



Rallies would be more popular if they had more variety



Five generations later, Wong family keeps traditions alive



Sophomore balances club dance and water polo



# THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

Friday, November 21, 2023

Saratoga High School | Saratoga, CA

Vol. 64, No. 3

### Bay Area School Districts' Parcel Tax Revenues (2021)

School District	Parcel Tax Revenue (2021)
LGSUHS	950,000
PAUSD	15,800,000
FHSUHS	5,100,000

### Parcel Tax Timeline

**January**  
Field Tracking Survey  
Board to assess renewal feasibility, weighing in increase of parcel tax rates

**February**  
Board Decision  
Discuss running the measure as May 2024 special election

**May**  
Tentative Special Election  
If unfeasible, board continues community engagement

**August**  
Community Engagement Concludes  
Committee continues ensuring funds are obtained

**November**  
Tentative Addition to Ballot

01.2024 - 11.2024

- May 2016:** Current parcel tax renewed at \$49 per parcel for July 2017 - 2025.
- September 2023:** Community polling revealed that 64% of voters support the \$99 parcel tax renewal and 67% of voters support the \$249 parcel tax renewal.

## Teen drug abuse surges to levels before the pandemic

By Saachi Jain, Grace Lin & Ruiyan Zhu

In 2023, 17% of high schoolers nationwide are addicted to drugs, more than two thirds of high schoolers have tried alcohol illegally and 12% of high school students have said they have vaped in the past month, according to the American Addiction Centers and the National Library of Medicine.

These numbers are alarming to observers, and, more specifically, usage trends appear to be going in the wrong direction after the pandemic. Pre-pandemic in 2018, nicotine use surges related to vaping were the largest recorded in 43 years, with an additional 1.3 million nicotine vapers than in 2017.

According to a national survey conducted by the New England Journal of Medicine, the percentage of 12th-graders vaping doubled between 2017 and 2019, from 18.8% to 35.1%.

Going into the pandemic, 20% of all high school students reported vaping in a survey done by the Center for Disease Control and

Prevention. Though the survey data showed a 40% decline in these rates in 2021, data validity has been called into question due to inconsistent surveying methods.

For example, the National Youth Tobacco Survey was historically conducted at school, but was completed at home during the pandemic.

For this reason, the survey methodologies were adjusted.

Assistant principal Matt Torrens said he saw the growth of the vaping first hand.

"Before the pandemic, there were a lot of vaping materials that we would find in the parking lots and all over campus," Torrens said. "After the pandemic, it has gone down. I'm not sure if the behaviors have

changed necessarily, but it's being done less on campus."

The administration mainly relies on teachers and other staff members to report these instances of usage, whether they find evidence of a student vaping or drinking or simply suspect it to be the case.



Torrens

>> VAPING on pg. 3

## Board weighs parcel tax for improved district funding

By William Cao, Eric Shi & Agastya Vitaldevara

In recent years, it's become harder for Bay Area schools, including Saratoga High, to recruit and retain top teaching talent in such a high-cost-of-living area. At the same time, comparable districts such as Mountain View, Los Altos and Santa Clara now pay their teachers significantly higher wages than LGSUHS.

Notably, in recent years, longtime football coach Lugo accepted the athletic director and head coach job at Mountain View High School, and longtime guidance counselor Alina Satake also left for Mountain View.

As LGSUHS has fallen behind other nearby districts, with Mountain View having an average salary of \$152,524 as of the 2023-24 school year compared to LGSUHS's average salary of \$117,963, the Board of Trustees is considering asking voters to extend and/or increase a parcel tax of LGSUHS next year.

This measure would primarily aim to

raise staff salaries in light of concerns regarding falling employee retention rates, especially among teachers.

The board's upcoming actions for the parcel tax renewal process will include these actions:

They are creating informational materials, including parcel-tax fact sheets, FAQs and online presentations on the benefit of the tax, and will launch an outreach campaign in November to engage registered voters and parents on budget constraints and continue stakeholder engagement through December.

In January, the board will conduct a field tracking survey to assess renewal feasibility involving an increase in parcel tax rates. In February, the board will decide whether to run the measure as a May 2024 special election; if that deadline is infeasible, the board will instead continue community engagement until August with the hopes of having the measure on the November ballot.

>> PARCEL TAX on pg. 3

## Teachers call for return of credentialed librarian

By Sam Bai & Zack Zhang

In spring of 2020, former librarian Kevin Heyman retired. Since then, district officials have chosen to leave the position vacant. Both teachers and students have complained about this decision, saying they no longer have the same level of guidance and access to information for research projects.

**"Library technicians won't be able to run a class without a teacher in the library."**

RESOURCE AIDE Raquel Kirby

The job of a credentialed librarian is to help students access resources and plan school-wide library programs and maintain research databases, among other duties. For example, the National History Day project for AP U.S. History used to be a major event coordinated by Heyman. In coordination with history teachers, he would offer invaluable advice and direction to students. The loss of a librarian is one reason History Day is no longer a major activity at the school.

Helping fill the void in the library since 2020 has been library technician Lee Tapley, who has been out on medical leave during the fall semester but returned to work on Nov. 13. Despite not being a credentialed librarian, Tapley has assumed many responsibilities since Heyman's retirement,

from helping provide guidance on research projects to checking out books and helping maintain access to the school's databases.

In addition to Tapley, the library is being staffed by textbook technician Cynthia Cheng. Various substitutes helped maintain the facility while Tapley was out, but hours of operation were reduced this fall as a result of the staffing issues.

Regardless of these short-term problems, the bigger long-term problem is the lack of even a part-time librarian, staff members say.

"A credentialed librarian can run classes in the library," school resource aide Raquel Kirby said. "Library technicians won't be able to run a class without a teacher in the library."

In the past, Heyman ran classes on research and was available to guide students on projects such as History Day. Now teachers, in addition to their regular duties, are the ones teaching lessons on conducting research, avoiding plagiarism and properly citing sources. This adds extra workload to teachers' duties, and it also means students aren't getting the latest instruction on conducting college-level research in the digital age.

"English teachers like me could take our classes into the library and [Heyman] would do a whole demo on the various databases and be available as a resource," English teacher and journalism adviser Michael Tyler said. "As a teacher, I think [a fully functioning library] is a really nice thing to have."

>> LIBRARY on pg. 6

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# newsbriefs

## Winter Formal facing low ticket sales

Ticket sales were off to a slow start for this year's Winter Formal, which will be held at Dave & Buster's, an arcade venue inside of the Great Mall in Milpitas, on Dec. 2 from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m.

The theme will be "A Night in Vegas," since the dance commissioners thought the arcade games resembled casino slot machines. During the first week of ticket sales from Oct. 30 to Nov. 3, tickets were priced at \$84 for students with ASB and \$114 for students without ASB. The dance commission sold tickets for three weeks, with ticket prices increasing by \$10 each week. Nov. 17 was the last day to purchase tickets.

Dance commissioner junior Emily Rich said she believes the tickets were priced reasonably because the cost covers food, arcade games and admission into the event itself. However, as of Nov. 15, only around 325 tickets had been sold. This is a drastic decrease compared to the 664 ticket sales for last year's formal held at Great America. Rich believes that this is due to the choice of venue, as some students may feel that an arcade is too casual for a formal dance. Dave & Buster's was selected as the venue following a recommendation from assistant principal and activities director Kristen Cunningham.

"I feel like there's a bad stigma around Dave and Buster's," Rich said. "I was kind of iffy on it too when Ms. Cunningham suggested it, but once I went, it seemed fun." ♦

— Anamika Anand and Natalie Chua

## MUN team gains experience from first conference

Sixteen Model UN delegates from the school attended their first conference of the year on Nov. 10-12 at the Stanford Model United Nations Conference (SMUNC). Although the team didn't win any awards, participants said the skills and feedback taken away from the experience will aid them in future conferences.

For this event, delegates were paired together to represent a country, assigned to them two weeks prior. Though there was a steep learning curve for many rookies, officers felt they came out having learned a lot about their topics and the whole Model UN process, vice president Anushka Tadikonda said.

"We had a lot of new delegates at Stanford this year so the fact that their first conference was a college one was an incredible leap," Tadikonda said. "But I saw that they not only enjoyed the conference but also I witnessed increased confidence in public speaking, improvement in resolution writing and enhanced networking skills." ♦

— Sanjoli Gupta and William Norwood

## Seniors qualify as Coca-Cola Scholar semifinalists

Seniors Brad Ma and Zeyneb Kaya are two of the 1,514 Coca-Cola scholarship semifinalists this year. They were selected from a pool of more than 100,000 applicants, and still have two more rounds of applications.

Each year, the Coca-Cola Scholarship provides a \$20,000 academic scholarship to 150 prestigious finalists. This year marks the 36th edition of the scholarship, which has donated more than \$81 million to its 6,750 alumni to foster social leaders and innovators.

To be selected as a semifinalist, students fill out a form detailing their academic performances, activities and achievements. Currently, Ma and Kaya are working to complete the tougher second phase of the application, which consists of multiple short response questions, three personal essays and two recommendation letters.

If they pass this phase, they'll become one of the 250 regional finalists who will participate in an interview to determine the final 150. As the Nov. 9 deadline for the semifinalist phase application concludes, Kaya reflects on her progress.

"It's very very selective, but I'm really happy with what I've written," Kaya said. "I think it's the best I can put out." ♦

— Aiden Ye



**Pummeled Pumpkins** | On the left, the blue pumpkin smasher uses a pneumatic cylinder to crush a pumpkin, while on the right, the green smasher uses a theatrical sledgehammer to swing and smash a pumpkin.

# To help the environment, Robotics holds 2nd pumpkin smashing event

BY FlorenceHu

"Three, two, one!" A machine's 3-foot metal rod suddenly thrust six sharp blades into the pumpkin, crushing it to pieces. Slowly, the end of the piston rose back to its original position, dangling seeds from the fibrous strands of pumpkin pulp. That process, repeated again and again on Nov. 3 in the quad, turned dozens of Halloween pumpkins into compost.

Following a successful debut last year, Team 6165 MSET Cuttlefish hosted their second annual pumpkin smashing event, STEM Madness at Saratoga High (SMASH), on Nov. 3 from 3:30 to 6:30. Attendees had their pumpkins smashed by the two custom machines and walked around the quad to explore a variety of STEM-themed activities hosted by various clubs. The event was a culmination of five months worth of organizing and planning.

The event was first established by class of '23 alumna Emily Lu after she learned that over 1.3 billion pounds of pumpkin are tossed out each Halloween. The first pumpkin smasher was powered by a pneumatic cylinder that pushed down a piston when activated. The smashed pumpkins were then collected and shipped to a composting plant.

## "This is a real world solution to demolish pumpkins, contribute to the environment."

SENIOR Maithreyi Bharathi

After realizing that they needed to account for the extensive setup and cleanup time per each pumpkin, Cuttlefish wanted to increase the rate of pumpkin smashing. Since it presented the opportunity to take on an novel, interesting challenge, the team started in early June to design a new smasher for this year. One of the main criteria for the final product was a more dramatic, theatrical effect. Initial ideas included a can-crusher, spinning circular saw and sledgehammer.

## >> falconfigures

- 200 Hours put into the project
- 500 Pounds of pumpkin smashed
- 2 Pumpkin smashers designed and built
- 70 Hours into event preparation

Despite using a 16-pound hammer with a 34-inch handle, early trials revealed that the prototype needed more power. To solve this, the team increased tension on the exercise band by replacing it with a more powerful band that could withstand 80 to 100 pounds. This allowed for use of the component's full potential through a much stronger elastic pull.

As a result of increased power, the point of rotation was raised so that the hammer wouldn't have to pivot as much and require as much torque to lift. Most of the other design changes were also made to accommodate increased stress throughout the entire mechanism. Structural brackets that cracked at first were adjusted and the base was widened to ensure stability.

In addition, the prototype initially had a ratchet (a one-way gear) paired with a large disengaging mechanism to allow students to manually wind up the hammer. However, its lengthy winding process and bulkiness of the disengager caused it to be replaced with a motor and a quick release.

Finally, a set of six blades was installed on the platform, allowing for the pumpkin to be sliced into cleaner pieces.

With many iterations and adjustments made to the design, senior Jarrett Singh estimated that at least 200 hours of work were put into the project.

"The ideas were easier to come to, but the actual implementation of the design was more of a challenge," Singh said. "We initially thought it was easier, but it was overall more difficult."

Using this smasher, over 500

pounds of pumpkin were crushed and delivered to a composting plant, West Valley Recycles, in Campbell. With both smashers from last year and this year in use, the team hoped to save twice as many pounds of pumpkin from the landfill as they did last year. This prevented pumpkins from releasing detrimental greenhouse gases like methane.

To educate the community about helping the environment through composting, the Cuttlefish partnered with seven of the school's clubs, including Nanoseed Club, Gardening Club and Green Committee. The process of organizing activities that were held last year was more streamlined since there were templates that could be used, so the Cuttlefish wanted to expand the event to foster more engagement and push in-person outreach.

Along with traditional carnival games, the Cuttlefish also held a variety of robot demonstrations, science experiments and pumpkin carving activities. Meanwhile, the school's Society of Women Engineers (SWE) club demonstrated how Arduinos, an open-source electronic prototyping platform, works.

In addition to placing emphasis on the environmental benefits of composting, the team used the event to spread awareness about how STEM can create meaningful impact in the world. According to senior Maithreyi Bharathi, who helped organize the event, around 70 hours of work was put into reaching out to schools and local communities alone. She emphasized how the pumpkin smashers are solutions to tangible problems, such as the release of harmful greenhouse gasses from compostable organic waste.

Through this event, the Cuttlefish team hopes to promote and educate young students in the community about the innovative creations STEM can help bring into the world, going beyond what ordinary robotics competitions demand.

"This is not for a usual robotics game, but this is like a real world solution to demolishing pumpkins and contributing to the environment," Bharathi said. ♦

## VAPING

continued from pg. 1

Despite the apparent decline of vaping on campus, Torrens said other forms of substance abuse are still present, and the administration is taking many steps to raise awareness surrounding the dangers of these issues. Drinking was especially present among students before the pandemic and persisted after quarantine ended, he said.

"Apathy of peers is what often leads to substance abuse; kids make good and bad choices, mostly based on what their peers say," Torrens said. "If kids can learn to speak up and voice their opinions so that their friends make good decisions, we would be much better off."

## California Healthy Kids Survey: signs of increased drug use at some high schools

To track students' behaviors and attitudes over time the district has used data from the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) for many years now.

The CHKS was most recently conducted last spring during a MOSAIC. Students filled out the survey anonymously and were asked about a wide range of topics from school engagement and safety to alcohol, vaping and drug use. The district also asked staff and parents or guardians to complete the survey.

The survey included these results:

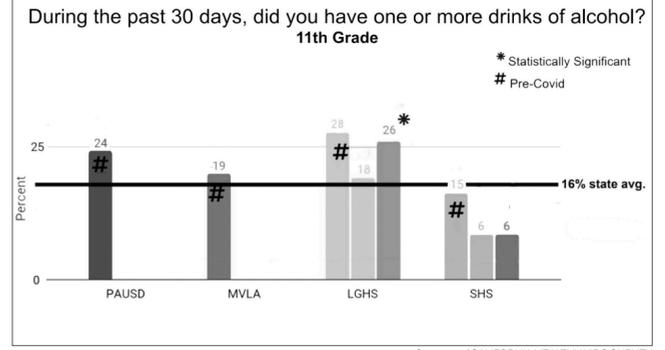
Six % of freshmen reported vaping e-cigarettes pre-COVID, but no freshmen reported vaping in the most recent survey. In the past month, 17 % of seniors said they had used alcohol; 11 % reported using marijuana; and six % had vaped.

Seven % of seniors said they had been drunk or high at school at least once. Eight % of seniors said they were currently vaping.

Ten % of seniors described themselves as binge drinkers. Experts worry that the downward usage following the pandemic may not hold for long. The pandemic disrupted teens' access to these substances and peer groups that encouraged drug use, vaping or alcohol use, but now that students are free from these constraints, the use and abuse numbers appear likely to return to pre-pandemic levels.

This fear is reflected in data from Los Gatos High School (LGHS). In 2021, 18% of juniors at LGHS said they drank within the past 30 days, but in the most recent survey, numbers jumped to 26%, nearly reaching the pre-COVID level of 28%. This raises red flags for teen drug use, and the danger of returning or even surpassing pre-COVID levels seems probable. Saratoga levels have remained relatively the same, with little to none increases.

There are many resources on Saratoga High's campus that aim to educate students about the short- and long-term effects of substance abuse. The Wellness Center has



Student addiction is measured in the California Healthy Kids Survey. Bars on the left, middle and right positions represent 2018, 2021 and 2023, from pre- to post-pandemic levels.

hosted activities aimed at improving poor mental health, which is a large cause of substance abuse. The district and Wellness Center also have access to organizations such as 24-hour substance abuse hotline for families who have children struggling with substance abuse, aimed at providing them with connection to a professional. The freshman-year health class tackles the subject extensively, and posters around campus document the dangers of substance abuse. The school is also addressing the aca-

ademic and social implications of substance abuse through MOSAIC life lessons once a month, encouraging students to speak up and support one another.

Recently, senior Ryan Lin started the tradition of Friday FoesFun in the student center to create an environment where students could have fun and simultaneously become educated about the dangers of drugs.

"Don't even try it," Lin said. "If you try it once, you can get addicted, and it will ruin your life." ♦

## PARCEL TAX

continued from pg. 1

The district recently paid for a survey of potential voters. The results show that while the majority of LGSUHS voters approve of the way the Los Gatos and Saratoga High School are performing, a large number think they are already overtaxed and might not support any parcel tax increases.

## A parcel tax of \$249 per parcel would provide an annual income of \$5 million.

A higher parcel tax — an annual tax on each parcel within a district — would help supplement the money the district gets from property taxes to pay for its costs such as maintaining libraries and improving employee salaries. Currently, the district's total budget is around \$80 million with \$70 million coming from the district's property tax-funded revenue. The existing \$49 parcel tax raises roughly \$1 million each year for the district.

"It is our hope to be able to

provide not only competitive salaries and benefits that would bring exemplary teachers to our schools but also additional incentives, such as multiple preparation periods, caring school climates as well as value and support for the professional work our staff exhibits," district public information officer Tanya De La Cruz said.

If two-thirds of voters approve it, funds collected from a parcel tax would be managed by an oversight committee of parents and community members. Members of this committee would meet regularly to ensure that funds obtained from the parcel tax are being used for what was promised to the community in the original ballot language.

In May 2016, the current parcel tax was renewed at \$49 per parcel for July 2017 through 2025, netting a total of \$950,000 annually for the school district. The \$49/parcel tax was first passed on May 3, 2011 district.

For comparison, the Fremont Union High School District's parcel tax for 2022 was set at \$98 per parcel, netting it \$5 million annually. In addition, Saratoga Union School District, comprising Redwood Middle and Saratoga's three elementary schools, assesses a parcel tax of \$68 per parcel, \$19 more per parcel than LGSUHS.

Noting this disparity, the

board hired a firm named EMC Research to conduct community polling on public perception of the district's handling of money, favorability for a parcel tax increase to \$99 and favorability for an increase to \$249. The polling occurred from Sept. 13-18 via phone interviews, emails and text and was in English and Chinese.

From the poll, it was discovered that 64% of voters support the \$99 parcel tax renewal and 67% of voters support the \$249 parcel tax renewal, meaning that overall, voters marginally support the \$249 parcel tax plan over the \$99 plan. Statistically, there is little difference between support for the \$99 plan and the \$249 plan.

A parcel tax of \$99 per parcel would generate an annual \$2 million in income over the course of eight years, while a parcel tax of \$249 per parcel would provide an annual income of \$5 million over the same period.

De La Cruz also noted the board has been meeting with staff, parents, and students since last spring to launch a new strategic plan called "We INSPIRE" that will guide the district in its work in the next few years, including managing the parcel tax.

"We need to reach our vision of shaping future global leaders, and this parcel tax will help us reach that goal," De La Cruz said. ♦

# Knit for Need Club donates to charities



Photo by ISABELLE WANG

Students practice knitting during Knit for Need's meeting on Oct. 25.

BY IsabelleWang & FlorenceWei

During lunch meetings in English teacher Mary Palisoul's room, members of the new Knit for Need Club — established earlier this year — carefully wrap threads of colorful, fluffy yarn around metal crochet hooks while junior co-presidents Aadhya Naveen and Shreya Raghuvanshi walk around, demonstrating how to crochet a scarf.

On the other side of the room, juniors treasurer Anika Ramakrishnan and secretary Meha Sekaran help others learn how to knit with looms. For several members, this was their first time crocheting or knitting.

All the officers have extensive prior experience knitting and said they wanted to share the fun activity with others who are also interested while at the same time helping the community. The officers plan to spend a few weeks teaching techniques before giving students time to create and donate their own projects.

To keep the meetings open-ended, the officers take suggestions from members to decide what they want to do during the meeting. Most of the meetings are spent on hands-on activities and demonstrations of knitting and crocheting techniques. This approach allows members to quickly identify unfamiliar techniques and get help at any time.

"I've been knitting for a while and it's a great hobby to learn," Naveen said. "Anyone can learn it. But it's really about weaving the community together, literally."

The club has two goals: to teach knitting and crocheting techniques to members, regardless of prior experience and to donate finished pieces created by members — such as scarves, beanies and blankets — to organizations that provide services to charities, such as for the homeless and premature babies. So far, knitted products have been donated to Warm Up America and Newborns in Need.

Although the club has enjoyed enthusiastic participation from roughly 12 students interested in learning to knit, purchasing the materials needed for club activities — such as yarn, knitting needles, crochet hooks and knitting looms — was an initial struggle.

The officers lacked money at the start of the school year for these supplies, so they took out a \$105 ASB loan to buy the necessary materials from Joann's and Michael's. The officers plan to pay back the money through bobafundraisers.

"We want to inspire others to contribute to the betterment of communities of need," Raghuvanshi said. "Especially in a hectic high school environment, we also wanted to provide a place for stress-relief and creative expression." ♦

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## Average Teacher Salaries 2020-21

\$114K Los Gatos - Saratoga	\$120K Palo Alto	\$120K Santa Clara	\$145K Mountain View - Los Altos
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Graphic by SKYLER MAO

Across the nearby school districts, parcel tax amounts show some correlation with average teacher salaries.

# A look at the nuts and bolts of the robotics team

BY SaachiJain

With almost 140 students participating in the school's two robotics programs, robotics has become one of the most popular activities on campus. The two organizations — the Mechanical Science and Engineering Team (MSET) Robotics Club and the VEX Robotics Club — boast 100 and 40 students respectively, though each has significant differences that many don't realize.

## MSET Robotics Club: parent organization

MSET is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and was originally founded in 2001 as a school club. MSET competes as part of the organization For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST), a worldwide robotics competition consisting of three possible tracks: FIRST Lego League (FLL), FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) and FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC). Working out of room 903 on campus, MSET also sometimes utilizes the MAP Annex for meetings and testing the robots, the engineering lab for machining parts and room 304 for testing some robots.

MSET has three FTC teams (the Cuttlefish, Bettafish and Jellyfish) and one FRC team (the Fish).

The Bettafish and Jellyfish are akin to a sports JV team and are primarily composed of freshmen and sophomores. More experienced members may later join the veteran Cuttlefish team.

FTC's competition season runs from September through April, and teams of 15 students build robots that compete in a "game challenge," in which a team's robot completes various tasks to score points. The FTC teams typically meet three to four times per week during the season, though this frequency drastically increases in the

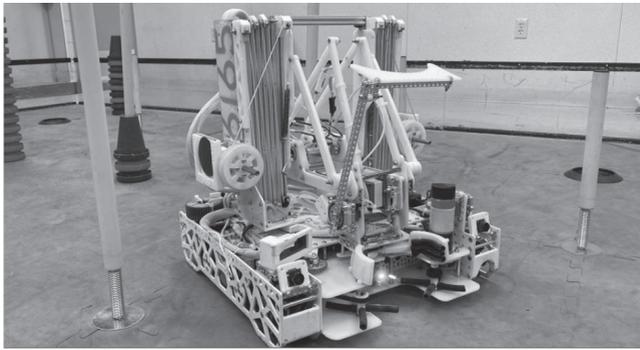


Photo by SAACHI JAIN

## MSET Cuttlefish 2022-2023 robot opens its claws to intake cone shaped scoring elements

weeks leading up to a competition.

Games at competitions are played in a 2 vs. 2 style, where there are two randomized alliances of two teams' robots playing against each other on the same field. The teams play a 2.5-minute match after which the winning alliance is determined for the team that scored more points. Each team plays anywhere from five to eight matches at a competition, and are ranked upon their results.

Similar to many sports tournaments, these competitions feature qualification matches, an elimination round and the final playoffs. Teams who continue to win tournaments throughout the season qualify to the regional championships in March, from where they can qualify to the World Championships in Houston. In the past two seasons, both the FRC team, the Fish, and the veteran FTC team, the Cuttlefish, qualified to the World Championships.

have a wide margin of error, the easier it is for the driver," she said. "It's important when you design your modules to make them complex, but also versatile."

## VEX Robotics Club: new kids on the block

Founded in 2021 as the "VEX For All Club," the VEX Robotics Club started out with just the officer team and later grew to 40 members in the two following seasons. VEX competes as part of the VEX Robotics Competition, and its season runs year-round, starting with the game reveal in April until the World Championships in April of the following year.

Since it is affiliated with ASB, the club holds lunch meetings on Red Mondays in math teacher Lisa Ginestet-Araki's room. During these meetings, the club officers discuss various topics throughout the competitive season, such as principles of mechanics, programming and CAD (Computer Aided Design). The VEX game format is similar to that of FTC, where the robots compete in alliances of two teams on a 12 foot by 12 foot field. However, the games and competitions of VEX and FTC are completely independent organizations.

Since its season runs throughout the school year, the VEX Robotics Club meets daily after school for build sessions, where they discuss design, work on building the robot and test software. This year, the club has a budget of around \$10,000.

VEX currently has six teams and looks forward to their expanding chances to compete and recruit more members to participate in future seasons.

"This year we have been able to expand our club to almost double its size, which was really exciting. Next year, we hope to expand even further, and possibly get another room," Vudali said. ♦

November 21, 2023

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# Marching band finishes with victory at Folsom

BY AnikaKapasi &amp; AngelaTan

When the name Saratoga High School thundered across the stadium as the winner of the overall sweepstakes of the Folsom Fall Festival on Nov. 4, proud parents and band students alike whooped and hollered as they savored an end-of-the-season victory.

The school's marching band competed at Folsom High's annual field show for their last competition of the 2023 season, placing first overall out of 10 schools with a score of 93.44. The band won every individual category — woodwinds, brass, color guard, general effect, visual performance and percussion — except field conducting, in which they placed eighth. According to junior drum major Aiden Chen, this result may have been because judges often prioritize cohesiveness of conducting, which was more challenging for the band's four drum majors.

One week earlier, the band competed at the Foothill Band Review hosted at Foothill High on Oct. 28, where they placed first in the 6A division with a score of 92.42 and second overall in the competition. Notably, in the individual categories of their division, the band placed first in percussion and woodwinds and also won music sweepstakes for having the highest overall score in music.

Comparing the 2023 season to the 2022 season, senior drum major Gabriel Shyh — a drum major in both seasons — found that the band significantly improved in their ability to efficiently learn and retain new material. While Shyh wishes the band was able to put more time into practicing marching this season, he said he understands that



Photo by ISABELLE GECILS

## Drum majors and guard captains return with numerous trophies after the awards ceremony.

preparation for Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE)'s acceptance into the 2024 California All-State Conference took priority for music director Jason Shiuan and the music program as a whole.

"I am extremely proud of the marching band, especially the Class of '24 for sticking through the pandemic during freshman year and cementing a legacy that will impact the years to come," Shyh said. "I am confident that next year's groups will continue to be successful and make the program proud."

Much of this season's success was also supported by the crew of parent volunteers who ran logistical work. On each compe-

petition day, the parents organized dinner for all 205 members, drove the numerous equipment trucks and chaperoned the students on their respective buses and at overnight competitions. Throughout the season, volunteer parents put in dozens of hours during performance weeks preparing uniforms to ensure they were ready for use for following competitions.

"The cliché is that it takes a village," Shiuan said. "The parents are super crucial because they do the behind-the-scenes work that usually gets no recognition. So it's really amazing that we have so many parents who [are happy to] jump in to help." ♦

# VEX robotics stays busy

BY FlorenceHu &amp; RuiyanZhu

The fall has been a busy season for the school's six VEX robotics teams, who have participated in two tournaments and now have one team 95071X, qualified to compete in the state championship.

At their second VEX tournament, hosted in the school gym on Oct. 8, the best among Saratoga's six teams, 95071X, finished seventh out of 32 teams in their qualification matches. The team was eliminated after they lost against the first seed alliance, which consisted of the No. 3 and No. 1 teams at the tournament.

Later that month, the First Robotics Competition (FRC) team attended the CapCityClassic, an off-season competition hosted at Pleasant Grove High School from Oct. 28-29. They advanced to the 4th of six elimination matches in the competition.

## VEX hosts tournament to raise funds

Thirty-two high school and middle school teams from the Bay Area attended this competition.

Sophomore Katherine Zeng said that event ran "much smoother" than other VEX events, which she attributed to the work of student and parent volunteers, as well as the support from VEX's sister teams at Redwood Middle School.

"It's really fun working with the middle schoolers and building that connection," Zeng said.

Raising over \$5,000 to finance material purchases and tournament registration fees in the future, as the hosting teams, the VEX teams were also granted discounts to purchase game elements and field parts, and they collected registration fees of around \$150 per team in attendance.

## FRC competition at the CapCityClassic

At the CapCityClassic tournament, the FRC robotics team was presented the

Excellence in Engineering award for their ability to demonstrate a professional approach to the design process, including being able to detail the ambitious designs and practical implementations of their robot's various mechanisms.

On the first day of the competition, they won two of the five qualification matches played, placing 7th out of 42 teams.

On the second day, the team pushed through three more matches that would determine priority in alliance selection, which then determines elimination brackets. After concluding the qualification matches in 10th place, they declined two alliance offers from higher-ranked teams in order to compete as an alliance captain, which allowed them to

have full control over their choice of alliance partners. As the alliance captain, the team ended up allying with 5924 Golden Gate Robotics, 2551 Penguin Empire and 4135 Iron Patriots.

On the third day, alliances competed against each other once again. However, the team was eliminated before their semifinals round.

One issue the team encountered at this competition was the shortage of members needed to gather scouting data about other teams' robots and strategies. Normally, the 49-member team would have around 30 in attendance, but since the venue was over two hours away, they averaged just 6 to 10 people scouting at a time.

"Our scouting data was limited because we had significantly less people than we normally have. As a result, we had to go based on what we knew [before the competition]," junior Sameera Kapur said. For new members, the tournament helped them familiarize with the pre-competition preparations. Sophomore Cohen Lu participated as the gunner on the drive team, manipulating the depositing mechanism.

"I think [the competition] went well," Kapur said. "It was definitely a learning experience for what we need to do better in the future." ♦

# College app pandemonium

## AS ACCEPTANCES DECREASE, APPLICATIONS INCREASE

BY AndrewLin

With 96% of 2022 graduating seniors continuing their education at a 2 or 4-year college, SHS has earned its reputation as an academic powerhouse: It's No. 181 among 17,680 high schools nationwide by the U.S. News Report and No. 24 among 1,536 high schools in California.

A large part of its academic excellence can be attributed to the rigor of courses offered here. The proportion of students who enrolled in at least one AP class increased this past decade, from 57% in 2013 to 69% in 2022, according to registrar Robert Wise.

This uptick in AP class signups and increasingly competitive academic environment has gone along with another trend: More seniors apply to dozens of colleges each fall if their top choices don't work out.

Until 2020, the average number of colleges a senior here applied to hovered around 13. That number steadily increased in 2020 up to 22 per student in 2023.

It's a trend guidance counselor Frances Saiki has seen since she started working at the school in 2007. Especially in the last four to five years, the majority of secondary school reports and counselor recommendation letters she's sent to colleges have been for Early Action and Early Decision applicants, a shift from when applications were more or less spread evenly between Early and Regular Decision in 2007.

Counselor Eileen Allen partly attributes this increase in applications to the increased competitiveness of the UC system, which is leading students to consider more out-of-state alternatives. All UCs have seen sharp declines in acceptance rates since 2020, other than Merced and Riverside, whose admittance rates are climbing.

According to College and Career Center adviser Brad Ward, in the past, an out-of-state college like the University of Michigan might receive 50 applications from Saratoga High seniors. Now, that number can be as high as 120.

This trend coincides with the steady de-

crease in acceptance rates at top-tier universities nationwide, due to test-optional policies and grade inflation (the average unweighted 10-12 GPA at SHS has grown from 3.47 in 2013 to 3.67 in 2022, Wise said). This has led students who might not have applied to a competitive school a decade ago to apply now.

Ward suggests students limit themselves to applying to 20 colleges maximum, with each UC school being counted separately.

"We'd rather see students have the time to be very thoughtful and deliberate with their applications and not be overwhelmed and rush through them," Allen said.

Students aren't the only ones who have increased their efforts for the past few years. A record-breaking 100 colleges visited SHS this year; the previous high was 94 in 2019, and that number included graduation pathways not included in the 2023 survey.

"We recommend applying to reach schools you really love and feel are a good fit, but you want to be able to do a great job with applications and be thoughtful," Allen said. "Applying to too many colleges can diminish the time you have to be thoughtful on your applications." ♦

## >> falconfigures

94 The previous record of colleges that visited SHS in the 2019 year.

100 The newest record of colleges that visited SHS in a 2023 survey.

9% UC Berkeley's acceptance rate as of 2022.

BY DivyaVadlakonda

The yearbook class has faced a post-pandemic reality in recent years: It has seen a decline in enrollment from 33 students — in 2019-2020 to 25 students in 2020-2021, a drop of 24%.

The next year was worse, with only a dozen sophomores, juniors and seniors returning to staff. As a result, the class was combined with the introductory class in 2021-2022 to produce the yearbook.

Another result of these trends the yearbook has experienced a shift in their leadership this year. For the first time in recent history, three out of its four editors-in-chief (EICs) are juniors. They were picked for the position last spring by adviser Megan Laws.

Junior Timothy Leung, Amy Pan and Ava Sadeghi share leadership duties with senior Grace Li. Leung, like the other juniors, began to work on the staff while taking Journalism 1 as a freshman.

"I feel like two years was enough for us to get started. We are definitely learning new things every day, but I was a design editor last year and I got a lot of experience from that," Leung said.

Nevertheless, the top leadership position

has been harder than he initially anticipated. Leung said he had to learn skills in fields that he knew little about, such as managing publishing, adapting to new workspaces and teaching skills to new staffers who know little about journalism. Now 20 freshmen are in the class.

Ordinarily, the class would begin introducing the first cycle of spreads — 2 side-by-side pages in the yearbook — right away. However, the EICs now do what they call a "journalism bootcamp" due to the lack of a proper Journalism 1 course to introduce important concepts.

This bootcamp condensed the previous Journalism 1 curriculum into six weeks. The new staffers, affectionately called "yearbies," began to create their own spreads.

"We really want to make sure that from day one, we give them a strong foundation [of journalistic principles]," Leung said. "Especially because right now, we are teaching basic concepts rather than running a well-oiled organization. We have to make sure that the freshmen are able to understand their tasks."

He said it has been hard to check in with the new students considering the breadth of journalistic and yearbook-specific con-



Leung

# PTSO launches Project Cornerstone workshops

BY IsabelleWang

Project Cornerstone — a YMCA of Silicon Valley Initiative run by volunteers in the community to ensure the youth are valued, respected and supported — began hosting workshops for the parents and guardians of students in the Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District.

So far, Project Cornerstone, which partners with schools

throughout the Bay Area in Santa Clara County and San Mateo County, has served over 56,500 students through its school programs and educated over 800 parents annually through the parent workshops.

"Our mission is to support the mental health and well-being of all youth by fostering the development of healthy social and emotional skills," said Debbi Headley, the School Partnerships Director

at Project Cornerstone and the workshop facilitator for the workshop series. "We do this by educating adults on how to cultivate supportive relationships with youth."

The three 90-minute workshops this school year will discuss topics of drugs, technology, sleep, stress, self-care and communication and will be held at the school's library.

The first meeting was an introduction to the adolescent's brain,

designed to help attendees understand how teenagers cope with stress and emotions.

The psychology of teens will be explored more in the second meeting, which will promote stress management and resiliency by teaching parents how to emphasize self-care and communication to teenagers.

Lastly, the third meeting will talk about inclusion and building a community with diversity, along

The student leadership team also proved pivotal in keeping the season running smoothly. The leadership team consisted of 40 students who were either drum majors, guard captains, section leaders or managers. They ensured band members stayed on track during rehearsals and managed internal tasks, often facilitating music sectionals and student collaborations that the directors could not individually supervise.

Now that the marching season is over, the band has split into three separate ensembles — Freshman Band, Symphonic Band and SWE — which are each preparing their own concert pieces for the annual winter concert on Dec. 14. In addition, SWE is working on their repertoire for the California All-State Music Education Conference (CASMEC) and holds after-school rehearsals two or three times a month.

Looking ahead to next season, Chen hopes to implement changes in how the leadership team manages the group so they can improve the productivity of rehearsals from the beginning of the season. He felt that a major weakness during this season was that the drum majors didn't know how much to expect from a significantly larger group than the 176 members in last season, so they were less efficient in setting marching foundations for the year.

"Eventually, we did end up becoming a lot more focused and intentional with our rehearsal and our reps, but the band had to completely switch the way they were doing things [when competitions were getting closer]," Chen said. "Next year, we'll definitely be making our expectations clear from the very beginning, so that [members] know the standard of rehearsal etiquette that we demand of them and ourselves." ♦

LIBRARY

continued from pg. 1

With a credentialed librarian offering the latest techniques on research, teachers say they could focus more on content instruction specific to their classes.

A credentialed librarian could also help students who are struggling with research projects and give them access to a much more "university-like experience," AP U.S. History teacher Faith Daly said.

"In college, you go in and you talk to a research librarian or an archivist," Daly said. "They know the collection and are able to help you get what you want."

Without an expert on the collections at the library, students go to teachers during tutorials rather than seeking research help in the library. For some teachers, it is hard to both teach their course material and also provide cutting-edge instruction on the research process.

According to assistant principal Matthew Torrens, a major reason the district has viewed the role of a librarian as less vital is due to the digitalization of a lot of library resources, meaning students are able to access them on their own. JSTOR and EBSCO are currently the primary sources for research-based needs, used by both English and History classes. Previously, the library also included a collection of historical newspapers, e-books and additional databases: ProQuest, Gale and ABC-CLIO.

Historical newspapers helped show students how different stories were reported during different centuries. Databases such as Gale were also used to provide students with reference materials rather than simply crowd-sourced ones, according to Daly.

"These databases cost a lot of money to access, and so it is a problem to figure out which ones are within the budget. The [credentialed] librarian would make those

recommendations," English teacher Suzanne Herzman said. "It is also now more important than ever to teach students why databases matter and how they differ from simply asking Google or ChatGPT."

To supplement the lack of online databases, some teachers utilize the physical resources the library still has. Last year, English 11 Honors teachers Natasha Ritchie and Amy Keys brought their students to the library to access physical databases such as the Contemporary Literary Criticisms and Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism series.

As physical books have decreased in importance, the actual use of the library has changed significantly in the past 15 years. Currently, only 151 books are checked out among the thousands available in the library, according to textbook technician Nada Macesic.

"We used to have meeting rooms where students could collaborate and now they're collaborating in teacher's classrooms," Torrens said. "Little pieces of the library that are no longer used have been removed."

"Students are not reaching the same level as they could when we had a credentialed librarian."

TEACHER Faith Daly

Unlike Saratoga High, Los Gatos High School does have a credentialed librarian named Liz Olson. Principal Greg Louie said he knows of no plans for the district to hire a full-time or part-time credentialed librarian anytime soon.

"The overall gap in the quality of research has increased," Daly said. "Students are not reaching the same level as they could as when we had a credentialed librarian." ♦



Daly

Audiences appreciate fall play's uniqueness

By Alan Cai & Divya Vadlakonda

The lights of the McAfee Center dimmed as junior Apollo Burgess, playing the role of the energetic Jimmy, ran into his aloof ex-girlfriend Sandrine, played by junior Annaliese Shab, at a bar. The catch: Sandrine was engaged with another man and was celebrating her bachelorette party at that moment.

It took a moment for Jimmy to realize what was going on, and when he does, the two awkwardly part, likely to never see each other again.

The tense moment was a key moment in one of eight continuous vignettes from the drama department's fall play "Almost, Maine," which was performed on Nov. 11, 12, 16, 17 and 18. The first and second shows filled about 150 and 40 out of the 569 seats respectively — a low turnout on opening weekend that sophomore Nila Venkatratnam, who played Marvalyn, expected.

"Almost, Maine" is among the more unusual productions that the drama department has done in recent years: Rather than depicting a linear timeline, it presents eight different vignettes. The production takes place in a fictional town called Almost, Maine and portrays a love story between two different characters in each vignette.

Ever since the first day of auditions, drama director Ben Brotzman knew that this year's fall play would be different.

"Almost, Maine" is unique because it is very similar to what many people are going through in their own lives," Brotzman said. "The play not only reflects many of

the feelings we experience when spending time with significant others but also applies to how we treat our parents, friends and siblings."

Throughout rehearsals, Brotzman noticed the talent the actors brought to the table as well as their ability to adapt to the niches their roles demanded.

Senior Ashley Henry, who played Marci, agreed with his assessment, saying: "Everyone really fit into their role very well and we formed a very tight-knit community as the months progressed."

The prologue, interlogue and epilogue scenes were placed throughout the play, with sophomore Patrick Keogh as Pete and sophomore Ria Abraham as Ginette.

The modern timeframe and pacing of the dialogue allowed the audience to relate to what was happening on stage, with them empathizing with the more touching moments and laughing at the humorous ones.

Though Brotzman served as overall director, many aspects of the play's production were handled by students. "Almost, Maine" was led by senior stage manager Arushi Maheshwar, assistant stage manager Ryan Cagliostro and junior assistant director Rylee Stanton.

However, due to the production only having two actors per vignette, many actors did not participate in recurring scenes outside of their own. Nevertheless, Venkatratnam said the second show was among the strongest in terms of acting performance in recent years.

"It's made me have to work as an actor in a different way and pretend like it is an everyday conversation even if I'm on the stage," Venkatratnam said. ♦

AP classes: learning for more than just a test

As a result of the school's rigorous academic culture and college admissions pressures, an increasing number of students tend to pile up on AP classes, especially during their junior and senior years. Regardless of the mental and academic repercussions of taking these heavy course loads, many students simply take more AP classes in hopes of boosting their GPAs and buffering their college applications.

proach to the curriculum.

Even with these pressures, though, it is still possible to make the experience more engaging for students.

Classes such as AP U.S. History (APUSH) help cultivate valuable soft skills such as research, teamwork and critical thinking. These skills are vital to a student's future success. Learning to collaborate with your group members in a more difficult class environment is also a valuable experience that can be valuable into countless courses and situations later in life.

These approaches give students the freedom when choosing the areas they delve deeper into. Making these additions to classes that are historically monotonous improves the experience for students. In addition, teaching students the critical skills needed as a problem solver will benefit them much more in the long run.

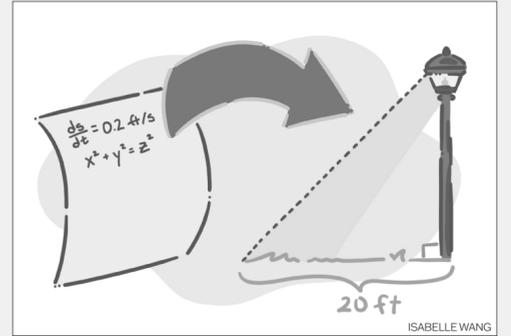
There are many other APs, especially AP sciences, that similarly fall into a trap regarding their focus — do you choose to solely prepare students for the AP test, regardless of their intentions in taking the class, or do you try to incorporate relevant lessons that the students will be able to apply later?

For some classes, finding a balance between test prep and enduring learning can be particularly difficult. Classes such as AP Chemistry struggle to even fit all of the AP curriculum into one school year, let alone finding times for labs and other activities.

From August until early May, there is little time for anything not directly related to passing the test. But after the early-May test, a golden few weeks opens up for deeper lessons unrelated to the core AP curriculum.

Classes such as AP Chemistry could use the time after the exam to still maintain a structured form of learning, focusing on topics that are more relevant to students' futures.

With other classes, however, achieving this balance between test prep and real-world applica-



ISABELLE WANG

Many AP classes have the sole mission of preparing students for the AP exam.

Some students are taking as many as 5 AP classes per year, loading up in their junior year with classes like Calculus BC, two AP science classes (collectively known as "double sciencing") and AP U.S. History. Each AP class assigns roughly an hour of homework per night, leading to as many as 6 hours of homework for some students each day. However, for many of these classes, students are simply memorizing material and largely forgetting it after AP tests are over.

This unfortunate trend is in part due to their curriculums: Many AP classes have the sole mission of preparing students for the AP exam, rather than striking a balance between applicable and relevant learning in addition to exam preparation. Not only does this approach not benefit students in the long run, but it also makes their heavy workload monotonous and less useful for their future endeavors.

AP classes have sometimes been undermined by the requirements of the tests. Some have so much material that it is difficult to incorporate applicable learning into the curriculum. Teachers, in turn, are under pressure to ensure that their students perform well on the exam and feel pressured to take a test prep ap-

proach tends to work more easily. Many AP math classes — ones like AP Calculus AB and BC and AP Statistics — are naturally based upon real-life examples and situations, many of which students explore through word problems and practice.

There are many classes that are only applicable to a student's potential major and may not serve much purpose beyond high school, but nevertheless teach students valuable soft skills.

Projects allow students to retain real-life application skills further into life.

For example, APUSH and AP Computer Science A (APCSA) are two fields commonly pursued by students in college, but never revisited by those who don't. However, these classes teach valuable research and teamwork skills applicable beyond school and offer opportunities for students to explore their own areas of learning, incorporating proj-

ects into the normal curriculum designed upon the format of the AP tests.

APUSH includes a couple of projects throughout the year that can lead to participation in National History Day, and though the requirements of the project are set in stone, the topic is up to students to decide. They are allowed the freedom to do their own research as they see fit.

Similarly, AP Computer Science has projects in every unit that allow students to use their own creativity to program around set parameters. Such projects, beyond taking notes on the textbook or doing practice MCQ questions for the AP test, allow students to retain these real-life application skills further into life.

Each AP class is different, but all should make an effort to include enduring and relatable lessons, while still preparing students for the AP exams. By incorporating projects and consistently drawing real-life connections to the material, engagement levels among students are sure to be significantly higher — and this can be done with little or no sacrifice to the pass rate of the class. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief: Lynn Dai, Jonny Luo; Opinion Editors: Sam Bai, Sarah Thomas; Reporter: Saachi Jain

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 22-12 in favor of this article.

Rally, rally, rally: It's time for something different

By Amelia Chang

The bell rings, signaling that second period has ended, and a tidal wave of students walk to the gym, prepared for the upcoming rally.

Some are excited, ready to show their school spirit, while others are less enthusiastic, having homework to finish or other "social-emotional" activities to do. They don't have an option to not go, however, because despite rallies only being "highly recommended," many teachers make sure to herd the students directly to the gym after the bell rings and also close their classrooms.

This pressure from staff to go to rallies already makes the idea of going less appealing, but perhaps if ASB and the administration can find ways to make rallies more engaging and relevant to all, more

people will want to go willingly and participate instead of cutting.

Rallies exist to promote school spirit, and many enjoy the games and events that are being held. Currently, though, the rallies just are not very interesting to a significant segment of students.

How could the rally commission solve this problem? Instead of limiting the rally events to accommodate just a few organizations such as the cheer or dance team, a wider variety of activities in this school should be represented.

I'm thinking of the robotics team or the marching band, activities that are not normally on display during the school day unless you're a part of them. If they're featured in rallies for even 5 or 10 minutes, they will be able to show off all the cool things that they've been doing.

Other possibilities include the

drama students putting on brief scenes or even the soccer team playing mini scrimmages, perhaps against staff members, to add in a bit of hilarity.

Rallies should be innovative and unexpected and try to accommodate what students want to see, rather than just generic, ritualistic exercises of games and chants that all rallies have become.

Rallies are a chance for the whole school to get together and show their spirit, but right now only a few parts of the school are being represented.

Having a wider variety of activities means that there will also be a higher chance rallies will catch someone's attention, and students will want to participate and see their own activity represented. Having new events at each rally will also garner more interest. Students should be able to sug-

bigidea

3 Ways to Boost Rallies

Feature clubs: Showcase organizations such as the robotics team or the marching band.

Have a variety of activities: Incorporate engaging activities, not just ritualistic exercises of games and chants.

Listen to suggestions: Rallies exist for the students, so their ideas and feedback should be the priority.

gest ideas to the ASB for new rally ideas that would make them want to go, and by the school taking into account these suggestions, more students, even reluctant ones, will be more likely to want to find their places in the bleachers. ♦

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# ‘iPad kid’ trend reflects reality of screen addiction

BY SkylerMao

It seems that everywhere we go — restaurants, streets and playgrounds — there always seems to be a kid entranced by their iPad, hopefully unaware of what’s going on around them.

This is part of a new generation of “iPad kids,” a boom in children hooked to their tablets as a result of the increasing integration of technology into our daily lives at ever younger ages, further exacerbated by the device-reliance caused by the pandemic.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 80% of households with children owned a tablet in 2021, compared to only 60% of households without children.

## Parents must begin to take action and stop letting electronics take care of their child.

Beginning with the pandemic, screen time for children under 18 has increased by 52%. Given the addictive nature of social media apps, many children have gone down a spiral of iPad addiction.

With the increase in iPad usage only imposing damage on children, parents must

begin to take action and stop letting electronics take care of their child.

The harms of screen time addiction among children can already be seen. A 2023 study found that kids who had more than four hours of screen time compared to those who didn’t were five times more likely to have stunted communication skills, twice as likely to have stunted personal and social skills and twice as likely to have stunted fine motor skills.

This lack of communication skills extends even further as children addicted to their screens often become short tempered, growing a self-centered ego as if everything has to go their way every time.

Even worse, the harmful effects of device use from early childhood can extend to children’s teenage and adult years. A study by Yale University concluded that youth who spent more time on digital technology were more likely to exhibit higher levels of internalizing problems two years later, including depression, anxiety and social anxiety.

Currently, 95% of teenagers use smartphones, with over 45% reporting near-constant use. With more kids getting hooked on iPads, the future of teenagers’ screen time addiction and mental health looks rather despondent.

This begs the question: If iPads are so harmful, why are so many children getting access to them?

The answer stems from parents, who have voiced that iPads are an easy way to



keep their kids engaged, since a quick distraction for their children can alleviate stress in potentially difficult situations.

However, parents should recognize that introducing screen time to their children at an early age has many negative effects — a way to calm kids down may turn into a cycle of addiction that impacts their development and later life.

Providing a child with unlimited access to the internet can in no way be an adequate substitute for real parenting, especially with such young children. A child’s development needs the care that only a parent or guardian can provide.

Parents should introduce screen time controls and educate their kids about the harms. They should focus on forming bonds with their child at a young age, as parent-child interaction is key for the child to develop into a happy, resilient individual. They can play board games, go to a park or spend other forms quality time with their kids.

Here is a plea to parents: Think long and hard before bringing a tablet into your home. A simple distraction may seem desirable at first, but there are much better things to do with your kids that don’t involve an iPad. ♦

# Productivity lies in early mornings, not late nights

BY FlorenceHu

On a quiet, serene morning, cool air passes through my open window. It is 7 a.m.

The few people walking outside keep quiet. No one chats on their phone, and cars have not even started to roam the streets yet.

Pouring out across the paper, the math equations form in my head just as fast as I can jot them down.

Ever since I had established the habit of waking up early, my thoughts have seemed clearer and focused.

Waking up to complete last-minute homework might sound like procrastination — but it is really better to fall asleep halfway through a project at 3 a.m.?

On top of being a great time to ditch communication problems, mornings are also my most productive time of the day. The first one to two hours of daylight provide a quiet space to work and much fewer distractions.

The benefits of being an early bird are supported by science, too. Waking up with the sun’s morning light reins in the body’s levels of melatonin, a sleep-inducing hormone.

Syncing with the sun’s schedule means natural light helps the body’s melatonin daily cycle stay on track, which makes the

most out of my few productive hours of the day.

With optimized working conditions, I tend to squeeze the most out of these precious morning hours.

Getting out of bed earlier isn’t usually easy, but on the other hand, 8 a.m. deadlines mean that I have to plan with a time constraint. These early morning deadlines are immediate incentives that push me to be even more productive.

Setting my goal of finishing the close read in 10 minutes means that I can be fully engaged. As a result, if I finish work in less time, I won’t have to wake up as early, allowing myself more sleep. The goal transforms from merely submitting an assignment to finishing it as efficiently as possible.

This early start to the day has made me more aware of how much sleep I should strive to get.

Since quitting the mindset of needlessly staying up late just for the sluggish, endless hours of nighttime blurriness, I’ve realized just how much more I can accomplish, when immersed in early mornings of clarity. ♦

# A night-owl lifestyle gives one productivity powers

BY VictoriaLin

The dim light of my lamp illuminates across the room. I sit at my desk, typing furiously at 100 words per minute. The time: 12 a.m. For whatever reason, it is only at this time — while feeling on the verge of being delirious — that I find my inspiration.

Any procrastinator knows the deadline for most assignments is either at 12 a.m. or the beginning of the class period. Night owls like me will start working right before midnight to be incentivized by the thought of either turning in the assignment on time or getting points off homework for turning it in late.

According to Inc., working at night can improve the amount of overall work done for some people.

If I hypothetically get no homework done by 9 p.m., I become overpowered by a rush of stress and adrenaline, which makes me much more productive.

Spurred by the thought of turning in an assignment late, my fingers go on hyper-speed. While the stress might not produce the highest quality of work, it’s better than not getting any work done at all. Working at night also pro-

vides fewer distractions for those who tend to jump from one time-consuming activity to another.

There’s no messages to respond to, no parents nagging you to wash the dishes and no cats to feed.

Unless all your friends are also fellow night owls (you guys might also be up until 3 a.m.), working at night eliminates all possibility of getting sidetracked by a conversation.

Staying up late can also create more hours in the day, exchanging useless sleeping for invaluable time on important assignments such as college essays, studying for tests or planning out the next day.

This mindset might not be super positive for your physical health, but you’ll thank yourself tomorrow for being so productive.

As a fellow student who gets roughly seven to eight hours of sleep per night, I sometimes find myself sleep deprived the next morning, but that’s what mid-afternoon naps are for.

Keep in mind that this midnight lifestyle is not sustainable for the long run.

Though our society runs during the day, I’m one of those people who seems to function best at night. It’s almost like having a super power — student during the day, dedicated worker at night. It may not be sustainable over a lifetime, but for now, it gets the job done. ♦

# Democracy endangered by wild gerrymandering

BY NicoleLee & RuiyanZhu

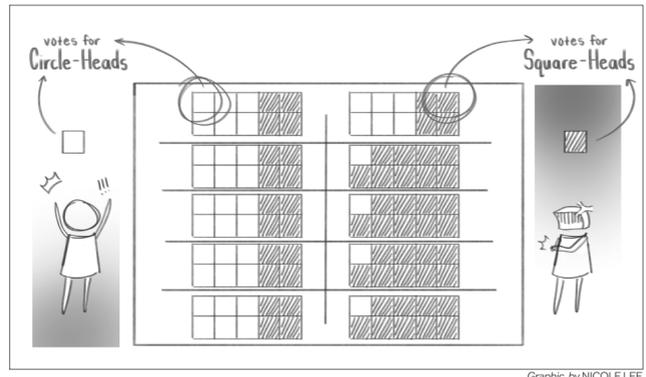
In 1812, politicians changed the boundaries of Massachusetts to favor the Jefferson Democrats, in part leading to a win for the Democrats. This practice continues to this day, and in the modern political climate, gerrymandering is a large part of the American political landscape.

Gerrymandering is deeply undemocratic. Essentially, instead of drawing competitive districts, politicians choose their voters by drawing a district, essentially a territorial division, with their desired demographic. In doing so, a minority party is able to receive a majority of the votes.

Even though changing the way districts are mapped is out of voters’ control, understanding gerrymandering can allow more awareness about this issue. Election processes have become eroded by partisan interests so much that they are basically rigged, and this affects the voting rights of all communities.

If the votes are manipulated to benefit one group, what is the point of putting in your ballot? If left unchecked, gerrymandering could have irreversible consequences. In the 2020 presidential election, Republicans attempted to dilute the influence of Democrats in North Carolina before the Supreme Court intervened.

According to the Washington Post, if Trump won 50% and Biden won 49%, there would be 10 red seats and just 3 blue seats



When 100 votes are grouped into the following districts of 10 votes each, a 60-40 vote win for square-heads can quickly transform into a 6-4 district loss for square-heads.

for the rest of the decade, an outcome completely at odds with North Carolina’s purple (swing state) political division.

Gerrymandering is done through two main methods: cracking and packing. Cracking is separating a group of people that are under the same political affiliation into different districts, diluting their voting powers.

On the other hand, packing occurs when a group under the same political affiliation is put into the same district.

However, this weakens their overall voting strength because those voters have been removed from other districts, making them uncompetitive.

Beyond the effect of gerrymandering on voters, Harvard researchers have found that it disempowers Americans at a district level. Politicians are put in seats, knowing they’re guaranteed to be gerrymandered into office next cycle; thus, they have less incentive to respond to what voters want.

The study also found empirical evidence

that gerrymandering illegally dilutes the power of Black voters and other people of color.

As a result, these marginalized minorities can’t get their voices heard.

However, it has been hard to prove that gerrymandering is at work in all cases, especially since district boundaries often don’t look like they’ve been intentionally cut up and tampered with.

According to Reuters, the Supreme Court made decisions in 2019 preventing federal courts from involving themselves in cases involving gerrymandering — a decision which undoubtedly lessened the control citizens have over gerrymandering. While gerrymandering that is considered to be racially motivated has been classified as illegal, partisan gerrymandering has been ruled to be largely OK by the Supreme Court, no matter the distortions and inequities it creates.

Because election processes are controlled by district remappings, opposing parties fight to skew the district in their favor. Voters are crucial for democracy to function, and these rigged maps are not making it any better.

As students, we may not have as much power to directly write new legislation. But as soon-to-be-voters, we should educate ourselves to be aware of the existence and dangers of gerrymandering and other issues that affect our democracy, and voice our opinions against it — whether online or in-person. ♦

# District’s new Wi-Fi is unnecessarily frustrating

BY SkylerMao & NikaSvizhenko

Over the summer, the district began implementing a new Wi-Fi system on campus, “LGSUHSD Wifi.” The switch to the new system was completed on Oct. 11.

From a student perspective, this new Wi-Fi has been problematic for two main reasons: It is unnecessarily difficult to set up and, for some, has raised privacy concerns. While the old Wi-Fi required only a school email and password, the new one requires students to install software and go through

a tedious setup process that doesn’t always work on the first, second or third attempts.

District director of technology Julie Grenier said in a prior Falcon article that convenience and increased cybersecurity were the major reasons for the change. While the old Wi-Fi required students to remember a password created specifically for it, the new one allows students and staff to use their Google account to log in.

However, the difficulty of remembering a password shouldn’t be solved with a 5-page instruction manual, equipped with computer software that requires downloading.

In addition, the old “lgswifi” didn’t even need a password after each successive log-in — automatic connection wasn’t even a problem.

Indeed, some students have ignored the new Wi-Fi, choosing to use the LGSUHSD Guest Wi-Fi or personal hotspots instead; this alone speaks volumes about the shortcomings of the new system.

For future rollouts of major technology changes, it would be helpful to have video tutorials rather than more abstract directions on a Google Doc, which are hard to follow.

In addition to being overly complicated to set up, the Wi-Fi has also raised privacy concerns.

While the district has stated that the new Wi-Fi does not permit any staff or administrators to access or view any files on students’ devices, this does not eliminate it completely from privacy concerns such as access to network history or other areas for monitoring.

Overall, the new Wi-Fi is going to have some benefits, but for many students, the switchover felt frustrating and unnecessary. If it ain’t broke, why fix it? ♦



# Flipped classes save class time for active learning

BY LawsonWang & BryanZhao

It’s tough for educators to find ways to make learning effective and engaging, especially for advanced courses like APs where there is a seemingly endless amount of material to be taught. Under pressure to cover so much, many rely on direct instruction and worksheets or the equivalent, and while they may be useful in teaching students the information, those periods are, quite frankly, extremely boring.

Thankfully, there is a solution to these boring, monotonous classes that is being implemented in numerous classes: flipping the delivery of information through lectures with the active doing of skill-building practice.

In flipped classrooms, students watch recorded lectures and take notes at home, preserving class time for asking questions, walking through homework problems and in-class activities. The numerous benefits of a flipped-classroom, attest to why more teachers should be partaking in this style of classroom learning.

Having more time to create an engaging

classroom environment encourages learning. Algebra I and Calculus BC teacher PJ Yim implements this model. Besides increasing time to practice, it also creates a lighthearted environment where students can stay interested and learn effectively.

Chemistry honors teacher Kathy Nakamatsu has also gone with a mostly flipped classroom model.

Nakamatsu uses videos to substitute for most of traditional in-class lectures, leaving a small minority of the lectures for the class, often on topics she feels would benefit most from in-class lectures and needs more explanation than what can be provided in an online lecture.

This allows all students to understand the material fully at their own pace. Asynchronous lectures can also be rewatched, which lets students review the parts they might have not understood.

Flipped classrooms, especially in STEM, are clearly superior to a regular class format and bring great benefits to both the teachers and the students when utilized properly.

More teachers should seriously consider how flipped learning could be implemented in their classrooms. ♦

# Stop the spread of inefficient flipped classroom teaching

BY GraceLin & FlorenceWei

Going home to a never-ending list of activities and extracurriculars after school is draining enough. Wouldn’t it be even more tiring to learn everything — that’s supposed to be taught at school — at home too?

For most students, this nightmare has become reality as more teachers switch from a traditional classroom to a flipped classroom.

Flipped classrooms have been around for more than a decade, but in recent years, they have become increasingly popular. Teachers have discovered the supposed benefits of assigning students to take lecture notes at home rather than doing direct instruction during class.

During quarantine, many teachers found this flipped strategy effective for its efficient online method.

Even as students repopulated the school after the initial shock of the pandemic, many teachers continued a flipped teaching model. In our view, it’s time to

return to a more traditional approach. It’s a chore to watch long and boring lectures with fatiguing eyes and an inescapable temptation to just fast forward through the video.

As teachers continue to rely on videos, students become dependent on passive learning methods, such as Googling for answers rather than asking for help.

Meanwhile, traditional non-flipped classrooms come with a wide range of benefits. Its structured nature motivates students to stay focused and engaged. If there is ever anything confusing, hands can go up and students can receive immediate support and clarification.

This supportive and comforting environment has been used for centuries without complaint.

Flipped classrooms may be effective for some students, but for others, the negatives outweigh the positives. Too often they promote passive and detached learning, while traditional classrooms increase the odds that everyone remains engaged — and isn’t that one main point of all good teaching? ♦

# 100-word rant: Ultra annoying pests invade campus

BY BillHuang

During hot fall school days, every classroom I’ve been in has had numerous flies zooming in circles and causing no end of annoy-

ance. These useless gnats not only hover around you but fly onto your head and next to your ears, making an infuriating buzzing sound that makes you go crazy.

These annoyances can be minor, often ignorable inconveniences in a work

period, but when taking a test or focusing on a lab? These gnats can lead to unparalleled disaster.

Adding to the frustration, they are also minuscule and almost impossible to kill. I’ve furiously slapped until my hands

are sore and clapped more than 100 times and not killed a single one.

There is one possible solution: Put an electric fly zapper in every room. They work flawlessly. ♦

# Charging stations for electric vehicles on campus need solid plan and guidelines

BY Christina Labban

In the streets in and around Saratoga, electrical vehicles (EVs) represent a significant portion of total automobiles on the road. In fact, over 34% of Bay Area vehicles are electric and 16% are hybrids, while the U.S. average of EVs is around 7%.

With this growing number, many schools and businesses have been required to adapt to front-line advancements such as installing many EV charging stations throughout the Bay. In fact, in August 2022, the California Air Resources Board approved the Advanced Clean Cars II rule requiring all new vehicles sold in California to be zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) by 2035. With charging stations now becoming required infrastructure, it would be smart to anticipate some of the inevitable difficulties.

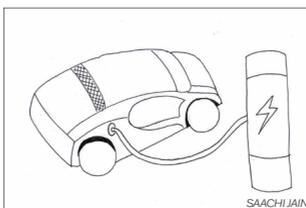
Usage policies are essential to ensure the fair and efficient use of the charging stations while avoiding potential issues or conflicts.

The charging stations should be primarily accessible to primary users, including school staff, faculty, and students, with clear guidelines on time limits and fair usage.

Moreover, to foster inclusivity, provisions should be made for disabled users, ensuring that the chargers are accessible to them and that necessary accommodations, such as accessible parking and charging spaces, are available. The policy should also consider guest access and, if applicable, community access, while defining any priority rules for specific users or school vehicles. For example, guest vehicles should only be allowed usage of the EV chargers past school hours.

If three EV charging stations were to be installed in the staff parking lot, and three charging stations installed in the student parking lots, considering that there would be six EV users using the systems, each person should have a limited amount of time and not hog the resource.

Another important consideration: the



SAACHI JAIN

type of EV charger installed. For the most efficiency, speed wise, direct current fast chargers would be ideal. DC fast chargers can provide charging speeds from 50 kW to 350 kW or more. They're designed for rapid charging and are ideal for schools where users require quick turnaround times, like during the school day.

Although DC fast chargers are more expensive to install and operate due to their high power output and additional infrastruc-

ture requirements, they would be most logical to prevent "charger hogging." It can take as little as 20-30 minutes to charge an EV from 20% to 80% or so with a high-powered DC fast charger.

Charging from 0% to 80% may take around 40-60 minutes, but the charging speed might slow down as the battery approaches full capacity. Charging an EV from 0% to 100% with a DC fast charger may take around 60-90 minutes, although charging speed might slow down in the final stages to protect the battery. Based on this information, something around a 1 hour time limit should be implemented among EV charger users.

Ultimately, there are many variables to be put into deliberation before installing EV chargers on campus. By the school establishing clear commonsense guidelines that emphasize fairness and accessibility, EV chargers will be a hugely positive addition to campus resources. ♦

## togatalks

What do you think about charging stations at school?

"It would need to be fast charging; otherwise, it wouldn't be worth charging my car."



senior Sunny Boppa

"I would love to use them. Charging my car at home has become extremely annoying."



senior Justin Jiang

"It's not something I would use regularly, but an electric vehicle charger would be nice."



teacher Matthew Welander

# An untapped resource: student photographers

BY Sam Bai

During tutorial on Oct. 26, this year's 33 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists stood in front of the cafeteria. It was later sent out to the community through a press release.

The composition of the photo left much to be desired. Multiple heads were covered while others were facing the wrong direction. This brings up the question, why was taking a simple photo so disorganized?

During the event, there were minimal directions given, no information regarding proper windows or lining were provided to create a better organized subject. Not even a "1, 2, 3" or a "please say cheese" was announced. Rather, everyone just held a smile for as long as they could, pondering when the photo was going to be taken, if it was not already. The dozens of cameras being held by adults made it even more confusing which one students were supposed to look at.

This episode sparked an idea for me: Why not tap into existing school programs for such photos?

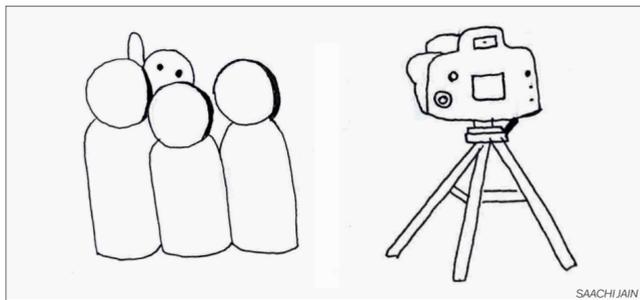
Multiple programs train students in the basics of good photography, including the digital photography class, newspaper, yearbook, SHSTV and Media Arts.

Besides the training in photography, each program has high-quality cameras available for student use.

Why not utilize these resources? It would be incredibly easy to do so. Having students take these photos would also provide them the chance to show off their skills. Other events also cry out for better, more consistent photographic coverage.

This problem is present throughout the school year, on and off campus. Why does Bombay in the Bay, arguably one of the largest student events of the year, have its photos taken solely by parents on a volunteering basis? Students in the various aforementioned programs could be offered extra-credit for offering their services, and these photos might be significantly better.

Another possibility could be the creation of a commission of a quarter dozen students who would take videos and photos of every event. Not only would this provide quality photos for the school and press releases, but also better record the history of the year as well as generating a large photography portfolio for the students. It would be a win-win for everyone, including the subjects of the photos. What better way is there to teach student photographers than having them take photos and putting those photos to good use? ♦



SAACHI JAIN

# USB-C's only fault

THE TRANSITION CREATES ENVIRONMENTAL WASTE

BY Zack Zhang

Whenever I travel, I bring the universally used USB-C with me, given that it's able to charge almost anything, anywhere. USB-C was first introduced in 2014 and is the latest generation of the USB connectors following its precedents USB-A, USB-B and Mini-USB.

Since its release, USB-C has been widely implemented to fit electronics for its maximum power up to 100W and significantly faster data transfer speed of 20 GB/sec, a whopping 40 times faster than that of USB-B, released in 2007.

So, when Apple announced that all new iPhones from the 15 series onwards would use USB-C, customers and tech reviews alike celebrated.

## Apple should take responsibility for its actions and set up a program to collect these old chargers.

The USB-C ports support directly reading and saving data on an external hard drive as well as recording heavily data-consuming ProRes 4k 60fps format. They can also be used to charge other phones, AirPods and even Apple Watches.

However, millions of iPhone users (including me) are now stuck with various obsolete accessories they have purchased in the past decade — specifically for older models that used the Lightning cable. What are consumers supposed to do with their MagSafe portable chargers, AirPods and other accessories still using a Lightning charger now?

Although the switch to USB-C is positive, dealing with the consequences of the switch should also be a priority for a company like Apple. For one, the decision is bound to result in a huge amount of e-waste.

According to business reports released by Apple itself, the total revenue the company earned from fast-charging cables, portable chargers and other accessories, was around \$41.24 billion last year — a 36.69% increase from 2021. While this revenue already seems enormous, it doesn't even include the sales from certified third-party companies.

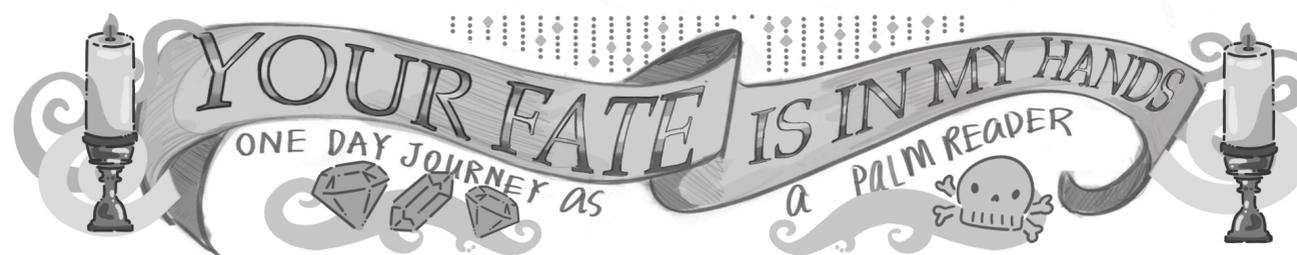
Even though Apple developed a robust recycling program in August of 2013, this program only applies to larger electronic devices such as the trade-in program for old iPhones and iPads. There's no such policy that accepts smaller accessories like charging cables.

Apple should take responsibility for its actions and set up a program to collect these old chargers and recycle them properly.

Though the company has made strides in sustainability, such as turning its newest Apple Watch carbon neutral, it still needs to realize that the amount of e-waste accessories like cables create is usually exponentially higher than those of properly recycled larger devices.

Of course, this phenomenon of leaving old technology to rot in landfills doesn't just apply to Apple. The trend of recklessly ignoring the adverse effects of technological advancements is common for nearly all tech companies. In the future, these companies should expand their recycling programs to include a wider spectrum of side accessories that come in pairs with the devices.

For now, the best destiny for these spare Lightning chargers would be Best Buy's recycle program, where local Best Buy stores will take any electronics in any condition, including charging cables. However, it's important that technology companies realize it is still their responsibility to create solutions for recycling obsolete products. For Apple, the priority should simply be broadening their range of items accepted in the recycling program. That would make the excitement over the switch to USB-C truly justified. ♦



Sometimes people ask me what my birthday is and then shake their heads in a condescending huff in response to my answer. "Sagittarius," they exclaim. "No wonder."

Or they say: "God, you're such an INFP. So typical."

From there, they proceed to laugh, rubbing salt in a wound carved into my heart by people insulting my date of birth or the results of a test that I took while I was delirious. Yes, I know this pain firsthand.

I decided I had enough. It was time for the victim to become the victimizer. It was time to take my fate into my own hands, or rather, take the hands of others in my own and foretell their fate as a palm reader.

I found instructions on WikiHow, the holy grail of every oddly specific query. After reading it, I was armed with the knowledge to strike fear into the hearts of people, prepared to calculate the slope of every ridge and line and tell my friends they will never find love.

My first victim was Falcon Opinion editor Sarah Thomas. I first read Thomas's heart line, the horizontal line closest to the fingers. While I initially thought that the line indicated she was selfish when it came to love, after some retrospection and squinting, my eyes and I decided that it was too short to render that verdict. I came to my final conclusion: She has a tendency to fall in love easily. Thomas begrudgingly confirmed this assertion, disappointed that even her hand betrayed this weakness.



I then moved onto Thomas's head line, which reveals her mode of communication, thirst for knowledge and intellectualism. Thomas had a curved and sloped line spanning the middle of her palm, which told me that she was a creative person. Though I admit that she peer-pressured me into agreeing that it was the right result, I still found it to be an accurate assessment.

The lifeline, which, contrary to popular belief, does not measure length of life based on length of the line, starts on the side of the pointer finger and tapers off near the wrist. I noted how Thomas's life line was

long and deep, which means vitality.

Though this was a general assessment, it basically encapsulated Thomas in a word — she is a very exuberant and lively person. No doubt, the reading may have been general (which might be attributed to me using WikiHow) but it seemed to work.

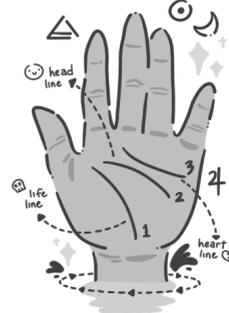
I then moved on to Falcon School Scope editor Will Norwood. When reading his love line, I observed that it began below the index finger and extended as a straight line. This was indicative of a person who was content with their love life. When asked to confirm or deny, he said "confirm," though the proof of confirmation remains to be seen.

Next, I assessed his head line, which was separated from his life line but was not as

curvy. This pattern suggested that Will was adventurous and enthusiastic for life. In trying to gaslight him into thinking my reading was correct, I brought up the fact that he was an avid rower, which is intrinsically an unconventional and adventurous sport. Palm reading is a game of connecting the dots, and I was almost too good at it.

Will's lifeline, interestingly, was not a continuing line, indicating a sudden change in lifestyle. The lifeline did make a prediction in the future, so I cannot confirm if the results were correct — Will himself was surprised at this result. Maybe I'll check back in a few years to see if the hand really knows all.

Surprisingly, the readings were relatively accurate in the way that everyone possesses certain characteristics to some degree. Although I did learn a new skill and gain some joy in making hand puns (admittedly, they got out of hand), I do not think that I will make palm reading a habit — delivering off-putting news while giving my friends a high-five seems a bit excessive. ♦



# Pumpkin spice latte does not deserve hate

People put too much stock in how "basic" something they enjoy is instead of just appreciating the simple happiness it creates that brightens our slow march toward the inevitable, creeping death awaiting us all.

What I'm saying is, the infamous pumpkin spice latte from Starbucks doesn't deserve all the hate it gets. Sure, it doesn't really taste like pumpkin and the spice just kicks in as an aftertaste, but the rush of flavor at the beginning blends nicely with the inherent bitterness of coffee, which I find quite enjoyable.

## It harnesses its use of spice and bitterness to create its own brand of enjoyability.

The flavor is bitter and a bit strong at the beginning, jolting your brain a little, but then it settles into a more mellow taste at the back of your tongue to send off the initial metaphorical kick. It's not traditionally palatable in the way that it's overly sweet, but it harnesses its use of spice and bitterness to create its own brand of enjoyability, which I value in this seasonal treat.

Of course, the drink itself isn't world-shattering — not a lot of drinks ARE — but honestly I don't think that it even MATTERS how objectively innovative pumpkin spice lattes are. All that matters is that I ENJOYED drinking it. It made me a little happier and I think there's a lot of value in that.

The value of a pumpkin spice latte is not assigned objectively by how generally palatable it is — we assign our OWN value to the pumpkin

spice latte by appreciating our time with it and letting it make our day a little easier. I know arguing about petty things like whether a pumpkin spice latte is any good or not can be really fun, but you should never let debates like that hinder your experience of something you enjoy or discourage you from pursuing that happiness further. Because simple happiness should always be pursued. ♦



# Red traffic lights: Are they really automated?

On mornings when I feel tired, the absolute worst scenario is being late to school. Rushing through my morning routine, I desperately hope that the traffic lights are on my side today. Yet it seems that just for me, the traffic lights are so perfectly coordinated, flashing bright blaring scarlets whenever I'm late for school.

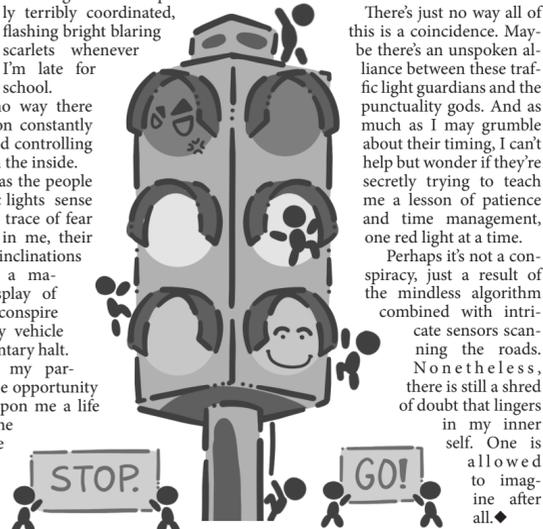
There's no way there isn't a person constantly watching and controlling the lights on the inside.

As soon as the people in the traffic lights sense the slightest trace of fear or urgency in me, their sinister inclinations surface. In a malevolent display of red, they conspire to bring my vehicle to an involuntary halt. Meanwhile, my parents seize the opportunity to bestow upon me a life lesson on the importance of waking earlier and not being late.

At this point, with the combination of a monotonous lecture and the mischievous traffic lights, frustration simmers inside of me until I am about ready to burst. If only I could confront these traffic lights, I would do so without hesitation.

There's just no way all of this is a coincidence. Maybe there's an unspoken alliance between these traffic light guardians and the punctuality gods. And as much as I may grumble about their timing, I can't help but wonder if they're secretly trying to teach me a lesson of patience and time management, one red light at a time.

Perhaps it's not a conspiracy, just a result of the mindless algorithm combined with intricate sensors scanning the roads. Nonetheless, there is still a shred of doubt that lingers in my inner self. One is allowed to imagine after all. ♦



Graphic by ANNIE LIU and ISABELLE WANG

# HANDCRAFTED JOYS

## KANDI is sweeter than CANDY

Throughout my entire 15 years of living, nothing else has been more persistently terrifying than the veins on my wrists. Just the sight of the small, fragile and exposed lines criss-crossing the thin portions of my extremities still makes me nearly nauseous with anxiety.

Ever since I was a child, I've been suffering from an obscure phobia called venophobia — the irrational fear of seeing or touching my veins and arteries.

Specifically, I'm afraid of how fragile my veins are and the idea that I could press down on them too hard and accidentally pop them. I've never been particularly skinny, but the area that was always thin enough to take the brunt of this terror was the inside of my wrists.

My solution from a young age to deal with this nearly debilitating fear was to cover my wrists up! In STYLE!

At first, I used to just wear bracelets that I bought, arranging them differently on my arms and piling them on until they trailed up to cover the whole area-which-must-not-be-named. Soon, however, I decided to get a little more creative with it and started making my own bracelets.

In the rave subculture, there's a style of bracelet called a kandi bracelet. It's made using square, bright-colored beads and often incorporates text

beads or beads shaped like hearts or stars. What initially drew me to this phenomenon was the bright colors, the homemade aesthetic and the habit of rave kandi enthusiasts piling the bracelets up high on their wrists, covering the entire area which I never wanted to see or touch. It was the perfect solution!

One aspect I really enjoy is the customizability of making little jokes through the text beads, such as small puns or inside references for things I enjoy.

For example, my favorites include my Minecraft creeper bracelet, my bracelet dedicated to Monster Energy: Ultra Strawberry Dreams or my "Live, Laugh, Lobotomy" meme bracelet (which is one of my favorites). I usually wear the same bracelets each day on the same arm in the same spot, sorting them carefully by color palette and the length of the text on each.

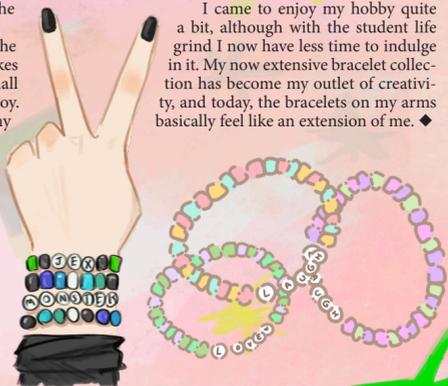
The process of beading my bracelets also makes for quite a relaxing stim — the repetitive, predictable pattern is one I come to enjoy. Pick the colors, loop the string through the bead, loop the string back through a second time

and tie the end off. Pick, loop, loop, tie, pick, loop, loop and tie. It honestly feels quite meditative. I can lose myself in the automatic motions for hours on end, until all I could think about is neon green, pastel yellow, pink and eye-splitting cyan.

I came to enjoy my hobby quite a bit, although with the student life grind I now have less time to indulge in it. My now extensive bracelet collection has become my outlet of creativity, and today, the bracelets on my arms basically feel like an extension of me. ♦



Jex Popov



# CHARCOAL PORTRAITS

When I was 10, I loved oil painting. After school, when my mom dropped me off at an art studio, I would bathe in the scent of the linseed oil that would latch onto my clothes and follow me home after class.

I stopped the painting classes I'd been attending for six years when the pandemic hit. Desiring something different, I left waxy paint and picturesque landscapes to dedicate myself to its complete antithesis: monochromatic charcoal portraits.

One of my first pieces was a hyper-realistic portrait of Taylor Swift. My friend's birthday was around the corner, and since she was a big Swiftie, a Swift-themed gift was an obvious choice.

For five hours, I locked myself in my bathroom, which had a large enough counter space to spread all my newly purchased pencils and gray-toned multimedia paper.

I sectioned each part of the face, hands and arms, dedicating my utmost focus to each by intently applying pressure where darker values were

and excitedly overusing the white charcoal to add highlights.

At last, my magnum opus, the product of hours of focused work, was complete. When it was time to give my friend her gift at last, her reaction made it worth all the effort. Struck by a bolt of sudden anticipation and restlessness, I realized that I could make something more out of this new medium. If I could replicate what I just did with the same passion, I could inspire a similar reaction out of others.

I spent that summer almost exclusively in my bathroom-art studio, feverishly working on new pieces like I was chasing something bigger. The portraits became a birthday staple: I drew a portrait of my grandparents for my dad.

My grandfather had passed away a year before during quarantine, and my grandmother three years prior to him. My grandparents had been living with us since before I was born, and being cooped up in the same house was all-consuming and lonely for them. Their passing was hard for all of us, but I felt my dad's grief the most.

Drawing their picture hyper-realistically was a way to commemorate the impact they had on my life — not only to recreate them exactly how I remembered and solidify their memory, but also to let my dad know that they would always reside in our house.

The phrase "art imitates life and life imitates art" had taken on a more personal meaning in my life. In the summer of 2022, I decided

to distribute a Google Form to people interested in ordering portrait commissions and donate the proceeds to Second Harvest Food Bank. It was time-consuming, but it was so worth it.

Though repetition has allowed my technique to evolve, the emotion behind it has not changed. Direct imitation from picture to paper is a more unconventional yet intimate way to know someone; to recognize the wrinkles around their eyes or the distinctive curve of their smile — that is a different kind of magic that makes my heart soar. ♦



Divya Vadlakonda

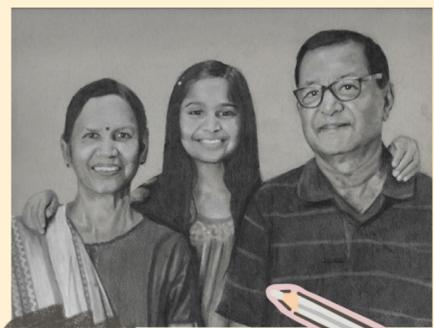
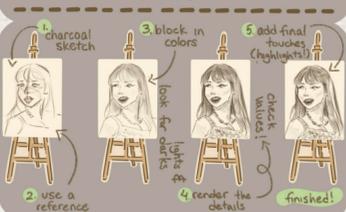


Photo by DIVYA VADLAKONDA



### Charcoal steps



# DREAM JOURNALING

As I drift to sleep every night, my mind becomes a canvas for the most vivid and whimsical imagery. Sometimes, bunnies cavort among clouds in a crimson sky. The sun comes out at midnight, and I become a dragon facing off a knight clad in gunpowder-gray armor. Other times, it's simply a vision of grass that grows too long or a river that flows too far. I can't get these scenes from anywhere other than the depths of my slumber.

As a creative writer, I try to cling to ideas and images. When I wake up from a dream, I rummage around the desk for my phone and hurriedly jot everything down. Before the contents of my dream fade to mist, I squeeze my brain out of everything that I remember. Words spill onto my Notes App, and I don't stop typing until every thought is off of my mind.

After everything



Florence Wei

is dumped from my head, I sift out the most precious ideas with the best potential for stories. Historically, many well-known works, including Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein," originated in dreams.

I once dreamed of a doctor who didn't know what he was doing. I filled in the missing pieces with conscious ideas while I was awake, and with each golden thought, I refined the nugget into a gold coin. Along with my dreamscape, I imagined ethical concerns from real life. My final idea: The doctor uses artificial intelligence to treat patients, but it backfires on him in the end.

At first, I thought the idea of dream journaling was useless — who even wants to hear about something so nonsensical? Now, it's become a necessary habit for me to overcome writer's block.

Before dream journaling, I had a long period of writer's block. No matter what I tried, I couldn't develop any ideas to form a good story. In this struggle, I discovered tons of ideas through dreams.

Even though my writer's block has worn off now, I still tap into my dreams for source material. If I am not motivated to write in the morning, at least I can do something with my free time when I sleep. Writing is simply much easier when I steal ideas from my dreams. ♦



# PHOTOGRAPHY

Since I was young, I have been constantly jealous of artists. I was actively annoyed by my inability to do simple acts like drawing, painting or even sculpting. Artists always looked so aesthetic as they expressed themselves through a creative medium, and I always wondered, "Why can't that be me?"

No matter how hard I tried, my art always turned out to resemble toddlers' scribbles. And for the longest time, I always believed I had no artistic ability — that is, until I discovered photography.

I traveled to New York during winter break of fifth grade, which was when I first started to take photos with the intent of actually making something I'd be proud of. As much as I tried, little fifth-grade-me had no idea what I was doing on my iPhone.

Still, that trip inspired me to take up the hobby.



William Norwood

It also helped that my mother was heavily involved in photography, even going as far as submitting her photos to competitions. I would watch her take and edit photos, and I thought I could never achieve anything on that level.

After the trip, I asked for some help and she taught me the basics of composition, camera operation and what to shoot. I then took her camera, went into our back garden and took some truly atrocious pictures; however, one of those pictures turned out really good — and it still remains one of the favorite pictures I have taken.

Ever so often, I come back to this picture, and each time I find another thing I could have done better. But most importantly, I took the photo, and regardless of how good it was, it was mine.

The pandemic was the best time to take photos for me. I could go on a walk and take photos, then return home to edit them. I used to do this on a regular basis, but as soon as life went back to normal I lost the free time to take photos.

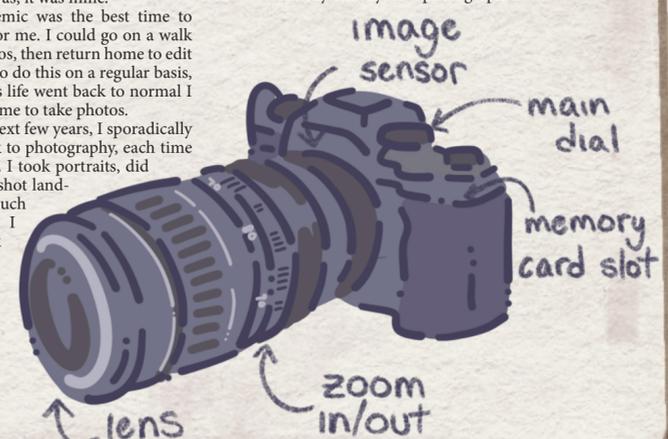
Over the next few years, I sporadically returned back to photography, each time progressively improving. I took portraits, did street photography and shot landscapes, but however much

I tried to branch out, I always returned back to my favorite subject matter, plants. I loved taking macro photos to see their intricate details and bursts of colors.

I was soon forced to branch out when I ran



Photo by WILLIAM NORWOOD



# #BookTok: TikTok's hit-or-miss trove of novels

BY SunnyCao

#fyp, #FitTok, and #BookTok — these are all terms you would recognize if you are on TikTok. These subcultures of niche topics have formed a formidable place on the app, and they are a great way for communities of people with niche interests to come together. I myself have dabbled in them slightly, mostly through the BookTok hashtag, which has allowed me into a community in either joint praise or criticism of a book.

#BookTok consists of book reviews and recommendations. It first grew to prominence during the pandemic, when teens stuck at home started sharing the books they were reading through the hashtag. The target audience is young adults, and the books recommended are predominantly young adult (YA) romance and thriller novels.

Like most other internet trends, BookTok has its positives and negatives. While it does

expose readers to unique and great reads, it's also problematic in that recommendations often romanticize toxic relationships.

I first started on BookTok my freshman summer, which was when it trended the most and I had lots of free time to read.

Scrolling through the endless numbers of videos on #BookTok made me feel "productive" during the summer, and I quickly fell into the BookTok rabbit hole. In addition to the exposure to new books, the community within the BookTok hashtag made me feel connected to others online. After I had read a book, I could go back to the hashtag and relate to others' reactions to the plot progression. It was a big yet tight-knit community, and with every book I read, it felt like I was suddenly in on another secret inside joke.

The first book I picked up that summer was a mysterious and invigorating YA novel called "We Were Liars" by E. Lockhart. It was an intriguing read

that featured a twisted tale about the seemingly perfect Sinclair family who hides their secrets and lies behind their tall and handsome reputations. There was a gripping plot twist at the end that was very well written and not nearly as predictable as other YA novels I've read.

The second book that BookTok sent my way was Taylor Jenkins Reid's "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo," which follows the life of an old Hollywood star, Evelyn Hugo (a fictional character), and the legacy she left behind throughout her seven marriages to her seven husbands. It revealed stunning secrets and lies about her rise to fame.

This book was all over TikTok when it came out in June 2017, and rightfully so. Despite being written in an interview style, I loved the book, which was surprising since this style of writing usually fails to keep my attention.

This book definitely lived up to its expectations, and even though some BookTok recommendations get overhyped, this one deserves every bit of its popularity.

Then there are the duds. BookTok seems to have a favorite author, Colleen Hoover. Every time I open BookTok, some form of her YA work is pushed into my feed.

Tired of all the advertising, I finally decided to pick up one of her most popular books, called "It Ends With Us." With all the hype around it, my expectations were high. However, it greatly underwhelmed me.

The book followed a pretty typical love triangle trope, where the main character Lily meets and falls in love with the male lead, Ryle, before her childhood lover Atlas comes back and changes her current life.

The plot was boring and very predictable, leaving it with no emotional value.

In addition, the book also promoted a toxic relationship between Ryle and Lily that goes unresolved in the end: Lily just seemed to forget the abuse she endured from [her lover?] and the whole ending was very 'happily ever after' and glossed over.

It's as if slapping that happily-ever-after trademark — commonly known as HEA books — on any romance would make it immediately appealing.

This is also a common trend with Hoover's other books, such as "Ugly Love," which also romanticizes emotional abuse brought on by the intensity of love. Finally, her prequel to "It Ends With Us," "It Starts With Us," also shares the same unhealthy themes.

And it isn't just Hoover who feeds into this toxic relationship trope.

To their target audience — impressionable teenagers — the ideal romance is portrayed as manipulative, toxic and abusive.

My advice: Give BookTok a try, but tread carefully.

Don't just read books because of their hype and don't rely on BookTok reviews entirely.

Instead, consider reviews from other sources like GoodReads and Amazon to weigh whether the book will actually fit your reading tastes, and even if a book is a dud, you can always go on the hashtag and agree with those who share similar opinions.

BookTok is a great place for building community, but it's important to realize their shortcomings. ♦

48 Percent of TikTok users who read more after using BookTok

20 Books that BookTok helped sell in millions

62 Percent of US users who have read one BookTok book



# A guide to the whimsical world of Studio Ghibli

BY Isabelle Wang

Immersive realism, enchanting, comforting, magical, nostalgic and delicious are just a few of the words to describe the intricate yet simple style that Studio Ghibli films use. Known for its unique animation style, Studio Ghibli is a Japanese animation studio based in Tokyo that creates fictional short films and movies.

The studio was founded in 1985 by Hayao Miyazaki, Toshio Suzuki, Isao Takahata and Yasuyoshi Tokuma, with their latest movie "The Boy and the Heron" set for release this December.

The studio's most well-known animation, "Spirited Away" even won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in 2003, being the first hand-drawn and non-English-language animated film to win the award.

Newcomers to Studio Ghibli can have a hard time choosing a movie to start with. Each 90-minute film is packed with its own world of exciting characters with intricate story lines. Here I've broken down my top four must-watch Studio Ghibli movies.

## "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988)

The most classic and probably most recognizable Studio Ghibli movie is of this fluffy, raccoon-cat-owl with gray stripes, pointy ears and wide eyes. Totoro brings an exciting, mysterious company to two sisters, Satsuki and Mei, who moved to an old country house with their father as they wait for their mother to recover from an illness in a hospital.

The new house is full of mysterious surprises



Ponyo

such as soot spirits and a flying cat bus, which leads the sisters to find a forest full of more magical creatures.

As the sisters explore the fantasy-like forest and begin to feel the emotional toll of not seeing their loved ones, viewers find themselves on a rollercoaster of emotions depicted by the realistic styles of landscapes, adorable cartoon characters and out-of-the-world magical creatures.

The sisters usually accompany Totoro on his journeys at night by holding onto his fur as he flies with an umbrella.

Throughout these short but adrenaline-rush moments, Studio Ghibli portrays the simple joys and excitement of children as they explore the world around them.

Watching Totoro glide through the air as the sister's hair ruffles in the wind and small lights flicker in cornfields below them, you are taken on a carefree adventure of growing acorns with Totoro and flying to the tops of trees.

## "Ponyo" (2008)

If you enjoyed watching "The Little Mermaid," "Ponyo" has a similar plot with some twists at the beginning of the movie. Ponyo, originally a pink, red-haired fish, is intrigued by humans and wishes to become one after becoming 5-year-old Sosuke's pet.

After a stormy night that floods the entire town so that almost all of the buildings are underwater, Ponyo becomes human for a short period of time to accompany Sosuke as he searches for his mother.

In one of Studio Ghibli's most heart-felt movies, the friendship into a sweet, young love between Ponyo and Sosuke, Sosuke tries to keep Ponyo alive as a human.

Another well-known aspect of Studio Ghibli are the delicious foods its animations depict. From instant noodles and stacks of sandwiches

(which Ponyo deliciously picks out the ham to eat) to warm milk with a heaping spoonful of honey, "Ponyo" is a must-watch on a fall night with cozy blankets.

Beauty lies in the simplicity of seeing the simple squiggle of noodles and steam from a hot, fatty soup that makes your mouth water.

Watching it, you somehow feel as sleepy as Ponyo does when she finishes the whole bowl.

## "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989)

In a coming-of-age story, Kiki becomes stressed from her new job as a bakery delivery man and insecure by questioning her magical abilities, eventually losing her ability to communicate with her cat.

However, with support from the townspeople and a new friend, Kiki learns how to find herself and recover from failure.

Covering topics like mental health, "Kiki's Delivery Service" often connects to viewers who struggle with confidence, as Kiki also goes through a period of depression.

However, through meeting characters who never gave up on their passion and kept persevering, Kiki demonstrates many important life lessons throughout her journey of becoming a witch.

For me, the dialogue and storyline is what makes this movie stand out, alternating between the inner monologue Kiki has with herself and with other characters.

For instance, the conversations Kiki has with Jiji — "If I lose my magic, that means I've lost absolutely everything else" and "I think something's wrong with me. Seems like that other me, the cheerful and honest one, went away somewhere" — demon-

strate the self-doubt that arises in Kiki over time.

## "Spirited Away" (2001)

Imagine going on a trip to an amusement park one day when all of a sudden, your parents turn into pigs and the border of the park floods with water, leaving you trapped all by yourself.

While this may sound like an extremely strange and specific dream, this is what elementary school student Chihiro experiences on part of her family's trip to move to a new town.

Throughout the movie, feelings of loneliness and abandonment are shown as Chihiro struggles to bring her parents back to humans while encountering intimidating monsters — some being just humans with additional peculiar abilities but others being giant radishes who wear nothing but an apron.

While there are scenes where Chihiro stands up for herself, Studio Ghibli portrays moments of sadness and heartbreak with grape-sized tears that flood Chihiro's eyes whenever she gets stressed.

There were some also very popular movies not included in this list, such as "Howl's Moving Castle" or "Princess Mononoke".

The unique characters and plot described in these four movies carry on throughout all Studio Ghibli movies.

Though I went over the basic plots of each movie, there are still plenty of more surprises that will keep you binge-watching for hours. ♦



My Neighbor Totoro

All graphics by DIVYA VADLAKONDA and ISABELLE WANG

# 'Never Have I Ever': Hollywood gets it right

BY Saachi Jain

Dainty piano music crescendos as the camera pans outward, revealing a Geometry textbook set upon a praying area — this is a quintessential scene from the Netflix show "Never Have I Ever," starring Hindu protagonist Devi Vishwakumar. The show was spearheaded by famous actress and screenwriter, Mindy Kaling, who has been a recent advocate for diverse representation in media.

As the daughter of two immigrant Indian parents, Devi navigates the highs and lows of high school while living up to her widowed mother's high expectations for her future.

The show, which first premiered in April 2020 and concluded with its third season, follows her from sophomore to senior year, exploring her school life, family life and every teenage girl's favorite — relationship drama.

Many of Devi's aspirations are completely relatable — she wants to be a good student, have the best extracurriculars and go to the best college. This pressure is often put on her by her mom, her adult cousin Kamala and her Patti, or grandmother.

I identify with these pressures, as my parents put similar expectations on me that have become part of my own thinking. As is the mentality with many immigrant parents, they care about my doing well in school, going to college and living a stable life. These expectations have been felt by many of my friends growing up as well, but seeing it portrayed in the media was a first for many of us.

## Cultural representations ring true

I grew up immersed in Indian culture, but not very "traditionally." Both of my parents immigrated to the United States in their 20s, and my older sister and I grew up eating meat, cutting our hair and observing traditional American practices that are sometimes unheard of in India. I do, however, relate to Devi's goals in life and her struggle of determining how Indian she truly is.

Even scenes as simple as the celebration of a Ganesh Puja — a festival tributing the Hindu deity Ganesha — or an episode surrounding a traditional Hindu wedding, are the much-needed representation in popular culture of Indian-Americans. I greatly relate to these traditions, as my family also celebrates many of these holidays.

It is important to note that "Never Have I Ever" is not the first attempt at incorpo-

rating Indian culture into American shows, but one of the first ones which I felt was mostly accurate and not inherently racist and stereotypical.

For the longest time, my reference was the character Ravi in the hit Disney channel show "Jessie." Ravi is portrayed as a "stereotypical Indian" character. He always wears a traditional kurtha — a long, elaborately designed shirt worn by both males and females in India — and is portrayed as awkward, unathletic and the nerdiest person in his adopted family.

## Everyone, whether or not you are Indian-American, can identify with her journey and learn from it.

Despite living in the United States for most of his life, he still speaks with a heavy Indian accent. The image that Ravi painted of Indian-Americans was negative and inaccurate, if anything. Rather than portraying an Indian character who is well assimilated into American culture, the screenwriters consistently made his character stand out and continued to highlight his differences rather than his other qualities, including a quirky sense of humor and down-to-earth personality.

## Trying to navigate my dual identities

Though I knew the show catered to stereotypes, I also realized that shows like "Jessie" were the only image some Americans have of Indian-Americans.

Disney is yet to make a movie centralizing around an Indian protagonist, and I sought accurate representations of my culture growing up.

Devi is different from the stereotypical Indian-American character that the media so often portrays. Though she cares about school and does perform well, she desires a social life, wants to be popular and goes through the typical relationship woes and wants that most experience while in high school.

If there's one thing I identify with most in Devi, it's that nobody is perfect. It's great that the writers developed her personality more beyond stereotypical Indian representation in other media, and everyone, whether or not you are Indian-American, can identify with her journey and learn from it. ♦

# 'Mulan' brought honor to my East Asian identity

BY AnnikaGho

In one of the earliest scenes of Disney's 1998 movie "Mulan," the heroic main character ties a bag of grains and a bone attached to a bamboo stick to her dog. It jumps around, trying to eat the bone, but ends up scattering grain all over the place instead. The chickens are able to get their food, leaving Mulan free to do whatever she desires.

## A heroine who looks like me

When I first watched the movie, these scenes stood out to me for their exemplification of Mulan's brave and cunning qualities, cementing her status as my favorite Disney princess. I cut my hair to the shoulder length of hers (without a sword though), dressed up as Mulan for Halloween and had Mulan pins on my Crocs — I absolutely loved her for many reasons.

But above all, it's because Mulan is the only Disney princess who really looks like me. In my childhood, she was the only on-screen character that I could identify with. Even now, 25 years after the movie first aired, finding movies with characters I can truly identify with — as I had with Mulan — is difficult.

In third grade, I started becoming interested in musicals. The more I watched, the more I discovered the not-so-great side media representations of Asian women. Famous musicals such as "Miss Saigon" and "Madame Butterfly" all depicted the trope of the quiet Asian lady who seems to fall head over heels for an American hero. These portrayals always characterized Asian women as helpless and delicate. As a child, I would keep watching, confused at these recurring interpretations.

## The struggle for my Asian identity

I wanted to tell the writers that I could make decisions for myself just fine. I would find myself thinking, "Just because we emphasize hard work and don't want to get involved with fights, this shouldn't be an excuse to label us as 'weak.'"

In part because of these portrayals, I grew scared that my opinions would be easily dismissed by teachers or peers because they didn't see me as capable of being

a leader. I was a shy kid, and knowing that a person might hate or ignore me for my perspective wasn't reassuring. Over time, I became more and more self-conscious of the way I acted, trying especially hard to not fall into this "nerdy Asian" stereotype.

My internalization of these depictions was the worst part. When I was younger, I really believed that "all Asians were the same," and the media only helped sell that racist stereotype to me.

My friends and I all had medium-length black hair, played the piano and did well in school. I always hated the first couple weeks of a new school year since it took a while before my teachers could distinguish that I wasn't Amelia, Lily or Vanessa, or that we were nowhere close to being related.

By middle school, however, I was confused. Did this mean I had to purposely do something different in order to show that I was an individual? Why did I have to purposely break the stereotype if I truly loved music and the things that were seen as "Asian?"

In times like this, I remembered "Mulan." Mulan was different — she broke stereotypes in ways that I had never seen before. Mulan explained to me that I didn't need someone or something else to prove my success and individuality.

Her forward and bold personality showed me and the rest of the world that Asian women are not all submissive and weak, and more importantly, that we are not all the same.

## Mulan's legacy: breaking stereotypes and embracing individuality

She has helped me feel more comfortable around people I have met for the first time. I no longer feel a need to convince myself or others that I am not perpetuating this stereotype, even by doing things that fall under it.

While I am not an aspiring actress or a warrior, seeing a version of myself in the media serves as a reminder to people who look like me that we matter.

So, Hollywood, please do better at prioritizing diversity both on screen and behind the scenes. Representation gives everyone a strong sense of self-esteem and helps tell better, more accurate stories. ♦



Graphic by DIVYA VADLAKONDA

**FAV Fall SHOW**

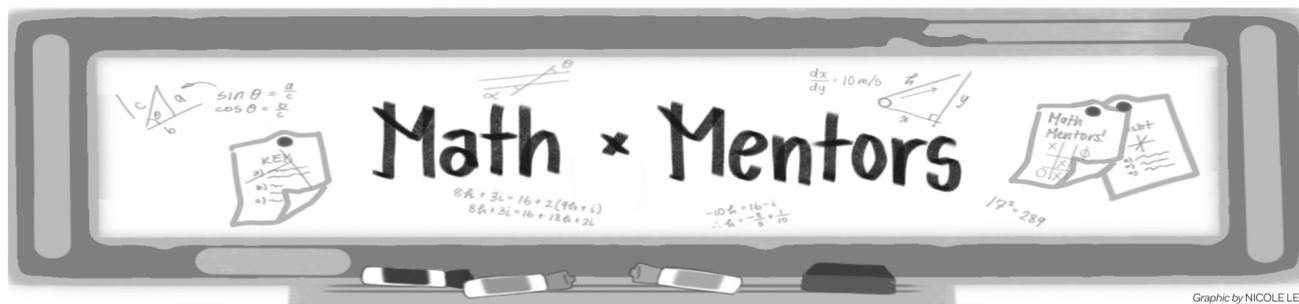
**JUNIOR**  
Narmeen Khericha  
Stranger Things  
"Stranger Things" is a dark 1980s-set sci-fi/horror drama that is full of jumpscare and dark mystery elements, which makes it perfect for the fall!"

**SENIOR**  
Aritra Bagchi  
Gilmore Girls  
"Gilmore Girls" is a great fall show to me since its vibrant autumn visuals and heartwarming mother-daughter relationship creates an atmosphere that is just perfect for this season."

**SENIOR**  
Priyanka Meduri  
The Office  
"My favorite fall comfort show is 'The Office,' because its friendly, comedic energy is the perfect vibe for those cozy fall evenings."

WORLD'S BEST BOSS  
DUNDER MIFFLIN

Infographic by ARIEL ZHOU



Graphic by NICOLE LEE

SINCE ITS CREATION THREE YEARS AGO, THE MATH MENTOR PROGRAM HAS NEARLY QUADRUPLED ENROLLMENT

By Angela Tan

As the bell rings at the start of tutorial, Algebra 2 Honors and AP Calculus AB teacher Lisa Ginestet-Araki watches as her classroom, located in the corner of the math wing, fills with students eager to ask questions and study for upcoming tests. Among them are several pairs of mentors and mentees, devoted to teaching each other math skills and building friendships along the way.

The math mentor program is a volunteer-based program where students can sign up to tutor other students and receive volunteer hours in return. Mentors and mentees meet each week during tutorial in Ginestet-Araki's classroom.

When Ginestet-Araki initiated the program in 2021, she had a simple vision: to fulfill the need for additional math aid within her own classes. To her surprise, in just three years' time, the program has grown nearly four times in size and now includes 70 mentees and mentors from all grade levels and math courses.

Ginestet-Araki was originally inspired by Multivariable Calculus teacher Ken Prucha, one of her former colleagues at James Logan High. Prucha organized a largely successful student mentoring program that began 15 years ago. However, while Prucha's system scheduled student mentoring sessions during lunch, Ginestet-Araki takes advantage of tutorials to ensure that mentors and mentees have a convenient time and place to meet at least once a week for 30 minutes.

In the first year, the program ran in her classroom for only students in her Algebra 2 course. Ginestet-Araki had asked some

of her mathematically stronger Algebra 2 Honors students if they were willing to help other students in Honors or regular Algebra 2 classes who were struggling to keep up with the content.

"I eventually decided to experiment because many of my students from Algebra 2 Honors moved on to Precalculus Honors, and they wanted to continue being mentors," Ginestet-Araki said. "The program started expanding and it eventually became open to all classes."

At first, mentees outnumbered mentors. That meant Ginestet-Araki sometimes had to pair two students of the same math level — although this worked out, she said it was not ideal.

Later, as all of the math department teachers began pitching in and persuading their most outstanding veteran students to apply, Ginestet-Araki had more flexibility to match mentees with mentors who were one or two levels more advanced.

For example, Ginestet-Araki noted that Calculus BC teacher PJ Yim has helped by providing his Calculus BC students as mentors; his students take the hardest variant out of all the rigorous AP calculus courses and have the background to help all lower level students.

"This year, the mentors are mostly juniors and seniors plus a few sophomores," Ginestet-Araki said. "The ratio of mentors to mentees is always an ebb and flow — sometimes I get an increase in mentees right after a chapter test. We currently have a surplus of mentors, which is really great."

To join the program, prospective mentors and mentees must fill out a paper form that can be picked up from Ginestet-Araki. She decided last year to switch from a Google Form to a paper application.

Not only are the logistics of the paper form easier, but according to Ginestet-Araki, the extra step of students coming in and chatting face to face allows her to remind them of the once-a-week mentoring expectations.

At the end of each school year, Ginestet-Araki adds up the number of hours that each mentor reports and gives them volunteer credit for what they have contributed. She continues to maintain full trust in her students, as there has not been any indication of students trying to cheat the system for volunteer hours.

"Most of the mentors are my past students, so I feel like there's that extra level of trust because I know them so well. I like to assume that they're [having integrity]," Ginestet-Araki said.

The program has only modest funding and Ginestet-Araki volunteers her own time to improve student performance by matching students and facilitating sessions. She



Photo by ANGELA TAN

Freshman Renisha Mandal tutors freshman Brian Le at their tutoring session on Oct. 12.

said she continues to commit because she knows the system is effective.

Sophomore Julie Dong has participated as a mentee in the program for two years. She thinks that the math mentor program provides more flexibility than private tutoring services outside of school.

"I had a math tutor outside of school last year for a bit, and then I did a little bit of tutoring during the summer. I find that because [my math mentor] is at school, it's more convenient [to ask questions], and they often reply to my messages too," Dong said.

The average cost for a private academic tutor in Saratoga is at least \$30 an hour, which can be an expensive commitment for some families. However, signing up to be tutored by a mentor in the math mentor program is completely free.

Additionally, since mentors have firsthand experience of taking their mentees' course, they know exactly what to expect and how to help them prepare. Ginestet-Araki has seen definite upward trends with mentee test scores, sometimes even by a full grade.

Research has shown that peer tutoring contributes to academic success of both students who tutor and students being tutored. Peer work not only builds knowledge in weak concept areas, but also contributes to better social relationships, improves positive school culture, and increases classroom engagement.

"I think that any time you teach math to another student, you get better at it, whether you're in Precalculus Honors, AP Calculus BC or Algebra 1," Ginestet-Araki said. "It's really beneficial for the mentors and for the mentees because they get to hear a different perspective than how their teacher teaches

it." Besides improvement in grades, what Ginestet-Araki finds even more rewarding is seeing friendships blossom between students of different grade levels who were initially complete strangers.

"Students come up to me and say, 'Hey, we worked well together last year. Can we pair up again this year?' Things like that make the program really cool and definitely memorable," she said.

Ginestet-Araki hopes that in the future, she can continue to improve the program by finding a way to enforce regular meeting hours for every pairing. She said many students started by meeting once or twice each

**"I think that any time you teach math to another student, you get better at it."**

MATHTEACHER Lisa Ginestet-Araki

week, but sessions eventually discontinued. Her biggest concern is that if the students are not meeting consistently, the program will be ineffective.

She hopes to find a digital way to track timesheets so that she can more easily identify who is meeting on a weekly basis and improve mentor performance.

"If I had more time and resources, it would be nice to have more training for the mentors," Ginestet-Araki said. "Maybe once or twice during lunch or tutorial, just to give them extra resources and a better understanding on how to help other students effectively." ♦

## AP Physics C sees new high record enrollment

By Kevin Yang

A record of three classes of 70 students are taking AP Physics C taught by Matthew Welander this year. The class has grown from one section of 32 students last year.

AP Physics C is an advanced class open only to students who previously took AP Physics 1 and 2. It's based on calculus and covers on AP Physics 1 and 2 knowledge, covering more advanced concepts.

Many who signed up believe that the class will be relevant to their future major and career. Senior Pothan Tang is one of those students.

Tang first discovered his interest in physics last year while he was learning dynamics in the AP Physics 1 & 2 course, as he found it fascinating to study how forces influence the motion of objects. To continue his journey in Physics, Tang himself hopes to major in applied physics in college.

Now as a student in AP Physics C, Tang said he has been challenged by the course because tests have greater time restrictions. Overall, however, he said he enjoys the class due to his interest in its content.

"For me, it's very interesting to discover stuff in nature by applying mathematical equations," Tang said. "This class is a challenge for me, but I'm also able to take this challenge to deepen my."

Since most students who take AP Physics 1 and 2 are juniors, most who take AP Physics C are seniors.

According to Welander, most students in past years tended to take AP Biology or AP Chemistry in their junior years, and AP Physics 1 and 2 in their senior year. However, he found that this is beginning to change as more and more juniors enroll in both AP Physics 1 and 2 and another science course

of their choosing, something many refer to as "double sciencing."

"What can be toxic is when students feel pressured into taking classes that they're not interested in," Welander said. "Hopefully some of them are doing it because they liked science and it's where their strengths lie."

The trend of "double sciencing" led to higher enrollment in AP Physics C as more students finish the prerequisite courses earlier on, he said.

In previous years, Welander used to have only one AP Physics C class and three AP Physics 1 and 2 classes. This year, however, the ratio has been reversed: He only has one AP Physics 1 class with mostly juniors and an unprecedented three AP Physics C classes, which consists mostly of his previous students who had him in their junior years. Another physics teacher Thomas Casavant is teaching three AP Physics 1 and 2 classes this year.

Another interesting trend is that more females are taking Physics C, though they remain a minority in the class. Although there was only one female student in the class in 2021, female enrollment increased to 22.8% of all students enrolling in Physics C classes this year, he said. Currently, there are six girls in his 2nd period class, five in his 4th period and five in the 6th period — totalling to 16 out of 70 students. Welander hopes that students take AP Physics C because they find interest in Physics instead of just trying to improve a college application.

"It's true that AP Physics C is a pre-req for STEM majors in college," Welander said. "However, I will suggest that you take more time to consider if you are planning to take this class only for college." ♦



Welander

## Class merchandise proves to be wildly unpopular

WHILE MANY FALCONS BELIEVE CLASS MERCH TO BE OUTDATED, OTHER SCHOOLS CONTINUE BUYING PRODUCTS

By Annika Gho & Victoria Lin

I definitely think there are better things to remember my class with though."

The classic varsity letterman jacket in every American high school movie is nowhere to be found at Saratoga High.

Class rings and letterman jackets, elements that have long been the epitome of American high school culture, seem like the shadows of retro fashion trends that have not translated with the current generation of high school students.

Jostens is the vendor that handles Saratoga High's senior package, also known as a Mascot (Falcon) package. The Falcon Package is a bundle which includes several personalized cards and envelopes with the name, two T-shirts, a pull-over hoodie, key ring and mascot tassel.

**"I don't need a big ring that says '24'; maybe if they were smaller, I'd reconsider."**

SENIOR Vidhi Patel

In a poll about class rings conducted on the Saratoga Falcon's Instagram account, 3 out of 28 seniors said they would buy the class rings. For some, their reasoning was quite simple.

"Two words," senior Jarett Singh said. "Too expensive."

Other seniors said they preferred cheaper forms of memorabilia.

"I personally wouldn't buy them because I have no reason to," senior Vidhi Patel said. "I don't need a big ring that says '24'.

## Board pressured to find gym HVAC alternatives

By Nicole Lee & William Norwood

Parents, teachers and athletes have been pushing for a revamp of the gym's faulty HVAC system since last year. However, the district recently canceled the project due to unexpectedly high replacement costs totaling \$3.5 million, but the group has continued to campaign for a new HVAC and is now looking for ways to find short-term improvements.

Junior Adrienne Chung created a petition in June in support of replacing the HVAC system, with the goal of sharing the signatures with the board to demonstrate athletes' and students' support of the upgrade. Beyond this petition, campaign members like Chung have been regularly attending board meetings, organizing meetings with superintendent Bill Sanderson and chief business officer Delores Perley.

"The petition wasn't really to put pressure as much as it was to centralize the flow of information and make sure it was easier for people to access updates and context," Chung said.

The HVAC system in the gym hasn't been updated since the school was founded in 1959. According to history teacher Mike Davey, who has coached basketball teams for most of his 30 years at the school, the last major renovation of the gym was a resurfacing of the floor 31 years ago. Athletes who play in the gym facilities say they have little to no effective air conditioning and heating to protect them from the severe hot or cold weather outside, which has been detrimental to both the team's health and capacity to play.

"It's a health hazard for students, especially [those] playing sports," said junior Riley Adler, who, along with Chung, is spearheading the campaign.

Although the season has already started, Davey noticed small positive changes since the campaign started. While the district doesn't have the \$3.5 million to upgrade the entire HVAC system, officials have paid for cheaper short-term improvements.

Previously, it required a visit to the locker room to try to make any temperature adjustments in the gym, but the district has attempted to make this easier by installing a new thermostat on the gym wall.

**"We're hopeful they're pressured and do something to help us short term."**

JUNIOR Adrienne Chung

The district has also fixed the previously existing heating system to work properly and for longer periods of time than its previous half-hour life. They have also purchased portable heaters for use there.

Since the campaign began, the board has also been more transparent and has started sending updates through an email thread to the campaign group, Adler said.

The group is still talking to the school board in an effort to keep making improvements. Davey, who has also tried to bring attention to the issue, is seeing some signs of hope from the board despite his disappointment of seeing the bigger improvement project rejected.

"We're hopeful that they're pressured and can do something to help us short term and long term because there's two different goals: Making it through the season is the short-term goal, and how to fix this is the long-term goal," he said. ♦

### >> falconfigures

70

Mentees and mentors from all grade levels and math courses

12

Different courses that are covered by the math mentor program

3

Years since the program started

30

Dollars per hour saved by using classmate mentors

### togatalks

How would you describe your experiences with the math mentor program so far?

"It benefits me because it helps me review concepts that I've previously learned and better understand them."



junior mentor Michelle Ho

"It's pretty pleasant: I get to teach and my mentee gets to learn. There's a healthy learning environment."



freshman mentor Vivian Zhong

"It's been cool and seems helpful. It's nice to be able to talk with other people who know about what they're doing."



junior mentee Natalie Poon



Courtesy of JOSTENS

Jostens' class rings are fully customizable and made from real metals with unique looks.

# AN IMMIGRANT FAMILY'S HERITAGE:

SENIOR HANNAH DIMOCK'S FAMILY HISTORY TRACES BACK FIVE GENERATIONS FROM CHINA TO THE US

BY LynnDai

Aged hands roll over sticky anise cookie dough as the afternoon sunlight casts a stream across the kitchen countertop. Senior Hannah Dimock stands beside her grandmother, Mary Wong, 86, watching intently over her shoulders. Across the room, Hannah's mother, Sharon Palmer, slides a fresh-baked tray out of the oven just as her father sneaks a bite.

This image parallels one decade earlier during the Great Depression: In a smaller home situated within a largely white community in Beloit, Wisconsin, Hannah's great-grandmother Yee Shee stood in her kitchen as the neighboring Antonsen family from Sweden taught her a recipe that would eventually be passed down to her children and become beloved by all her future generations.

Yee Shee was a first-generation immigrant who, at age 29 and in an arranged marriage, moved from Guangdong, China, to the U.S. in 1923. Despite the prevailing societal pressures and expectations as a single mother for Yee Shee to return to her homeland with her children in the late '30s, she chose to stay put and single-handedly raised seven successful kids.

These rich family traditions and history, coupled with Hannah's own experiences in an Asian American majority environment like Saratoga and her scholarly discussions with her father Andrew Dimock, who previously taught English at Saratoga, have all contributed to her understanding of her cultural identity. While Hannah is a quarter Chinese, she identifies as fully white.



Shee

Asian is, comparison-wise, quite small," she said. "When I mention that I'm a quarter Chinese, it feels like I'm grasping at something that's barely there, to somehow prove that I'm less white than I'm being viewed as."

Even so, she is heavily involved in and inspired by her family's traditions, such as their annual family reunion and the inspiring immigrant story of her great-grandmother, Yee Shee.

In the post-Depression days of Hannah's great-grandmother, Mary and her older siblings Helen, Harry and Frank entertained themselves by watching their mother cook, but there was no father in the room. In 1938, Yee Shee's husband, Charles Wong, died at age 46 while trying to prevent a brawl in their family restaurant, the Nan King Lo.

Despite being beloved by the community, the restaurant was later sold by Yee Shee to support her children financially.

Now, almost a century later, Yee Shee's story has been captured by Mary Wong and Beatrice McKenzie — an emeritus professor of history at Beloit College — in the 2022 book "The Wongs of Beloit, Wisconsin."

The book traces 13 generations of Hannah's family history.

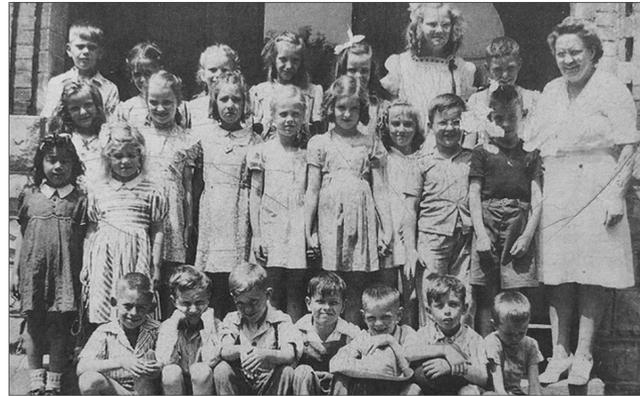
Four generations removed from Yee Shee's journey and struggles in the U.S., Hannah sees herself carrying on the traditional values her ancestors brought to America, while also shaping them through her first-hand experience watching her first or second-generation immigrant peers go through the cultural translation process. Hannah has shifted her ancestors' traditional values to focus more on individual interests and freedom to explore her passions.

"Understanding the immigration and assimilation process has made me more conscious of the differences between the experiences and familial situations between myself and my classmates," Hannah said. "I have the unique experience of growing up in an environment where white people are in the racial minority. I try my best to use this experience to be more mindful of my own privilege as a white American and inform the importance of carrying on the stories of my family's assimilation into the United States."

**Yee Shee: establishing traditions, defying stereotypes throughout her move to Beloit**

Yee Shee's journey to Beloit in 1923 with her husband Charles Wong, was primarily motivated by the unstable political tension in Guangdong and the looming threat that Congress was about to tighten immigration laws and permanently declare wives of citizens "ineligible to naturalize" as U.S. citizens. In Beloit, "integration services" including workforce education and English language and literacy classes were provided for the immigrant population.

Charles Wong was a dedicated business owner of his family's Nan King Lo restaurant and a "family man," according to Mary.



Courtesy of DAVID PALMER

Mary Wong (far bottom left) in Ms. McKinley's first grade classroom at Royce School, 1943.

Through his goal of providing a better education and life for his children, he placed heavy emphasis on assimilating his children into Beloit through weekly sessions at the local church.

"The church provided the support of a known, repetitive, supportive activity and was a place with friends, including one friend my age, with whom I continue to keep in contact," Mary said.

After her husband's unexpected death, Yee Shee chose to stay in America while also keeping alive bonds with family in China. Mary Wong said an important factor that encouraged Yee Shee to stay might have been her desire to carry out her husband's goals.

Although such characteristics in a patriarchal society often diminish the role of women — Confucian teachings emphasized that women were always to obey their husbands, and after they died, their sons — Yee Shee drew on connections she had cultivated in her community, using them to fuel her efforts to keep her family in the U.S.

"Women in an arranged marriage such as my Mom, accepted and followed their husband's lead," Mary Wong said. "Since my Mom knew why they immigrated to the U.S. Midwest, she felt she needed to fulfill his goals no matter how difficult and she saw how successful her oldest children were in school and community."

Yee Shee had no mother, sister or close friends to share her work, as she would have in China. Still, with support from her neighbors, she cooked every meal, cleaned, sewed, washed, ironed and mended clothes and established a small successful garden in her backyard, all while maintaining a strong image for her children.

"As I was 17 months old at the time, I was not aware of how great her grief was [after Charles' death], wailing and crying so my older siblings and neighbors sadly remem-

bered," Mary Wong said. "I did, upon reflecting, realize that as I got older, the only time she seemed sad was on or about the anniversary date of my father's death. Otherwise, she had a pleasant disposition, working hard each day to complete her work, never complaining."

With her seven children, Yee Shee managed to pass on traditional family values. Among those values were respect for elders, frugality and helping others in times of need. During the Great Depression, for example, Yee Shee shared her garden bounties with the neighbors. To keep food on the table, she sold shares of the family property in Hong Kong. After the U.S. repealed the Chinese exclusion laws that significantly restricted immigration to the country from 1882 throughout World War II, Chinese citizens became eligible for naturalization. Consequently, Yee Shee naturalized as an American citizen in 1959. She utilized her citizenship to her advantage, frequently visiting children and grandchildren in California, Washington, Pennsylvania and Utah. Before her death in 1978 at age 83, Yee Shee had 22 grandchildren and was able to remember all their birthdays.

Her seven children all grew up to lead successful lives. Gim Wong, the eldest, was a staff sergeant in World War II, later became a plant engineering manager at Fairbanks Morse & Co., and was awarded "Beloit Booster of the Year" in 1971 for his involvement in community service; Fung Wong was a registered nurse and opened the first emergency room in Beloit, in 1948; George Wong was a First Lieutenant stationed in Korea in the '50s, and later became an electrical engineer at Beloit Iron Works (now Beloit Corporation); Helen Wong started an international women's club at Pullman; Harry Wong was a cardiac anesthesiologist and later becoming the Harry C. Wong Chair in at University of Utah Medical School.



Wong

# THE WONGS OF BELOIT, WISCONSIN

Frank Wong earned a full 4-year scholarship to Harvard University and later became a professor of history, at several colleges; and Mary Wong, the youngest, went on to become a teacher, sometimes being the only minority to hold the role in her schools.

Mary Wong's brother, Frank, likened his mother to a "Golden Chrysanthemum," referencing the symbolic flower in Chinese culture that represents strength and unchanging virtue through a flower that survives the deathly first of autumn.

**"Understanding immigration has made me more conscious of our differences."**



SENIOR Hannah Dimock

"So successfully had Yee Shee overcome the extraordinary circumstances of her life, including outrageous misfortune, that to those close to her, time seemed to have no grip on her destiny," Frank wrote in his eulogy included in the novel. "Although she accomplished most of her life in America, she did so with simple Chinese virtues that are also universal virtues; courage and compassion, strength and love, honesty and justice, all nourished by the extended roots of the family. Neither time nor death shall conquer these old prominent virtues."

**Current generations: carrying on five generations of traditional familial legacies**

While Mary and her six siblings often faced the difficult balancing act of integrating American values of individualism and competition with the traditional values established by Yee Shee, she has always remained true to her family values.

Throughout Mary's life, values of hard work, respect and generosity taught by Yee Shee were at the heart of how she and her siblings tried to live their lives and also pass down to their children.

She now lives with her granddaughter Hannah, her daughter Sharon Palmer, the senior associate vice provost for undergraduate education at Stanford University, and her son-in-law, Andrew Dimock. Andrew Dimock is teaching at Branham High School this year, he previously taught English 9 and 10 as a long-term substitute.

"Throughout my entire life, I have been supported by my older brothers and sisters," Mary said. "With any challenge, disappointment or problem, someone would always be there for me. And, because I followed six siblings who were excellent students, active leaders in school and in the community, they made my path to adulthood easier."

Because of their well-known restaurant and the reputation of Mary's older siblings, Mary said she experienced less racism from their neighbors. She said that many of her friends were children of immigrants from

Europe and accepted her totally, never mentioning her ethnic origin. Even so, she was warned about the racial tensions that were exacerbated during World War II.

"I was most aware of my race and ethnicity during WWII, when kids would call me a 'Jap' or the enemy," Mary said. "Beginning when I went to school my mother would tell me to say I was Chinese, not Japanese."

She never realized why Yee Shee stressed that differentiation until decades later, when she was married and living with two children in Berkeley, California: After moving to the state in the 1970s, Mary had learned that one of her best friends, a Japanese American woman, was relocated to a camp during the war as part of a larger movement where the U.S., in fear that citizens of Japanese ancestry would act as spies, forcibly relocated and incarcerated them along the Pacific Coast.

Her actions in communicating with the rest of her family to record the history of Yee Shee's influences have allowed for the Wong family values to be passed down and maintained, namely through the triennial Wong family reunions.

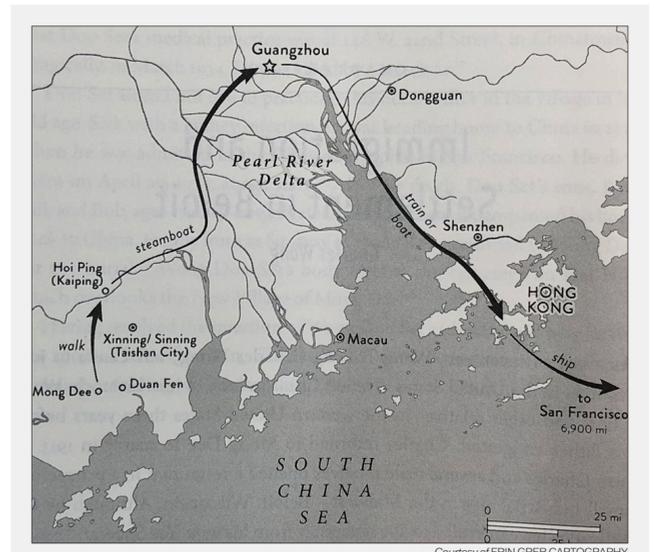
These reunions have taken place across the West Coast and Midwest, from Seattle and Beloit to Salt Lake City. Several second-generation family members took the lead in planning all the generational events until 2022, at which time third-generation family members assumed the responsibility. The reunions hold entire-family and individual family dinners for smaller gatherings to get acquainted.

At the reunions, dozens of family members celebrate their history. Their latest reunion, in the summer of 2022, involved a panel with three surviving members of the second generation, who answered questions about their experiences growing up in Beloit.

Besides carrying on family traditions and storytelling traditions, Hannah said her grandmother's emphasis on family has translated into her own values and experiences.

While Hannah feels that she didn't have a grasp of the significance of her great-grandparents' immigration to the U.S. when she was younger, she said she's now more aware of how meaningful and courageous their move was. After absorbing more stories about the assimilation and the experience of growing up Chinese American from her grandma, she also recognized the importance of keeping her great-grandparents' legacy alive through the generations by maintaining them herself.

"I can recognize that my own family has had more generations since immigration, and that makes my approach to the concept of immigration — especially being a white American—much less shaped by personal experience," Hannah said. "While I can never understand the experience of being a first-generation immigrant-American, I hope that I can continue to be mindful of these differences and the ways in which my own life has been shaped by earlier immigration within my family." ♦



Courtesy of ERIN GREB CARTOGRAPHY

The typical voyage of immigrants from Mong Dee, China, going by steamboat to Guangzhou, boat or train through Shenzhen and finally boarding a ship at Hong Kong.

## The first step: immigration journey as the 'paper sons'

The Wong family's journey to the U.S. began on paper. Wong Doo Set, Dimock's great-great-grandfather, was a medical practitioner from a well-established family in China. His younger brother Wong Ben Yuk, then 13, decided to move to America to increase family wealth, according to The Wongs of Beloit Wisconsin. His home city, Mong Dee, was an emigrants' village — one from which many young men departed to find work, as the city itself was an active trade route next to the Pearl River Delta.

Ben Yuk's move was part of a larger phenomenon occurring at the time. In the late nineteenth century, stage migration, or the process of moving to different areas during the different stages of life, was typical for Chinese emigrants. Due to the population density and land scarcity from European colonization, a quarter of the men in Taishan, Guangdong, where the Wong family lived, sought work elsewhere in the 19th century.

Although this complicated his citizenship process, Ben Yuk was still able to naturalize as a part of the influx of "paper sons," the fictive children of Chinese American fathers, to be admitted into the U.S. This was further made easier by the 1906 SF earthquake, where public birth documents were destroyed and thus prevented the city from tracing blood relations, allowing for immigrants to call for citizenship through relations established by paper, not blood.

In response to U.S. officials' query for documents, he referred them to the one person he knew was living in San Francisco at the time: Wong Sang. While the identity of Wong Sang and his connections to the Wong family are not definitive, Wong Sang not only vouched for Ben Yuk's previous status as a permanent resident of the U.S., but claimed that he knew of Ben Yuk's birth in the country, meaning that he was a U.S. citizen. Ben Yuk was granted admission in that same year.

He continued to make several trips back and forth from China to California, leaving home permanently for Mong Dee in 1908. Four years later, however, his brother Doo Set would take over his documentation papers and emigrate to America, a move that was likely orchestrated by their parents, who selected which sons would go forth from the village to interact with individuals at all levels of society.

**While waiting to be processed, Ben Yuk was detained with a shipping company housing dozens of other Chinese men.**

When Ben Yuk arrived on Angel Island, an immigration station widely known as the "Ellis Island of the West" that further complicated admission through more severe literacy tests and questioning, its detention center had not been built yet. As a result, while waiting to be processed, he was left detained with a shipping company that was responsible for housing dozens of other Chinese men, all of whom were left suspended in tiny warehouses that fostered diseases like smallpox.

Ben Yuk arrived at Angel Island in San Francisco in 1889, just following the end of what immigration restrictionists at the time claimed was a loophole in an earlier Chinese restriction law: foreign-born sons and daughters of Chinese-American citizens were entitled to U.S. citizenship.

Doo Set came to the U.S. in 1912 in place of his younger brother, successfully convincing U.S. immigration officials that his face matched Ben Yuk's photograph taken four years prior, a process McKenzie wrote was likely due to the fact that officials were more deferential towards Doo Set's higher class status as a physician.

Doo Set initially settled in Chicago, where previous Chinese businessmen had organized a Chinese village at the World Fair in 1893 to combat negative views of Chinese Americans among the Anglo-Americans there. Eventually, he moved to Beloit to avoid the summer-heat that had regularly exacerbated his asthma. Doo Set would later testify for the citizenship of several children who were not his actual sons, alongside three of which were his own. ♦

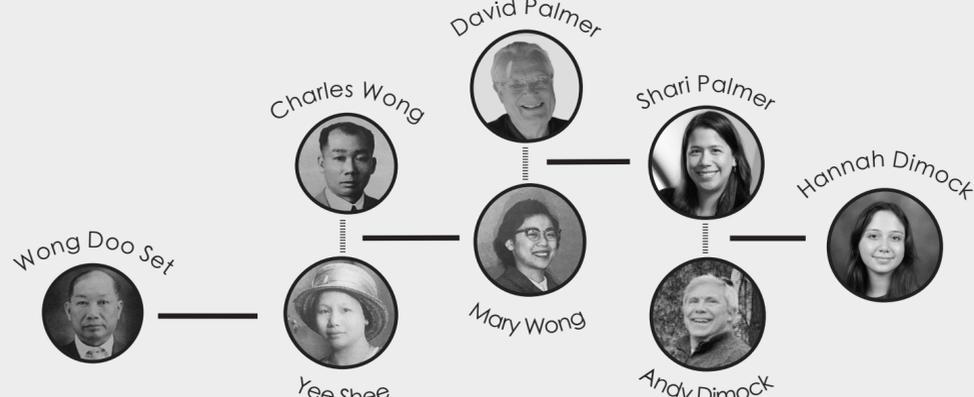


Courtesy of LISA FORTSCH

Frank Wong, Mary's brother, pops out as a surprise during the 1982 Wong family reunion.

## THE WONG FAMILY

Originating in Guangdong, China, the Wong family moved to Beloit, Wisconsin in 1923 and have since traced back five generations in the United States.



Graphic by SUNNY CAO



Warriors - Milwaukee Bucks - Miami Heat

# NBA FINAL PREDICTIONS

Graphic by ISABELLE WANG

## Despite aging core, Warriors can still win

By GeorgeHu

The Golden State Warriors have hit the jackpot in the past decade, winning a jaw-dropping four NBA championships in the past 10 NBA seasons, with their most recent being in 2021-2022. All four championships involved point guard Stephen Curry, shooting guard Klay Thompson and power forward Draymond Green — their longtime three core players.

Despite all this success, they have been overlooked in recent years to win the title. The Warriors were eliminated in the second round last season by the Los Angeles Lakers. Meanwhile, their core players are getting long in the tooth in NBA terms; Curry is 35, while Green and Thompson are 33. Because of this, none of the 30 NBA general managers, when surveyed, picked the Warriors to win this year's title.

Nevertheless, Warriors fans should still have plenty of optimism; they still have a talented enough roster to win it all if they stay healthy and catch some breaks.

Although the Warriors are known for having an older NBA roster, they have young talent, which includes 21-year-old forward Jonathan Kuminga and 21-year-old guard Moses Moody. Both players have been noticeably performing well early on.

In the preseason, Kuminga averaged 21.8

points in five games, playing 27 minutes per game. This is a jump from last year's preseason, where he averaged 10 points in around the same number of minutes per game. Moody averaged 13.2 points per game on 20.6 minutes per game, which is more than last year despite having fewer minutes played.

Most significant to the Warriors' title hopes, they traded guard Jordan Poole, forward Patrick Baldwin Jr., and guard Ryan Rollins to the Washington Wizards to acquire future Hall of Fame guard Chris Paul.

The veteran presence of members on the Warriors can only help further develop their young talent.

Paul's basketball IQ has shown to make a huge difference in the past through his stints in playing for the Oklahoma City Thunder and the Phoenix Suns. After each of these teams acquired Paul, their win count skyrocketed and easily outperformed their consensus early season expectations. The Thunder defied expectations by making the playoffs with a 44-28 record their first year with Paul, and the Suns went from a win percentage of below 50% the year before they got Paul to a win percentage of above 70% the year they acquired Paul.

Last season, one of the flaws that prevented the Warriors from repeating as champions was their lack of a secondary playmaker

— and the often befuddling and frustratingly inconsistent play of Poole. The addition of an always-dialed-in Paul removes this flaw as he can lead the offense and be the focal playmaker when Curry needs to be on the bench for rest.

Lastly, there isn't any team in the league that is clearly way better than the other teams despite many blockbuster trades during the offseason, making the league wide open. Last season, no team won 60 games or more; the Warriors themselves won 44. This is the first time this phenomenon has happened in a non-shortened season since the 2000-2001 NBA season.

It does not look like that will change this upcoming season. Some teams do look formidable, but it is clear that they still have glaring flaws.

The Denver Nuggets, the reigning NBA champions, lost guard Bruce Brown, who helped the team with his great defense and ability to play three positions.

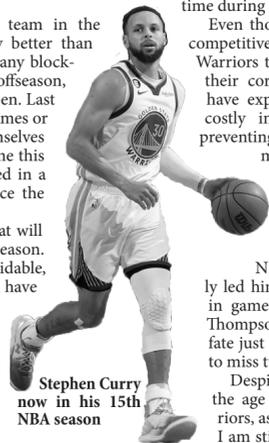
The Phoenix Suns had to trade away a lot of their depth — which included guard/forward Mikal Bridges, forward Cam John-

son, forward Jae Crowder and guard Landry Shamet — for all-star forward Kevin Durant and all-star guard Bradley Beal. As a result, the team may struggle when their stars are forced to be on the bench for periods of time during games for rest purposes.

Even though the league is highly competitive, it is still essential for the Warriors to avoid costly injuries to their core players. The Warriors have experienced many of these costly injuries in recent years, preventing them from winning more championships. Durant's injury against the Rockets in the 2019 postseason forced him to miss the first four games of the 2019

NBA finals and potentially led him to injuring his Achilles in game 5 of those same finals. Thompson would suffer a similar fate just a game later, forcing him to miss two full seasons.

Despite injury prospects and the age of the core of the Warriors, as a longtime Warriors fan, I am still confident the Warriors can win the 2024 NBA finals and secure their eighth championship in franchise history. ♦



Stephen Curry now in his 13th NBA season

## Face it: The reloaded Milwaukee Bucks are ready

By BillHuang

Staring at an official report from ESPN NBA insider Adrian Wojnarowski on Instagram in late September, I saw a huge image of 7-time all-star Damian Lillard photo-shopped into a Milwaukee Buck jersey.

It was a seismic shakeup of the NBA landscape. Arguably one of the best shooters behind Stephen Curry, Lillard joined the franchise that had won an NBA championship just two years ago. I knew this meant the Milwaukee Bucks would be the obvious pick to hold the championship trophy next June.

For the past 11 seasons, Lillard has committed every fiber of his being to the Portland Trail Blazers, carrying the entire team on his back. Despite scoring around 30 or 40 points every night and even dropping a

franchise record and personal career high of 71 points last season, the Blazers underperformed year after year, never having enough talent to challenge the best teams.

**When the report came through that Lillard had been traded to the Bucks, I knew they were an obvious favorite.**

Entering the off-season, rumors of the flashy point guard leaving the Blazers started spiraling. Many fans speculated possible teams that Lillard might join the Miami Heat or the Toronto Raptors. If he had gone to Miami, it would have created a new pow-

er duo with superstar small forward Jimmy Butler.

When the report came through that Lillard had been traded to the Bucks, I knew they were an obvious favorite in the championship contention. The trade to the Bucks was a three-team trade: the Bucks received Lillard; the Blazers received Suns' center Deandre Ayton; the Phoenix Suns received shooting guard Grayson Allen, small forward Keon Johnson, power forward Nasir Little and center Jusuf Nurkic.

The Bucks have been one of, if not, the

best team in the Eastern Conference for the past few seasons. With the all league MVP, finals MVP, finals Champion, 7-time all-star power forward Giannis Antetokounmpo leading the team, having Lillard join his side will make an unstoppable force. Antetokounmpo averaged 31.1 points per game last season, and Lillard averaged 32.2 points, and even had three 50-point games. Giannis had been unstoppable in the paint and in the driving lines and Lillard had been untouchable beyond the 3-point line.

Although the future in the league is always uncertain, the Bucks look to be heavy favorites, with one of the greatest guard-big man duos in NBA history.

In a few more months, I hope to see the glorious finals be played by the Bucks facing off against our beloved Golden State Warriors. ♦

## Don't be surprised if Miami Heat wins it all in 2024

By AlanCai

"There's no chance the Miami Heat will win," fans said during every matchup in the playoffs. Yet, out of four playoff series, the Florida team only failed to win one: the NBA Finals, falling only to the Denver Nuggets.

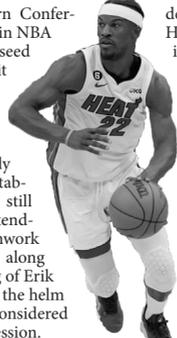
The team has consistently surpassed expectations this decade and its players have proven themselves to be a formidable force, despite being eternally considered an underdog. Appearing in two of the last four NBA finals, the most out of any team so far this decade, the Heat is poised to win its fourth title since its 1988 founding.

The Heat is not a flashy team by any regard. It reached the finals this year with only one all-star player selection and a dismal

eighth seed in the Eastern Conference. The only other team in NBA history to finish at eighth seed or below and still make it to the finals was the 1999 New York Knicks.

Despite having odds overwhelmingly stacked against them by arguably better players on more established teams, the Heat is still one of the foremost contenders due to its strong teamwork and frontcourt dynamic, along with the superior coaching of Erik Spoelstra, who has been at the helm since 2008 and is widely considered to be at the top of his profession.

Though not a star stud-



Jimmy Butler leads the Heat

ded as other teams like the Bucks, the Heat have one of the most tested lineups in the modern NBA.

Longtime veteran Guard-Forward Jimmy Butler is at the center of everything. He is well known throughout the league for his impeccable work ethic and ability to perform and push his teammates at the most crucial moments of the game. During the 2022-2023 season, Butler averaged 22.9 points per game in the regular season and 26.9 in the postseason.

Center Bam Adebayo shoulders the bulk of the scoring burden on the team. A young and efficient frontcourt player, Adebayo is blossoming into one of the most valu-

able centers, averaging 17.9 points per game in last season's deep postseason run on top of 9.9 boards (rebounds).

Rounding up the lineup, guards Kyle Lowry and Tyler Herro are formidable forces on their own. They perfectly complement the talents and effort of the team by scoring and playmaking around the perimeter.

Despite all their success, the Heat remains an underrated team. Despite not making many off-season trades, they continue to bring versatile prowess on both ends of the court, which historically translates to championships.

Others are picking the Nuggets or the Suns or the Bucks or Celtics to win next June. I'm betting on experience combined with great coaching and sticking with the Heat. ♦

## Parent donations crucial to keep sports running

By GraceLin

This fall, the JV girls' water polo team ran short of money due to a lack of parent donations, leading them to cancel one appearance in a tournament.

Funding shortages like this are rare at the school, but funding struggles are more common in recent years after the passage of California's Assembly Bill 1575 in 2012, which forbids public schools from charging fees for participation in extracurricular activities. After this bill's passage, all school programs and departments like the Media Arts Program and clubs could no longer require parent donations, making it more difficult for many programs to cover the cost of field trips, bus rides and many other expenses.

Because of this, sports must rely on parent donations and fundraising to help fund programs, which can go up to \$25,000 annually for high-expense sports like football, athletics director Rick Ellis said.

Ellis said the amounts requested of parents depend on two main factors: the number of kids per team and the cost of equipment, uniforms and tournaments.

If the team doesn't receive enough donations, they have to resort to fundraising campaigns to offset costs. Sports such as girls' water polo and football have turned to businesses like Chipotle and Vertical Raise in order to help cover costs. This fall, football's Vertical Raise fundraiser generated about \$10,000, according to campus supervisor and assistant football coach Archie Ljepava.

Donation requests can range from \$250-600 depending on the sport. Sports like badminton and volleyball are on the lower side, while football players' parents were asked to donate around \$600 per participant this year, Ellis said.

In addition, coaches are asked to incorporate the athletic general fund cost into their donation ask. The athletic general fund cost is an additional donation request for sports to cover transportation, referees and equipment. It can vary between \$50-250 a player.

Sports that require few or no referees, like badminton and tennis, ask for only \$50 donations for these costs. On the other hand, football requires five referees, meaning athletes' parents are asked to donate \$250.

Aside from the cost of referees, certain sports, such as football, rely on large private buses for transportation to away games. These generally cost \$1,300 per trip. Equipment for the weight room and trainer room are also included in the athletic general

fund donation.

And while some teams like football incur steep costs, it does well with funding. In one successful annual campaign, players are given a spirit pack, including shorts and T-shirts. Much of the equipment, like shoulder pads and helmets, is covered by the district, decreasing costs that must come from parent donations and fundraisers like Vertical Raise.

Other sports like basketball also incur occasional hefty costs. This year, the boys' basketball head coach Mike Davey decided to join the Vikes Alumni Tournament held in Canada this December. The cost will be covered by donations, and teams from Washington and Canada will be attending along with the school's boys' basketball team, he said.

"It's a little bit more nervous for me because I have to plan everything and all set it all up, but hopefully it's just exciting for them," Davey said.

While underfunding is a concern for sports, Ellis said the school's main athletics issue is actually finding coaches for certain teams, especially ones like lacrosse and field hockey.

The school had to resort to canceling both the boys and girls lacrosse teams last year due to not being able to find a coach and not having enough sign-ups.

While the athletic program could always use more money, Ellis said parent donations and fundraising campaigns have continued to help teams pay for sports.

"We've had relatively good parent donations and good fundraising campaigns to pay for all the sports and fund the athletic program that way," Ellis said.

Ellis encouraged students and parents to support sports they aren't a part of by attending games, saying that paying for tickets can help out teams.

"That's a great way to support the kids: showing up at a girls' volleyball game on a Tuesday, Thursday night or a field hockey game on a Monday or Wednesday afternoon," Ellis said.

Another key part of athletics funding is the Sports Boosters organization, which can step in to help in areas that may lack sufficient funds.

As a nonprofit organization, the Boosters pays for resources like concussion testing, scholarships, strength and conditioning training, and athletic capital improvements not covered by the district.

"I think that with good communication and parent outreach, we can get around them [underfunding issues]. They're anomaly situations — they're not happening regularly," Ellis said. ♦



Ellis

## Balancing act: Sophomore juggles water polo and dance

By IsabelleWang

After the end-of-the-day school bell rang this fall, sophomore Thalea Charton headed to her dance studio to practice for an hour. Then, after an intense session of ballet and other forms of dance, Charton packed her bags and headed to her second sport as a member of the school's water polo team, where she practiced for another two hours.

**"I decided to continue dancing outside of school because it's a way to relieve emotions."**

SOPHOMORE Thalea Charton

Charton's history in both sports goes back to early elementary school. She started swimming at age 6 at De Anza Cupertino Aquatics and dancing at age 3 at East West and Dance Academy USA dance studios.

She began playing water polo for the first time this fall on the girls' JV team. Starting this winter, she will also be playing for San Jose Express Water Polo.

As a freshman, Charton was on the school's dance team.

This year, she decided to shift her focus more toward water polo as a team sport, dropping dance at school to practice it recreationally.

"I decided to continue dancing outside of school because it's a way to relieve emotions," Charton said. "My favorite part of dance is whenever we do improv because it helps me bring out my creativity."

Charton found the dance team to be divided into cliques, making it difficult for the members to bond. Additionally, she decided to move on from school dance for its unexpected time commitment.

"It was said there would be some Saturday practices, but it ended up being every single Saturday," Charton said.

Charton is enjoying dance more now, as the stress and pressure of performing with a group has disappeared.

In contrast to the extra time commitment required for dance, water polo provided a set schedule of two hours after school from Monday to Friday that Charton could follow and know what to expect. While she sometimes spends 10 hours a week in the waters, she also commits to five hours of dance practice each week, or one hour each weekday.

Despite simultaneously participating in two time-consuming pursuits, she has

found ways to balance schoolwork with sports.

This tight schedule is worth it, however, as the strong leadership from the upperclassmen and connections made in water polo is something Charton looks forward to continuing.

The varsity girls' water polo team mostly consisted of upperclassmen, with six seniors leading the team and being role models for younger players.

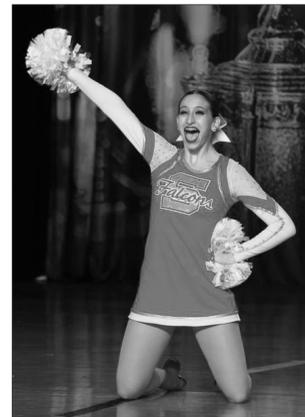
Compared to dance, where Charton found that the wide range of ages led to separations between upperclassmen and lowerclassmen, the water polo seniors' strong leadership and connections to the underclassmen helped the JV and varsity teams become more cohesive and comfortable.

"Water polo involves more team bonding since it is a team sport, so our practices are more team based where we focus on working together," Charton said.

She found that the comfortable team atmosphere in water polo made the team performance stronger. Additionally, Charton said that practicing dance outside of school also helps her grow stronger for water polo.

Along with its team spirit, Charton said that water polo has a lot more energy and excitement compared to what she experienced with dancing.

"There's a lot of times this year where we've made comebacks," Charton said. "I think it's always fun to see people get riled up, and, while they're not violent, you can see them get angry because they're so passionate about it." ♦



Sophomore Thalea Charton in the pom routine at Dance Nationals in March 2023.

## Sometimes teams don't match their namesakes

It makes sense that the names of most professional sports teams begin with the city, state or region that they are located in. The arena of the Los Angeles Lakers is located in Los Angeles, and the New York Yankees' stadium is located in New York City.

However, this is surprisingly not always the case. Nearly a third of all NFL teams do not play in the city that they are named after.

The most shocking examples include the Kansas City Chiefs in Missouri, Kansas City Royals in Missouri, Atlanta Braves in Cumberland, Ga., Los Angeles Angels in Anaheim, and San Francisco 49ers in Santa Clara.

Atlanta Braves and Los Angeles Angels

While the Los Angeles Angels and Atlanta Braves do play in the same state as their namesake city, they play 24 miles away in Anaheim and 12 miles away in Cumberland, respectively.

The Angels have gone through several name changes in the past, from the California Angels in 1997 to the Anaheim Angels. Angel Stadium, which has been their home

ly enough, Kansas City is in both Missouri and Kansas, despite the city's name implying that it is only in Kansas.

Originally, in the early 1800s, Kansas City began where the Kansas and Missouri river intersected. In 1854, the rivers were chosen as the boundary of Kansas and Missouri, causing Kansas City to be in both states.

Atlanta Braves and Los Angeles Angels

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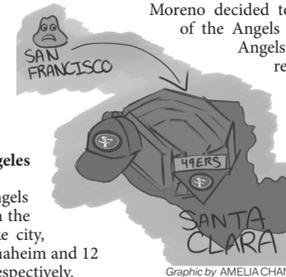
since 1966, was extensively renovated in 1997 and the city of Anaheim lended \$30 million for the renovation, with the condition that the team's name has to include "Anaheim." In 2005, Angels owner Arturo Moreno decided to change the name of the Angels to the Los Angeles Angels for increased name recognition, as the Los Angeles MLB market is the second-largest media market.

The Braves have been called the Atlanta Braves since 1966 and played their home games in Atlanta until the start of the 2017 MLB season. Much like the Angels, they moved to play at Truist Park in Cumberland in 2017 for monetary reasons.

Atlanta Braves and Los Angeles Angels

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Graphic by AMELIA CHANG



George Hu

# Fall sports recap: Falcons fight for CCS spots

BY AidenYe & VictoriaLin

Despite low participation from underclassmen in most sports and many losses to graduation, most teams performed as well, if not better than last year. Only the girls' volleyball team, sophomore Millie Wang from golf and select cross country runners participated in CCS, with Wang reaching the NorCal tournament.

## Cross Country: One senior makes CCS

Due to more inexperienced underclassmen competing in the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League Finals (SCVALS), both the boys and girls placed sixth out of seven teams. In CCS, the boys placed 10th out of 11 teams, and the girls placed 10th out of 12 teams. Only one senior, Jacob Merrill, ran at CCS, meaning many members still have time to improve in the coming years.

## Field Hockey: Senior leadership leads to a victorious season, places third in league

Having a relatively successful season, seniors mentored the younger players despite having initial disagreements with their new coach. The team was unable to qualify for CCS. They finished their season with a record of 10-4, placing them at third in the El Camino League.

## Football: Major improvements and new coaches lead to series of shutout wins

Ending with a season record of 4-6, the Falcons performed well above their 1-4 record last year. With a large influx of seniors this year, alongside new coach and former NFL player Darrel Adams joining, the team was much more successful. Notable victories include a 45-0 against Lynbrook on Nov. 4 and 24-0 against Gunn on Oct. 27. Ultimately, the small team size of 26, compared to other teams who often have 50 players, meant the Falcons were often fatigued in later quarters, leading to their losses this season.

## Girls' golf: Star places 7th at CCS, goes on to finish 8th at the NorCal tournament

The Falcons placed fourth out of nine teams, and No. 1 player Millie Wang and No. 2 player Sarah Lim made it to CCS. Although Lim could not participate in CCS

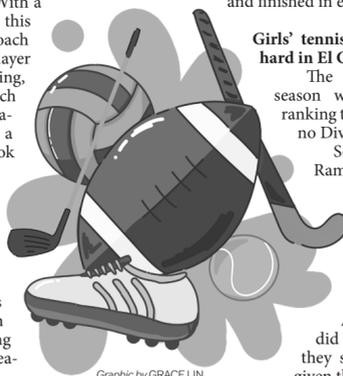
due to other conflicts, Wang finished seventh and advanced to the NorCal tournament, which was at the Berkeley Country Club, where she carded four over par and finished in eighth place.

## Girls' tennis: Falcons compete hard in El Camino Division

The Falcons ended the season with a 9-3 record, ranking third in the El Camino Division. Sophomore Riya Rama made it to the quarterfinals, and doubles players senior Nancy Lei and sophomore Sasha Prasad qualified for the semifinals. Although the team did not make it to CCS, they still performed well given the loss of two strong seniors to graduation.

## Girls' volleyball: Youngsters come up big in run to CCS, lose first CSS matchup

After qualifying for CCS, the Falcons lost their first game against King City. They had an average season with an overall record of



Graphic by GRACE LIN

## BOYS' BASKETBALL

# Team forges chemistry through summer practices

BY BillHuang & BryanZhao

The team is being led this year by their new starters: point guard Caleb Yu, shooting guard Bryan Wang, small forward Daniel Jadali, power forward Kali Duvvuri, and center Raghav Chakravarthi. Over the summer, they played in the Mountain View High School summer league and went to a week-end-long tournament at St. Mary's College. Jadali and Wang are highly experienced guards, put alongside Duvvuri and Chakravarthi, who are the post players. With their hard work throughout the summer, they are aiming to shoot high this season.

Over the summer, the team had a strict practice schedule — six days a week, one hour of weightlifting and two hours of open gym. During their tournament, coach Mike Davey gave all players playing time to help everyone gain some experience and develop chemistry with each other.

"Coach [Mike Davey] subbed in everyone to see who could do what and because of that, everyone that may not play [much]



Photo by BRYAN ZHAO

Junior Steven Ning evades junior Caleb Yu during basketball practice in the gym on the Nov. 3.

for the regular season could show [their skills]," junior shooting guard Steven Ning said.

Since the tournament in June and July, the team has taken only two weeks off. In August, they resumed open gym and weight lifting. By maximizing the amount of time they put into basketball after the break from

mid-July to August, they want to neutralize the rust following the break and run at peak efficiency.

"On top of practices, we cut into our individual time to refine personal skill sets," sophomore point guard Nathan Liu said. "In a regular week, we spend time practicing with the team, but with weightlifting

and practicing on my own, I often spend 20 hours a week on basketball."

Beyond their more rigorous training routine, the team has worked on strengthening the connections between each player. The summer tournaments and daily practices have welded the team together, according to Ning.

"With a strong team comes strong relationships," senior shooting guard Bryan Wang said. "Our team has crazy chemistry, and even outside of basketball, we all love spending time with each other and have gotten really close."

Although the team initially struggled with communication on and off the courts in the beginning, Wang said that the summer tournament has already resolved many of these issues.

Wang hopes to win CCS finals and looks to make a big step for Saratoga Basketball this season.

"Even though [winning CCS] previously has not been done, with our unique chemistry and dedication, it is most definitely not out of reach," Wang said. ♦

## BOYS' SOCCER

# Hong highlights strong additions to new roster

BY MitchellChen

Even with the loss of 11 seniors from last year's team, the Falcons think they have a strong starting lineup, especially with the addition of D1 Navy commit senior Yul Hong, who is lacing up for the school season after previously only playing club soccer.

11 of the 18 players are also club soccer players. Notably, sophomore Matez Casanova and junior Langdon Huynh both joined the school team from Major League Soccer development clubs such as Palo Alto soccer club and De Anza Force.

Left wing Mohit Gandluru, one of four seniors on the squad, is confident the juniors and sophomores can make the necessary adjustments to help them succeed in the league.

"I think we have a lot of talent on the team, and we are a strong contender for

CCS this year," said Gandluru. "Our main problem right now is the conditioning of the team."

Going forward, the team is looking to increase their endurance by adding more running into their practices and continue building their team chemistry.

"The problem we had last year was the amount of sick and injured players which resulted in poor practice attendance. This severely impacted our on-field coordination and chemistry," Gandluru said.

While tryouts have just ended, the team played their first preseason game against Homestead on Nov. 17. Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was not able to cover this game.

"I think it will be more of a test to see where the team is at and how we can look to improve during the season. I am also looking to have fun with my new teammates as well," Hong said. ♦

## GIRLS' SOCCER

# Falcons return with small roster of club-level players

BY AmeliaChang & RuiyanZhu

After missing CCS by one game last year, the Falcons are more determined than ever to make it this year.

"The overall goal would just be to make it to CCS since we weren't quite able to do that last year," senior co captain Kate Oberhauser said. "We just have to get off to a good start preseason and get as many wins as we can."

Oberhauser will be going to UC San Diego, where she has already verbally committed to play Division I soccer.

With younger star players like sophomore striker Keatyn Spendlove, freshmen left wing and attacking midfielder Katie Lu and winger Claire Chen, the team is excited to mentor the new players

to be the best players possible. The team is considered small, with 18 players.

The early season has seen them jump straight into training and simple technical drills like dribbling between cone to cone. Players have also been working on speed and agility drills, like jumping over hurdles. They end with scrimmages at the end of practice.

The team is also working on their mental game on top of practicing.

"Having a strong mentality is crucial to the game," Spendlove said. "It can help a lot even off the field."

The team's first preseason game will be on Nov. 30 against Hillsdale High School.

"I think we'll do very well. Everybody seems very committed and wants to do what's best for the team," Spendlove said. ♦

## GIRLS' BASKETBALL

# Coach Steffen focuses on helping young team

BY AidenYe & FlorenceWei

Youth is one theme of this year's team. As the winter season begins, players are practicing, drilling and playing preseason games in preparation for league games in January.

After losing last year's top scorer, Tanya Ghai, to graduation, two freshmen — power forward Emma Williams and shooting guard Payton Steffen — have large roles on the 12-player team.

"Everyone on the team treats us equally and supports us, especially the upperclassmen," Williams said. "If we make a mistake during practice, they ensure we don't feel discouraged."

Although the starting lineup is still being determined, it will likely be led by junior point guard Urvi Iyer and senior shooting guard Zineerah Ahmed. The two are co-captains.

Through the introduction of new members brought challenges, the team has bonded through open gym sessions in recent months, where interested members could drop in and play during the summer, as well as group activities such as eating boba and frozen yogurt together.

Members plan to have more team-bonding activities throughout the season.

As the season approaches, the team is gearing up to focus on polishing more specific plays to ensure a secure guard.

"I think it's important for our team to have a solid defense because we're not that offense-focused," Williams said.

To do this, they have been practicing helping in man-to-man defense and creating turnovers.

The team has also been practicing the "Michigan State Drill," in which players rapidly pass, catch and finish in transition.

The drill raises the speed of transitions, so players will be able to react quickly during a game.

In addition to new members, the new coach, Manny Steffen, the father of Payton and a well-known media arts teacher at Redwood Middle School, has worked to strengthen the team.

He records the scrimmages so members can review and see what they need to improve.

With solid team spirit and a clear goal, the team has high hopes for the season despite not making CCS last year.

"High school basketball is really intense compared to middle school," Williams said. "But we're all really prepared, so I think it will be absolutely spectacular." ♦



Williams



Iyer



Steffen



Ahmed

## WRESTLING

# State champion coach brings intense training

BY AidenYe

Following an unsuccessful season last year, the Falcons hope to rebuild through new underclassmen, increased rigor in wrestling training by head coach Bianca Vargas and weightlifting training by new strength and conditioning coach Darrel Adams.

Compared to last year, the team has already increased in size, from five members to around 10.

With a majority of athletes being underclassmen with little experience, there is a lot of conditioning required before more complicated wrestling techniques can be taught.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the team practices techniques and cardio exercises. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, they start with lifting in the weight room before transitioning into more technique training for pins and pin-escapes in the wrestling room near the gym.

Junior co-captain Keion Ashjaee-Marshall noted the importance of neck training — a muscle not often targeted in sports.

"Neck strength is important because you need to keep your head up whenever you shoot for a takedown, even though someone is always trying to press your neck down," Ashjaee-Marshall said. In terms of technique, the team is starting from the basics: double-leg takedowns and stand-up game. A double-leg involves grabbing the opponent's legs right above the knee to flip them over onto the mat, while stand-up game covers standing up

while maintaining a stable base.

"Right now we haven't had too much full-out sparring because we have a lot of new members and we don't want them to get hurt," junior co-captain Rebecca Bossow said.

Near the end of practices, the whole team engages in a friendly competition where two wrestlers try to grab each other's knees as fast as possible — the first step to getting a takedown.

"We have a lot of new members, and we don't want them to get hurt."



JUNIOR Rebecca Bossow

Prior to their first scrimmage against MacDonald High School on Nov. 17, the team began to have matches with each other. Doing this allowed athletes to get live-practice for the techniques they've been learning for the past couple weeks.

"[Vargas] has been a state champion wrestler, so it's a new experience," Ashjaee-Marshall said. "Practices are long and aggressive, but it's all for winning."

Although the team is rebuilding around younger players, Bossow believes the team will see a significant improvement from last year. ♦

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# snapshots



Photo by BRYAN ZHAO



Photo by BRYAN ZHAO



Photo by FLORENCE HU

Senior Katelyn Fritz completes drills, preparing for the upcoming soccer season.

Junior Caleb Yu prepares to take a shot during a practice scrimmage in the gym.

Senior Rishab Melkote sets up during the robotics team SMASH event on Nov. 3.

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# 1 mile, 2 runners, 4 Chipotle Bowls, many regrets

OUR PLAN TO BREAK THE CHIPOTLE MILE RECORD WITH TWO PEOPLE RUNNING ENDED WITH BIG STOMACHACHES

## Flailing Falcons



Mitchell Chen and George Hu

15:36.

That is the world record for running a mile while eating a Chipotle Bowl every lap around the track. It is held by Jack Flood, a professional decathlete and someone with a stomach apparently made of iron. We tried to be clever and beat his world record with two people.

Since each of us had to run only two laps

and eat two Chipotle Bowls, we thought it would be a breeze.

We chose a simple relay strategy: One of us would first run a lap and then scarf down a bowl, and once they finished the bowl, the second runner would take off. By alternating runners, we were confident we would easily beat come in under 15:36.

Boy, were we wrong.

George came in from his first lap, still huffing and puffing, but he channeled his inner Matt Stonie (a famous competitive eater) as he tried to eat a plate heavy on protein, simultaneously shoveling mouthfuls of rice and chicken and trying not to gag as he struggled to catch his breath. It took him 8:21 to complete the lap and the first bowl.

Soon, another unexpected obstacle hit.

While the rice wasn't too bad, the chicken got to us. Halfway through the first bowl, we both started to experience cramps as all the protein started churning inside our stomach. Our relay strategy helped, but not by much — after each of us had our first bowl, the time was already 15:34. At this point the goal was no longer to break the record. We just wanted to complete the challenge.

As we prepared ourselves to run the next lap, our next — and by far, our worst — challenge hit: We did not have nearly enough time to rest.

Mitchell staggered along and after walking, jogging and regretting his life choices for 10 minutes, he finished the last lap of the challenge at 23:45. Opening his last bowl, he gagged at the sight of the salsa drenched rice

and chicken.

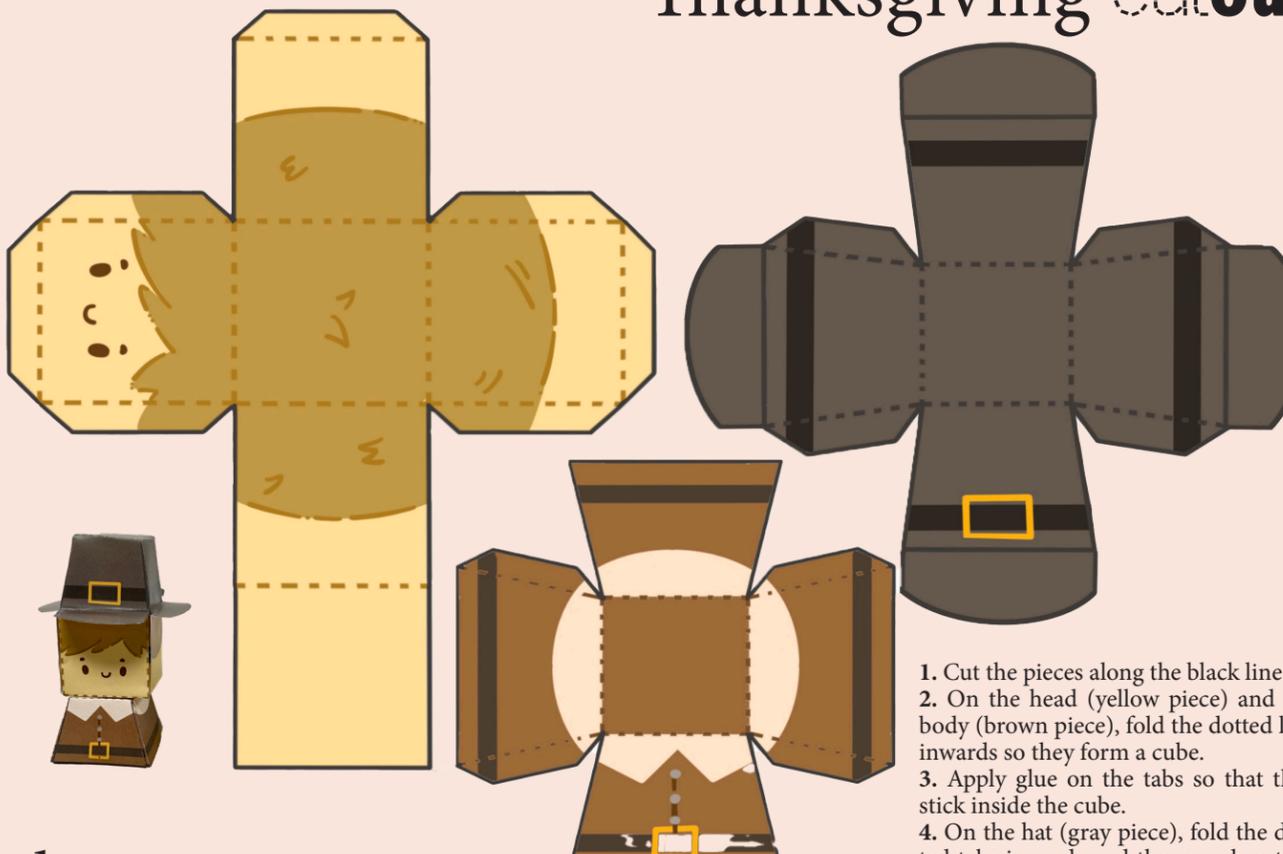
During the second half of the challenge, we considered throwing in the towel. Since we were doing this during a red-day tutorial, the idea of sitting in class with meat sweats (too much sweating when eating a high amount of protein in a short period of time) did not sound pleasant. Even though we did not beat the record, we did not give up. We pushed on. Bite after bite, we devoured every last piece of chicken and salsa.

Our lesson? To anyone who thinks they can complete a Chipotle mile, please don't.

Our total time: 30:23.

Reflecting upon this challenge, we concluded it was not worth the \$40 worth of food, much less the hours spent on the toilet afterwards. ♦

## Thanksgiving cutout



1. Cut the pieces along the black line.
2. On the head (yellow piece) and the body (brown piece), fold the dotted line inwards so they form a cube.
3. Apply glue on the tabs so that they stick inside the cube.
4. On the hat (gray piece), fold the dotted tabs inwards and the round rectangle flaps outwards.
5. Glue the four tabs on the hat so it forms a rectangular hat with four round tabs facing out.
6. Glue the head on the top of the body, and place the hat on top.

—Isabelle Wang

## topten

GEESE ON CAMPUS

- 10 **Swimming pool geese.** I imagine the geese feathers to be quite unpleasant to swim in. They also poop all over the pool deck, which is quite nasty.
- 9 **Student center geese.** I love these guys. These guys are my besties. You're always welcome inside!
- 8 **Artificial turf geese.** I never see them.
- 7 **Packs of geese.** Looks like a big friend group, and it's especially nice to see them in the sky.
- 6 **Roof geese.** I wonder what they do up there...
- 5 **Parking lot geese.** Isn't it stressful moving around a bunch of huge metal contraptions?!
- 4 **Baby geese.** Utterly, absolutely, indubitably cute geese that are just minding their own business.
- 3 **Quad geese.** It's always heartwarming to come across a chilling goose and its complimentary poop.
- 2 **Unafraid geese.** Sorry geese, I don't really want to share my lunch with you.
- 1 **Aggressive geese.** Go geese go! Defend your turf! Poop on their shoes!

>> Nicole Lee