on campus, each having around four officers, it feels as if everyone is either a club officer or planning to become one. Clubs are an important part of the school, but joining or founding them has become a norm for students looking to bolster their chances at acceptance to a great college. This culture needs to change.

By increasing the uniqueness of the clubs present, ensuring that a club covers unique topics throughout the year and enforcing the productivity of their meetings, ASB can improve the club experience for students at

There is far too much overlap between some clubs and already existing organiza-

Debate Club and the Speech and Debate team, or the Environmental Action Club and the Green Committee, leading to an oversaturation of options and clubs present

One method to help reduce this overlap is by requiring all clubs to submit a list of topics that will be covered during club meetings throughout the year. Newly applying clubs already have to distinguish their club from others during interviews with ASB; however, making clubs list what they will cover through the year is a solid way of ensuring proper differentiation.

Club meetings, the most crucial portion of what a club is supposed to do at school, are also sometimes neglected by both clubs and ASB. Student attendance at the majority of clubs often end up being only the officers and a couple of dedicated members.

A productive meeting should include some sort of lesson or activity relating to the subject of the club and also highlight important upcoming events so that members can look forward to their future plans. There needs to be a greater focus on these meetings and how they actively benefit the

While it is difficult for ASB members to attend meetings of all the clubs around campus, the monthly meeting minute requirements could be revised to require more detail about specific topics discussed or activities held during meetings.

, falcon**figures** Total number of

Clubs should also explain to ASB how their meetings relate back to their mission and how they are different from past meetings. By doing so, a greater emphasis is put on having quality club meetings. Simply having watery meetings that discuss upcoming events that the club plans to host is

Great examples of clubs that successfully differentiate include the CS club and Girls Who Code club, which, although similar in nature, discuss topics that rarely overlap. While the CS club teaches its members about interesting developments and niches for exploration within the field of computer programming, the Girls Who Code club is centralized around promoting women to join the field.

Furthermore, their meetings present topics related to their clubs in an engaging and educational way. However, there are many clubs whose meetings are simply checklist items to meet ASB requirements, and their meetings lack substance.

Rather than creating them without reason, clubs should be a means for a large number of students to collaborate and share an interest in something majorly non pursuable outside of a group and school environment. The ASB policy should reflect this, and by reducing the overlap between clubs and ensuring that each meeting is unique and productive, they can achieve it. ◆

# Detect this: AI detectors can be xenophobic

BY William Norwood

In the era where Artificial Intelligence (AI) can generate human-sounding text, many companies, organizations and schools have tried to combat its use with AI detectors. Tools such as GPT Zero, ZeroGPT, Originality AI, Winston AI and TurnItIn (used by the district for both plagiarism and AI detection) attempt to detect AI-generated text by using algorithms that compare AI written texts with human written text and

However, other than stylistic choices, AI-generated text is largely indistinguishable from human text — there's no secret code embedded within the text that marks it as a product of AI.

These detectors work by fighting fire with fire — they look at the perplexity of sentences and measure "how 'surprised' or 'confused' a generative language model [the detector] is when trying to predict the next word in a sentence," according to The Guardian. If an AI model used by a detector can easily predict the next word in a sentence, text perplexity is low, and if it cannot predict it, it's high. Low perplexity means the text is most likely AI-generated.

number of issues, including false positives, which occur more often for non-native English speakers.

According to a paper written by Stanford scholars, generative language detectors "consistently misclassify non-native English writing samples as AI-generated, whereas native writing samples are accurately iden-

Within the study, they tested seven AI detectors with 91 non-native English speakers essays. All seven identified 18 of the human written text as AI-generated text, and at least one detected 89 of the 91 essays as

Although these programs are supposed to accurately detect AI and maintain aca- ers should use a four-step approach to AI AI can be used as a powerful tool when used demic standards, they instead point the finger at non-native English speakers.

This is an especially big problem in the Bay Area, where there is a high level of non-native English speakers. According to

the Mercury News, 51% of households in Santa Clara County speak another language at home. Consequently, local districts have AI detectors also come with a large a higher percentage of non-native English speakers and thus risk having increasingly igher levels of false claims of AI use.

> This can then lead to damaging permanent marks on a person's academic record, hurting their future educational experience.

In fact, OpenAI, the creators of ChatGPT, has removed its own AI detector off of the market, citing a "low rate of accuracy" for the tool. When the creators of the largest AI tool identify a problem with detectors, this should be a fair indication for schools to re-evaluate the tools they use to identify AI written text.

The Harvard Graduate School of Education suggests that teachtools: Stop pretending it does not exist, use correctly, and in a creative manner. AI with students, teach students how to ask AI questions and use generative AI to spark imagination. This is simply the only way to adapt with the times, and reduce fear sur

In the meantime, let's put AI detectors where they belong: in the broad category of wishful thinking that didn't work out in the

# lifestyles

# Top-tier pencils and pens can upgrade your life

For whatever reason, I have long been an avid stationery buff, with my collection growing each year. I have always taken pride in having the best writing materials for

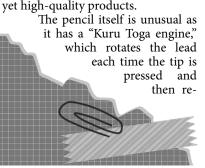
To me, receiving a compliment over a specific pen you lent to a friend is extremely special. The warm feeling you get is so similar to when your crush looks at you and gives you that little laugh. Now, if you want the same warm feeling of accomplishment, look no further as I bestow upon you a list of the best stationery in accordance with my own usage.

### The diversity of elite mechanical pencils

For the best mechanical pencil, there are multiple options (and NO, Oxi-Gels are nothing compared to my choices). Afterwards, I'll discuss the best pens for your pencil case and their specific purposes.

### Pencil: Kuru Toga Advance (\$9)

The Kuru Toga branch of pencils is produced by the Japanese stationery brand, Uni Mitsubishi. Uni is known for its relatively cheap yet high-quality products.



leased, allowing for an optimally sharp writing experience. The Kuru Toga Advance is the newest release of the Kuru Toga pencils and rotates twice as fast as Uni's regular line.

### Pencil: Lamy Logo Mechanical (\$25)

Trust me: Any product from the German brand, Lamy, is assured to be high-qual-

ity. In particular, the Lamy logo pencil is incredibly sleek as it consists of a firm and thin metal body. The metallic body, along with the beautiful mechanics of the German pencil, makes it an everlasting tool. The pen has a comfortable grip and a cold, immaculate feel in your hand, and it could simply last you forever. Although the color I have,

black (indisputably the best color), is no longer available, the pencil can still be purchased in stainless steel with various color accents. This pen, unlike the Kuru Toga Advance, is on the higher end of the price range, but you

get what you pay for: a high caliber tool, an amazing writing experience and paranoia about losing it.

### Picking the best pen to win Zebra Sarasa R or Clip (\$2)

The pen is simply superior to any other writing tool, which is why we have the most important tool in the lineup.

Both Zebra Sarasa ballpoint pens — R and Clip — are a simply flawless experience, with trademark Sarasa ink. This ink creates a butter-like writing style and — as it's water resistant — dries incredibly fast, which is also excellent for left-handed writers or people prone to ink smearing.

The Zebra Sarasa R also has a beautiful white barrel, which will fit in with any color scheme you have in place, besides black. They both have the same ink and style, with the only difference being the color. Both are

excellent choices and you can get singular colors, which are all truly visually stunning. pens for about \$2 at a local stationery store — such as Mai Do in Santana Row — or in Muji Gel Pens (\$7.83) packs on Amazon.

### Pen: Uni Jetstream Edge 0.28mm (\$8.20)

This pencil is the newest to my collection, but since purchasing it two months ago, I now strongly believe it is a must-have in any pencil case. The Uni Jetstream Edge is unique for one reason: the 0.28mm tip, which is unheard of in the realm of commercially available pens. The tip allows you to easily write in small places like margins. This pen also simply looks beautiful with a firm, textured, metal body.

### Fountain Pen: Pilot Kakuno (\$14)

This is the only fountain pen on this list. A fountain pen is not necessary for a well-rounded pencil case, but it's inherently important to me, other pen fans and calligraphers. The fountain pen lifestyle is like no other, and it fills you with a sense of fulfillment. The Pilot Kakuno is often marketed as the best "beginner" fountain pen to put your foot in the door, which is true.

The Pilot Kakuno is around the \$10 mark, so it's not majorly expensive, as far as fountain pens go. They also come in so many different colors and you are sure to find a pen within the collection that looks best to you.

### Honorable mentions Mildliners (\$8)

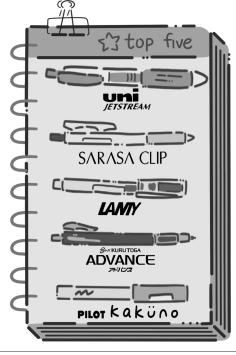
I am ashamed to say it, as they have been robbed by the aesthetic stationary community, who only worry about how the pastels fit with their "vibe." However, mildliners remain the best highlighter pick. With their recent rise in popularity due to their signature pastel color palette, the mildliner has become a must-have for most high school students. The highlighters are simply beautiful, and they come in the widest range of

A couple of pens to mention are, of course, the Muji Gel Pens. They are great value for money, write decently well and look good. They write smoothly, comfortably and are relatively cheap, but there is nothing special about them. They're great for what they are, but are by no means an extraordinary tool.

### LePen (\$11.22)

If you are in search of a set of colored pens, take a look at LePen. LePen makes beautiful colored pens, perfect for those times when you actually need one.

Note that I am by no means a profession al stationery reviewer. But these are all tools use daily and recommend for anybody wanting to broaden their stationery hori-



# A regretful tale of two lost watches

We've all had that moment of panic when you suddenly pat your pockets and find something missing. But for me, I'd be nervously staring dejectedly at my empty

As a child, I had a big infatuation with wanting to be older and feel like an adult. A small part of that dream came true when I received my first watch for my 7th birthday. It was a cute Swatch with a

blue band on one side and a pink band on the other. And even better, the watch face had glow-in-the-dark num-

At the prime age of 7, wear ing that watch made me feel so adult-like and sophisticated. I always tended to it so carefully, making sure to take it off every time I washed my hands or went to sleep.

This habit, although protective, soon proved to be problematic. With me constantly taking my watch on and off, it wasn't long before I lost it. To this day, I'm convinced that it had vanished into thin air because I clearly remember the day it was sitting on my sink and gone the next.

At the prime age of 7, wearing that watch made me feel so adult-like and sophisticated.

I desperately searched for that watch for days all around the house, but no one could find it. I missed that watch dearly, realizing how valuable it had been to me. It had been

my first time losing something so important and costly and the guilt that followed was immeasurable and only made me more disappointed.

But after some weeks of complaining and moping, my mom surprised me with another Swatch. I loved it even more

than the first one. Like a beautiful explosion of color on your wrist, the whole face was

painted in different shades of rainbow colors all around the device. I remember swearing to my mom that I wouldn't lose this precious watch as soon as I got it. Sadly, I was wrong.

A few months later, while attending a summer camp at Harker, my watch met its doomsday by the pool. I remember taking off my watch and putting it in the locker on top of my clothes, an image that haunts

my mind to this day.

When I got back from the pool, the watch was gone. Sopping wet and cold, I frantically dug around the pile of clothes, hoping that it had somehow fallen to the bottom. But by the time I got dressed and the whole locker was emptied out, there was no sign of my beloved watch.

That day, I remember lying to my mom saying that there was some after-school activity, telling her to pick me up later. With the extra hours, I scoured the locker room and all around campus, praying that my watch would miraculously show up.

On the car ride home I hesitantly broke the news to my mom. She understandably got mad at me, adding to my guilt of losing yet another expensive possession.

I finally got another chance to redeem myself a year later, when our family took a trip to Japan, which is known for its high-end watches. So, when I sheepishly asked my mom for another watch, she made me promise not to lose it again and bought me yet

This watch had a tan watch band and watch face. I thought if the watch wasn't so | door plants don't want direct sunlight. eve-catching I wouldn't lose it. I was right The third time really was the

charm. I wore that watch everywhere for a year, came close to losing it a few times, took it off one day and haven't put it on since. I figured that if I don't wear it anywhere, I can't lose it, right? So that third watch sits peacefully on my dresser to

Throughout my experiences with all these watches, I have learned a lot (albeit mostly a lot about my terrible forgetfulness and organization), but also to cherish

every little thing I own, because if you are forgetful or careless, your time with it will be far too short. ◆



BY Sanjoli**Gupta** 

The simple act of nurturing a plant prorides a source of pride and excitement. But this is easier said than done, so here is an easy guide to keeping your plants alive!

Tip 1: A robust watering schedule Knowing when and how much water you use for your plants will help ensure the survival of your plants.

Tip 2: Regulate the lighting!

Obviously, your plants need sunlight and little imprints of the sun and moon on the | energy to grow. However, do note many in-Γip 3: Don't be too ambitious

> tend to neglect them? Succulents do not need much care. However, orchids require a more robust schedule and attention.

> Tip 4: Befriend your plants! OK, this isn't necessary, but I think it's fun to talk to my plants. You didn't buy them just to put them on the shelves, right?

Are you more hands on with plants or

Using interesting pots for your plants can also add to the overall look of your plant, making it more aesthetpersonality to

Being brings me immense joy, and watching each plant grow taller and stronger brings me pride and excitement. Hopefully, these tips will keep your indoor plants thriving and happy to bring you the

same levels of joy! ◆ All graphics by ISABELLE WANG

# Falcon getavayspots

# HONG KONG

### TRAVELING TO MY SECOND HOME PLANET TO VISIT MY GRANDPARENTS AND RELATIVES

BY Nicole**Lee** 

airport's sliding glass doors, I can immediately recognize an extreme that packs 7.4 million citizens into 426 square miles.

ly dried off. If you've chosen to take ence from California's usually arid

pandemic, my family consistently vis- food that I was absolutely stuffed to ited Hong Kong during either summer the point that I got indigestion. Alor winter break. After most of Hong though some of my favorites included Jīnyú jiē (which directly translates few summers, and I hope to continue

four years of social distancing.

Although I initially felt a bit out of vantage of the easily accessible malls.

just stepped into an island-sized sau- cities, Hong Kong offers an extensive creates a sticky sensation in the air, as use on my own. I could go to the mall if I've finished swimming at the beach neighboring my grandpa's apartment and the salt water has only partial- complex in a heartbeat for delicious siu-mai, a traditional Chinese dumpthe extra step of applying sunscreen, ling typically filled with shrimp, and you'll be in for a treat — Hong Kong's afterwards, I could head to the metro that took place throughout my prehumidity is a vastly different experi- stations and meet up with my parents in another district within half an hour.

During the few years before the Kong were numbered, I ate so much

and I finally got to see my grandpar- other street food — I would be lying if fish that people could buy. I remem-Even just 10 steps away from the ents and cousins this summer after I said there was any meal I ate in Hong ber being fascinated by the street Kong that I didn't love.

In every moment I spent in Hong change in the atmosphere that her- place from the drastic change in lan- Kong, I was brimming with excitealds my arrival into Hong Kong, a city guage and social norms, I got over it ment as I reminisced childhood within a week and quickly took ad- memories of every location I visited, from Sham Shui Po (a street mar-Not only do the 80 to 90-degree As opposed to the transit-bare ketplace where I remember buying temperatures make me feel like I've nature of Saratoga and surrounding lots of street food and where my dad showed me the art of bargaining) to na, but the surrounding moisture also metro system that my parents let me Choi Hung (the city of my grandpa's of the malls I visited were located).

While walking around the streets of Sham Shui Po, for example, I recalled several significant moments vious trips: When I was lost in the Knowing my 21 days in Hong helped me by yelling around the street

More recently in Mong Kok, my dad led me down the street called Kong's COVID-19 restrictions were egg waffles, soup, mochi and the clastor (goldfish street"), which was filled my family tradition for years. ◆

lifted, this family tradition resumed, sics — dim-sum, pig intestines and with different dogs, cats, rabbits and when I visited in elementary school, which was filled with only fish at the time. I also visited Qiúxié jiē (which translates to "sports shoes street"), where I bought a new pair of shoes to aid my feet in the day-long shopping sprees my mom would bring me on.

My knowledge of Cantonese small, but mighty — made the metro system seem like a constant advenapartment) or Mong Kok (where most ture. I could go wherever I wanted and communicate with people if they asked questions; my accent was minor enough that people understood what I was saying. Over the years, my sense of independence has grown with my excitement in exploring a whole new, streets as a 4-year-old, a kind grandpa yet familiar, world of people and so-

Visiting Hong Kong turned out to be the most comforting and fulfilling experience I have had over the past

# scotland

### A WEEK IN THE LAND OF PICTURESQUE SCENERY AND QUESTIONABLE CUISINE

The Saratoga Falcon

October 6, 2023

away, like a lost spirit finding its home in the foggy sky. Step by step, sophomore Arahan Balasubramanian graduall scaled The Storr in Scotland's Isle of Skye, taking in the stunning scenery around him.

Surrounded by the vast plains and the crashing waves of the ocean, the ascent up the mountain into the swirling clouds was one of the most magical moments from his trip to Eu-

Over the summer, Balasubramanian visited Scotland for 10 days, sightseeing its attractions and immersing himself in the culture.

From living in an Airbnb castle for a day to seeing Loch Ness, where the elusive monster Nessie lives by legend, there is no shortage of tourist at-

tractions and scenic spots.

Even though Balasubramanian spent a lot of time on the road, not a moment felt dull, he said. Whenever he looked out the window, he was always greeted with a grand expanse of tall mountains. Not only were the sights gorgeous, he said the people there were also very nice, and always warmly welcoming. "The hike up The Storr

went all the way up to the fog barrier, so it kind of felt like

the sky," Balasubramanian said.

Scotland wasn't all sunshine and rainbows, though. The constant rain With each breath, a small cloud of vapor formed and slowly drifted and cold during his visit was a huge obstacle in Balasubramanian's travels. The rain was not only uncomfortable but also made a lot of the tourist attractions like the Fairy Pools and Isle of Skye inaccessible. Surprisingly, the biggest disappointment Balasubramanian noticed in Scotland was the food.

> Instead of the traditional Scottish food he expected to find and enjoy, he only found the American food they serve there to be tasty.

"At the Mexican place we ate at, we got a burrito but they didn't even have rice or beans in there," Balasubramanian said.

The lack of food options, combined with the eating restrictions from his culture, made his overall experience of exploring various cuisines quite sour.

Balasubramanian said he would visit Scotland again if given the opportunity, since he missed a lot of scenic places on his trip due to the weather and time con-

"I would definitely recommend visiting Scotland. There are places that you should go to that I didn't get to go to and the scenery there is very beautiful," Balasubramanian said. "Even though the foreign cuisine was not very good, and the weather rained during the later quarter of my trip, the scenery and beauty of Scotland really made my trip overall very enjoyable." ◆

# Germany,

STUNNING ARCHITECTURE, NO TIPS AND WHIMSICAL CHARM

## togatalks

Do you have a second home? What was your favorite memory there?

"My second home is Finland. I like hanging out with my childhood best friends and I really liked the chocolate and ruis leipä bread."



"My second home is Palo Alto. I enjoyed Moonlight run and walk in the Baylands on full moon with my



"My second home is in Beijing, China. My favorite memory there was studying with my childhood friends and eating Dan dan noodle."



junior Shawn Wong

BY FlorenceWei

The summer heat warmed the dusky sky as sophomore with intricate designs ranging from baroque-style to chick-Eliza Lin gazed at the dangling carts on a ferris wheel next en-inspired shapes. They also used specially sanitized water to quaint dwellings painted in brown and red. The view out so people could play in it. Lin observed children splashing on the balcony, where she could admire the glistening water and dogs running around in the spray since the summer along the Rhine Bank of Germany, was something Lin said heatwave was in full swing. she would never forget.

intention of visiting her relatives who lived in Germany. in Germany. She later visited France to explore new sights and have fun. Though she had previously been to France, Lin said she was excited to see Germany for the first time.

Throughout the trip, she discovered more of Europe's culture and beauty. Lin vividly recalled the magical feeling just buy an expensive drink." of seeing the majestic Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany peeking out behind clouds of verdant trees and hiking in nature on a Black Forest trail.

"It's such an architectural feat because it was all handbuilt," Lin said of the castle. "It must have taken such a long stream and painted with vibrant shades of pink, yellow and time, and the symmetry of it was incredible for something blue. created without modern power tools." Though not abnormally hot, the climate was consider-

ably warmer than in the Bay Area.

Additionally, Lin noticed the varied cityscape and build—sion on me, and I'll treasure that forever."

ing structures. Artistic fountains, rare in California, were found almost everywhere in Germany. Each was carved

Another considerable difference between the U.S. and Lin's adventure in Europe began last summer with the Germany was the tipping expectations, or the lack thereof,

"What was interesting is that here, you're expected to tip your life savings on a cup of Starbucks," Lin said. "In Germany, it's pretty much tipless, but instead you order drinks. If you're having dinner, instead of tipping \$10, you would

Beautiful architecture also abounds in Europe. Colmar, France, in particular, was stunning, Lin said.

Each building in the town was archaic and had a whimsical quality to it. Many of the houses were built next to a

"The buildings we live near [in Saratoga] are only about 100 years old," Lin said. "But in Colmar, I saw buildings built in 1035. Going to Europe left a really strong impres-



and vary with each performance. As the

throughout the stadium, our heart rates

tripled as Swift again made her way to the

You Loved Before," which was recently re-

leased as an additional track from her "Lov-

er" album, and "Stay Stay Stay" from her

"Red" album. The two songs were throw-

backs to the 2010s era, and we were all hit

with a wave of nostalgia as we screamed

the end of the concert, Swift — suitably

- started singing her latest album, "Mid-

nights." We couldn't believe the three-and-

a-half hour concert was almost over, but we

were determined to enjoy every last second

of the Midnights era. We are pretty sure ev-

over her fierce performance of "Vigilante

Sh\*t." The entire stadium was shaking as

the venue-issued light up wristbands were

flashing together in various patterns. We

ended the night with "Karma," the perfect

party song and emotional uplift after the

After navigating through 70,000 people

trying to leave a stadium at once, traffic and

PTSD (Post-Taylor Swift Depression), the

reality of the fact that we just went to the

Eras Tour didn't hit us until the next day. We

were all beyond exhausted and had lost our

voices by the end of the concert but every-

Looking back, it was easily the most

rollercoaster she just took us on.

thing was completely worth it.

eryone, and we mean everyone, went crazy

As we approached midnight and neared

The surprise songs were "All of the Girls

front stage with her guitar.

along to the lyrics.

ending notes of "Bad Blood" faded away

ALMOST.

There is a certain magic that comes alive when stories of love, hope and human connection take center stage, a reminder of what it means to be human. This magic is a feeling that the drama department seeks to recreate through this year's fall production,

"Almost, Maine," The play started production on Sept. 16 and will premiere on Nov. 11 in the McAfee Center. The play uses a unique narrative format: The stories of several vignettes all unfold simultaneously, but are presented at different times throughout the play.

"Almost, Maine" is set on a winter night in Maine when the Northern Lights create an otherworldly atmosphere. The play delves into themes of desire and connection through its overarching message about the courage it takes to open yourself up to new possibilities. A few of the town's couples experience the life-changing power of the human heart, and relationships start, end and alter far beyond recognition.

"It's a play about making connections with another human being. And we're still struggling, as a society, with opening up to making a connection with another person,"

Pity poor young musicians like us.

score. It's just what we're looking for!

When we go online to find free sheet mu-

**BY FlorenceWei** 

& Annika**Gho** 

drama director Benjamin Brotzman said. "The play will bring people together and broaden their horizons, and I thought that would be good for the growth of our depart-

Ultimately, he said, "Almost, Maine" takes a deeper look into the connections we make during life. Its themes of endearment and vulnerability are timeless, exploring the intricacies of relationships and the beauty of believing — a theme which Brotzman hopes will resonate with audiences of all ages.

In conjunction with this unique format, Brotzman said that standards and expectations have been set high, making the behind-the-scenes process complex compared to previous years.

Differing from previous productions that had more concrete locations, the setting for this production is set in a mythical and imaginary town in Maine, which Brotzman says will be "difficult to bring to life." The set design will depict a cold, starless night in winter, utilizing green and blue lights to appeal to the play's fantasy and imitate the Northern Lights that are so instrumental to

This year, the production also includes workshops aimed at bringing the cast out of their comfort zones. Exercises include

putting an arm around someone or holding hands. Brotzman shares the goal is to ensure the cast feels secure with one another, translating into a more authentic and real performance.

The cast includes Patrick Keogh as Pete, Ria Abraham as Ginette, Caitlin Weber as East, Mia Ouchida as Glory, Apollo Burgess as Jimmy, Annaliese Shab as Sandrine, Misha Khairom, Bella Huesca, Ananya Ravi and Milani James as the Bachelorette Party Girls, Norah Heller as the Waitress, Kiana Saadieh as the Bartender, Katie Berger as Steve, Marvalyn as Nila Venkataratnam, Ariana Tootoonchi as Gayle and Phil, Ryan Cagliostro as Lendall, Ananya Ravi as Deena, Milani James as Shelly, Ashly Henry as Marci, Ella Tamas King as Hope, Araceli Lublinerman as Danny, Misha Khairom as Suzette, Vivienne Brooks as Rhonda, and Cosmo Cooper as Dave. The assistant director is Rylee Stanton, scenic designer is Cris Vaughan, and costume designer is Jenny Garcia.

King said the unique nature of the workshops will prove to be pivotal to the play's production.

"I'm interested to see how people will react to being able to overcome being uncomfortable and adapting to another per-

MAINE By John Cariani

aloga High School & Saraloga Theatre Arts Presen

"Almost Maine" takes place on a cold winter night in Maine during the Northern Lights.

son, because intimacy and relationships are a big part of the production," King said. "I have really high hopes for this play because everyone is starting to bond and is putting

# We were enchanted to meet you, Taylor Swift

& SaachiJain Once upon a time, the planets and the fates and all the stars aligned, and we ended

up in the same stadium with Taylor Swift at the same time. Yes, we got tickets, somehow. After surviving the Great War against Ticketmaster last November, we — meaning Saachi — secured three tickets to see THE Taylor Swift in Swiftie Clara's Levi's Sta-

dium on July 29. As the concert approached, we all busied ourselves with concert outfit planning, fantasizing about how it'll be, and — the most important part — making the friendship bracelets. As we sat around Saachi's dining table with an assortment of multicolored beads making these bracelets, we were bursting with anticipation.

Fast forward a few hours, as we all piled into our seats at the stadium and watched the countdown to her appearance tick down, the screams only increased. The three of us sounded like animals as we sang so hard we lost our voices.

The riveting concert tour was an incredible 3-hour performance, spanning through all of Swift's musical eras, or albums, released in the last decade.

The "Lover" section opened the show. and the set was perfect: As the notes of "Miss Americana and the Heartbreak Prince" sounded throughout the stadium, which fittingly repeated the lyrics "It's been a long time coming," the whole stadium screamed

Swift then transitioned seamlessly to b u t "Cruel Summer," another one of her top hits. And the bridge of that song, with multiple melody lines blending into a crescendo that spilled over the entire stadium, lit in a glowing pink — was simply too powerful as we all screamed our little hearts out. As

she was performing, the sun was setting, so scary nonetheless. the sky was painted in all the sunset colors associated with the "Lover" album. Coincidence? We think not. Too soon, we had said goodbye to "Daylight" and moved onto the

We could not describe our cathartic rush of complete giddiness as Taylor skipped out in a gold fringe dress with her guitar and

"Fearless" playing in the background. We really didn't know how it could get better than this —

until it did. We ventured into the misty woods of the "Evermore" album as everyone bawled

their eyes out to "Marjorie," a heartfelt song about Swift's grandmother. After "Evermore," no one was ready for "Reputation." We

will never forget the first 'dun dun dun' notes of "Ready for it?" rattling through our bones. When Swift strutted out in that snake bodysuit, we nearly passed out from We can never forget

Sunny's fear of the large snake that shadowed the stadium — it was merely CGI (comput-

As the set slowly turned from black to purple, Swift walked out in her iconic "Speak Now" era purple ball gown, reminiscing back to her country days to perform "Enchanted" and "Long Live." We all bathed in the fantasy princess vibes that she show-

It was amazing to hear all 10 minutes of "All Too Well," a fan-favorite from her album "Red" that only grew in popularity after she recorded the 10-minute version two years ago. However, after that 10-minute emotional rollercoaster of hearing dizzying screams of 70,000 people screaming-singing the tragic breakup ballad and barely contained sobs, we were all too unwell.

Our hearts were pounding out of our chests, and the screams that echoed through our eardrums left us on the verge of passing out. Luckily, Swift, being the icon that

she is, allowed us time to recover emotionally with one of her less tragic albums, "Folklore," which had the most songs, much to Sunny's excitement, since it was her favorite album. Tears ricocheted off our faces when she played "Betty," "August" and "Cardigan." When her olive green, flowy silk dress took the stage, the stadium calmed down with Swift's indie-pop and the low notes of

most anticipated moments of the night arrived: surprise songs, a section of the concert

transformational concert experience of our lives. The three hours could not have gone by any quicker, and by the end, the whole thing felt like a fever dream because of how much fun we had in the moment. The concert lived up to every little second of all of the pining and anticipation over the last sevare not en months. And all of our aching feet and complete exhaustion were all completely on the worth it to see THE Taylor Swift live. We'll

# In 'UTOPIA' Travis Scott answers all of his critics

With three classic albums in his discography, Travis Scott had a lot to live up to, especially after "ASTROWORLD" (2018) sold 4 million units in the U.S. alone. By then, Scott had firmly asserted his niche in mainstream hip-hop, but tragedy struck while he was on tour in 2021.

Following the Astrofest crowd crush that killed 10 concertgoers, Scott was heavily criticized by the media, despite concert management company Live Nation's culpability for the incident. Expectations for "UTOPIA" were high: If it was of poor qual-

He delivered.

Compared to "ASTROWORLD," "UTO-PIA" has a darker, grittier sound akin to Scott's first two records. And, with a bigger team behind the album, the production sounds more polished and professional.

### **Expectations for "UTOPIA"** were high: If it was of poor quality, Scott's public image could be further tarnished.

His new album, released in late July, has less consistency between songs compared to Scott's first three albums, but that contributes to its charm. With a lack of a clear narrative throughout the album, each song is unique enough to stand on its own, so there isn't a boring moment in the album's

73-minute runtime. Aside from the album's improved production value, Scott displays some of his best vocal performances ever here. Guest

artists, including frequent collaborators — "If I gave you a day in my life or a day in Drake, James Blake and SZA, deliver vers- my eyes, don't blink" — is a contender for es that reinforce or even define the mood of one of his best verses of all time. "THANK

When the album was initially released, the names of featured artists were hidden on streaming services, making their appearance in a song a genuine surprise. This something more artists should do. The sense of mystery adds to the excitement and makes the first listen much more enjoyable.

There is a song to satisfy almost anyone's taste on "UTOPIA." A few high-energy songs are immediately attention-grabbing 21 Savage. on this album, with Scott and fellow rapper ity, Scott's public image could be further tar- Drake's collaboration on "MELTDOWN" g the wildly popular MODE," complete with a delicious beat switch after Drake's verse.

Directly following in the track list is "FE!N" with a synth-heavy beat laced with pitched-down sirens building up to rapper Playboi Carti's official debut of his new, deeper vocal style.

Other notable tracks of this kind are the raunchy "TOPIA TWINS" with Rob49 and returning 21 Savage; the 6-minute, four-verse "SKIT-ZO" featuring Young Thug; "LOOOVE," featuring Kid Cudi and a distorted, rhythmic dance beat and "MODERN JAM" featuring Teezo Touchdown, which has clear similarities to Kanye West's "I Am A God" (2013), including production by Daft Punk.

"HYAENA," the album's opening track, confuses the listener with a strange acapella sample before surprising them with a hard-hitting, grungy beat that perfectly drums and conaccompanies Scott's hard-hitting, grungy

The album offers a change of pace with a supply of calm songs. In "MY EYES," Scott addresses his relationship with his former partner Kylie Jenner and the Astrofest tragedy, and his final verse after the beat switch

GOD" has Scott expressing his gratitude for his life and the opportunity to be a father, yet another beat switch separates the song's woozy, ephemeral first half with the more grounded second half.

Other songs have similarly somber vibes, including "I KNOW?" and "PARASAIL" featuring Yung Lean and "TIL FURTHER NOTICE" featuring James Blake and

spite the exceptional music already mentioned. the songs on "UTOPIA" that I find myself to the most are "SIRENS," a frenetic, somewhat experimental track that I didn't like on first listen; "CIRCUS MAXIMUS" featuring Swae Lee and The Week-

nd, its thumping stantly crescendoing synths driving the melody of a song dripping with decadence; and

"TELEKINESIS"

featuring Future

and SZA, a former gospel song composed by Kanye West rising into a stellar SZA

> Though this is true for every song on the album, detailed descriptions of these three songs cannot compare to actually listening to them multiple times.

> The feelings these songs give are completely different from any music I have litened to in the past.

The same is not true for some other songs on the album. Though I would argue that the rest of the album is good, it's nothing groundbreaking. There are dozens of songs that sound like

and the same goes for "I KNOW ?" and "PARA-SAIL." Because "SI RENS."

"CIRCUS MAXIMUS" and "TELEKINESIS" are so distinct, they have a timeless quality to them and never get boring even after repeated listens.

They're almost cinematic, Scott's vision fully realized.

For me, "UTOPIA" earns 4.25 Falcons out of 5. It lacks the generation-defining innovation that a 5/5 album must have, but the sheer quality of the music more than makes up for

I believe this album has a good shot at Album of the Year, and I'm excited for the music Scott will put out in the future, whenever that happens.

sicians to continue to explore their art, and it's challenging to do so without free sheet music readily available.

sic at a site like Musescore.com, a treasure trove of various music selections, we see a perfect "Pirates of the Caribbean" theme

Hastily, we click to download the music, but the screen flashes twice before sending us to the website's premium subscription –

MuseScore PRO+ After an attempt to print it out, the same message flashes. In frustration, we exit MuseScore and search for the score on the International Music Score Library Project, or IMSLP, another music repository. Sadly, though, that site only has classical music and does not have the contemporary pieces

This situation is an unfortunate reality for musicians seeking free sheet music online: The reality is it is becoming harder and

Exploring new pieces allows young mu-

Typically, assigned pieces from music teachers are meant to build technique and

style, so naturally, it's rarely particularly interesting or contemporary. Think Bach's Inventions or Chopin etudes or any Sonatina The freedom to choose lets students understand the essence and meaning of music.

Previously, Musescore's never-ending library and simple search system have always solved the problem of hard-to-find music, from classical pieces by hidden composers to pop music covers for all types of instru-

However, it's been getting far more difficult year after year as the website has added more restrictions due to copyright issues, decreasing the amount of free music avail-

Other sites require insane prices — see musicnotes.com, which charges \$4.99 to \$9.99 for just one copy of sheet music — or are subscription-based, which is simply in-

convenient for students. Musescore PRO and

Online sheet music should be easier to obtain

Musescore PRO+ are \$5.99 and \$7.99 per week respectively. This is a solid option if someone wants to download everything in one go, but once that week is up, the package has to be bought again. Other solutions have a limited library; the only things one can find

are five different versions of "Pachelbel's Canon." We've looked for alternatives. We've tried

using Google images. We've tried taking on a free trial. We've even tried to rewrite the piece on Musescore's interface and downand even more misclicks, who has time for from Amazon.

shift toward digital form, so do musical perfect "Pirates of the Caribbean" theme. ◆

scores, a fact that is critical to many musicians.

While this change offers advantages, like downloading music on the iPad with the tap of a finger, the pieces aren't as easy to find.

Then, after searching for way too long and finally seeing them, they will most likely never be free.

After a decade of playing an instrument, we have

finding sheet music is like willingly trying to jump into a rabbit

We'd instead settle for the less convenient, more archaic choice — buying a load it on our own but with so many notes collection of music pieces from a \$10 book

The passion is there, so I guess we'll sail As the world's records and documents the high Cs as long as it takes to find the

# Dummies guide to reading books online for free

As a senior, I have copious amounts of for a Penguin Classics hardcover? work to do. This fact does not pair well with my identity as a master procrastinator. I've found that, if I'm doing homework in my room, I'm easily distracted by any-

thing — for instance, I'd rather organize Expo markers than finish my work. Because of this, I've

realized I have to do my work outside of my house: in libraries, cafés, and most recently, bookstores. In my recent foray

into Barnes and Nobles, I discovered a shocking truth about our contemporary reality: To read a new book, you're likely to pay at least \$20 for a hard copy and around \$5-\$10 for an eBook (depending on when the book was released).

My jaw dropped. How is this acceptable? When did this become the norm? Literature is crucial for human development. and you're telling me that our capitalist overlords have decided that destroying our brain through mindless scrolling costs the low, low price of FREE (\$0), but pursuing Hoopla

The American citizen in me couldn't take this. What happened to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? How can I pursue happiness if my favorite book drains all the cash in my wallet?

> This is especially so since I'm unemployed and have Libby no way to pay these exorbitant prices other than my parents' generosity. You've probably expe-

rienced a crisis similar to this if you enjoy reading. The important thing is that piracy saves you money and time, and these sites enable you to test the waters with any book you hope to pur-

Fear not — I have some pearls of wisdom for you in the form of links in order to access literature and media online for

chase, even if you are unsure whether it

There are plenty legal (and some not-solegal) options, and it's up to you to choose which to use to access your favorite content

through their local library, including mov- ly, it's virus-free (to my knowledge). ies, TV shows, music, eBooks, and audiobooks. You can access this content for free LibGen through their local libraries, meaning that only an SCCLD library card is needed to access all of these wonderful resources.

Libby is a similar application to Hoopla and a perfectly savory, legal way to check out books and other resources for a limited time through the Saratoga Library.

The only downsides to Libby and Hoopla are that they function like a regular library the only available titles are those offered by the library, and you can only access the work through the platform (you can't download out for a limited amount of time. These next few options are slightly (entirely) less legal, but get past many of the aforementioned annoyances of Libby and Hoopla.

If you enjoy contemporary works of fiction published as recently as weeks ago, take a look at OceanOfPDF. I've yet to find a SINGLE book that OceanOfPDF doesn't

actual intellectual growth can cost up to \$35 Hoopla enables users to access content well as the latest TikTok novels. Additional-

Have you ever wanted to do your AP U.S. History or AP Environmental Science notes, but realized you do not have your textbook with you and therefore are unable to do your homework?

Never again. LibGen, or library genesis, enables you to access fiction, nonfiction and academic writing (though you can't use it at school, because of 'copyright infringement'). I would recommend simply downloading all of your textbooks and uploading them to your Google Drive at the beginning of the year for easy access.

Internet Archive is a great way to access almost all forms of media, with over 100,000 movies, 15 million songs and 2.6 million TV archives.

As modern, information dependent consumers, teens need to know where to access the key information contained in books. One of the greatest parts of the internet is the way it democratizes information that was once hidden from the masses. ◆



# Soft glow of fairy lights fills Laws' English class

BY Annie**Liu** 

Walking into English teacher Megan Laws' Room 704 for the first time, students are struck by the absence of glaring fluores-

Not too bright but not too dark, a soft light illuminates the entirety of her room. Her students study under the warm glow of fairy lights and pastel motivational quotes on the walls as they bask in the aesthetic

Near the start of her teaching career at Scotts Valley High School in 2015, Laws in-

said she found the original harsh lighting too bright and wanted to create a calmer learning environment. After finding out how softer lighting helps individuals with sensory issues or migraines and students' ability to focus, she decided to keep the grew longer. tradition for good. Adding fairy lights also helped achieve the atmosphere Laws wanted

and improved classroom management. "The softer lighting is almost comforting in a way," said Nabil Fayad, a freshman in one of her classes.

After Laws moved here two years ago,

troduced fairy lights in her classroom. She said she found the original harsh lighting three months of her first semester.

She noticed a significant change in student behavior as they became more calm and their attention span

"It was amazing to see the change in students because I put these in halfway through the year," Laws said. "Students were more well behaved compared to the first half of the year.

As a result of the change in atmosphere,

students who were usually rowdy and constantly moving up and down were now able to sit down and be less disruptive, Laws said.

"I think that if students feel comfortable and relaxed within their learning environments they are set up for optimal learning," she said. "If sensory needs are met, their brains don't have to focus on the outside stimuli and they can actually focus on the materi-

# Plants enliven Erick Rector's English classroom

BY Annie Liu & Sam**Bai** 

Weighed down by homework and latenight studying, students trudge into English teacher Erick Rector's Room 705, only to be met with the equivalent of a ray of happiness: An array of plants placed on top of every table lead up to a jungle-like scenery decorating the back of the classroom.

Alive with different types of greenery, from cacti to orchids, Rector's classroom exudes a perfect vibe for discussing conversations between Socrates and Euthyphro to life questions such as whether anything in our world is real in his AP Language and English 9 classes.

"I think these plants offer students a better learning environment - they make the classroom more unique and having a plant at each table creates

this sense of individuality," senior Alana Liu "It's more welcoming and friendly to walk into a classroom

As a child, Rector always hated indoor plants for the effort needed to take care of them. Thus, he kept his plants outside, where they could be watered by nature rather than annoyingly hav-

His opinion of plants changed, however, when his friends gifted him a few during the beginning of the

& William Norwood



Slowly, those plants started growing on him, and he started his collection of potted green friends.

"I got a plant. And then it grew. It continued to grow, and I was like, 'Oh, that's cool,"

Rector cherishes the plants his friends give him the most. Early on in his gardening adventure, Rector found that many of the plants gifted to him could easily propagate from a cutting, allowing him to quickly expand his plant collection. His discovery of the little effort needed to take care of plants reinvigorated his interest in them. He has since become addicted to plants, each of which he loves equally.

Some of his students also enjoy the presence of the plants while working in class or during tutorial simply be-

cause of their aesthetic. "I prefer a classroom with plants," freshman Robert Yu said. "They are just nice to look at. My favorite plant is the fern in the glass."

From soft ferns to spiky cacti, Rector continues to add to his plant collection in his classroom this year. Recently he bought a CAT-ctus in a cat

"The cat plant? That one was stupid," Rector said. " I got that at Trader Joe's for five bucks. I was like, 'Oh, it's a cactus so it's easier to take care of, but it's [also] in a cat [container] that



Rector sits inside of his homemade jungle of various orchids, cacti, ferns and indoor plants.

looks like my cat."

Some of the other greens in his room consist of succulents, orchids, ferns and

Students from past years have also left origami for Rector's plant collection. They place origami birds, butterflies and flowers in plant pots and on Rector's table. didn't expect

him to like origami so much," sophomore Eliza Lin said. "I was just bored so I folded some origami with the paper

bought during the pandemic, and then gave a bunch to him.

While the plants started out as a personal hobby to bring entertainment during quarantine, it has since become

much more. Rector said the plants liven up the classroom, giving ing student involvement in a class where participation is key.

"I like to think the plants are calming, and that in turn helps students be calm and be more tion projects. relaxed," Rector said. ◆

and intrigue

We learned many things about turtles that were extremely interesting: baby turtles have small beaks to help crack open the egg when it's time to hatch; with some species it disappears as they age, while for others it stays. The movement of surrounding eggs hatching can also cause an egg to hatch.

My favorite part of the trip was all the

The Saratoga Falcon October 6, 2023

### SCHOOL SCOPE

The mural painted

over the summer by seven English 11 Honors stu-

dents on the back-

side of the 700

building depicts

symbols from the

and themes of

community and

Photo by ISABELLE WANG

"Beloved'

# English mural project finished over summer

& Isabelle**Wang** 

As the hot summer sun beamed down onto senior Carine Chan's wrist, she repeatedly blotched the checkered school wall with a gradient of orange, yellow and red. Nearby, the chattering of her group members floated in the air as they debated the colors and design of the waves that would ultimately span the 8.7 feet tall by 48 feet wide.

Over the course of four months starting in May, seven rising seniors — Sam Bai, Carine Chan, Lynn Dai, Andrew Lin, Victoria Lin, Eric Shi and Zitong Wang — completed their English 11 Honors final project: painting the school's newest mural on the 700 building in the back parking lot.

"[We] spent a lot of time on the project," Victoria Lin said. "Each member probably spent at least 50 hours on the project, while some people definitely spent closer to 200."

The mural's visuals are an ode to Toni Morrison's "Beloved," an English 11 Honors curriculum novel about a family of formerly enslaved people. The mural incorporates significant themes and characters from the novel to illustrate an overarching theme of community and hope.

The community members in the book, the sisters of 124 Bluestone Road, appear as water figures in the rushing waves that surround and uphold the boat, representing the denouement of the plot and symbolizing the strength that community can provide.

"We incorporated some ideas [that relate to] school as well, [to send a] more hopeful and happy message," Chan said.

The poignant moment in the novel where the protagonist Sethe crosses the Ohio River, a boundary between freedom and slavery, is also referenced: Across the river, Sethe is depicted leading a boat of people, who represent the school's staff and students. As a nod to the school's mascot, the falcons at the front of the boat guide it to safety, indicating hope and persistence for a better future.

The project began in May when the English 11 Honors final project was started in class. The students created their group by their shared interests in art: Many were taking AP Drawing, submitting to art competi-

Afterwards, they designed multiple versions of the drawing: digitally, on paper and on the whiteboard. The team began with sketching out different compositions of their ideas on the white board. While the original idea didn't include a boat, they decided to add one to better symbolize the movement made by Sethe and the community. Once the idea was finalized, they sketched another draft on paper and colored it digitally.

tions or drawing in their free time.

After earning approval from principal

"Each member probably spent at least 50 hours on the project."

SENIOR Carine Chan

Greg Louie and their English 11 Honors teachers Amy Keys and Natasha Ritchie, they began preparing the wall by power washing it to get rid of dirt, putting on a primer for the paints and drawing the composition with charcoal pencil before painting the surface. The group used over 15 quarts of paint in total: a mixture of red, orange, blues and gray.

The group communicated with Keys and Ritchie about the developments of the mural and reached an agreement that the project would go into the summer. At the end of May, roughly one-third of the mural had been completed. After continuous work for 15-20 hours per week over the summer, it was varnished on Aug. 15.

Due to the large amount of time commitment required for the project, Chan said the group frequently ran into scheduling conflicts as members weren't always available at the same time.

Since they were also going into their senior year, many were preoccupied with summer camps and college applications, a factor that caused the project to continue as long as it did.

Another difficulty was working with a variety of artists who had differing individual art styles. The group worked to make sure the whole mural was cohesive while each person expressed their stylistic flair in their part.

"Despite having so many people, there were some that specialized in certain elements like drawing people, birds or waves," Chan said. "We wanted to make sure that everyone got to do a piece of the mural since it was a collaborative project."

Even after scheduling a time for everyone to meet, however, the meetings weren't always spent on painting. With the large size of the mural, disagreements over changes and additions incited many debates among members. While the overall composition of the waves, sky and birds stayed mostly the make a mark on our school and contribute same, the group found more problems in to it in a similar way."

the small details

"One of the largest contention bits we had were the clouds," Chan said. "We wanted to keep some parts [of the mural] realistic and the other parts flattened [and more cartoon-ish], which conflicted with the 3D

The struggle of keeping the mural cohe-

->>≝ bigidea

"Beloved" mural

Sam Bai

Lynn Dai

Eric Shi

Carine Chan

Andrew Lin

Victoria Lin

Zitong Wang

sive also applied to the water, which was finalized as vague shapes of people holding up the glimmery, watery waves — a decision which was made to prevent taking attention

away from the other elements. Over time, the group worked out several problems by trying different techniques digitally first, such as adding stakes on the boat, making the fire from the torch bigger and brighter, adding more people on the boat and add-

ing leaves into Sethe's hair for a pop of color. "Since we're all art people, we have our own styles and opinions and we think some things look better than others," Chan said "We also didn't know what would look good or what wouldn't, since we were drawing on a wall, and if someone tried it but it turned out bad, somebody else would have to go over and cover it."

"It always makes me happy to see the existing murals on the walls, they help me find my way around," Chan said. "There was a feeling that we wanted to do something to

# New experiences in Costa Rica provide memories

It was 6 a.m., and the light peeked through the canopy above. I walked through the foliage, being careful not to touch any plants in the rainforest, as I followed a line of students to the beach. In the distance, I could hear the waves crashing and the squelch of my boots in the mud. Clutching my flashlight and keeping my eyes glued to the ground, I am careful not to step on anything or trip.

When the ocean came into sight, the crashing waves, only feet away, a buzz of excitement filled the air. We were heading to a baby turtle nest where we would watch the baby turtles get to sea.

Twenty one students went on a five day trip to Costa Rica to learn about environmental science and participate in conserva-

Each night or early morning was met with an air of excitement



Three students help dig out the sides of a turtle nest to release baby turtles into the ocean.

turtle patrols. Each night or early morning was met with an air of excitement and intrigue, as well as uncertainty of whether we would see a turtle. While walking around the beach on patrol, flashing red lights shone from both sides as other groups spotted turtles and the guides communicated with the flashlights.

The cool night wind and thunder between the clouds on the horizon above the sea made the moment all the more special. We would watch the turtles do a little dance after burying their eggs under the sand, which I thought was the cutest thing ever.

During our adventures, however, we saw the ugly parts of nature too. Although seeing dead turtle eggs was disheartening,

we were reminded that all animals die and it's a natural part of the process. Instead of harboring a living creature, the broken egg shells instead added nutrients to the sand.

My experience was special in that I got to see wildlife and also got to be a part of the effort to rescue it and keep it alive.

While going on turtle patrols, we were staying in the Osa peninsula, which has an astounding 5% of the world's biodiversity, we were one with nature. We would see monkeys hanging overhead during walks or frogs on the path outside our rooms. When touring the regenerative farm, we through real life experiences. saw greenhouses, chicken coops and passion fruit vines.

Moreover, we got to see how farming was

sustainably reestablished after years of grazing and even got to try our hand at planting

We also planted mangroves along a lake to re-establish Mangrove forests, which were previously cut down for farmland and cattle ranching. Learning just how difficult it was to re-

establish these mangrove forests was special because we could physically see the effects of unsustainable practices and how we can make an impact.

We also visited the Alturas Wildlife Center, which housed wildlife that ca leased into the wild due to injury.

Mocha, a sloth, had paralysis in one of its limbs that would make it difficult to survive in the wild; Julietta, a parrot, was raised in

With the news constantly giving a grim outlook on the future - having stories about how wildlife and species are disappearing at an alarming rate — it was special to see that places existed to protect wildlife. It was also heartening to see that people cared about the planet and had high hopes for its future and survival.

Interacting with wildlife and participating in research was heavily different from going to a museum or a zoo because these animals weren't behind glass or presented for human interaction, but just living in the wild while researchers tried to protect them and learn more about them.

The experience seemed authentic and special in that way. This trip helped me connect what we had learned in the classroom

My love for environmental science has only grown and I am excited to continue exploring it in the future. ◆

# ing to be done so manually.

During the height of the COVID-19

pandemic, many — including Spanish

teacher Gina Rodriguez — adopted pets.

with plants," junior Shawn Wong said.

Rodriguez's rabbit provides emotional help

she taught her class on Zoom. When teachers were asked to return to school around 3 months later, Rodriguez decided to bring her to class to let her roam around the classroom as she taught from her desk.

While others adopted dogs and cats, As Zumi was extremely well received by her students and be-Rodriguez opted for a rabbit. Rodriguez's rabbit, Zumi, was adopted cause there was no school policy as a baby in November 2020, and would against bringing rabbits to school, often accompany Rodriguez on her lap as Rodriguez decided to keep bringing



her to class.

"I like that Zumi interacts for Zumi with the kids. They feed her and she's very calming to a lot

of them," Rodriguez said. To manage Zumi and take care of her needs, Rodriguez placed several mechanisms around the classroom, including a gate at the classroom entrance, a toilet area near the back of the classroom, and a feeding bowl at the back of the classroom

During class, Zumi is free to roam around the classroom. On rare occasions, Rodriguez also brings Zumi out for walks around the school hallways. "Her rabbit helps bring a relaxing and

enjoyable presence to the classroom," junior Neha Tadikamalla said. "Zumi is an adorable furry friend that makes the classroom free and never constrained." ◆

ву Lynn**Dai** 

Though only 13 square miles in size,

Saratoga boasts 120 historical residencies,

eight of which are members of the Nation-

al Register of Historic Places, the federal

government's list of historical districts and

Characterized by rolling hills, serene

weather and orchards that covered nearly

every inch of the county in the late 1860s,

Santa Clara County produced 30% of Cal-

ifornia's total wheat crop in 1854. The city

is now known for its cultural diversity,

comfortable neighborhoods and the archi-

tectural excellence of the homes here since

The grand, 175-acre white Italian

Villa Montalvo

Villa is one of Saratoga's most iconic

the mid-19th century.

historical landmarks.

James Duval Phelan.

then San Francisco's

mayor, it features

the key char-

acteristics of

Architecture:

Italianate

stone walls; eaves

with decorative

support brackets;

applied swags, or

carved ornamen-

tal motifs consist-

ing of stylized flow-

ers and foliage; ornate

columns; cornices; porch

and miles of hiking trails.

windows and belvederes. The

estate also boasts exquisite gardens, an

arboretum, two theaters, an art gallery

Phelan first purchased 160 acres of

the estate in 1911 and began construc-

tion a year later. He named the villa in

honor of the 16th-century Spanish writer

Garci Ordonez de Montalvo, who coined

the name "California" in his fable "The

Chronicles of California's Queen Calafia".

trim and tall, Palladian

Constructed in 1912 by

properties worthy of preservation.

Three students face hurdles on their journeys to pursuing humanities and their passions for art in a STEM centralized community.

# from her past mistakes

Senior Carine Chan has been obsessed with painting and drawing since about age 8. She was introduced to visual art through her first set of crayons that she picked up when she was bored one afternoon.

Over time, her passion for art has developed into a daily part of her life. She works with all sorts of mediums ranging from charcoal and paint to printmaking and pastels. With her experience in different mediums, she has also grown to appreciate different forms of art, from realism to digital to abstract.

"I'd be in a much worse situation if I took classes I didn't enjoy."



SENIOR Carine Chan

Chan estimates she spends four to five hours each week working on her art portfolio. Her most visible piece can be found at Saratoga High — the large "Beloved" mural that stands between the History and English Buildings. She created the mural this past summer as part of a group project with six other students.

Even with a strong passion for art, Chan said she still finds it difficult to focus on her pastimes without getting distracted.

"There are times where I don't feel 'enough' compared to those taking multiple AP classes since it always felt like they were doing more than me," she admitted.

into taking Chemistry Honors because her brother, Class of '22 alumnus Ethan Chan, had helped plan her schedule and recommended it, even though her parents had never forced her to take the class. Chan believed she could handle the class well, but after struggling in the class, she said she realized that it was not worth taking a class

she was not interested in. Even though she runs into roadblocks when it comes to art, Chan said that such issues are part of the creative process, whereas in Chemistry, not understanding concepts would often make her feel like she was running out of time.

"Chemistry was hard for me because I struggled with memorizing terminology and understanding concepts," she said. Through Chemistry [Honors], I realized that I would be in a significantly worse situation if I kept taking classes I didn't enjoy."

Chan said she enjoyed the class and the teacher, but the course didn't suit her learn-

From her experience with Chemistry Honors, a class that can be extremely rigorous and fast-paced, Chan said she adapted to the mentality that everyone has different talents and different methods of achieving their goals

She recalls that her parents told her to prioritize her time wisely, and she used their advice to focus on what works best for her, rather than getting distracted by what other students were doing.

Since sophomore year, Chan said she has learned to pick classes based on what has worked for her in the past instead of trying to copy what everyone else is doing. For example, she prefers taking classes that grant more creative freedom compared to classes that depend more on understanding specific concepts. This year, she has chosen classes that are suitable for her.

"Even though I'm not planning to pursue art as a career, it's a hobby I'd like to in-In sophomore year, she felt pressured corporate into my job," Chan said. ◆

# Carine Chan: learning | Audrey Wong: finding life skills through band

Junior Audrey Wong has played the flute and participated in band since sixth grade. She points to the band as a haven for artistically inclined students.

"When I played the flute in middle school, I did it because I wanted to be with my friends," she said. "But then after, my interest increased during seventh and eighth grade, which is when you get to be in the marching band. And then my freshman year was really fun: There were a lot of fun activities in band camp, which made me

Wong said she especially enjoys the bond that "every one of the 200 musicians in band" share. Even if they aren't close friends, she said she still feels comfortable waving to them in halls due to all the time spent together. Band members practice 9-15 hours per week, and up to 20 during

"You get to see these people at school and you can wave 'hi' to them," Wong said. "Any time I see an upperclassman or a drum major and wave to them, they always wave 'hi' back and it's very nice to see." Wong said her experience in band has

also helped her grow as a person, which can directly translate to skills needed in any field of work.

For example, as band manager

in her junior year, Wong helped with more technical and behindthe-scenes items like setting up canopies on hot days, loading uniforms and equipment onto the truck on competition days and Wong checking uniform quality. She has also organized her time well for the extra time commitment required of officers in addition to the weekly 15 hours required for regular band musicians during competition season.

She said many points that are frequently stressed to the band musicians are especially emphasized to her as the manager.

"The band instructors and parents are

## falconfigures

Saratoga High

always telling us to leave a place cleaner than you found it and be respectful and be presentable," she said. "We're always told that we represent our school and to be mindful of what we say."

> Wong also receives a lot of supand signed her up for flute classes.

to an art school, Wong said they "just want her to be happy" and are "fine" with anything else she wants playing in the school's marching band program, Wong has become

tainable job in music. At most, she said she has thought about joining concert bands when she's in college, but does not have a clear idea of what she wants to do yet.

"I don't think it really correlates with what I want to go into. It's just an extracurricular I find fun," Wong said. ◆

Yearbook staff

the Soundings Magazine staff

students enrolled in a studio art class at

members in Band

port from her parents, who have encouraged her to go further in band While they don't want her to go

to minor in. As she has continued less concerned with finding a sus-

members on

### Near the northern border of Saratoga, the residency formerly owned by Joseph Cox lays halfway across the avenue later named after him. Framed by a row of short

rose and cattail bushes, the home features a symmetrical front and three tall, ascenddows on its

door, all of which are signature aspects of craftsman-style houses.

In 1883, 125 of Saratoga's 8,129 acres were covered with prune trees. Dr. George Handy, an eve doctor from New York,

had bought a grain ranch of 450 acres that year. Spurred by Joseph Cox's introduction of a French prune variety he named Double X, Handy planted what would become the largest prune orchard in

Cox built the home for his family in 1915. While he served as the deputy county assessor of Joseph Cox House Santa Clara County

in 1904, Joseph's ther William Cox had arrived in the area with his wife Dicey Baggs in William started working in ranches and later came to own 315 acres of or-

chards spanning across the avenue named after his family The home includes classic

features of the Craftsman Style period, including an overlay of wooden beams, along with natural tones and stones to complement the warmth of woodworking. •

as a residential area. Houses and buildings to attract non-agricultural related induschanged to reflect rich design and detailing, such as the Mission Revival Odd Fellows home, located in the Saratoga Retirement Community on 14500 Fruitvale Ave,

Colonial Memorial Arch on Saratoga-Los

Gatos Rd and Craftsman Cox house on

The years before World War I in 1904 that Saratoga and much of Santa Clara Valley shifted from an agricultural jump-started an era of big new estates: to residential community, according to the Saratoga Foothill Club, a property listed Heritage Resources Inventory. Saratoga's on the National Register of Historic Places, annual Blossom Festival, established in was one of the first quasi-public buildings 1900, brought thousands of visitors to the

to appear just before the war.

19161 Cox Ave.

community each year. Such construction continued after With the addition of the railroad, Sara-World War II, when the county's business toga became more accessible and was seen community launched an active campaign

Memories

ic Swanee

Dress

Shop,

built

from 1904 to

1905 in the

False-Front

Pioneer style

reminiscent of

earlier Nation-

al-style houses

in San Jose.

(which often feature

a wooden front wall

extending beyond the

roof), was refurbished and

dedicated as a museum. It now

shares the responsibility of managing his-

toric Saratoga resources with the Saratoga

Public Library and other historical archives

Warner Hutton, c. 1896: Victorian-era

When the Saratoga Commission started

The 1924 Fontaine House on

La Paloma Avenue is a product of

the partnership between architect

the son of renowned photogra-

pher and landscape painter

Andrew Hill.

for her roles in

was an En-

Hollywood's Gold-

en Age movies like

cock films "Rebecca"

Her mother Lillian

de Havilland moved to

Saratoga in 1919 when

Fontaine developed anemia

after contracting measles and a

streptococcal infection in early child-

the Alfred Hitch-

and "Suspicion."

Ioan Fontaine

Howard Higbie and Andrew Hill Jr,

identifying cultural resources in the early

cottage faced threats of demolition

SARATOGA SCOOP

Early buildings from the 1850s to 1880s

all featured "pioneer designs," more com-

monly known as Queen Anne, Stick-style

Victorian or National-style designs char-

acterized by triangular, pointed roofs and

It wasn't until the development of the

San Jose-Los Gatos Interurban Railroad

After construction of the estate was

more and Mary Pickford at Mon-

talvo. While he bequeathed

the villa as a public park

after his death, the San

Francisco Art As-

sociation assumed

trusteeship of the

estate in 1930

and launched an

artist residency

program — the

third of its kind

in the U.S. Fol-

lowing World War

II, a group of citizens

formed the Montalvo

the villa, and ownership was

transferred to the organization in

1953.Now known as the Montalvo Arts

Center, the villa has welcomed more than

600 artists from 20 countries to its pro-

cial life has since developed its program

into the Sally and Don Lucas Artists

Programs, which houses state-of-the-art

technology as well as the Project Space

Seven years later, orchards were "spread-

ing to the edges of the valley floor" and

dominating agriculture, according to the

Saratoga Heritage Resources Inventory.

The center for arts, politics and so-

gram since its start in 1939.

completed in 1914, Phelan hosted celeb-

rities such as Jack London, Ethel Barry-

intricate woodwork.

SARATOGA'S 120 HISTORICAL RESERVATIONS FEATURE A VARIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND ORCHARDS

tries to the area.

Consequently, the population boomed from 95,000 to over 500,000 from 1950 to

In 1956, however, Saratoga residents became alarmed once farmers saw the rapidly-advancing San Jose annexation

Saratoga became incorporated that same year, and its first General Plan -86% designated for housing, 5% for agriculture and the rest for commercial development — was established a few months after. Such a description encompassed only 13.5 miles and kickstarted residential growth.

1970s, the Warner Hutton House was one of Local citizens formed the Saraoga Historical Foundation in 1964, their first considerations. with goals to assimilate into the Built in 1896, the Queen Anne, community, collect his-Victorian-style cottage is located off Quito Road and torical memorabilia and establish a was named as one of the three historically sigmuseum. nificant structures In 1976, Saratoga History Museum the histor-

by the Office of Historic Preservation According to the Saratoga Heritage Resources Inventory, "many Saratoga residents regarded the building as an irreplaceable trea-

sure as one of Sara-

toga's last 19th-century farmhouses." Seven public agencies were involved in finding an alternative to save the house from demolition,

and the house was later incorporated into the community center on Fruitvale Avenue It features essential characteristics of

Queen Anne architecture: textured walls with decorative shingles, a large polygonal tower at the home's corner and steeply pitched, asymmetrical roofing. ◆

The house features a tudor-norman-

and decorative half-timbering,

mixed-material stone walls

and casement windows

in diamond shapes.

These living

monuments of

history, ranging

from Colonial

Tudor styles to

Mission Reviv-

al, Pioneer and

Italian Villa, are

part of the unknown

tidbits of the town that

make Saratoga so unique.

The historical properties

along every road are all reminiscent of

Queen Anne and

architectural

dy architectural style, with features such

as a steeply pitched gable roofs, exposed

to Japan shortly after graduating.

# Hannah Dimock: overcoming peer expectations

Senior Hannah Dimock, who also holds a enough compared to her classmates. passion in the humanities — albeit for writcourse selections. Last year, with a heavy but humanities-centered course load including English 11 Honors, AP U.S. History and AP Spanish, she still felt like she wasn't doing

## >> falcon**figures**

percent of students polled consider Saratoga to be a STEM

percent of seniors are

taking AP Physics C

percent of AP scores are 3 or higher

large scale STEM programs in the

The Falcon polled 160 students on Instagram. Information is taken from the school website

"There are times when I felt a high pres-studies. ing and history — said she has felt a simi- sure to take advanced science courses and lar pressure to choose STEM classes during fell victim to self-comparison," Dimock the same passion for learning that I don't she took a Stanford Summer Humanities said. "Even though I somewhat wanted to, it felt as if my course selections were automatically decided for me by what everybody else was doing."

As a result of the constant peer pressure — many of whom were taking multiple AP science courses — Dimock decided to take AP Environmental Science, a STEM-heavy class she had initially not planned on taking.

However, she ended up loving the class and wants to pursue it in the future as a minor in addition to pursuing English and or "I really enjoyed AP Environmental Sci-

ence because it's very versatile," she said. "There are so many routes you can take, such as environmental journalism or field Her parents have been extremely sup-

portive in her choice to pursue humanities, as both of them have studied in the field themselves. Her father is an English teacher at Bran-

ham High School, while her mother is a se-

nior associate Vice Provost for Undergradu-

ate Education at Stanford University. Both her parents studied English, with

her dad additionally majoring in social

find in the majority of STEM field offerings," Dimock said she finds humanities more

cause it can be interpreted in different ways, which contributes to their healing power. She joined the Soundings literary and arts magazine in her junior year and took Creative Writing in freshman year in order to make use of the creative writing opportu-

"versatile" compared to most sciences be-

nities and availabilites at school. "Writing is such an intimate, introspective art through which I love connecting with people — especially through Soundings," Dimock said. "It's been cool to find a community of other students who have the plore your own mind." ◆ same interests as me."

Similarly, she loves history because it provides knowledge and power which are "Through humanities, I can experience often overlooked by many people. In 2022, Institute course on Roman history, which analyzed Roman legacies through the use of

She loved the class immensely for its heavy discussion-based nature. Dimock noted that she likes history because it's something that is permanent rather than temporary.

"I definitely feel like humanities has helped me escape from the pressure because you can truly express yourself without any right or wrong answers," she said. "You can express yourself really however you want with writing and it's more subjective. It definitely gives you a little bit more space to ex-

This story has been modified for print. To read about the experiences of more students, scan the QR code to the right.



## >>> falcon**figures**

Californian homes on

homes in Saratoga on the National Historic Register

categories of buildings on the National Historic Register

**Fontaine House** 

hood. During her teen years, Fontaine's the city's agricultural roots, which con-

health improved dramatically. She was a tinue to be celebrated these homes and

student at Los Gatos High, then moved in community events and festivals.

years old is the minimum age for a building to be on the Register

nformation from NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

October 6, 2023

# Senior verbally commits to play Division I soccer at University of California: San Diego

BY Anika**Kapasi** 

As college coaches lined the sidelines of the freshly cut grass fields at the Surf Sports Park during San Diego Surf Cup last summer, senior Kate Oberhauser — an attacking midfielder for the varsity team and De Anza Force club team — hoped to impress onlookers as she dribbled down the sideline, weaving skillfully through defenders, ultimately crossing the ball into the heart of the 18-yard box.

Surf Cup, one of the largest 4-day tournaments in the country, showcased the

"Best of the Best" players for college coaches to recruit; held from July 28-31 in Del Mar, Calif., it was one of the most important weekends of Oberhauser's soccer career.

Ever since she attended one of UC San Diego's identification (ID) camps in late June, the college's coaches had shown interest in her. They told her they would come out to watch her Oberhauser play at Surf Cup to see if she would be a strong fit for their Division I program.

"The coaches I was communicating with told me they really liked me, but they couldn't make a decision based on just seeing me in the ID camp," Oberhauser said. "They said they wanted to see me in a club environment and watched me at Surf Cup. A few weeks later, they offered me a spot."

Oberhauser's soccer journey began when she was 5 — as an attacking midfielder, she played on West Valley Soccer Club until she was 16 before moving to De Anza Force Soccer Club the summer before junior year.

She said her West Valley coach Wayne Kania was especially instrumental in her college recruitment.

He developed her technically and tactically as a player, influencing the style of play that she brings into her games for both club and high school soccer. Her ability to keep the ball in tight spaces, along with her dribbling skills and vision to read the field has made her an irreplaceable playmaker and vital asset to her team.

Getting recruited had been one of Oberhauser's goals for a while, but she didn't begin actively reaching out to schools and getting on their radar until the middle of her junior year, later than many serious high school athletes these days.

"I wasn't that well educated on how the [college recruitment] process was supposed to work," she said. "I knew I wanted to play in college, but it wasn't until last winter that my parents and coaches pushed me to start [reaching out to

At the beginning of her recruitment process in December 2022, Oberhauser sent mass emails to all the colleges she potentially wanted to attend

and introduced herself with highlight videos. With the responses she received, she began developing relationships with coaches and attended school-specific ID camps. With a limited number of schools

emailing back, her list of prospective colleges became narrower — UCSD topped Oberhauser's list as she loved the campus, the environment and the coaches she inter-"I feel like there were many places that I

could have been happy at, but in the grand scheme of things, UCSD is definitely a dream for me," Oberhauser said.

es has been relatively smooth since Strout

understands our team well and knows how

week in the dance studio, with each

practice session lasting around two

hours and 15 minutes. In the fall,

the dance team mainly focuses on

preparing for the frequent foot-

ball game half-time performances.

However, when competition sea-

ramp up with additional sessions held on

ration for the USA National dance compe-

Saturdays for up to three hours, in prepa-

For freshman Chloe Nguyen, entering

the dance studio is like being transported

mentarily immerse herself in the art of

However, beyond the art form itself,

"The most special thing about this team

dance — a treasure she can't find anywhere

Nguyen has also come to cherish her close

mates and the way I always feel welcomed

"We all get to pursue what we love and form

friendships that will last a lifetime. I always

look forward to having a blast dancing with

friendships with teammates.

else on campus.

my best friends." ◆

to a whole new world where she can mo-

During the first few weeks after Surf Cup,



Senior Kate Oberhauser plays Santa Monica Surf Soccer Club at San Diego Surf Cup on July 30.

Oberhauser doubted that the UCSD coaches were going to extend an offer, especially because they had not been communicating with her since the tournament.

But in late August, when they texted her during Spanish class to set up a call, Oberhauser was in complete shock.

For the rest of the day, she anxiouswaited for the phone to ring; once the UCSD coach officially offered her a spot, she immediately texted her parents, siblings and her old West Valley coach, ecstatic for the

Oberhauser felt relieved to have found a place at a school that she believed she would be a good fit for and be happy at.

To athletes who know that college recruitment is a path they want to pursue, Oberhauser urges them to start reaching out and making connections with coaches in their sophomore and beginning of junior year, especially because it was stressful for her to start the process late.

"I would keep hearing from the players and coaches from my ID camps and club team that 'you're going to end up where you're meant to be or everything will turn out the way it's supposed to be," she said. "And I heard this many, many times during the process, and I never believed it, but it turned out that way for me, so I definitely feel like it has some truth to it." ◆

## New coach helps kick off to powerful start of the season

DANCE

BY Shirina**Cao** & Jessica**Li** 

Junior dance team co-captain Anisa Taymuree ran up to the center of the football field on Sept. 1 with the other members and got into position. As the first beats of "Hot in It" started playing, the dance team and Saejel Thomas are working to ensure moved with carefully controlled energy to the team is cohesive, both in dance synhit every accent and executed every spin chronization and in team chemistry. As the and hand movement flawlessly.

After the performance, Anisa turned to her fellow teammates and felt proud of how far they had come since the first time everyone met at auditions in April.

The 14-member team spent the summer learning various choreographies during their annual trip to United Spirit Association (USA) summer camp while simultaneously bonding with newer members,

fostering a strong sense of community son starts in January, practices will begin to within the team long before the school year

"We're starting off the season with a ration for the bang," Taymuree said. "Our performance tition in May. [during the game against Santa Cruz] was the hardest hip hop choreography we've had so far, but it got the crowd really hyped

Under the guidance of new coach Toni Strout, the team has been working on cleaning their hip-hop routine as well as jazz, pom, and lyrical routines for dances later on in the season.

Strout has been dancing for 41 years and majored in dance at San Jose State is how close my bonds are with my team-University, which has undoubtedly helped her lead the team. Veteran members have and valued within the team," Nguyen said. quickly adapted to her coaching style, finding it to be a huge improvement from their earlier experiences.

"The transition between the two coach-

## Building trust to avoid injuries and create a safe environment

**CHEER** 

BY GraceLin & ChristinaLabbar

to guide us to victory," sophomore May At the Homecoming football game on Sept. 22, several cheerleaders — senior Senior co-captains Michelle Wan, Erika Eva Semin, junior Analise Shab and fresh-Andersson, Annalyn Bui and Taylor Chu as men Dezi Lencioni — hoisted junior capwell as junior co-captains Anisa Taymuree tain Lucie Le Toquin into the air during a spirited routine. Le Toquin shook her red and blue pom-poms as she cheered on the

season begins, one of their top priorities The spectacle showcased the harmony is to ease the team's five freshmen among the team members, a testament to into learning new dance styles and the trust they've cultivated over hours of adapting to the team dynamic. The team trains three days a

This trust and companionship among teammates is a crucial factor in the success of the team's routines and safety. For the school's cheerleading team, trust is not just a buzzword; it's a lifeline that keeps them from experiencing painful injuries.

"I used to be scared of getting lifted into the air, but now I enjoy it because of my teammates' support," Le Toquin said.

A fumbled catch or a miscommunication during a stunt can result in falls and mishaps that not only mar performances but also put athletes at risk. For example, returning sophomore cheerleader Lizzie Lockhart remembers how she got hurt after a lift attempt when practicing a stunt

The team was learning a new stunt for the Homecoming game, and when Lockhart was preparing to load into her jump in, her teammate prepped too high. Lockhart fell when her teammate lifted her up, causing her to injure her lower back and

To avoid injuries, the cheerleading squad also tries to instill the importance of trust and communication to their six new members. While some of these newcomers already have experience in gymnastics, season." ◆

cheerleading requires them to learn new

The team, led by captain Kylee O'brie and Le Toquin and coached by Brandy Fisher, have been quick to express their enthusiasm for the new additions.

For the freshmen, like freshmen Sia Chowdhri, joining a team of experienced cheerleaders initially felt intimidating. However, over time, they've been embraced as a part of the cheerleading family. receiving guidance and support from the

"I used to be scared of getting lifted into the air, but now I enjoy it because of my teammates' support."

JUNIOR Lucie LeToquin

"I'm always excited for feedback so I can learn and grow more," Chowdhri said. O'Brien has also helped Chowdhri learn by critiquing stunt skills and fundamentals, as well as helping her develop more flexibility. Since then, Chowdhri has developed more confidence on the field.

Coach Fisher encourages the squad to work better together and trust each other. With a balanced approach of discipline and support, the new coach is behind the team's positive outlook to tackle the next

"With our new coach, we are a more cohesive team," Lockhart said. "As a team, we are working together to continue building trust and communication skills with each other. We're all hopeful for the rest of the

# Sheehy: teacher by day basketball coach by night

& Bryan**Zhao** 

As the entire JV basketball team watched, special education teacher Danny Wallace and history teacher Jerry Sheehy demonstrated post moves and box out drills in the schools' large gym. This was all thanks to Wallace's coach 20 years ago when he was a standout player at the school

This is the ninth year Sheehy will be coaching the team. After coming to Saratoga High, he was the JV head coach and varsity assistant coach for 7 years straight before he took a gap coaching outside teams like National Junior Basketball.

"I have two sons, so I've always coached them for basketball and other sports from when they were little to now so I didn't stop coaching sports," said Sheehy.

### "He has shown us the hard work and dedication we have to put in."

FRESHMAN Noah Nguyen with each other.

He recently came back last year as the JV head coach because his son, Cole Sheehy, entered the school as a freshman. Having known many of the current students who played on the same outside team as his son since elementary school, Sheehy has found it easier to build strong connections between him and his players.

"It was more special because a lot of the kids that I'm coaching this year I've known since they were quite young, maybe four to five years old," Sheehy said. "So there's guys on the team that I've known for a long

Although Sheehy has been teaching for almost 25 years here, he said he start- ning CCS." ◆

ed coaching to become closer to the game of basketball, a sport he has always loved. Coaching has also allowed him to make closer bonds with the players, many of whom were either in or had taken his class

Usually, he sees kids in a class anywhere from three hours to four and a half hours a week, but in basketball season, he often sees his players 15 hours a week between open gyms and other training activities.. Sheehy has helped JV improve on both

their physicality and mentality toward the game. With all of the freshmen on the team experiencing high school basketball for the first time, Sheehy has been working hard to help prepare the

freshman for the upcoming rigorous season by hosting open gyms and weightlifting sessions throughout the summer and the start of the school year. He has also emphasized the dif-

ference between a classroom and being a part of a team. To Sheehy, a team is "being part of something bigger than just yourself," as players form close bonds with their teammates and spend a lot of time

"Sheehy has helped us feel welcomed to high school basketball," freshman Noah Nguven said. "He has also shown us the hard work and dedication we have to put in in order to become successful in the upcoming high school season."

Working with varsity coach and history teacher Mike Davey, Sheehy hopes to continue coaching for at least a few more years with the goal of winning CCS champion-'Saratoga is often underestimated,"

Sheehy said. "Whether it's coaching JV or assisting on varsity, I would love to see Saratoga get back to that place where we're shocking people, putting up league championships and upsetting teams and win-

# **Davey: carrying on his** father's coaching legacy

Longtime history teacher Mike Davey has continued his father Dick Davey's legacy while coaching multiple sports in his 30 years at the school: both girls' and boys' basketball as well as softball.

Dick Davey coached the Santa Clara University men's team for 16 years and is most famous for recruiting and coaching NBA Hall of Fame guard Steve Nash. Mike Davey grew up watching the impact his dad had upon the young men on his teams.

Mike Davey — who currently coaches both the varsity boys' basketball and varsity softball teams — said he did not initially plan to coach

the opporsupport stu-

He first started coaching the boys' basketball team in 1998. After switching from coaching boys' to girls' basketball in 2008 so as to be able to coach both of his daughters, he returned to coaching the boys' team last year.

His interest in coaching softball goes back to his time playing baseball in high school. When one of his daughters joined the softball team, he helped out as an assistant coach; however, when previous head coach Chris Smith passed away in 2017, he stepped up to fill the role.

Despite the joy he gains from coaching and seeing players improve, Davey said he struggles with the time-consuming nature of coaching sports, especially since he is a full-time teacher. Being an on-campus coach requires him to stay after school for many hours — oftentimes for little or no

"A normal teacher can go home at 3:30 or four, but I'm here until eight o'clock at night," Davey said, "It continues to take a lot of time I would otherwise spend with my family. It's a lot of work and as I get older, it gets harder."

Because of how coaches are paid, any supplemental practice coaches hold outside of the season are completely unpaid. Even practices held after CCS aren't paid, since those are considered outside the "You do it for the kids, but it's frus-

trating that the school doesn't appreciate on-campus coaches enough," Davey said. "Kids can come in anytime; like a student just came in and asked me to write his green sheet because I'm his coach, and those kinds of things. Unfortunately the school doesn't provide any bonus for an on-campus teacher to do this."

Even so, Davey noted how rewarding coaching and teaching students outside of school is. In particular, he said he loves being able to celebrate many of the team's achievements with the same joy his players

"I think the most special moment was when we won CCS with the girls' basketball team in 2016. We won it at Santa Clara University where my dad coached all those years," Davey said. "My daughter had a huge 3-pointer at the end of the third quarter that kind of sealed the win, so that was pretty special." Davey also feels that the connec-

tions he makes with his students is an invaluable takeaway from his coaching experience. It is the biggest reason why he is willing to spend so many hours after school helping athletes, and why he has

"Coaching is for the kids as much as possible," Davey said. "I think I'm very close to a lot of former players that I've coached." ◆

continued coaching even after 25 years.



# Lack of defense costs Falcons Homecoming win

& Nika**Svizhenko** 

The stands were filled with a "White-Out" theme as students cheered on the Falcons during the Homecoming football game at home against Cupertino on Sept. 22.

"We knew Cupertino wasn't going to be an easy win," sophomore wide receiver Jayden Kwong said. "It would be challenging. But we still felt confident and were ready to go."

The Falcons started the game well but fell to a stronger Pioneers team 34-13.

Senior wide receiver and defensive back Cooper Call scored a touchdown with a 30yard dash early in the first quarter followed by a successful extra point.

Cupertino quickly struck back with a long touchdown on a pass. With the game tied 7-7 coming into the second quarter, Call caught a long pass and made a 52-yard run to the 10-yard line. Sophomore wide receiver Brennan Pak finished the job with a 3-yard charge into the end zone, putting the Falcons up 13-7.

Despite the two early touchdowns by Call and Pak, the Falcon defense couldn't contain Cupertino's attack. The Pioneers mixed in a good run game with short passes and the occasional deep throw, which allowed them

"As our offense started to go down, so did our defense," Pak said. "A majority of our players played both offense and defense. We kept getting more tired, and then they kept scoring as the game went on."

Cupertino widened their lead in the third quarter by scoring two quick touchdowns.

and 5 for Cupertino. Efforts made by junior offensive and defensive lineman Tevita Pahulu brought down Cupertino's quarterback in the backfield and prevented them from

But the exhausted Falcons, many of whom had played both offense and defense the whole game, couldn't mount a come-

"It's hard to play with all our energy. I have to play both sides, so I get burnt out really quickly. And that's the [same with] the majority of our team," Pak said. "It's just hard to compete when they have double our

. Injuries also affected the Falcons' performance. During the fourth quarter freshman

to score a touchdown late into the second

The third quarter went downhill. The Falcon offense stagnated, committing turnovers and placing extra pressure on the de-

scoring additional points.

fense to make sacks and interceptions.

The fourth quarter started with the 2nd

The Falcons preparing to execute their Run-Pass-Option play during their homecoming game.

quarterback Anson Hulme suffered a hit to his shin by a helmet, which he said affected what he was able to do

Hulme was subbed out for sophomore Oliver Su late into the fourth quarter, but it was too late to make a difference. So far, their season has included a 28-7 loss against Harbor on Sept. 8 and a 69-0 home drubbing of Santa Cruz on Sept. 1.

The team played at Mills on Sept. 29. (Because of printing deadlines, The Falcon

couldn't include coverage of that game in this article.)

Even with a hard Homecoming loss, Kwong still has high hopes for the future.

"After every game, win or loss, the main thing that stuck with me is that all the coaches have done their part, so we have to do our part," Kwong said. "We have the talent, we have the people, we just gotta pull it all together now. And if we can do that, the wins will start stacking on." ◆

**GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL** 

# Team scores victories with new coach and strong freshmen

BY Divya**Vadlakonda** 

In an away game against Milpitas High School on Sept. 12, freshman outside hitter Iris Jin glided through the air in an adrenaline-filled rush, her focused eyes following the ball before making a resounding kill. Jubilant shouts from her teammates sounded across the gym as they celebrated their first El Camino division win.

With just three seniors on the team this year — pin hitter and co-captain Anjali Aarkoti, defensive specialist Natalie Chua and opposite hitter Ariel Zhou — the girls' volleyball team is relying on younger players like Jin to fill the empty roles.

Concerns about a smaller roster with majority freshmen and former JV players defined the team's pre-season. However, the team has continued through the season with a largely successful streak of league games — losing 3-0 against Lynbrook on Sept. 21 and winning 3-2 against Fremont on Sept. 14, 3-1 against Milpitas and 3-0 against Wil-

New freshmen players — Jin, middle blocker Aanya Hotha and libero Morgan Li — brought an infusion of new talent to the team this year, filling the void that many team members anticipated after the loss of seven seniors last year. In the process, the freshmen have adapted to the rigors of playing in high school.

"Our coach always says that winning is secondary and tells us to enjoy playing."

JUNIOR Shreya Raghuvanshi

The team has also had time to adjust to the new varsity head coach Yakgna Arumugam, who was the JV head coach last

sive style called the Japanese press [man

on man coverage] which relies a lot on the

tioned for the season by swimming around

for the ball and 6-on-5 formations during

Sophomore Nirvaan Shah believes the

"We have a lot of potential on the team

munication and play with good intensity

the team continues to play together.

physicality of the players," Vuppala said.

year. Arumugam has put more emphasis on motivating the players, which, according to junior middle blocker Shreya Raghuvanshi, has been one of the reasons for the team's high energy during games. "Our coach always says that winning is

secondary and tells us to enjoy playing. I feel it helps us keep a good balance of having fun while also focusing on doing well," Raghuvanshi said. "Personally, it helps me fight for points without overthinking my every Arumugam mainly works on aspects

that help the team become more cohesive, practicing serve receives, getting blocks up and working on team defense. However, Raghuvanshi says that a majority of the team's success is, in part, due to their synergy with

"Obviously playing well is dependent on skill, but it's also based on communication and how the team dynamic works," Raghuvanshi said. "We are able to trust each other

Arumugam, the former girls' volleyball JV coach, coached junior opposite hitter Kendra Joe, junior setter Narmeen Khericha and junior libero Caitlin Lee while they were on the team last year. Lee said being used to his coaching style and knowing most of her teammates beforehand has made it easier to acclimate to the team from JV.

Lee also said her transition from JV to varsity resulted in a shift in mindset. "The players on varsity are a lot more ex-

perienced because most of them play club, so being on the team has reflected on how motivated I am to try my hardest," she said.

Based on the way the season has progressed so far, Aarkoti said winning the El Camino division and making CCS is possible, as long as they work on strengthening defense in order to get better passes to the

"It's definitely not going to be easy, especially with teams like Lynbrook and Milpitas, but we've had a good streak so far so I'm

### **BOYS' WATER POLO**

BY Mitchell**Chen** 

Each game for the boys' water polo team so far has followed a familiar pattern: bad

After each loss, senior Yanis Herne has felt the team has been able to learn a lot coaching styles has been difficult," Herne about what strategies and setups work best. said. "As soon as we get into a rhythm of

set Nirvaan Shah and freshman flat Bryan Le. Defensively, Herne and Jarrett Singh have been key players, with Herne averaging 6 steals per game and Singh able to cover faster players down the pool.

underclassmen players who lack experience and conditioning.

After their previous coach Kendal Jarvis left for the Navy last year, they are learning from new head coach Utku Kahran, a team chemistry will continue to improve as recent alumni of San Jose State where he played Division 1 water polo.

and we just need to work on our comstrategies from the new coach. throughout the game," Shah said. ◆

"This year we are switching to a defen-

BY MitchellChen

to several victories in a row for the Falcons.

"We have a lot of potential on the team," said hole set Ryder Gangemi, a senior captain. "And since many players also play club water polo, the team also has a lot of experience, which translates to our success in the

With a 17-5 victory against Milpitas on Sept. 28, a 10-7 victory against Homestead on Sept. 26, a 13-4 victory against Milpitas on Sept. 21, a 7-4 win against Cupertino on Sept. 19 and a 6-5 victory against Wilcox on Sept. 14, the girls' water polo team is 8-0

as of Sept. 29. The leading scorers, senior starter Ryder Gangemi and junior Cassidy Coglan, are able to quickly organize and communicate plays to the rest of the team. This allows

freshman Riona Coglan to quickly get back

Poly in protecting the cage.

"I think our wins reflect the work and effort everyone put in during summer conother schools," Gangemi said.

such as San Jose Express or West Valley, where they were able to continue to improve their game skills and experience.

"Playing water polo outside of school the team in games," Cassidy said.

The team hopes to continue their streak of victories and potentially make CCS, which they haven't done since 2018.

Allegreti, the team chemistry has improved, and high morale going into this season has helped their confidence in the pool.

the wing players and new additions such as and we get hyped during games and just go out and have fun together," Cassidy said. ◆

**CROSS COUNTRY** 

# Workouts intensify as big meets begin

Both cross country teams opened up their season with the 2023 Lowell Invitational on Sept. 9, with only the best seven available male and female runners from each team participating.

The girls team was forced to bring all of their runners to the race, as they only have seven runners this year, while the boys team had many more options, as they have a total

As a result, the girls only have a varsity team and no JV team. At Lowell, the boys placed 24th out of 30 teams, while the girls placed 22nd out of 25 teams. Senior Steven Sun ran the fastest for the

boys, individually placing 118th out of 213 runners and running a time of 16:17 for the 2.78-mile race. Junior Anisha Rahut did the best for the girls, individually placing 71st out of 160 runners with a time of 19.52.

This season, the team is scheduled to run eight meets. The team's next race is the Ram Invitational at Westmoor High School on Sept. 30, where the top seven runners for each gender will run.

The most critical future meets are the SCVAL league final at Crystal Springs Park on Oct. 31 and the CCS meet at Crystal Springs Park on Nov. 11.

Though the Falcons have lost Wasil Khan,



Junior Dylan Sordello maintains pace with the pack during the 2023 Lowell Invitational.

Elizabeth Stoiber, Isha Goswami and Carolyn Wang to graduation, they are counting on standout runners such as Sun and Rahut. "The team shows up on time to practice

and does not skip runs or take shortcuts," junior Dylan Sordello said.

The team's second race took place at the Baylands Park on Sept. 19, marking the first SCVAL league meet. There, the boys placed 11th out of the 14 SCVAL teams that participated in their corresponding race and the girls placed 9th out of the 13 SCVAL teams

To help the team prepare for future races, head coach Ian Tippetts and assistant coaches Kathy Tippetts and Cindy Phan have started adding more strenuous workouts to the training regime.

The first two weeks of the season involved only slow, aerobic runs to help the athletes smoothly transition into training again, decreasing the likelihood of injuries.

Practices from Monday to Friday start at 4 p.m. and typically end between 5:15 to 6 p.m., with varying exercises from deadlifts to box jumps.

Saturday's long aerobic run begins much earlier, typically beginning at 7:30 a.m., at places around Saratoga such as Sanborn Park's hiking trails, which are typically 6 to

To ensure a smooth transition, the runners ran 20 total miles for the first week and 25 total miles for the second. Many runners come into the season after running infrequently over the summer.

Through their transition to a more grueling training routine mid-season, the team hopes to have better performances at their

"The harder training routine helps condition us for the races, as they help us get more used to the fast pace required to excel in these races," Sordello said. 🔷

**GIRLS'TENNIS** 

# Players take on increased roles after key losses

ву Florence**Hu** 

After the departure of last year's top three players, the girls' tennis team is looking to regain their momentum. In addition to the loss of two graduating seniors, they also lost their top three players: senior Sabrina Manea, junior Megha Horantur and sophomore Viki Toram, who were last year's No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 singles players, respectively. All three players left to train competitively for tournaments hosted by the United States Tennis Association (USTA); Manea has been training individually in Spain.

This year, three new players have joined the experienced team, many of whom have improved their skills since last season

during summer training camps. The school's girls' tennis team, coached by Florin Marcia, has consistently practiced hard to train their incoming freshmen to improve and overcome the team's past limits. Their work has paid off — they lost only against Lynbrook 7-0 on Sept. 19, winning against Wilcox 6-1 on Sept. 26, Santa Clara 7-0 on Sept. 14 and Fremont High School 5-2 on Sept. 12.

Last season, the team won all but two of their games, both of which were against This season, junior Natalie Poon, the

hopes to improve on the team's ranking. "We were a little bit worried because we lost our top three players from last year," Poon said. "But I think if we work hard and

team's co-captain and No. 3 singles player,

from Monday through Thursday, the team players are consistently improving their skills. Their regular training has helped players hone in on more consistent technique and strengthen their former weaknesses.

maintain a good mindset, we will do great."

ranks, Poon and senior Nancy Lei, the team's captain and No. 1 doubles player, acknowledged the increased nervousness surrounding each of the games. Though she has seen that some people tense up, Lei says she likes seeing that others are more relaxed on the court. Even with tennis being an individual sport, she believes that a lot of the mindset comes from playing with their team. "Overall, we have a positive outlook.

With two hour practices four days a week to be set back even if we lose any following games," Lei said. "Overall, we should focus on the team aspect of winning, not just the

Over the games played so far, the players have not only improved their skills but also Since most players had moved up a few strengthened their bonds. The players felt motivated by their teammates and celebrated their wins together as a team, cheering each other up to the last point. "Everyone on the team gets along well

with each other. Today at our game, [sophomore] Riya Rama was the last person to finish her match and everyone was watching her play and cheering her on," sophomore Katelynn Vasquez, No. 3 doubles player,

**GIRLS' GOLF** 

# New rules quicken play

Since the golf season started in mid-August, players have been adjusting to a new double par rule that has been introduced this season, drastically increasing the speed at which tournaments move.

Par is the number of strokes that proficient players are supposed to play a hole in. Now, with this new rule, the maximum number of shots a player can hit is double the par. For example, a par-4 hole would allow a maximum of eight shots before players must pick up their ball and move on.

"The game moves along a lot faster this year, so it's a bit different, but it helps the less experienced," sophomore Millie Wang said. "Our travel team players are also more consistent, as they are all shooting around The team, coached by David Gragnola,

lost to Lynbrook 215-213, but beat Gunn High 255-223 — the team that is first in the SCVAL-De Anza league.

junior team captain Sarah Lim said. "It was

Although the Falcons lost one of their key players last year, Class of '22 alumna Ananya Seth, the team bonds have not suffered and are stronger than ever, Wang said. "Last year we made it to CCS as a team, which was the first time in a few years, and so this year, I think we have a good chance of getting in," Lim said.

Lim also looks forward to all the future

"Being at our home course is really helpful because we're more used to the course," she said. "I'm also excited because matches are always a good place to bond with your For personal goals, both star players

Wang, Lim hopes to make it to CCS. "I'm really looking forward to this **FIELD HOCKEY** 

## Falcons adjust to new coach

BY MitchellChen, SaachiJain

After a 0-2 loss to Presentation on Sept. 27, the field hockey team is focused on connecting as a team for defense, midfield and forwards in future contests. The team's record is currently 3-3 in the El Camino

"We need to execute more on opportunities when they arise during games," senior captain Zinneerah Ahmed said. "We need to work on getting short corners and just having quicker passes."

So far, the team's main weakness has been on defense. At practice, they primarily do drills for short, Ahmed accurate passes throughout the field and exercises avoiding short corners, which is a penalty shot awarded to the offense. They have also been working to secure free hits, which are awarded when they get fouls. The team has their sights set on making CCS again and making it past

The team is also adjusting to their new coach, Sam Ng, who replaced former coach

the first round this time.

"It's been a hard adjustment to our new oach because he's a liftle older and not es pecially vocal," Ahmed said. "But it's really taught us to be responsible for each other and for ourselves."

The captains have also taken on even more responsibilities this season as a result of having a new coach, including running warmups and stretches at the be-

ginning of practice, setting up drills and talking to refs during games. Ahmed, alongside senior right-sided center back Emma Green and left midfield senior Lexi

Cleland, has made it his primary focus to target these weaknesses through drills They are also trying to support the new underclassmen, such as freshman Giselle Adams and Eve-

er they make mistakes. "This season has definitely been a challenge so far since we have a new coach and we lost so many players from last year," junior Margaret Huesby said. "But I think the seniors are able to take authority and organize us well during practice, which has

lyn Williams and encourage them whenev-

made it a lot easier to adjust." ◆

# Struggles mount for winless team | Fresh strategy change key to wins

With four different coaches in the last spacing and poor passes. The result: an 0-8 four years, the boys have struggled to find record as of Sept. 29. stability in leadership of the program. "Adjusting to different coaches and

things, we have to start over." Top scorers have been sophomore hole-Kahran hopes to rebuild the water polo program starting this year with a large underclassmen team. Under his guidance, the team condi-

After the graduation of three seniors 2,000-3,000 yards in the first few weeks. from last year's squad, the team has many Additionally, the Falcons have been working on basic skills like driving in, releasing practices.

One challenge has been adapting to new

### **GIRLS' WATER POLO**

After a 15-11 loss during the first scrimmage of the year against Prospect on Aug. 31, the girls' water polo head coach Mike Allegreti made changes to what plays they would run in future games. That move led

onto defense, assisting junior goalie Lera

ditioning, as we are a faster team than most Players such as Cassidy Colgan have joined water polo clubs after the season

has helped me improve my confidence and awareness in the water and has gotten me more aware with the game so I can take more of a leadership role and help direct

Playing their second year with coach 'I feel like we're much closer as a team,

"It was a pretty big accomplishment and a morale booster that we won against

Gunn, since they're usually pretty good,"

home games at the Saratoga Country Club, as they practice there every day.

- Lim, who ranks No. 2, and Wang, who ranks No. 1 — hope to get into CCS individually. Wang hopes to finish top three in has a 3-3 record as of Sept 29. The team states, since she finished fifth last year. Like

> whole season; just getting to know new players and competing again is really exciting," Lim said. "Overall, I think it'll be a great season." ◆



# snapshots







Photo by BRYAN ZHAO

Senior Bryan Wang dances front row during quad day on Sept. 22.

Senior Cooper Call gets away from an opponent against Santa Cruz on Sept. 1.

Senior Riley Alves performs stunts during halftime during the Homecoming game on Sept. 22.

Girls' volleyball celebrates after scoring a point against Santa Clara on Sept. 26.



# WHICH TYPE OF WATER DO YOU CHOOSE?



# Cold, crisp and bubbling? Normal, boring and still?





If you're in the mood for a refreshing lime-flavored drink, but not in the mood for heart failure at age 30, let me introduce you to your new best friend: sparkling water. Sparkling water allows you to meet your daily hydration needs with flavorful bliss and strategically avoid an unhealthy lifestyle.

The brainwashed masses might claim that the flavor in sparkling water isn't strong enough, joking that La Croix manufactures their sparkling water in the same room as a singular fruit to obtain its flavor. My response to that: Grow up.

If you need your beverage of choice to have an extremely artificial saturated fruit flavoring, maybe you should consider graduating from kindergarten first. Put the Kool-Aid and Capri-Sun down. Is your plan to be an 80-year-old sipping on Gatorade-Coke-Stevia?

Let's be realistic. Sparkling water is the perfect medium of hydration that allows you to maintain your mature appearance and indulge in a fruity libation.

I understand that it might be intimidating. There are so many brands, and each has its own pros and cons. I'm here to help, though! An amateur "sparkler" (our community's affectionate term for sparkling water drinkers) might start with Crystal Geyser. A real professional-level sparkler might venture into the world of Topo Chico or San Pelligrino. Most will see the can in your hand and immediately begin making judgments, or even try to find humor in their hatred of something so beautiful. But you should never hide your passion and always hold your head high. Don't let the world dull your sparkle.



As you're sitting around the table at a restaurant, the server walks by and asks you the most infuriating question of the evening: "sparkling or still?" To any rational person, the correct answer would obviously be still water. As you watch the server pour the hydrating glory of still water, your heart feels content knowing that you just saved money by passing on crappy carbonated water. Not only is still water much cheaper — being free at every establishment — but it also objectively tastes exponentially better than sparkling water. In the case of sparkling water, the whole is less than the sum of its parts. Just as both Pomegranate juice

and chicken noodle soup are delicious separately, a combination of the two will result in a questionably textured mixture of sweet, sour and salty flavors that just do not blend. In the same way, while Coca Cola tastes delicious and water tastes delicious, mixing the sparkling nature of Coca Cola with water just ruins the comfort water brings as a hydrating and refreshing drink. Sparkling water also doesn't taste very different from water except that of the bubbles. Sparkling water by La Croix is also just a flat-out scam. Bringing La Croix to a party is like offering people a bottle of water ruined with carbonated bubbles and the scent of fruits.

Sparkling water is one beverage that you should never choose, whether at restaurants or your local Safeway. Bubbles are fine, water is fine, but bubbles in water are just not natural.

# A bad match: Me and air mattresses



A 15-year-old and an air mattress walk into a bar, but only the 15-year-old walks out. Or, rather, the 15-year-old wakes up at 6 a.m. in a small, hot apartment in LA on the floor only to realize that the air mattress he was supposed to be sleeping on is rapidly deflating.

After arriving in LA the day prior, I'd been picked up by my sister, who had practically begged me to grace her with my amazing presence for at least three days when she wasn't swarmed with college classes. To prepare for the occasion, she asked one of her friends for a spare air mattress and, miraculously, they were willing to provide one for me. My sister and her boyfriend had also spent a considerable amount of time the day prior trying to inflate the old thing.

Even with her repeated warnings to not roughhouse the old crusty mattress, I was not able to control myself and gave into my

intrusive thoughts, plopping down in my delirious state instead (night flights really hit differently).

Little did I know, I had just ripped a hole.

In other words, I, the generously accepted guest to my sister's humble abode, had just gone and ripped a hole straight through the center of someone's beloved mattress.

Now luckily it didn't explode, or else someone would've called 911 and reported shots fired (it is LA, after all)! But that did not make the experience of having to trek into my sister's room at the crack of

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like a child having to inform their parents of having wet the bed. After explaining the mattress fiasco to my sister, she then got up to inspect the victim (the mattress), before grudgingly notifying the grieving parent of the air mattress about how their child had been body slammed to the floor and unceremoniously killed.

dawn any better. I felt

Now, whenever I encounter a collection of air mattresses, I shrivel up into myself like a turtle retreating into its shell as the mattresses just sit there and watch on, implicitly condemning me for destroying one of their own.

AIR MATTRESS

"It had an explosive personality that just couldn't be

### topten

WAYS TO HELP OUR SPORTS

- 10 Ice hockey players to play on the field hockey team. If you play ice hockey, you better be on the field.
- **9** Create a lacrosse team. Obviously the lacrosse team can't win if they don't exist ...
- **8** Trading tips to golfers. Maybe this would encourage them to win.
- 7 Morning Runs. XC athletes prefer not to run in smoggy afternoons.
- 6 Draft tall girls for basketball. We need the height advantage at SHS!
- 5 Ban non track athletes from the team. T&F is not your offseason training, stick to your own sport.
- 4 Badminton players must have experience. This is for all the freshmen trying to get out of P.E.
- 3 Stop requiring water polo to wear ugly ear protectors. This change will stop scaring students away from watching games.
- **2** Fall athletes wrestling. A great way to stay in shape this offseason.
- **1 Football weight requirement.** "Is that a fifth grader or a player?"
- >> Nika Svizhenko