

# THE DRAGON

VOL 3, No 2 • Design Tech High School • dtechdragon.com • @dtech\_dragon

December 19, 2018

## Can Two Spirits Rally?

By Hezekiah Smithstein  
Editor in Chief (website)



Amulen Rozmus leads students during the rally.  
Photo by Jacob Lau

**A**s a non-traditional school, d.tech is missing features such as libraries, theaters, and football fields. But there is something else missing at the school, which has nothing to do with any physical structure: school spirit.

At the end of last year, a group of students, who call themselves Spirit Committee, took this issue into their own hands and decided to plan and execute what they dubbed as d.tech's "first spirit rally." The group then ran the Halloween rally, and expanded to other types of spirit events.

The problem? A spirit group at d.tech already

exists: d.leadership's spirit division, which handles events such as community meeting pop-ups, spirit weeks, and school-branded gear. d.leadership spirit had intentions to hold spirit rallies of its own, but when Spirit Committee jumpstarted rallies and expanded to other events, tensions between the two groups began to rise.

"It's great that Spirit Committee saw a problem and wanted to change it and took action to do that," d.leadership co-leader and senior Vani Suresh says. She was disappointed, however, that "instead of communicating with us from the start, they kind of did their own thing," adding that it felt like they were attempting to be "a second leadership."

Spirit Committee founder, senior Agathe Vasseur, explains that her involvement in d.tech's Spirit Committee began after "hearing from the community that there was nothing happening from the spirit team," and specifically that d.leadership spirit "hadn't planned a spirit rally in the five years since the school was founded."

After talking with dtech students, freshman Amulen Rozmus, who helps Vasseur run Spirit Committee, saw that there were times "Leadership wasn't connecting with the students and what they wanted." His goal has been to promote more spirit at d.tech, adding that there are "a lot of different avenues to doing that." One of these avenues were rallies, which both he and Vasseur

worked with Athletics Director Marcus Marsall to coordinate.

The rallies themselves, however, were not the heart of the issue. "It was something I wanted to do as a part of leadership for a long time, but it never really came to fruition," Suresh acknowledges, "so I thought it was cool to see the spirit at d.tech go up [during the rally]."

However, as Spirit Committee began to lead their own spirit days and community meeting pop-ups, communication between the two groups was absent. d.leadership spirit leader Madison Shem also notes that although leadership ran events in community meetings in the past, this year "Henry [Lonnemann] gave Agathe [Vasseur] and Amu [Rozmus] the authority [to run] rallies and community meetings, and we were unaware of that."

One time, after Lonnemann approved Shem's proposal for a d.leadership pop-up during the Halloween community meeting, Shem was surprised to discover that she also needed approval to run her event from the Spirit Committee.

The lapses in communication between d.leadership, Spirit Committee, and the d.tech staff have caused from the start. Vasseur noted that when Marsall got her a spot to pitch the creation of the Spirit Committee in a staff

*Spirit continues on page 2.*

Student Life

## Instagram: Too Addictive to Quit

By Ally Shirman  
Section editor

Enough grams to form an addiction?



Illustration by Maddie Hsu

have considered [it] many times but I never do it. I don't dare. I don't dare to delete. It's just a big thing. I don't know why. It should be easier."

Senior Georgina Fakoukaki's words reflect the struggle many teens face with Instagram. Despite the many studies that show Instagram's negative impact on mental health, many people still flock to the app, completely aware of the harm that the platform causes.

The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) and the Young Health Movement (YHM) published a report in early 2017, called *#StatusOfMind*, that examined the effects of social media on people in the UK aged 14-24, comparing YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram.

The survey had young people rate the apps in a variety of categories such as anxiety, self-expression, real world relationships, community building, and FoMO (Fear of Missing Out). It found that Instagram's average net score ranked the lowest of the five, see the infographic on page three for more detail.

A survey of the d.tech community conducted in December 2018 revealed that 25 percent of the 90 respondents who have Instagram accounts would describe the app's influence as negative. However, these respondents also reported spending, on average, an hour more on Instagram per week compared to those who identified Instagram's influence as positive. In other words, the people who think Instagram is bad for them spend more time on it.

When asked why they stay on the app despite feeling it has negative effects, students reported feelings of FOMO and wanting to stay connected with old friends. Some even acknowledged that they were addicted to Instagram.

Sophomore Catherine Simone, who has had her Instagram account for about four years declared her indifference to the app, but still believes that "there's a kind of pressure that everyone has [Instagram]. So you also want to have it because you don't want to miss out." Despite the fact that she's "not really that into it," she hasn't deleted it, giving into that pressure instead.

Simone also believes that being a member of Instagram comes with a certain responsibility to post: "I kind of just post because you can't have an account and have so many people follow you and then not post." She continues, "But then when I do post, I get all anxious about it because

*Instagram continues on page 3.*

## Taking a Trip to the 1930s



By Courtney Sullivan Wu  
Staff Writer

**E**veryone knows the classic Cinderella story but have you heard it in reverse? In Mary-Anne, a hilarious new video series, two sisters are forced to go from riches to rags. Young Mary and Anne are kicked out of their mansion with nothing but the clothes on their backs after a series of poor financial decisions, and left to figure out how to be working women in the 1930's.

The brains behind the show are sophomores Okalani Luna and Hannah Levin, along with Emily Schmuckal, a sophomore at Sequoia High School. Luna came up with the idea of doing a show after researching old film cameras, liking the thought of making an old fashioned comedy show. When Luna met with Levin, they were able to develop the concept further, coming up with ideas for formatting, plot, and jokes. Schmuckal, Luna's friend from middle school, got involved shortly after.

The show is filmed in black and white, heavily inspired by the comedy of the 1930's. Levin and Luna drew inspiration from actresses such as Patsy Kelly, "The Queen of Wisecrack", and Thelma Todd, comedians known for their animated facial expressions, sharp humor, and wit.

While they have only produced two scenes of their first episode, the girls have already accumulated a diverse crew of students from not only d.tech, but other schools around the Bay Area. d.tech senior Brandon Rodriguez is their costume designer and sophomore Cate Messina acts as their camerawoman, their hair and makeup girl attends Burlingame High School, a couple of their actors attend Woodside and other schools in Sunnyvale. Several d.tech students fill out the cast.

As for Levin, Luna, and Schmuckal, each girl has a specialized role in the production of the show. Levin plays Anne and acts as the manager, handling the logistics of the project and coordinating between actors, crew, and venues. Schmuckal, the only one out of the three with acting experience, has become the director. Luna, playing Mary, also acts as a producer, editing the audio and video, and approves costumes for era authenticity.

Each scene takes a lot of work: hours of script writing, venue finding and run-throughs before four hours of filming. Venues can present a challenge, given the show's time period, but Levin has been able to find accommodations in unique places. She was able to book four free hours with

the opulent Filoli Gardens in Woodside to film their first scene. "We had to sign a contract and everything," says Levin. They plan to film the 3rd and 4th scene in Hobee's Restaurant.

Producing an original show hasn't been easy. In the first two scenes, the mix of costumes and accents made it look like an era mash up, though it is set only in the 1930s. This was most obvious when Mary and Anne wore Victorian era dresses and spoke with British accents, yet the character Margaret spoken in an American accent and wore a plain white T-shirt with overalls.

Luna and Levin are fully aware of the contrast, hoping to refilm the second scene and fix the abnormalities. "We want it to be [set in] the 1930's because, for us, that was the time where things were really stylish and you could get creative. Kind of like the 'Swinging 60's', there were lots of new trends and there were more crazy things that would appear [on screen]," says Luna.

To date, Levin, Luna and Schmuckal are hoping to finish their first episode and want to get the Mary-Anne script copyrighted. "I want it to be as professional as possible, like an official thing you'd see on TV," says Schmuckal. It seems they are well on their way.

# STUDENT LIFE

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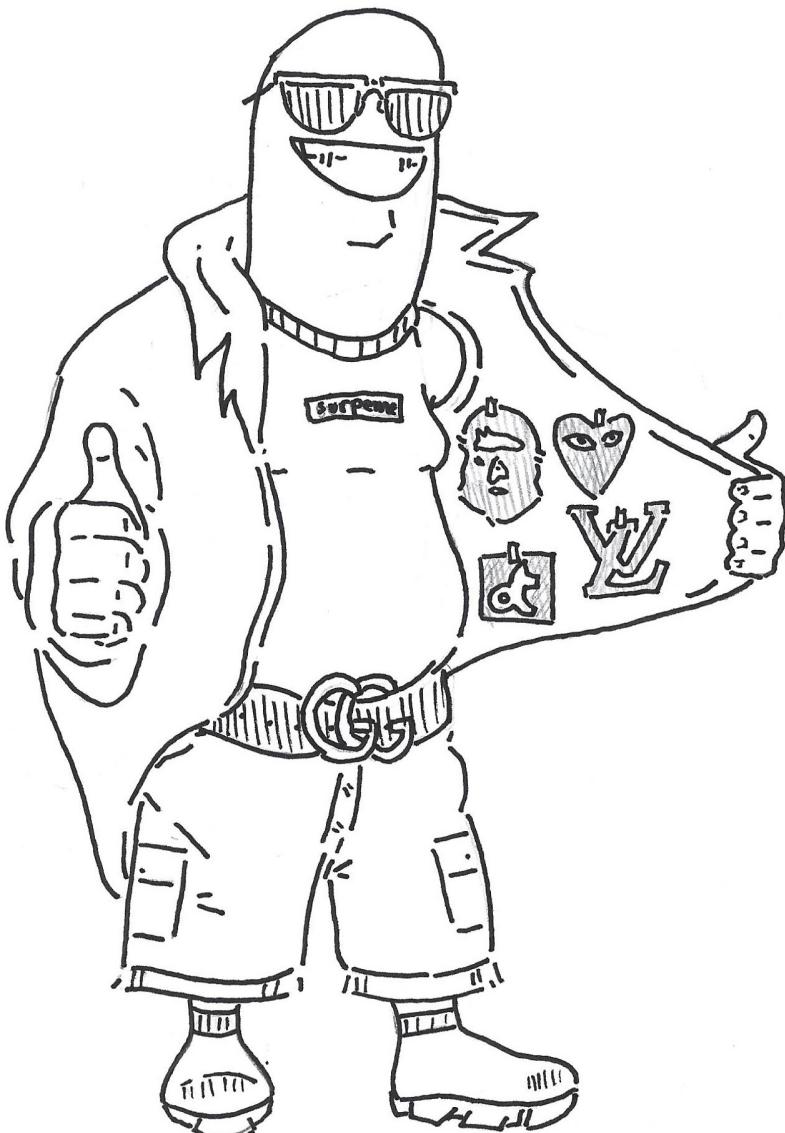


Illustration by Sean James-Hickey

## Campus Scalpers

By Benji Chang & Syed Hussaini

Staff Writers

Parents often coerce their children into getting jobs with enticing words about building character and saving for college. Some children mow lawns and work in restaurants – but why work at a boring job when you could join the world of scalping? Scalping is the act of buying limited edition items such as hoodies, shoes, or even bikes, and then reselling them at a higher price once they're out of stock. d.tech is no stranger to this hobby, with its very own active scalping community.

Junior Steven Varghese has been reselling Supreme clothes at profit for about a year. "It's easy to make a lot [of] profit off of just one clothing item," Varghese reveals. He sells Supreme on an app called StockX, where people bid the items. Scalpers then send their items to StockX, which verifies, and sends it to the buyer. Varghese likes StockX because its middleman system helps prevent scamming and is convenient to use.

For Varghese and other students, scalping is not just a hobby, it's a source of income. He doesn't always make a profit, however, as competitors can make it hard to get the best clothing. "Once stuff drops at 8:00am every Thursday, you have a five-second interval to get it," says Varghese. Case in point: he has been unable to get the newest Supreme gear several times because his computer was too slow, meaning he's out of luck until the next item is released.

Like Varghese, junior Jacob Nebeling also

purchases and resells limited edition clothing. He describes his favorite parts as, "interacting with customers and just making money off it." He also explains some of the negatives to this job: "I do worry about fraud and people faking that they didn't get the item." However, Nebeling has managed to avoid any scams by using StockX.

There aren't just sellers at d.tech; there are also buyers. Junior Griffin Trumpler has been buying clothes from scalpers for a year, often because he's usually not ready to buy clothes when they drop. He doesn't always "know what I want at the time or [feel] ready for a full commitment." However, Trumpler does mention that his indecisiveness has consequences, as the scalpers' prices are a big downside.

d.tech even has some reformed scalpers in its ranks. After finding a steady job at Happy Lemon Boba and Tea, junior Nathan Wilson grew disenchanted with scalping, as he says, "Scalping is risky because you don't know how much money you're going to make." Wilson once bought a Supreme hoodie hoping to make a large profit, and he wasn't even able to resell it, costing him about 300 dollars. However, Wilson was also able to make that up when he bought the Nike Air Force Supreme NBA shoes. This just goes to show the fickle nature of the Supreme market.

Whether you're a buyer or a seller, scalping is not a job for the faint of heart. It has both high risks and high rewards. Although it can be a fast and relatively easy way to make some quick money, if you're going to get into it, you better be ready for an unpredictable ride.

## Spirit



d.leadership and Spirit Committee meet.

Photo By Hezekiah Smithstein

meeting, the staff were at first "iffy about it, because they thought I was just taking over Leadership's role," Vasseur explains. "Which was not at all the intention."

Marsall explains that with the creation of the Spirit Committee "there wasn't any original intent to take over," the goal of the committee being to bring more student representation to community meetings. He adds that he "didn't know that there was a spirit team in leadership until we started doing this." Lonnemann points out that the Spirit Committee team is "just really good at having kids get motivated about doing certain things, and having fun."

However, once the staff approved Spirit Committee, no action was taken to ensure that the two groups wouldn't overlap. With Spirit Committee's close contact with Marsall and Lonnemann, they got control of student-run activities in community meetings. With Leadership being a more "self-maintaining organism," as Lonnemann described, d.leadership doesn't have a direct path to event approval.

On November 29, d.leadership and Spirit Committee gathered for the first time and discussed their plans moving forward. One of the options discussed and rejected was merging

Spirit Committee into d.leadership as a rally committee. As d.leadership co-leader Adelyn Chen explains merging "creates this idea that if you don't get into d.leadership, or if you don't apply, then you can form a separate organization and then you are granted an 'in.'" This, Chen continues, "defeats the purpose of our applications."

The agreed-upon solution: Given that a large part of Spirit Committee is graduating at the end of the school year, the remainder of the group will apply to d.leadership next year, where they will go through the review like other applicants. The remainder of the Spirit Committee decided not to continue next school year because having two spirit teams would be redundant.

For this year, both groups have decided to collaborate on events and see where things go from there. Currently, they are working together on the next spirit rally, which will happen on December 19th. "We're joining forces on [the winter rally] and trying to see if it can be better than it would have been if it had been just we did it or just they did it," Suresh says. It will remain to be seen if this newfound collaboration will, indeed, light a spark under the flickering flame of spirit at d.tech.

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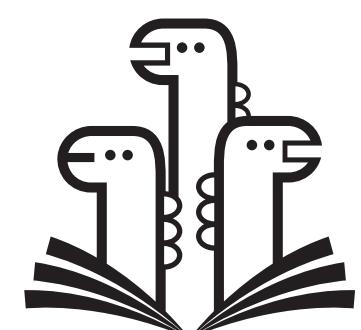
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# STUDENT LIFE

December 19, 2018

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## Instagram

there are so many people who look at it." Today, Simone only has two photos uploaded to her page. Simone refrains from posting photos due to the pressure she feels from having a large audience of 2,169 followers.

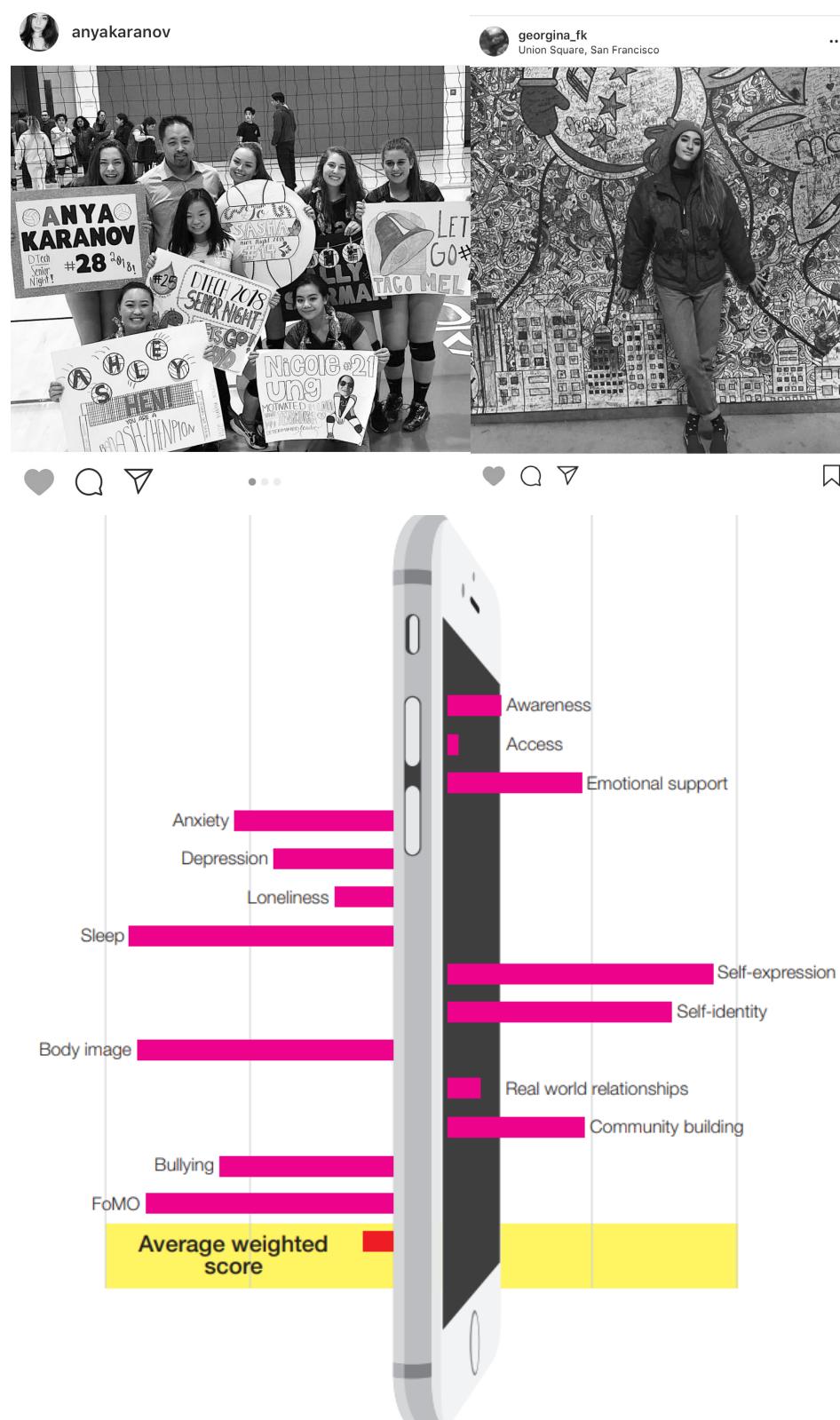
Unlike Simone, junior Kevin Lynch doesn't believe there is a pressure to post, but rather "a pressure to be on social media because a lot of stuff goes on there." Fakouaki agrees, stating that "If I delete Instagram, I'll be out of the loop."

Lynch also describes Instagram "kind of like a contact book. You know someone, you follow them." Senior Tatiana Fakouaki furthers this point: "When you meet people nowadays, they don't ask for your number, they ask if you have social media instead." Tatiana Fakouaki has struggled with her relationship with Instagram in the past, often deleting and redownloading the app. "As much as I would like to call people and know what they're doing, they just tell me to look at their story or posts," she explains. "You're kind of forced into it, otherwise you're going to isolate yourself."

Even though Georgina Fakouaki keeps up with friends from the many areas of her life, she is "fed up with it." She says she feels "sick" when opening the app and "doing useless things [and] spending my time unwisely." Fakouaki says, "At the end of the day, it is addictive."

Both Simone and Georgina Fakouaki have expressed interest in deleting the app - or at least taking a break from it. However, senior Anya Karanov has recently deleted Instagram for the third time. "I want to use my time wisely and I don't want to be sitting in my bed on Instagram for hours on end," she says. For Karanov, a constant issue has been Instagram's endless scroll feature, and her habit of subconsciously clicking on the app. "A couple days ago [when I deleted the app] I was like, 'I don't need this right now,'" so she decided it was time for Instagram to go (again).

Junior Julia Lederman has a different approach to dealing with Instagram's addicting draw than Karanov. She believes that with regulation, using the app will not be detrimental to a user's mental health. In her freshman year, Lederman



Infographic courtesy of RSPH

described herself as not in the right headspace to "see what everyone else was doing." To work on her mental health, Lederman deleted the app for all of freshman and sophomore year. "I've just recently got back on," she says, in order to stay in touch with overseas friends.

For some, like Lederman and Karanov, a digital detox does the trick, but for others, staying off Instagram altogether has been worthwhile. In the survey conducted among d.tech students, 13.3 percent of respondents said they had no Instagram accounts, and 83.3 percent of that number said they didn't feel as if they are missing out on anything. Senior Alex White has never downloaded the app, and does not regret the decision. "I always felt that it was a waste of time. The people using [Instagram] seem sadder after using it than before." Sophomore Dahlia Levy agrees: "There's so much harm versus good." Though Levy has had the opportunity to get Instagram, she finds it "kind of pointless and unnecessary."

Despite Instagram's downsides, it does have positives, such as allowing young people to explore interests, stay connected with friends and distant relatives, and find self-identity. Rather than publishing StatusOfMind with an ending that calls for every user to get rid of social media - an impossible feat for today's generation - RSPH concluded their study by asking respondents how willing they would be to implement seven different methods to reduce social media's adverse effects. One of the major suggestions is to introduce a comprehensive Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in schools. It would teach students about safe use of social media - including dealing with cyber-bullying, social media addiction, body image, and other potential effects of social media on mental health. The conclusion also suggests places where people can look for help dealing with Instagram's dangers.

Because so many people use Instagram, it makes it difficult for members of the platform to leave - all their peers use the app, and thus they feel deleting the app means erasing their connections with friends altogether. If there is a collective step in understanding that people's lives don't live on social media, young people may be able to feel less pressure about their presence on Instagram altogether.

## Dreaming of a Green Christmas

By Jane Wang & Miriam Djamco

Staff Writers

From popcorn-selling fanatics to the bizarrely costumed members of the Last-Friday-of-the-Month squad, it's safe to say that d.tech has some pretty unique people who do some pretty strange things. So naturally, when all of us are busy babysitting crazy cousins and scarfing down Christmas pie, you could say that things can get... even weirder. In the spirit of the 2018 holiday season, we rounded up some of d.tech community's most unusual Christmas tree traditions.

The next time you're looking to cut some expenses from your holiday ski trip, take some notes from senior Ally Shirman: over the past six years, her family has gone dumpster-diving for their tree. Why? "It's a money saver and it's kinda fun," Shirman says. "We don't feel like buying a tree and bringing it up for only a week."

But how do they find a dumpster tree before Christmas? They don't. As a Jewish family, the Shirmans have never observed Christmas. But since they are also a family of Russian heritage, they celebrate New Year's similarly - with family and presents and a beautifully decorated tree.

"There is this 'tree dumpster' neighborhood up in Tahoe, and we just go find a tree after Christmas," says Shirman. "Another year, we just

found one on the side of the road..."

Feeling guilty about killing a tree every holiday season? For the past five years, the Baggott family has grown their own. "My parents are really against cutting down Christmas trees, so we are growing one," junior Phoebe Baggott explains. To make the tree look even more festive, her mother always sticks candy canes in the pot it make "it look like the tree is growing out of candy canes."

In another odd Christmas tradition, sophomore Samantha Campbell takes the yuletide game "Find the Pickle" (yes, it's a thing!) to a whole new level. In to this old German custom, players search for a pickle hidden deep within a Christmas tree without touching it. While most families use a pickle ornament for the festivities, the Campbell family uses real pickles straight out of the jar.

It all started the Christmas Eve of 2011. When asked about the origins of this unconventional twist, Campbell explained, "Well, my grandma got us this pickle ornament...then Christmas Eve dinner we always have these little mini pickles so as a joke, my brother was like, 'We should try using a real pickle!'"

So began a seven-year Campbell tradition of hiding a mini dill pickle in the Christmas tree, the prize for the sharp-eyed winner being the first to open presents. So between Campbell, her brother, and their three cousins, the competition

"can get... pretty crazy."

When it comes to wacky tree toppers, junior Kira Hofelmann's might just take the Christmas cake; in recent years, Hofelmann family Christmas tree toppers have ranged from glittery crumpled paper to kitchen utensils.

"I don't know how it worked, but we put a cookie cutter up there," Hofelmann says. Another year, they chos to crown their Christmas fir with an upside-down bowl. But the weirdest one? "Probably a fork..." Hofelmann laughs.

The tradition began the winter after the Hofelmans moved to San Francisco. Having forgotten all their Christmas decorations back in their LA house, they'd decided to bust out the paper and glitter to create their own garlands and ornaments. Their solution for the missing star: find the weirdest item in the house.

Of course, a random fork perched atop a Christmas tree is bound to prompt more than a few sidelong glances from the dinner guests. Hofelmann says, "We've got some questions, and we just explained to them, 'We just want to be creative!'"

The d.tech community has some one-of-a-kind holiday traditions. With winter break now rapidly approaching, maybe it's time to come up with your own unique tree tradition to end this year with style.



The Baggott Family Christmas tree.  
Photo by Phoebe Baggott

# HOLIDAY CHEER



## The Mall Santa Lowdown

By Matt Silverman & Andrew Nourie

*Christmas Fanatics*

One of the most festive ways to spend your money during Christmas time is getting your photo taken with a Mall Santa. It combines the best two aspects of the holiday season: the big man himself, and rampant consumerism.

"But which mall Santa should I go to?" you might ask. Well, we took it upon ourselves to review and score three Mall Santa experiences so that you won't waste your time with a St. Nick who belongs on the naughty list.

### Tanforan

The first mall on our list was Tanforan, in San Bruno. We did not have high expectations for this one due to our past experiences at this location, and we weren't surprised.

The first thing we saw from the parking lot was a Hooters with a spectacular view of Golden Gate National Cemetery (a memorial graveyard). Needless to say, this was not a very holly or jolly sight.

The mall was devoid of any Christmas decor. Even at the entrance to the mall, there were no signs advertising the event or any form of Holiday cheer to be seen. After fumbling around for a few moments, we found him next to a Lids store.

A quick glance at the set might make one of a simple mind (i.e. a child) believe that this truly was a throne befitting of Santa. There were small trees scattered around the area as well as a large bright festive hut behind Kris Kringle. There was a table with coloring supplies for the small gremlins to use while they were waiting. Santa himself came off as somewhat convincing. He sported the normal red garments and wore a large, beautifully kept beard.

It all seemed fine until we took a closer look. The hut was a Home Depot pre-built shed, and looked cheap. The most dressed up worker was only sporting a lame Christmas vest. The ropes outlining where the line was appeared to be the same ones they use at airports.

Santa may have looked convincing, but he didn't have the attitude of our favorite red boy. He had a couch instead of a chair so he wouldn't have to be sat on by children, and what he said to us was "Smile or I'll tickle you!" which only made him come off as creepy.

The price for digital copies of your Santa photo was about 40 dollars, which was definitely not worth the experience. If you can, go to a different mall Santa this Christmas.



Image courtesy of Tanforan Mall



Image courtesy of Hillsdale Mall

### Hillsdale

This mall in San Mateo had the longest line of any Santa we went to, but was well worth the wait. From the wreaths and decorations hung around the storefronts, to the Santa's village located centrally by the Build a Bear and Lego stores, there was no shortage of Christmas spirit. The cornerstone of this winter wonderland was a two-story Christmas tree, with a tunnel leading through it into the line to sit on the big guy's lap.

While standing in line, there was no shortage of entertainment, ranging from animatronic representations of classic Christmas stories such as Dickens "A Christmas Carol" or "The Night Before Christmas" to life-sized stuffed animals dressed as royalty. There was even a letter writing station that sent letters to the North Pole (trash chute). None of the ankle-biters were bored while waiting for their turn to meet Santa.

As we approached the front of the line, we were greeted with the sight of a towering scarlet throne seated in front of a massive pine. The chair was surrounded by extravagant decorations complete with lots of gold trim and festive wreaths. Guarding the big man was a shiny gold rope allowing for a private and uninterrupted visit until the next child was called by one of Santa's workers.

Santa was accepting of two older children visiting him and greeted us with a jolly "Ho ho ho, would you like to sit on my lap?". After our enthusiastic, "Yes," he sighed deeply, "I don't know why I asked, I knew the answer to that". He also was the only Santa that asked us what we wanted for Christmas, a seemingly small detail that actually had a big impact.

The pictures came out to roughly 25 dollars for one printed photo, which for the quality of the production and the photo, seemed like a reasonable price.



Image courtesy of Stanford Mall

### Stanford

The final stop on our holiday crusade was the Stanford Shopping Center in Palo Alto. The company that supplied the Mall Santa service was the same as Tanforan, so we were somewhat skeptical, but kept an open mind as we trekked onwards.

Stanford had holiday themed decor with a large decorated tree and many wreaths with red ribbons, but for some reason, it just didn't give off a Christmas vibe. Especially when we got to the set and noticed that the same cheap craftsmanship from Tanforan had been used when creating the set.

The line had fake white pine leaves on the ground that should have made it feel like snow, but instead, it just felt lazy. There was no entertainment, which was fine for Tanforan because no one wanted to go to that inadequate Santa. Here, however, the line was packed with little well-dressed and impatient goblins. All of the workers were wearing everyday clothing and the elves were statues.

To top it off, there was a fast track to see Santa, so if you paid more money than you could skip the line and see Santa before the poor kids.

We felt like this was going to be a huge disappointment.

That's when we saw him. Santa was sitting in his plastic cabin, wearing a marvelous green Christmas sweater with depictions of reindeer and sleighs instead of the classic red coat. He had small round glasses that sat low on the bridge of his nose and a beard to rival the mighty Zeus himself.

We walked up to him. "Have you two been good this year?" he asked. Tears almost welled up in our eyes as we both replied: "Yes, Santa." It felt as if all the Christmas spirit we had lost growing up had come back to us. This wasn't a mall Santa, this was the real Santa Claus. It was a magical experience. We finally understood that this was what it meant to be a mall Santa. To see the joy in children's eyes when they get to meet their hero who showers them in nerf guns and Nintendo DS games.

Then we got to the counter to buy our 40 dollar photos; what a total rip off.

# R & A NEW YEAR

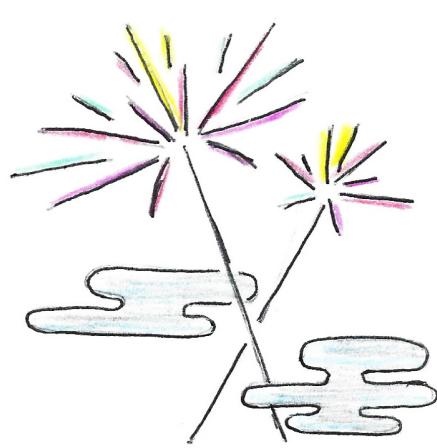


Illustration by Nicholas Gibson

Cassie Tse, 11th: To be taller than Vani Suresh

Prediction: Less than one second

An admirable goal, yet sadly doomed to fail. Some New Year's Resolutions like these are simply wishful thinking, and cannot be accomplished even with the most motivation and hard work. Maybe Cassie will have an inexplicable growth spurt sometime in 2019, and if so, congrats to her, but she shouldn't get her hopes up. Maybe in a couple years, Cassie!

Advice: Ditch this resolution and pick a new one, perhaps. Or just quit.



Illustration by Maddie Hsu

Isabelle Yu, 11th: To not be dead inside

Prediction: Eight days

Isabelle's prediction is extremely laughable and relatable. But it's also too general - what exactly does "not being dead inside" mean? We don't know. Dr. Dora Farkas, the creator of "Finish Your Thesis," says vague goals like these are destined to fail. While Isabelle will likely spend a few days enjoying her break and not stressing out, she will inevitably go back to being dead inside once school starts again.

Advice: Farkas advises that goals be "specific, measurable, and timely." Some steps to take to achieve "not being dead inside" may include eating cake daily and sleeping 18+ hours a day. These may not be super realistic, but they are definitely specific, measurable, and timely, so she's sure to succeed.



Illustration by Nicholas Gibson

## New Year's Resolutions

By Vani Suresh

Staff Writer

New Year's is a time for celebration and a time to set goals for the coming year. However, studies have shown that 92 percent fail during the year, usually within the first two weeks. Let's take a look at some d.tech resolutions and predict how long they'll last.

Courtney Sullivan Wu, 12th: To eat healthily and to not eat cookies or ice cream before bed  
Prediction: Two to three weeks

Ah, the classic 'eat healthier' resolution. Props to Courtney for including some specifics, but unfortunately it's not enough. Like the other 32 percent of resolution-makers who aim to eat healthier, Courtney will inevitably sneak both cookies and ice cream.

Advice: Prepare yourself for disappointment. In reality, do you really want to give up cookies and ice cream? Get a whiteboard, think about your priorities, and maybe change your resolution to "eat cookies or ice cream every day." Love yourself for the ice cream-loving person that you are.

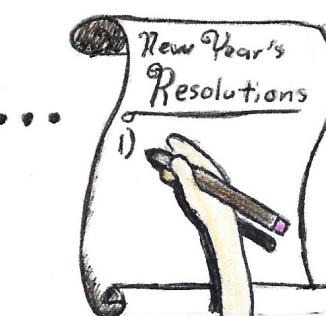


Illustration by Nicholas Gibson

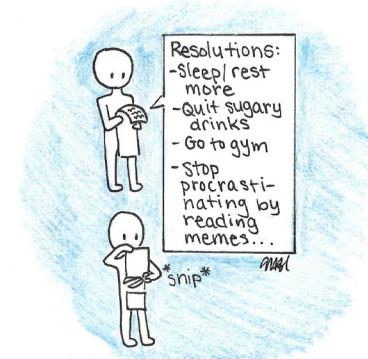


Illustration by Maddie Hsu

Adam Albers, 9th: To not drink as much AriZona

Prediction: One to two months

Undoubtedly, Adam will start the year off strong, maybe even eliminating AriZona from his diet. However, we notice that Adam only wants to reduce his AriZona intake, which means he has no plans to stop drinking. If he currently drinks five cans a day, he may find success by drinking three AriZona cans per day instead. Since he is still consistently going to drink the tea, he will likely fall back into his old drinking habits.

Advice: Adam should either eliminate AriZona completely from his diet or just give up. Besides, AriZona's Green Tea with Ginseng and Honey at least sounds healthy and it definitely tastes good. I don't know how you're supposed to give that up...

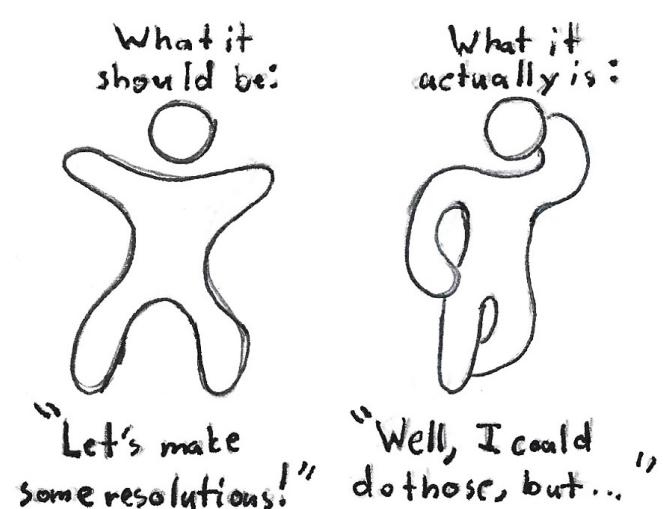


Illustration by Nicholas Gibson

## Where to Give Back for the Holidays

By Yohanna Konardi

Contributor

The new year is almost upon us, and there is no better way to up your empathy game than volunteering. Here are several ways you can give back to your community:

Are you a sucker for a clean environment? Beach cleanups are a perfect way to introduce you to the volunteering world. Help pick up litter from the shores of the Pacific Ocean while going on a beautiful walk with a friend. There is no age requirement for this activity.

Pacifica Beach Coalition: <https://www.pacificabeachcoalition.org/calendar-2018/>

Do you have a green thumb? If you like working with plants, enrich the Bay Area community by planting trees along the city streets with Friends of the Urban Forest. Or you can help garden and maintain the San Francisco Botanical Garden's beautiful flora. These events are usually held on Saturday mornings around San Francisco and have no age requirement for volunteers.

Urban Tree Planting: [www.fuf.net](http://www.fuf.net)

San Francisco Botanical Garden: <https://sfbotanicalgarden.org/volunteer/>

Do you enjoy teaching and working with children? Consider becoming a Reading Partner for an underprivileged child. As a Reading Partner, you will meet with a child once a week and help them refine their reading skills. Volunteers must be 14 or older.

Bay Area Reading Partners: <https://readingpartners.org>

Do you like to cook? Help prepare meals for elderly folks who are feeling particularly lonely this holiday, with Project Open Hand. If you are more comfortable with distributing the food, check out the Excelsior Food Pantry. Volunteers must be 15 or older.

Project Open Hand: <https://www.openhand.org/volunteer>

Excelsior Food Pantry: <https://ecfoodpantry.missionbaycc.org/volunteer/>

Do you consider yourself handy? Help build or repair a house on behalf of someone in need. No construction experience is necessary. Just sign up and start putting your DRG skills to use. Volunteers must be 16 or older.

Home Building: <https://www.habitatgsf.org/get-involved/volunteer>

# ALUMNI

December 19, 2018

dtechdragon.com

## *d.tech Alumni: Where Are They Now*

By Malia Savella & Taylor Abbey

Contributors

We know the tale well; in August of 2014, 120 wide-eyed freshmen enrolled in d.tech, looking for something different. Over the next four years they would endure a torturous, uphill battle with changing classes, staff, and campuses. Now, as graduates of d.tech, they face a new and foreign territory: adulthood. From half a hallway, where have our beloved alumni gone?

Many have taken the traditional approach of a four-year university, traveling near and far for their education. Alumnus Arthur Yu is just across the bay, as a freshman majoring in cognitive science at UC Berkeley. The first major life change has been the close proximity to classes. "My commute time was, [on] average, like, three hours to d.tech. To be able to walk to class in 15 to 20 minutes is really nice," he says.

Although the campus is small, it has a diverse student body. Yu says he finds himself being the ambassador of Bay Area culture, teaching foreign students about things like jaywalking and Californian slang. Yu states, "It's really funny seeing [non-native students] be like, 'What's a Clipper Card?'"



Image courtesy of Arthur Yu



Image courtesy of Sofya Shatalova

Yu says that with so many students around you at all times, it's impossible not to make friends. He's made most of his friends through random encounters in stairways and halls, but for alumnus Sofya Shatalova, the best outlets for social interaction happen in the dorms.

Shatalova lives in a 55-person dorm at Cal Poly, in San Luis Obispo. She didn't expect to enjoy dorm life "because, you know, a bunch of people you don't know hanging out in one space...that sounds awful." However, in the past three months, she's memorized the names of every person in her tower.

Some alumni note how certain principles at d.tech have helped them in their college careers.

Shatalova has been able to apply her design thinking skills to her industrial engineering major. The similarities began in her introductory course's first activity: building, launching and recording the number of paper airplanes thrown into a recycling bin. "That [activity] specifically made me think of d.tech because I could totally see this being a project...like something you'll do in freshman year," she says.

Meghna Gaddam, a d.tech alumnus majoring in pre-med and anthropology at Northwestern University in Chicago, is finally now able to appreciate the concept of lab days. She once questioned them, because of their lack of structure. She says she called them a day of "nothingness." However, as Gaddam grew acquainted with her new college environment, she was struck by the similarities between formulating your own daily class schedule and lab days. Gaddam emphasizes the importance of time management skills and self-advocating for academic help in college. "You need to be able to do your own work, teach things to yourself, and manage your own time," Gaddam says.



Image courtesy of Meghna Gaddam



Image courtesy of Kleiton Macrohon

Similar realizations were made by former student Kleiton Macrohon. Majoring in chemistry at the University of the Pacific, Macrohon's praise stems from the dynamic and constantly changing nature inherent in d.tech's culture.

"With all the schedule changes [at d.tech] and the different things that happened throughout the day, you learn to adapt to current situations that are thrown at you," Macrohon said. He compares it to learning the ropes of adulthood and taking on personal responsibilities, including getting adjusted to working with a brand new cohort of peers, as well as learning how to cook and clean for himself.

Alternatively, some d.tech alumni have taken the road less traveled: a gap year. Alumnus Milo Aronica has dedicated his free time to navigating the Silicon Valley workplace, as well as following a few passion projects of his own. Aronica works for two local medical supply companies: Potrero Medical, and its sister company, Theranova. He has plans on majoring in mechanical engineering at Bucknell University, a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania.

He says that entering the workforce at such a young age has its share of pitfalls, the most notable being the socially isolating experience of the obvious age-gap between him and his co-workers.



Image courtesy of Milo Aronica



Image courtesy of Trisha Chen

Alumnus Trisha Chen, who is taking a gap year doing freelance art in Washington, has become acquainted with a different isolation. For the first time in her life she is fending for herself, living in a place where no one knows her. The reality of self-reliance hit hard and she finds herself suddenly conscious of all the things she needs to maintain. "It's a lot of money put into weird stuff you don't think you'd ever need to buy", she says, citing examples like a knife sharpener and a printer.

But with self-preservation comes freedom. Being alone means no distractions or compromises: "No one can bother you, unless you let them into your home," she says. Chen uses this time to fill her commissions and work on her art portfolio, a liberty she didn't have as a student. And with a potential art career opportunity with a Bay Area company, her gap year is also a test to weigh her options between work and school. If she is hired, she may skip college altogether. If she decides to stay in Washington, she will be entering Western Washington University in the fall of 2019 as an English major.

Chen isn't the only one with big plans for her future. Alumnus William DeBruce, a recent graduate of both d.tech and the College of San Mateo, is preparing for a two-year mission trip in January. He'll be joined by missionaries all over the world in Fiji, preaching the word of his church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, as well as performing general service work. As it is a family tradition to pursue mission trips when 18, DeBruce has been preparing for this his whole life.

His mission is, in part, an obstacle. "By the time I got to high school, I knew I would have to... work around my mission... that'd take me out of the education game for, like, two years. I had to figure out a way to manage my school life and career life," he says. He began preparing diligently in sophomore year. With the help of college counseling and d.tech's concurrent enrollment policies, he was able to accumulate enough credits to graduate this semester with an Associate's Degree in Computer Science. When he returns in 2021, he plans on transferring to a four-year university, to either continue pursuing computer science or jump into pre-med.



Image courtesy of William DeBruce



Image courtesy of Ella Rook

Come time to decide where to attend a four-year school, Ella Rook, a psychology major at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, stressed the importance of attending a school that provides a consistent feeling of comfort -- a genuine "home-away-from-home".

As the first semester slowly comes to an end, Rook says she has noticed an apparent correlation between struggling students and those who are thriving on campus. "The people I know at [Reed] who are doing well saw Reed as a place they would fit into," Rook says.

Aside from feeling comfortable academically, some alumni commented on grappling with the often unpleasant and mentally uncomfortable reality of adulthood.

"You're going to be uncomfortable," Chen says, "But you just have to make sure your own mental health is in line."

The first batch of d.tech alumni have certainly come a long way. From finding their footing in a mere half-a-hallway to the ribbon cutting ceremony for d.tech's specialized multimillion-dollar campus, the class of 2018 have since diverged onto their own separate paths. While it may still be too early to get an adequate pulse on their future endeavors, the insight gained from some of their experiences will surely enlighten future d.tech graduates.



d.tech class of 2018.  
Photo courtesy of Christine Tam

# PROFILES

December 19, 2018

dtechdragon.com

## Wayne's World: Party in the DRG

By Maria McAlister-Young

Editor in Chief (Print)

Wayne Brock's introduction to teaching was unusual. After complaining about his job as a mechanical engineer to a friend, Brock started thinking about teaching. One of his friends told him the new school she worked at, Life Learning Academy, was looking for a science teacher. Though Brock did not have any teaching credentials, his friend urged him to "just fill out a resumé and email it to this email address," Brock recalls. Brock remembers that almost immediately after doing so, the school, he says, "basically hired me on the spot and said 'Here's your desk. When do you start?'" Brock fell in love with teaching, and later got his credential in physics and other sciences through taking night school.

Sixteen years later, Brock wanted a change. He had developed a science program, a makerspace, and a bike shop for Life Learning Academy, his previous place of work. "I felt like I had done everything I could do within that environment," Brock explains. Through a couple fateful encounters with d.tech staff, Brock was introduced to the school and interviewed for the Physics teacher position. However, during the interview, "it became clear that starting an engineering program here and helping support DRG work and that kind of thing was better [for me]," explains Brock. "This is where my passion is - doing these kind of projects and pushing kids."

Growing up, Brock was constantly tinkering on different projects and fixing things that got broken. He remembers helping his dad with tractor repairs on their farm in Bourbon, Indiana, saying "I was handing him wrenches as soon as I could hold the wrench."

Though Brock loved the acres of land over



Brock helps a student with a project during lab day.

Photo by Kelley Hill

which he had free rein, the hard work and endless days eventually drove Brock to find something new. However, Brock recognizes that his ability and drive to constantly improve the world around him has come, in part, from his life on the farm.

To create a conducive environment for improving the world, Brock sets few limits on Design Realization Garage (DRG) projects. His only rules are that "it has to be safe, appropriate for school environment, and it has to be able to fit through the door." Some past projects have included puzzles, liquidized sand, and robots. Even if Brock doesn't know exactly how to complete every project, he is always willing and eager to support and learn with his students. DRG Assistant Nick Hom, who works with Brock everyday, explains how "He tries to help as many people as possible. It's nice to see that he actually does care about his students."

Despite this, Brock laments the difficulty of pulling students into the DRG to explore these new materials. Because students often initially

lack the skills required in the DRG, they feel uncomfortable, and many students won't visit unless a project or class forces one. "It's just getting over that initial resistance. And if it doesn't work the first time or it comes out bad it's okay. You just try it again," says Brock, recognizing the feelings that students have about the DRG. "They are pushing themselves to go out of their comfort zone [when they come here] so I try to be as accepting and welcoming as possible."

To create a more welcoming space, Brock is trying to diversify the lower DRG to include more arts and crafts. His goal is to ensure that "people don't see d.tech as just the tech nerd school," he says. Bringing more arts into the DRG would appeal to a larger portion of the student body and Brock has already ordered jewelry making supplies as a start.

Brock is also interested in bringing more class projects into the DRG. "Kids want to keep high grades and I want to tell them 'well screw that and come work on some cool project.' But that's not what I'm supposed to say," Brock laughs.

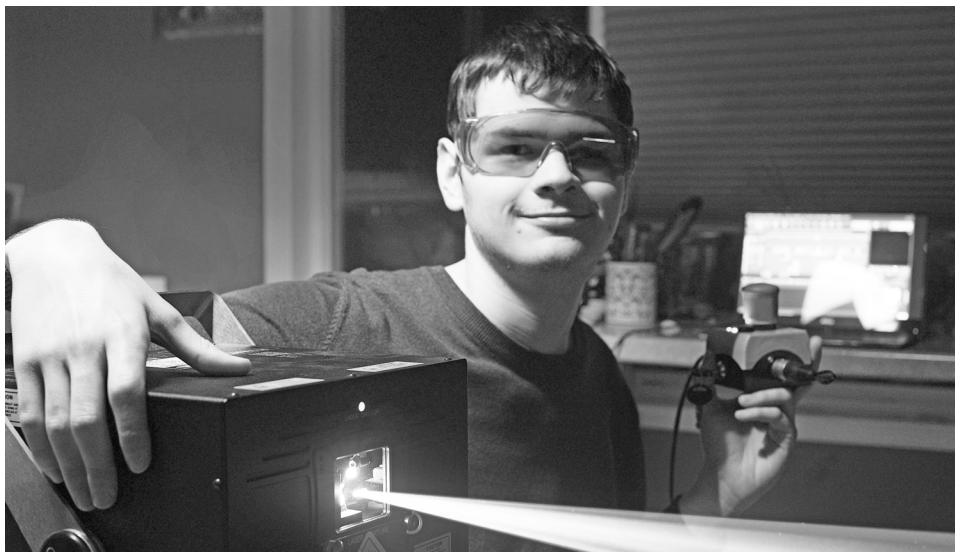
The idea is that by having teachers give credit for these cool projects, students will have both an incentive and a specific project in mind when using the DRG.

Even at home, Brock is always trying new things with his family. He remembers one time when his son told him he wanted to learn how to play Dungeons and Dragons. When they ordered the starter kit, Brock took one look at it and said "I don't understand any of this." However, instead of giving up, Brock asked around and learned that the easiest way to learn how to play was to join a group of other players.

After finding the local Dungeons and Dragons group at a game store, Brock walked in and asked if he and his son could join. They agreed, and Brock and his son started playing "at the game store at night with all these grown ups," Brock recalls. Eventually, after watching and listening to his son play for a while, Brock was given a character of his own from his son's collection. Brock acknowledged that "[Playing Dungeons and Dragons] forced me to learn something I wouldn't have pushed myself to do otherwise."

Teaching at d.tech is no exception. Brock loves to challenge himself and his students to pursue projects that make them learn new skills. "I love it when I can learn all kinds of new stuff, because as I teach it to my [students], it forces me to learn as well." Brock adds, "I just love learning."

As math teacher Joanne Da Luz, who also worked with Brock at his first school, says, "The school is so incredibly lucky to have him!" Whether you have been taught by him in an engineering or robotics class or just stopped by to say hello, Wayne Brock brings excitement and expertise to every discussion. And he is always willing to advise any student interested in making something, whether it be a complex robot or an intricate necklace worn to a school dance.



Connor Fagans shows off his laser projector.

Photo courtesy of Connor Fagans

## The Last Lasermaster

By Jared Lin

Contributor

What's the most special thing about d.tech? It's not the 52 million dollar building. It's not the Oracle food, though that is very tasty. It's not even design thinking. It's the people you meet and the connections you make. The guy sitting right beside you in math class might just be the next Bill Gates or Steve Jobs and you'll never know. At least, not until you ask.

Connor Fagans, a licensed laser technician, is exactly this kind of super interesting person in our midst.

The d.tech junior has always been intrigued by lasers, the brilliant vibrance of pure, unfiltered light. He acquired his first of many lasers at the age of 13, a green laser pointer. This eventually led to a collection of over 20 laser pointers, ranging from the typical five milliwatts all the way to one watt.

To put that in perspective, the one watt laser, which is categorized as Class 4 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), is strong enough to see from the International Space Station if pointed up, and capable of setting things on fire and blinding someone. "Class 4 lasers are actually powerful enough to illuminate the dust in the air at night and cause eye damage, even if you see it on the wall," Fagans says. Ironically, the hardest thing to burn is paper, as it reflects most of the light spectrum.

Anyone can collect laser pointers, but not everyone is capable of what Fagans specializes in: programming shows that are displayed with a laser projector. "It's the only true form of full color vector graphics," he says. Using a single dot

of light, he can draw frames, abstract images, and even animations. Essentially, the laser moves so fast that the points appear connected when viewed with the human eye, making it appear as fluid motion. The typical laser projector is capable of moving at 35,000 points per second, though Fagans' is capable of moving at 90,000.

The projector only has one laser, but inside the 25 pound, 6,000 dollar black box is actually a pair of rotating mirrors to redirect the beam, which can form a 50 by 50 foot image. The technology is "on the edge of physics, considering the speed of mirror movement, precision, [and] high acceleration," Fagans says. If they went any faster, the mirrors would actually shatter from inertia, or even melt from the incredible speed of rotation.

Of course, a laser projector over three times more powerful than what it takes to reach the International Space Station can't just be brought out and beamed at people. "There's a big legal side to this," Fagans says. "You have to get a variance, which is a license from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulating high-powered lasers." The 15-page application includes procedure specs and a show report to ensure people are safe. Fagans just recently received his variance, and hopes to run his show, the "@d.tech Laser Spectacular," at a community meeting.

Fagans places great importance on the safety procedures associated with operation of the laser projector, which include a 2.5 meter vertical clearance and 3 meter horizontal clearance, and two shutters: one manual, and one remote controlled. He keeps the button for the remote controlled shutter next to him at all times, which is one of three ways that the laser can be disabled remotely. Two keys are required

for operation: one on the controller box, and one on the projector itself. This is a safety measure to prevent curious people from messing around with the laser and accidentally blinding themselves or others.

Fagans spends anywhere from a minimum of five hours to thousands of hours programming his laser shows. His sister, sophomore Annabelle Fagans, describes him as "devoted, persistent, and creative." She notes that he used to do shows at his old high school, and "spends a lot of his time making shows to music and talking to other people in the laser community."

Speaking of other people in the laser community, Fagans first stumbled upon laser projection through Prismatic Magic, a company run by Dr. David Volpe, who tours the US putting on laser shows for schools. "It was just, super awesome," Fagans says, referring to his experience seeing a show at his old school. "The technology just fascinated me; when I first saw it, it was so unique that I just wanted to start doing it."

Volpe himself encountered laser projection after seeing a show at his high school. He was fascinated by the fact that the brain can be tricked into "seeing any color we can think of, just by mixing together the three primary colors of light: red, [yellow], and blue."

After watching one of Prismatic Magic's shows, Fagans contacted Volpe to ask for the files, and the two struck up a mentor/student relationship. "[Volpe] is my biggest source of inspiration," says Fagans.

Currently, Fagans produces and regularly publishes shows on his YouTube channel, Laser Pictures, and has also done many live shows during dances at his previous high school. So far, he has yet to commercialize his hobby, which he hopes to do in the near future.

If anyone has an event that could use a scintillating laser show, feel free to get in touch with Fagans (cfagans20@dtechhs.org).

# THE DRAGON

December 19, 2018

dtechdragon.com

## All Bark and All Bite

By Asa Bensaid

Art Director

Fairy lights strung up, the heater cranked, and snow piling up around the windows - well okay, we don't actually get snow here in the San Francisco, but you get the point. It's that time of year again. But my holiday season has never completely arrived until I take my first bite of the sickeningly sweet peppermint bark I always make. Luckily, peppermint bark is one of the easiest desserts that you can make — it's literally just melted chocolate with crushed candy canes sprinkled on top. Here's the process:

Divide your white chocolate into two bowls and put the semi-sweet chocolate in a third bowl, though you can switch up the ratios as much as you like — two layers of semi-sweet with one layer of white is just as yum with a little more punch. Melt and layer the chocolates separately in a pan, making sure to cool each layer before putting the next on, then sprinkle crushed candy canes on top and cool until fully set. Once fully set, take the bark out of the pan and break it into pieces, then taste test until it's half gone. For a fully detailed recipe, keep reading.



All the ingredients laid out.  
Photo by Vlad Morozov

### Ingredients:

- » 12 ounces (339g) white chocolate, broken into pieces and divided evenly
- » 6 ounces (170g) high quality semi-sweet chocolate, broken into pieces
- » 1 and 1/2 teaspoons vegetable or coconut oil (don't use olive oil, it overpowers the flavor)
- » 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract, divided in half
- » 3 regular size candy canes, crushed

### Directions:

1. Line the bottom and sides of a 9-inch or 8-inch square baking pan with parchment paper or aluminum foil, smoothing out any wrinkles. Set aside.
2. Mix 1/2 teaspoon of oil and 6 ounces of white chocolate in a small heatproof bowl. Melt in a microwave in 30 second increments, stirring vigorously with a spoon after each increment until completely melted and smooth. Chocolate overheats and burns very quickly, and just a bit of burnt chocolate will ruin your batch.
3. Once melted, stir in 1/4 teaspoon of peppermint extract.
4. Pour melted white chocolate into the pre-



Pouring the third layer.  
Photo by Vlad Morozov

viously prepared baking pan, spreading it as evenly as possible with the back of the spoon. Place the baking pan in the refrigerator for 10-15 minutes.

5. Repeat step 2-4 with the bowl of semi-sweet chocolate
6. Pour the semi-sweet chocolate over the white chocolate, spreading into a smooth layer. Place the pan back in the refrigerator for another 10-15 minutes.
7. Place the remaining white chocolate and 1/2 teaspoon oil in a small heatproof bowl. Microwave and stir in the same manner you did in step 2. Pour over the previous layers and spread until smooth. (This layer will not have peppermint extract.)
8. Crush the candy canes by using a food processor or stick the candy canes in a sealed ziplock bag and smash with a rolling pin. Once sufficiently crushed, sprinkle on top of the choc-

olate.

9. Refrigerate the bark until completely hardened. Once hardened, remove from the pan and peel off the foil or parchment.

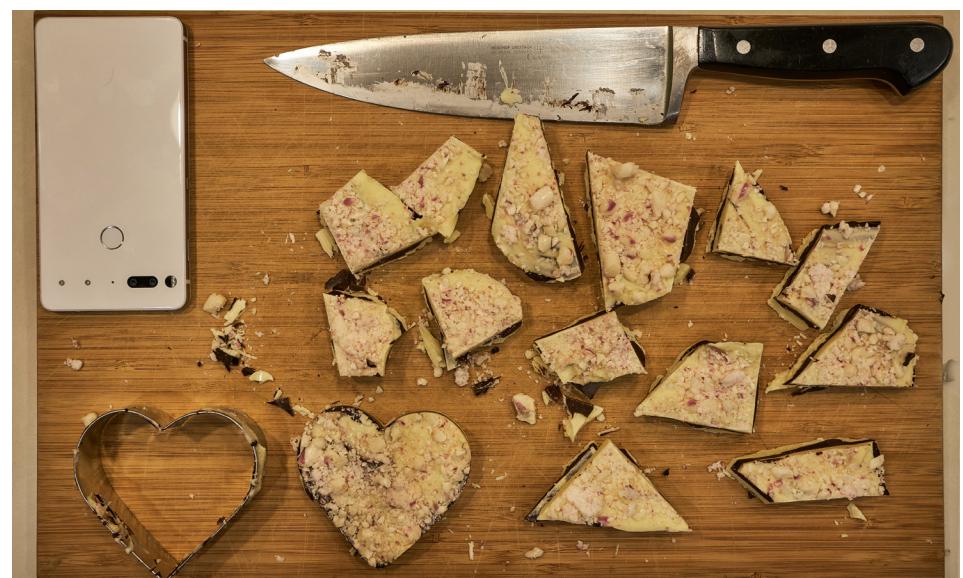
10. Break into pieces as large or as small as you want. Alternatively, you can cut squares. To do so, remove from the refrigerator and allow to sit at room temperature to slightly soften for 10-15 minutes. Use a very sharp chef's knife and cut. If you have a gas range, run the knife over open flame for a few seconds for a cleaner cut.

### Tips:

Make it ahead and store the bark in the refrigerator. It will keep well in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.

For some fun shapes, you can put cookie cutters in the pan, like I did with the heart.

Recipe loosely adapted from Sallysbakingaddiction.



The finished product, cut and ready to eat.  
Photo by Vlad Morozov

## Seasonal Crossword

By Daphne Palmeter  
Copy Editor

### Across

- 1A You won't find it in San Francisco  
4A The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (1955)  
9A An unfinished PT (4 words)  
10A 1917 Russian revolutionaries  
12A Organization sponsoring a series of Kwanzaa events  
15A Former TBD host  
16A Only so far (3 words)  
17A Milanese madams  
18A Post-menorah-lighting food  
20A Get up or stand up  
23A Branch of medicine dealing with disorders of the nervous system  
24A Classic holiday reading (3 words)  
25A Popular chocolate snack (2 words)  
26A Suffix denoting a medical examination or inspection

### Down

- 2D Unopened midnight sun  
3D End of the orange line on BART (2 words)  
4D Stellar core remnant (2 words)  
5D \_\_\_\_\_ the Halls, 2007 short film  
6D Lazy child's mode of transportation  
7D "\_\_\_\_\_, that's so sad."  
8D Occupation for a goldfish (2 words)  
11D With class (2 words)  
13D Poe's "The Cask of \_\_\_\_\_"  
14D A child on Christmas (2 words)  
17D Hanukkah helper  
19D Holiday beverages  
21D Blood of the Greek Gods  
22D Piaf or Wharton  
23D What a nutcracker may be

