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Political polarization challenges family bonds

# THE saratogafalcon

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Junior Yashom Kapoor (left) whizzes past an opponent at the Sacramento Raceway.

Courtesy of YASHOM KAPOOR

## Go-kart driver races on national circuit

BY Eric Shi  
& Daniel Wu

Foot pressing the gas pedal to the floor, junior Yashom Kapoor zipped around the corners of the Prairie City Karting Track in Sacramento. With a line of karts closing in on him like a pack of wolves, Kapoor desperately fended them off until the last lap, where he was eventually overtaken, finishing the race in fifth place and third overall in the championship.

Although Kapoor felt slightly dismayed at his placement in the determining race for the KA100 Senior Championship at Prairie City, which occurred on Nov. 13 — given that he was tied for second with a chance at securing first — he still felt a sense of satisfaction, perhaps even joy, bubbling through him.

To Kapoor, the adrenaline-inducing nature of the race and the feeling of constantly pushing himself to achieve higher speeds is the ultimate reward.

While many students have some prior experience with go-karts, be it at Great

America or elsewhere, Kapoor races at a professional caliber, driving go-karts no bigger than a bathtub at up to 80 miles per hour.

Kart racing, or karting, is an unconventional motorsport where competitors race on road circuits in open four-wheeled vehicles known as karts or go-karts. Karting first rose to popularity in America during the 1960s after race car builder Art Ingels created the first go-kart in Los Angeles, with the first organized race taking place in 1957 in the parking lot of the Rose Bowl stadium in Pasadena.

### Kapoor's go-karting career timeline

Kapoor discovered his love for karting at age 7 when he visited Zig-E's Funland, an amusement park located in Indiana, where he used to live. The park featured a miniature go-karting track with karts that ran at a measly maximum speed of 15 miles per hour. Although slow, the experience served as the gateway to Kapoor's



Kapoor

karting career.

"At the time, I was too small to drive, so I ended up sitting next to my dad while he drove," Kapoor said. "Even so, it was incredibly fun and I kept nagging at my dad to go again."

Soon after, Kapoor's family discovered a go-karting track in South Bend, Indiana. Because Kapoor was too small to drive the bigger karts that run at higher speeds, he started off by driving "mini-karts" with his younger sister, sophomore Yana Kapoor.

"Originally, karting was meant as a fun hobby for the family on the weekends, but I knew from the start that I wanted to take it competitively," Kapoor said.

At 8, Kapoor began his competitive karting career. Unlike most competitive sports that have a national organization, karting comprises multiple regional series spread across the U.S.

**>> GO-KARTING** on pg. 17

## Racist quad incident spurs local outrage

BY Kathy Wang

Teachers, students, and parents alike are outraged after a Black doll was found hanging from a noose on a tree in the main quad on the morning of Sunday, Nov. 13. Similar incidents occurred at around the same time at Redwood Middle and Prospect High School.

"This is a horrible display of racism and hate that is condemned by our school," principal Greg Louie said. "It is a direct violation of our values of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging."

Based on security camera footage, the district believes that the incident occurred around 9:15 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 11, according to an email sent by superintendent Bill Sanderson. The school is working to try to identify suspects and is using security camera footage.

**"[This display of racism] is a direct violation of our values of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging."**

PRINCIPAL Greg Louie

In the email, Sanderson emphasized that the "horrible incident" is not representative of the students in the school and district.

Currently, assistant principal Brian Thompson is working with the Sheriff's Department to identify and apprehend the individuals. Various classes, including Media Arts, have created anti-hate posters, which have been posted throughout hallways and classrooms.

This event preceded the school's anti-bullying week that began on Nov. 14. Louie said that prevention of these types of incidents is difficult as the campus is open to the community following school hours.

However, the administration says it will continue to stay vigilant against hate and racism while promoting longstanding school values of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. ♦

## Fall play attendance recovers

BY Jonny Luo  
& Daniel Wu

On the evening of Nov. 12, the lights dimmed, the curtains opened and the actors on stage danced in the darkness around a burning cauldron. The girls onstage laughed merrily, and as the dancing concluded, the audience erupted in resounding applause and cheers as they were treated to the opening scene of this year's fall play, "The Crucible." Over 240 people attended opening night, dwarfing last year's show (which only drew around 130 people). The play was also performed on Nov. 13, 17, 18 and 19.

"The Crucible" is a play written in 1953 by Arthur Miller and based on the 1692 Salem Witch Trials. It serves as a reminder about the dangers of McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare, a period of mass hysteria around suspected communist sympathizers in the 1950s that was just ending during the time of the play's release. The play follows a few characters and their responses to accusations of witchcraft in Salem.

Drama teacher Ben Brotzman, who directed the play, said he was happy with the turnout and performance on opening night.

**>> CRUCIBLE** on pg. 12

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## School plans to practice new evacuation simulation

To ensure that all students and staff are safe in emergencies like earthquakes or fires, the district is doing a new four-phase evacuation simulation this year.

Extending off the school's previous earthquake and fire drills, the simulations aim to inform students, parents and teachers about practices that will take place when a major emergency occurs.

"What makes the simulation different, however, is that there are now four different phases of the evacuation instead of one," assistant principal Brian Thompson said.

There's also going to be around 25 parent volunteers to help the school test out the attendance team to make sure the school can reunify the students with their parents.

Since this is the first year the school is carrying out the 4-phase evacuation simulation, the district hopes to integrate the full simulation one step at a time so students can absorb and understand the procedures.

"I hope we never really have to do it, but in the case of a real disaster, I would hope that other schools in the county took school safety as seriously as us," Thompson said. "I want us all to be prepared for all our students and our families." ♦

— Nicole Lee

## Teachers alternate between teaching at two schools

While teachers are often kept busy with endless grading and lesson planning for their classes, more teachers are juggling teaching at both Saratoga and Los Gatos this year. On campus, Ben Brotzman, Kristen Cunningham, Yumiko Munieshi and Sara Tseng all alternate between working on both campuses.

Although switching between two different schools and teaching two completely different subjects may seem like a pain, Tseng, who teaches computer programming at Saratoga and Chinese at Los Gatos, said that she has experienced the positives of alternating between the two environments.

"I have the opportunity to get to know both campuses and their student population," Tseng said. "It has been a fun experience so far."

Another teacher who switches between both schools is Munieshi, who teaches Japanese 3 at both schools.

Even with twice the hassles, Tseng said that she finds ways to make things work, and problems eventually work themselves out.

"I put the students first," Tseng said. "That's how I can manage [the juggle], by thinking about my students." ♦

— Amy Luo and Isabelle Wang

## Saratoga girls take lead at national math competition

Sophomore Ishani Agarwal felt an overwhelming wave of excitement as her name was announced during an award ceremony at MIT last month. She had placed third out of 250 contestants and received a grand prize of \$7,000 at the 2022 edition of Math Prize for Girls, an international mathematics competition for middle and high school girls.

Remarkably, Agarwal and three other students — junior Victoria Hu and seniors Lisa Fung and Jennifer Xiao — all finished in the top 20.

The contest occurred on Oct. 9, paired with an awards ceremony and a panel discussion.

To prepare for the in-person contest this year, many students chose to study previous years' exams, as the nature of the questions are competition-specific. It's rare for contestants to ace the test, with 19 out of 20 being the highest score in the competition's 13-year history; this year's top score winner managed a score of 17 out of 20 while Agarwal scored 12.

"At the end of the day, results don't really matter," Agarwal said. "The hard work that you put in prior to the competition is definitely the greatest reward." ♦

— Leyna Chan and Natalie Chua



Courtroom Chaos | Senior Olivia Smith as Abigail, junior Ella Tamas-King as Mercy Lewis and other ensemble members, act bewitched in the courtroom scene during a dress rehearsal for "The Crucible."

Courtesy of BEN BROTMAN

## Too big or too small: class size issues emerge this year

By Christina Chang

changing course levels.

Severely unbalanced courses pose a problem due to overcrowding when there are too many students in a classroom at a time. For example, if 20 students leave Algebra 2 Honors across all sections and 10 of those students go to a third-period Algebra 2 class, it will go from having a comfortable 24 students to an overcrowded 34.

This year, the courses that were especially unbalanced were the semester-long freshman Health and World Geography courses. At the start of the year, the average Health class had 35 students, the average World Geography class had 33 students and the average World History class had 34 students. After rebalancing, the averages became 29, 27 and 29, respectively, Wise said.

Class size balance is defined as having approximately the same number of students in all sections (class periods) of a particular course. Classes become unbalanced when students request schedule changes and student movement is unequal.

By design, almost every individual course is as balanced as possible across all sections the day before school starts. During scheduling, traditional academic courses — such as English, History, Math and Science — are targeted to have 32 or fewer students. While the median class size was approximately 30 at the start of the year, the average is now 28. (Note: these calculations exclude Special Education, which tends to have smaller classes, and P.E. and Performing Arts, which tend to have larger classes.)

"Usually the district's preliminary estimate is pretty good," Wise said. "This is the biggest miss I've observed in my seven years."

The incorrect estimate primarily affected ninth and tenth grade courses. The initial teaching budget allocated for eight term sections of Health, seven term sections of World Geography and six year-long sections of World History — fewer sections than principal Greg Louie would've liked from the district.

Additionally, there were a significant number of late-enrolling students this year, which surprised some district staff — many of whom were new to the district.

"We built a schedule at the end of the spring semester based on the number of students who were enrolled," Louie said. "However, we had additional students enroll after we built the schedule and this inevitably created the need that we had to address. I don't think there's much more we could have done with the information we had

at the time."

To rebalance classes, Louie approached district leadership after the start of the school year and made an appeal requesting additional money to reduce class sizes to something more reasonable.

The district granted a teaching budget increase of 0.8 Full Time Equivalency (FTE). A typical teacher workload for 1 FTE is five sections; the school received funds to cover four additional sections of teacher salary.

### The district granted a teaching budget increase of 0.8 Full Time Equivalency.



Wise

Louie alleviated the biggest issues by allocating an additional section for Health, World History, World Geography and ELD, which had a larger number of students than were anticipated in original planning.

After receiving additional funds, the guidance department worked with department chairs to identify crowded sections. An estimated total of 60 students were moved around to accommodate for the rebalancing of these four courses.

In early November, existing teachers took up some of these new classes, and history teacher Chris Rasmussen was hired to teach the new sections of World History and World Geography. ELD students were placed in SOAR classes at the start of the year, which hindered the ability of teachers to cater to the specific needs of ELD students — a problem that was exacerbated as the class grew. The school created a separate ELD class on Nov. 15, which is taught by French teacher Elaine Haggerty.

"Student scheduling is one of the most complex things that a school must do every year," Wise said. "Hats off to our excellent guidance department for identifying and correcting these problems." ♦

REGISTRAR Robert Wise

In an average year, there are over 1,000 student schedule changes, registrar Robert Wise said. He added an estimated 70 students' class schedules had to be changed in efforts to rebalance class sizes this year. Rebalancing efforts for the fall semester ended Sept. 15 alongside the student deadline for

the end of the year, he said. "However, we had additional students enroll after we built the schedule and this inevitably created the need that we had to address. I don't think there's much more we could have done with the information we had

## 'Creative, family-oriented and kind': Teacher of the Year's vision expands beyond teaching

By LynnDai

Special education teacher Brian Elliott learned in June that his colleagues had voted him to be the Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District's 2022 Teacher of the Year (TOTY). Colleagues noted his dedication to his students and excellence in all parts of his job — qualities that can be seen in a visit to his classroom, Room 403.

Right above the door is a monochrome photo of a racing horse — a metaphor to compare students venturing out to the "race of life" and rushing out the classroom. To the right are a series of posters featuring the U.S.'s founding members and their associated disorders (for example, Ben Franklin had dyslexia). The room even has a printer, which he dubbed the "heartbeat of the school" to ensure that students have access to all resources at all times. As always, calm music plays in the background.

Elliott also attributes a large part of winning the TOTY award to the dedicated professionals he has worked with. He said the award is "an honor that would not be possible without them."

While Room 403 reflects the nature of other classrooms on campus through its equipment and design, Elliott makes a constant effort to expand beyond its four walls and interact with all members of the school community. As head of the special education department, a former basketball coach at the school and a teacher of the on-site credit recovery program with special education teacher Danny Wallace, Elliott naturally traverses nearly all groups of students on campus.

"A huge part of my classroom is that it is a safe place for students to come to not only learn, but to feel comfortable on campus," Elliott said.

As part of the Special Education Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team, a legal document that ties staff to a responsibility of delivering their student's education, Elliott said he considers his students' families to be a large part of that team. He meets with parents several times a year online and in person to design specific academic program services and goals aligned to their student's independent academic situations.

Kathryn Liu, the parent of one of his stu-

dents, said that Elliott always values parent input. "He really has a heart that is so genuine and he has such a passion and care for each student and never seems to be tired," Liu said in an interview with the district.

Part of the process of creating specialized pathways and goals involves fine-tuning his instructional style to fit every student's motivations, Elliott said. For example, some of his students are interested in the niche aspects of the inner workings in motorcycle mechanics. Elliott encourages these students to analyze motorcycles in a systematic way through the scientific method, which facilitates further expansion of this interest to core education sectors like math and physics. The whole process of specializing the curriculum takes 20 to 30 hours each week, in addition to in-class teaching.

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course is offered to all students in the district who are referred from their guidance counselor, and aims to recover credits that would not look favorably on the college transcript to ensure graduation. Last year, the program helped over 45 students recover roughly 300 units of credit. It has a 100% success rate for participating students.

"We're both special education teachers, so we're able to support all curriculums with our global perspective," Elliott said. "What's made it so successful is that it is a safe place for students and we build relationships with them beyond just the credits they have to recover."

Another aspect that Elliott considers critical to his teaching philosophy is building relationships with students beyond their academic life at school. His students often share about their extracurricular activities such as part-time jobs, athletics or performances — events that Elliott attends to support his students. Moments when students try out something new are his "absolute favorite," as it shows that they trust him as a person. He largely attributes his teaching philosophy to the experiences he has had

with his teachers growing up. For example, his eighth-grade teacher at New Brighton Middle School, Ken Richter, "clearly practiced what he said and taught," while some of his other teachers weren't as passionate about teaching. The gap encouraged Elliott to go into teaching and "increase the odds" for students to learn under the mentorship of a teacher who cared about them and their success.

In addition to teaching, Elliott has also coached various basketball teams at school from 2018 to 2021. The different perspectives of the three departments have broadened his exposure to all aspects of the school community and enabled him to interact with students, families and staff beyond the walls of his classroom.

Those interactions involve aspects of his personal life, too. Financial literacy is a big part of Elliott's passion project, and he often offers advice to students, when applicable, and to other teachers on campus.

"One of my personal goals is being a lifelong learner," he said. "Everyone can learn. The traditional educational system doesn't necessarily work for everyone." ♦



COURTESY OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

## Sellers showcase fresh food at local farmers market

By Emma Fung & Kathy Wang



Parents strolled through the Prince of Peace farmers market on Oct. 27, chatting with different vendors about their products, while their children examined and sampled assortments of seasonal fruits such as peaches, plums and persimmons.

Since 2018, the Prince of Peace Wednesday farmers market has been run by manager Heather Harlow, and is currently located near the Prince of Peace Church on Saratoga Avenue. Before August 2018, it was located in downtown Saratoga near Big Basin.

"We're a year-round market and we've grown since we've moved here," Harlow said. "I think being here at the church is a bit better because we have more parking and it's a more visible spot for people to see."

With the new location, Harlow helps with marketing and organizing the general display of the farmers market. In addition, she has her own stand and sells fresh fish.

"I actually work two hats here: selling fish as a vendor and managing the market," Harlow said. "It's kind of like I have two jobs."

The Prince of Peace farmers market is most active during the spring, summer and early fall due to the more plentiful supply of fruits and vegetables. During the summertime, Harlow likes to hire more artists such as painters, potters, or singing groups to perform for crowds.

Harlow believes that running the farmers market is great for supporting small businesses. She said each vendor is technically their own business, whether they work for themselves or someone else.

"Sometimes, we pick the fruit the same day we bring it to the market," said Jorge Mendoza, who manages the fruit stands.

"Meanwhile in grocery stores, the fruit has

to be refrigerated at least a couple of weeks before it comes out to the community."

Customers at the market agree that the fresh products are one of the various reasons they shop there.

"I shop at the market to support small businesses, and the food is also a bit fresher. It's interesting to see what everybody sells each week," one customer said.

Fruit sales at the market are a booming business, with an average of 1,000 pounds of nectarines and 300 pounds of melons here is just the most giving, caring people that I've ever worked with." ♦

"Most people think that salespeople are just saying anything to get business," Cohen said. "But there's an old saying in sales or when you're selling food: It doesn't matter what you say. Once people put the food in their mouth, they stop listening, because that tells them everything they need to know."

Cohen's enjoyment of watching customers sample hummus correlates with his love for talking with his customers.

"I like dealing with people, and I find it fun to interact with them. I have a great product and it's entertaining for me to tell somebody how good it is," Cohen said.

Other vendors agree that interacting with customers is one of their favorite parts about selling at the market, along with spending time in the community itself.

"I call the farmers market Disneyland for adults because everyone's usually happy," Harlow said. "There's fresh fruit, happy faces, and you build relationships as a vendor, market manager and customer. Everybody here is just the most giving, caring people that I've ever worked with." ♦



# District preps staff to handle fentanyl overdoses

by Leyna Chan

Fentanyl overdoses and deaths are on the rise, and starting this fall, the district is trying to make sure both Saratoga and Los Gatos staff are ready to handle any possible episodes, including making sure each classroom now contains a Naloxone kit that aids in reviving victims.

According to data from the California Department of Public Health, the number of fentanyl overdose deaths in California jumped from 82 in 2012 to 5,722 in the past decade.

The typical age range for victims is between 18 to 25 — ages where drug experimentation is common.

The need for fentanyl awareness grew after the fentanyl-related deaths of two LGHS students in 2020.

Such incidents have only continued to become more prevalent in schools and neighborhoods across the Bay Area. Even over-the-counter drugs like Tylenol and Advil can be laced with fentanyl.

In response to the risk of fentanyl overdoses, opioid overdose training has been implemented in school districts statewide.

The opioid overdose training for SHS teachers began as an addition to the pre-existing standard staff protocol at a faculty meeting in September.

The presentation covered matters such as how fentanyl attacks the body and medication administration information that is often unfamiliar to those in

relatively unaffected communities like Saratoga.

Throughout the presentation, staff members learned about how each classroom has been pre-equipped with a Naloxone kit containing two nasal sprays, one for each nostril.

In the case of an overdose, teachers are expected to quickly recognize and address symptoms, administer the medication (twice if needed) and contact both 911 and the school nurse.

**[Not knowing the downsides to fentanyl] is a problem."**

TEACHER Megan Laws

Over the past couple of years, health clerk Tammy Parris said she has seen two accidental overdoses. In both circumstances, the students had taken medication for treating anxiety and trusted the source.

Parris noted that the training was sufficiently effective, saying it was "the best the district could provide given the general lack of direct experience the school staff has had with these situations."

She said she trusts that any teachers unsure about possible symptoms will seek her or the district nurse for assistance.

Despite the training and preparation, there's a possibility that symptoms may go undetected or be difficult to identify and confirm in a real event.

To address this concern, the trainers informed staff that there is no harm in administering the medication even if their suspicions turn out to be wrong.

"The nice thing about that medication is if you administer it, and you don't have a medication

risk it poses to both students and staff alike.

"Fentanyl is very transmissible through your fingertips, especially since our hands are porous," Parris said. "You can be contaminated without really even knowing that you've gotten it nor having taken the pill."

English teacher Megan Laws said that she felt grateful she got to attend the presentation, as it shed light on an issue that she had not yet encountered before in the school environment.

"They were telling us three granules of fentanyl is enough to produce an overdose, and that's like, grains of salt," Laws said. "The presentation opened our eyes as to how much of a problem [opioid overdose] is in the Bay Area, even with populations that aren't considered careless."

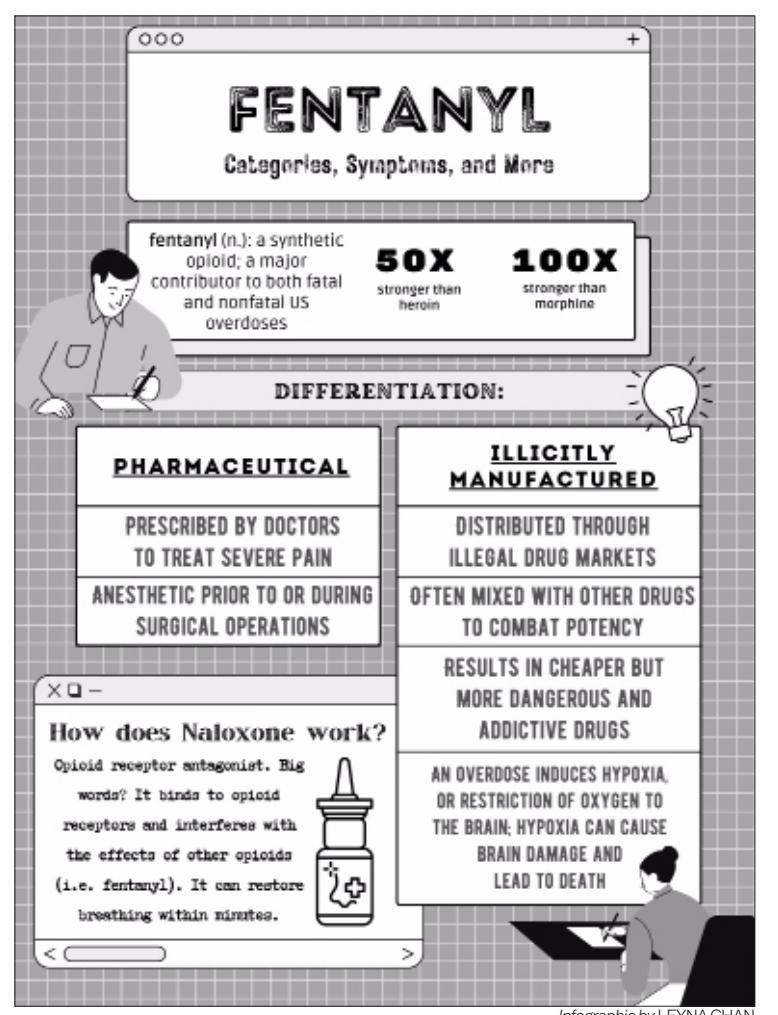
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"The nice thing about that medication is if you administer it, and you don't have a medication



Infographic by LEYNA CHAN

in your system that it needs to counteract, then it won't hurt you," Parris said. "It's better to give the medication, especially if you've got someone who's not responsive or breathing." So far little information about the epidemic has gone to SHS students, but a seminar on the topic was hosted at LGHS on Oct. 20.

"You can do a lot to your system if you're experimenting," Laws said.

"I think that students should definitely be made aware of the consequences. Reading that fentanyl can produce an extreme euphoria, wanting to feel that and not knowing the downsides to it is a problem." ♦

## Boitz and Cahatal receive UChicago's Educator Award

by Saachi Jain &amp; Shannon Ma

On the evening of Nov. 8, orchestra director Michael Boitz and AP Chemistry teacher Janny Cahatal were honored as recipients of the "Outstanding Educator Award" from the University of Chicago. As an annual tradition, UChicago asks incoming freshmen to nominate teachers who played a significant role in their education. Afterward, winners are chosen from thousands of responses.

Boitz was nominated by 2022 graduate Marcus Kuo, who was a student of Boitz for four years in the orchestra program, while Cahatal was nominated by 2022 graduate Jaime Fernandes da Ponte, who took Cahatal's AP Chemistry class.

"[The university] is going the distance to recognize and cherish relationships with educators," Boitz said. "They don't have to do this, but they do." Boitz is currently serving his 25th year as a director of the school's music department, which stands as one of the leading public high school music programs in the country. In receiving this award, Boitz said he feels humbled and honored, yet also "a little bit foolish."

"I have many colleagues in this profession who are remarkable and also deserve to be recognized," he explained.

When Boitz came to the school in 1997, Kevin Skelly, the principal at the time, felt that the academically high-achieving school needed a "soul."

This attitude drew Boitz to Saratoga, where he led the revival of the music program. It has remained his primary goal to foster a positive space that welcomes and unites students of all backgrounds.

Years later, Boitz has helped make Skelly's vision come to fruition, evidenced by the construction of the McAfee Center and

the school's music building, as well as the joy and passion that the music community brings to the school. "It's addictive, working with the amazing kids here," Boitz said. According to him, the positive student environment is what made him remain an educator all these years.

Many students in the music department are happy to hear of Boitz's award. "Mr. Boitz does everything in his power to help students achieve their potential," said junior Tejas Tirthapura, who serves as principal violinist in Saratoga Strings. "He is totally immersed in his job and deserves this impressive award."

Cahatal, who has been teaching for 18 years, diverted from a pre-medical track to education after teaching abroad in Africa for a year during her undergraduate years.

"I loved [teaching] so much more than I enjoyed my research projects in college," Cahatal said. "I can now definitively tell my college friends about how much I love my job, and they can't do the same."

Though she has won the Outstanding Educator Award twice before — once from UC Irvine and once again from UChicago — Cahatal felt its true impact this time around when forming bonds with a new set of students.

Looking to create a more casual and trusting relationship with her students, Cahatal cherishes the conversations she can have with them outside of the classroom. She is especially thrilled to be back in person with students. Cahatal also said that countless educators at this school deserve to be recognized. Still, she is glad to hear that alumni have appreciated their time here.

"If there's one thing I want any student to do, it's to thank your teachers," Cahatal said. "They do so much for you and deserve to be remembered, even if they aren't awarded." ♦

## Morelle on maternity leave part two until early January

by Meher Bhatnagar &amp; Ariel Zhou

As the spring semester came to a close last year, U.S. History teacher Margarita Morelle knew that starting off the 2022-23 school year was going to be difficult.

After taking her first maternity leave in February and giving birth to her daughter Luna in March, she decided to take her second maternity leave between October and December this semester to spend time with her newborn daughter.

The state of California allows for a 3-month maternity leave immediately after having a baby and another 3-month leave anytime after.

Historically, most teachers take the two 3-month leaves together as one longer six-month leave.

"My initial plan was to take leave right after having my baby and not come back until this October or November," Morelle said.

However, due to summer construction on campus, Morelle's classroom had to be completely cleared out. She knew it would be too hectic for a substitute teacher to both set up and teach her class, so she decided to save her next 3-month leave for later.

"Since the start of the year is an important time to get things situated, I wanted to come back and set up the room for myself to get the class running," Morelle said.

Morelle said that she had everything already planned out for her leave, which started on Oct. 17, and has created a daily calendar that the substitute teachers can

follow to stay on schedule with her initial lesson plan. Having gone on maternity leave in the past for her older child, Morelle considers herself well-versed at laying out descriptive lesson plans for the substitutes to follow. All grading for the assignments will be done by the substitute, and all of the worksheets, calendars and tests are Morelle's.

Before she went on leave, Morelle taught one period of AB U.S. History, two periods of regular U.S. History and one period of History in Film. Chris Rasmussen, a substitute teacher at Los Gatos High School, has taken over her Regular U.S. History and History in Film classes, while retired Saratoga High history teacher Kim Anzalone has taken over Morelle's AP U.S. History class.

**Morelle**

**"The start of the year is an important time. I wanted to come back to get the class running."**

TEACHER Margarita Morelle

Morelle said she is excited to spend some quality time with her daughter and celebrate her first holiday season with her. She plans to return on Jan. 9 at the beginning of the second semester.

"I'm really happy I was able to make time for my kids," Morelle said. "They are growing up so fast." ♦

# Programs struggle with raising parental funds

by Lynn Dai

On his MacBook, visual arts teacher and Tarbox keeps spreadsheets of budget statistics on the costs to host field trips for his students.

Various costs, including bus fees, admission tickets to museums and hotel stays, have been on the rise since the pandemic began in 2020. With the remaining surplus in donations left over from last year — a measly \$200 — Tarbox was barely able to pay for field trips in MAP this year. The total field trip costs amounted to approximately \$80,000, most of which was covered through PTOS.

"We want to make it simple for families, knowing that they're generous and they want the best experience for their child; everyone has the right intentions," Ellis said. "We just need to streamline it so that parents clearly know where the money goes."

Even in his smaller Art History classes, Tarbox nearly had to cancel a field trip to the Asian Art Museum planned for Nov. 28 because asked for donations fell short of covering the cost of a bus. Luckily, he salvaged the trip by converting to a smaller bus.

"Something in COVID shifted our donation amounts, so we need to make it clear that these trips won't run without the money because I think people want to support them," Tarbox said. "There aren't any other funding sources to make up for it; we just got to get people back in the groove."

These difficulties in obtaining enough funding to support his MAP and art students are part of an ongoing trend. Every year before the annual Falcon Fest, all Saratoga High School families receive an envelope in the mail filled with "donation" forms from organizations like the Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) and other departments their children might participate in. In recent years, however, more programs have been struggling to attain funds to meet basic necessities for students. Often, these departments have to resort to fundraisers such as partnerships with restaurants to make ends meet.

Departments across campus agree that the cause for inadequate funding is a lack of clarity to the parents, since many believe the misconception that the school budget already provides enough allocations

for each department to special activities like field trips. However, for elective programs and independent organizations like PTSO and speech and debate, those funds must come from parents or other donors.

"Donations aren't optional," PTSO president Lingling Sun said. "The issue is, from the output side, it's a must [in order to support our students]. But from the input side, [donations] aren't required."

### MAP and PTSO: the cause of the issue

California's Assembly Bill 1575, introduced in 2012, prohibits schools from charging fees for participation in classes or extracurricular activities. Activities like field

trips are supported by district and state funds, the sports budget depends largely on parental help. According to athletic director Rick Ellis, the budget is set up in two sections, the first of which, called General Athletic, raises nearly \$75,000 from Sports Boosters and supports all team expenses. The second section comprises of funds raised for each individual sports teams. While funding has been relatively low for the past decade, Ellis said that donations have been "very generous" during the last two years. However, sports teams are still forced to set up fundraisers to make ends meet. Ellis' goal is to make the funding system more sustainable for the future.

Despite the increase in donations, Shi said the club still had to suspend its original goal of hiring more coaches. Instead, the club has tried to leverage existing coach resources, a task made more feasible by what she called "great student leadership" this year: Shi said that captains Asish Goswami, Leo Jia, Skyler Mao and Timothy Leung paid every year, she said.

However, the program has significantly increased its donations turnover rate this year by reaching out individually to families over email and phone calls to explain the importance of donations. By the end of September, approximately 40% of families had donated; after the team's efforts, about 70% of family members had made donations by the end of October, which helped the club reach the "break even point," according to Shi.

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"The donations system in California is kind of a double-edged sword: while we can't require them, parents are given an option to match donations with their companies, which is a benefit of living in Saratoga," Shiuan said. "I think these things are going to be really difficult for any program on campus." ♦

### What are catalytic converters?

In essence, a catalytic converter takes the toxic fumes that your car generates and filters it into less harmful exhaust. They are vital to reducing air pollution, which is why the EPA made it mandatory for all cars starting 1975. The converter is usually positioned between the engine and the muffler under the car on the exhaust system.

### Why are they being stolen?

Stealing catalytic converters is almost the perfect crime: it's fast, it's profitable, and there is still very little public awareness about it.

Responding to these increasing rates, Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation on Sept. 25 that made it illegal for recyclers to buy the

trips and sports meets are not sponsored by the district, so most donations must come from parents.

The PTSO is one example of the various support systems school programs rely on for funding. This year, the program raised approximately \$87,000, primarily from Just Do It campaigns, PTSO memberships and matching funds. However, in a PTSO survey that received 43 responses, most parents were largely unaware of where PTSO funds are allocated — less than a quarter of parents were aware that PTSO makes one-time grants to support teachers and students.

Even in his smaller Art History classes, Tarbox nearly had to cancel a field trip to the Asian Art Museum planned for Nov. 28 because asked for donations fell short of covering the cost of a bus. Luckily, he salvaged the trip by converting to a smaller bus.

"Something in COVID shifted our donation amounts, so we need to make it clear that these trips won't run without the money because I think people want to support them," Tarbox said. "There aren't any other funding sources to make up for it; we just got to get people back in the groove."

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The Saratoga Falcon is published 9 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070. Views expressed in The Saratoga Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

## MISSIONSTATEMENT

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Saratoga Falcon welcomes all signed letters of opinion, which are subject to editing for length, accuracy and grammar. Please send them to shannon.ma@saratogafalcon.org and arnav.swamy@saratogafalcon.org. For information, phone (408) 867-3411, ext. 222.

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## Hanging doll calls attention to racism

Our school is diverse by national standards: We have a large Asian American population of 58.7%, covering a vast number of cultures and identities. Our diversity tends to indicate that we have an accepting community of varying backgrounds.

So, when superintendent Bill Sanderson recently revealed to families that a Black doll was hanged by a noose in the middle of the main quad — a clear act of hate and racism — the most common reaction was shock: Here? Racism? In Saratoga?

Regardless of whether the perpetrator was a Saratoga High student or not, this incident is a reminder that our school is far from anti-racist. In fact, there is too often quiet racism on campus from students against communities vastly underrepresented in our student body, unable to defend themselves even if they wished. These prejudices make our campus less safe and less welcome and we need to finally tackle it.

Our community has simply chosen to ignore this, hiding behind our own diversity, problematically refusing to acknowledge this hidden racism. Instead of engaging these issues together, we direct students into closed spaces with a counselor or therapist. Or we have vague discussions on “positive community norms” like respect.

Take a stroll through the library during tutorial — you’ll

hear students using the n-word casually and sometimes even making racist jokes. At football games, students make snide remarks about opposing players’ haircuts, girlfriends and more. It might not be painfully obvious, but these comments regularly target Latinos and Blacks.

This racism is quieter, but said in safer spaces and not publicly acknowledged. Sadly, it still happens regularly in every grade and in nearly every friend group (though mostly among boys, to be fair). And it’s more than “simply a joke” — the majority of these jokes are ill-intentioned.

These are the most common examples, but there’s plenty more, often coded into subtle microaggressions and closed-door conversations. As diverse as the school is, Black and Latino students are severely underrepresented in our student body, unable to defend themselves even if they wished. These prejudices make our campus less safe and less welcome and we need to finally tackle it.

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LEYNA CHAN

But now, with the shock of an abhorrently racist event in the middle of our campus, is the time to change that. This is not just a time to react strongly against racism and bring perpetrators to justice for their hate crimes. This is a time to reflect, as a community, on our prejudices and biases and to have explicit

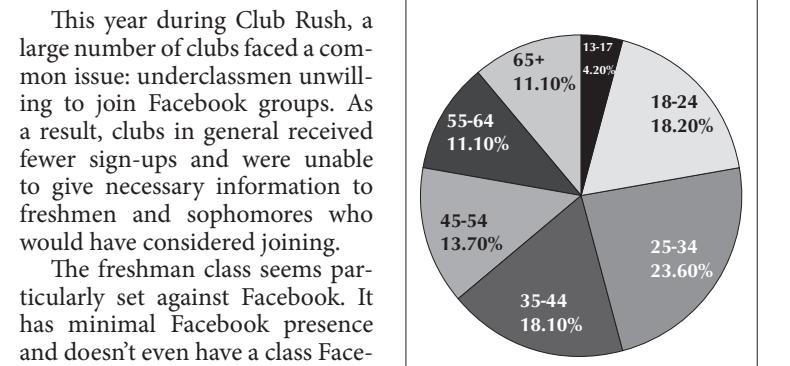
## Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

**Editors-in-Chief** Christina Chang  
Carolyn Wang  
**Opinion Editors** Shannon Ma  
Arnav Swamy  
**Writer** Shaan Sridhar

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 35-0 in favor of editorial.

## Facebook remains useful messaging platform

## By Derek Liang



This year during Club Rush, a large number of clubs faced a common issue: underclassmen unwilling to join Facebook groups. As a result, clubs in general received fewer sign-ups and were unable to give necessary information to freshmen and sophomores who would have considered joining.

The freshman class seems particularly set against Facebook. It has minimal Facebook presence and doesn’t even have a class Facebook page; in addition, only 65 out of all 283 sophomores are members of their class Facebook page, which hasn’t posted since last May and has little activity. The reality is that underclassmen rarely use

the app in their personal lives and don’t bother to download Facebook or start using it for a school club.

As there is no messaging app that all students use frequently, underclassmen need to realize that the pre-established club groups through Facebook are still the best option.

The school should consider promoting Facebook usage by transitioning important announcements onto the school Facebook page. Additionally, school clubs should give more incentives for students to join the Facebook group.

Without having to be begged or bribed with food, underclassmen need to accept the minor inconvenience and take a minute to get a Facebook account and be part of the school community. ♦

## Dear Saratoga students: Show more school spirit

By Lena Aribi  
& Meher Bhatnagar

Think of the iconic images from Friday nights in the fall — a time when students across the country gather by the hundreds or thousands on stadium bleachers to support and cheer on their football team. School spirit is supposed to be vibrant, the crowd is supposed to be going crazy with cheers and everyone is supposed to be wearing clothes that match the theme of the game.

Sadly, at Saratoga High School it sometimes seems only a few dozen people dress according to the theme and cheer only when there is a touchdown and they’re not looking at their phones. It is hardly a spirited atmosphere.

Take, for example, the Sept. 23 game vs. Mills High. A whiteout-themed game resulted in half of the students dressing accordingly and the other half wearing a chaotic mix of unrelated colors. If the students are not willing to put in the effort to at least match the theme, how can we expect to show our school spirit?

**Instead of accepting defeat, students need to do a better job of showing enthusiasm.**

While the football team, rally, and spirit commission have tried to enhance the sports culture at our school, it is up to us, as students, to contribute to the change.

## As languages die, vital cultures die with them

BY Zeyneb Kaya

**Editor's Note:** Zeyneb Kaya is a junior, and she wrote this piece as a guest columnist for The Falcon.

Climate change. The pandemic. Inflation. The current world faces countless issues. Yet, almost unheard of is the threat upon what is perhaps the most distinguishably human quality central to every part of our lives: language. Languages are being lost at an alarming rate, and with them, human culture and knowledge. Addressing the most pressing problems requires bringing together different backgrounds and unique perspectives. It will take making every voice heard to begin to heal the loss of humanity.

The “language crisis” — the rapid extinction of world languages — has a huge impact on global communities. There are over 7,000 languages spoken around the world, yet this diversity is fragile; every two weeks, a language disappears, and there will be a projected 90% of languages gone by the end of the century. The danger only spreads, as the cultures, knowledge and identities are lost in a deafening silence. If we do not speak up, millions of people may lose their voices.

The death of a language is a lot more than losing words. The way we speak reflects the values and knowledge of society. We express ourselves and our surroundings through language and form a reciprocal influence between who we are and what we speak. The ways in which a language addresses gender, time, age and more play a role in shaping our perspectives and beliefs.

Bilingual people understand that there are some words that, no matter how hard you try, cannot be accurately captured with one English word.

There’s tsundoku, in Japanese, which describes hoarding books and never reading them, or tartle, in Scottish, which describes that panic before you have to introduce someone whose name you can’t quite remember.

Language becomes ingrained in how we see the

world, and with diversity in the world’s languages, life is seen through a richer cultural lens, fostering creativity and innovation.

When a language dies, its blood is on our hands. The main reasons lie in cultural marginalization and the desire for one language of power. Globalization represses native languages. English, for instance, with its economic and political power, has quickly risen to dominate worldwide.

Language is a system of communication, but in hierarchical societies, language suddenly takes a symbol of class and superiority. This causes the language crisis to be-

come intertwined with the climate crisis.

It is native communities that have had to endure the greatest impacts of the climate crisis, with many forced into new and urban areas in the last 30 years. These individuals face conflict to fit into social hegemony and grow to learn only the language dominant in the region they reside in. In this way, the pervasiveness of the destructive effects of climate change expands into the most fundamental aspects of mankind: our words and interactions.

Language is an integral part of our daily lives. Acting fast is crucial. Right now, the critical overlap of declining languages and emerging digital technologies brings potential for change in documenting and promoting heritage. Mass communication through media provides a platform for sharing these unique voices, and computation is enabling the deployment of tools that were never before accessible.

But true change comes from within society, from the actions of each individual. Embracing diversity and exploring the different backgrounds right around us in our own communities is the first step to strengthening cultures.

Humanity holds the power to create, destroy and save, and it is up to us, now, to preserve the languages that have shaped us. ♦



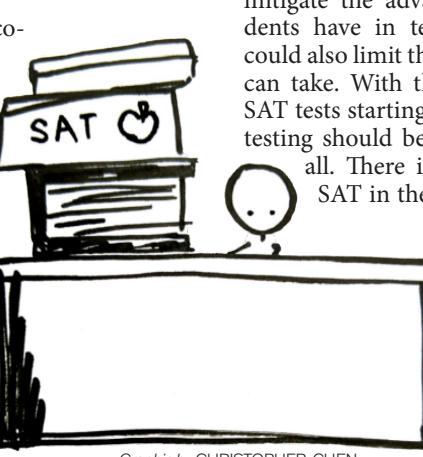
## School shooting prank call undermines campus safety

By Sam Bai

Early in the morning of Oct. 27, an anonymous caller alerted Santa Cruz High School officials that an active shooter was on campus.

School officials immediately called 911, initiating a massive law enforcement response of hundreds of officers. At the same time, the school went into lockdown. Law enforcement rushed onto school grounds, searching the entire school only to find that the tip was about a classroom that didn’t exist. It was a prank.

Although socioeconomic factors undoubtedly influence SAT performance, wealth mainly affects students' prior knowledge, not their possible improvement. Many joke about the expensive SAT/ACT prep courses students attend, but these courses aren't necessary in preparing for these tests with the prep materials



Graphic by CHRISTOPHER CHEN

available online for free, including 10 SAT tests offered on Khan Academy in a collaboration with College Board. According to a 2009 study by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, test prep courses only improved scores by 10 to 20 points in mathematics and 5 to 10 points in reading and writing.

There are nearly 4,000 colleges and universities, and only the upper echelon of these colleges implement a highly selective application process and admit a minuscule percentage of applicants. Still, if they really aim to be “the best of the best,” standardized test scores should be factored in. ♦

Perpetrators need to realize that the negatives of prank calls greatly outweigh the immature enjoyment they can derive from doing it. We have gotten to a point where school shootings are not taken seriously. On forums like Reddit, users constantly make jokes about U.S. school shootings when they are anything but a joking matter. These prank calls only make the situation worse, and we should place a priority on giving stiff penalties to anyone who is caught making such a call. ♦



# In Search of Educational Excellence

## Research in high school: a mismarketed resource

BY AnthonyWang

As the college admissions process becomes increasingly competitive, students have turned to extravagant activities to distinguish themselves as stellar students.

Among the ways perceived of gaining an advantage is to do research of various kinds in labs and other academic environments. And while these activities may not be the golden ticket into Stanford, Harvard or MIT, they can be valuable experiences — but not because of their value in the college admissions process.

High school research opportunities are a beneficial way for students to gain a taste of what they might do in the future. Research has earned a reputation as a resume booster — something to demonstrate competence to colleges or employers.

But in truth, the vast majority of high school research, just like all research, is not particularly impactful in any way. Even these papers can show little about the aptitude of a student as they are almost always written with other, professional researchers, and it is hard to know to what degree a student contributed to the project. This means that having done research or having brilliant results usually does not prove anything about the skills of a student.

As cheesy as it sounds, the real value of research comes from the journey, not the destination. For instance, when students hold internships, they are almost always relegated to boring tasks. However, this allows young people to decide their careers with more realistic expectations and certainty.

Similarly, even menial labor in research programs, such as learning to use the tools of data analysis, can produce meaningful benefits. Simply seeing "masters at work" leads to greater familiarity with professional environments. Communicating with a professor or graduate student allows a student to learn the expectations and ways forward in a particular field.

While internships may help train academic skills as well, this is not the main reason for doing them. Likewise, high



school research is not only an extracurricular for college preparation; it's an opportunity to find out whether a future in academia or in the lab is actually appealing.

Even the process of finding a research opportunity is helpful in learning from other scholars working in similar fields. While there are some nationwide programs for high school research, most students get research opportunities by participating in local programs or by simply asking a professor if they require another pair of hands in the lab.

This is a surprisingly level playing field for students. Of course, top performing students will always have an edge, as they do in almost any admissions process. However, as most applicants will have little to no professional research experience, the selection process hinges almost entirely on an applicant's commitment to studying a topic, as well as their desire to learn from more experienced researchers. If anything, reaching out to others in the hopes of finding research opportunities helps build social skills and courage.

So those who are interested in a career in STEM should go out and find a research opportunity that feels suitable for them. Research in STEM won't necessarily wow admissions officers, but given enough effort, anyone can learn niche knowledge and basic communication skills along with a better — and earlier — understanding of whether a field is a suitable fit. ♦

## Apple's most recent iPhone 14 model is worth every penny

BY ZackZhang

In recent years, many smartphone companies other than Apple have succumbed to these expectations, starting new trends such as full screens, impractically high pixel-resolutions and even folding screens. Sadly, these changes are not helpful because of the limitations set by their under-developed technology. The goal should not be to produce a novel product, but to cater to the user's actual experience.

Apple, on the other hand, did not mindlessly employ risky, new features. Each new iPhone model makes improvements on the existing features and only introduces new renovations to extend a smartphone's capabilities such as the Crash Detection and Emergency SOS via satellite feature, which



Courtesy of APPLE

is a crucial back-up mechanism when users are in danger.

iPhones have often been teased for being the most easily overheated phone. Even Apple's A16 Bionic processor, the most powerful processor existing on a smartphone, cannot perform with full potential if it's placed under great heat. The new iPhone 14 and 14 Pro greatly improved their heat dissipation by providing a better performing environment for their incredibly powerful chip.

Apple has also been consistently improving its camera system. The older generations' cameras required night mode in dark environments to absorb more light, whereas the new iPhone 14 Pro doesn't require night mode under the same lighting conditions due to its bigger camera sensor. Additionally, Apple upgraded the pixel

resolution from 12 to 48 megapixels in the iPhone 14 Pro. This may seem insignificant because iPhone's competitors already had cameras above 48 megapixels years ago, but the iPhone 14 does not solely rely on its camera resolution. Its AI also processes the photo afterward to calculate subtle but crucial details like dividing the outline of an object from its background.

Apple's iPhone, the most advanced and powerful of all time, has been breaking smartphone barriers for decades, and the meticulous thought that goes into each new iPhone model makes them worthy of high prices that start at \$999 and go as high as \$1,499. With Apple's emphasis on user experience, the iPhone stands out from the rest of its competitors in numerous ways. As Steve Jobs once said when the iPhone was first introduced in 2007: "[The] iPhone is a revolutionary and magical product that is five years ahead of any other mobile phone." The same remains true today. ♦

# New British PM is forgetting the people he's leading

BY Anirudhlyer

Rishi Sunak wasn't really supposed to become the UK's next prime minister.

After Boris Johnson messily resigned from the position on July 7 over a growing list of ethics scandals, former Foreign Secretary Liz Truss was next in line from the Conservative Party to take charge of the land across the pond.

Funnily, Truss defeated Sunak in an election that intended to establish the U.K.'s main leader for years to come. However, after making horrific policy moves, which resulted in record high inflation rates, Truss became the British public's second-most disliked leader of all time, standing at a net favorability of -70%. Russia's Vladimir Putin is the only world leader with a lower favorability rating, currently standing at -84%.

In particular, Truss's drastic slashing of taxes sent the markets reeling, and the value of the British pound tanked. As a result of this country-wide economic downturn, she shamefully resigned from office on Oct. 20, six weeks after initially taking office. Her 45-day term was the shortest in the country's history, and an election for the next leader of the U.K. ensued.

Although COVID-19 may have caused a learning gap for these medical students, classes shouldn't be made easier. It is typical for students to struggle more in their classes post-COVID-19; this trend was seen in numerous of our own high school classes. Additionally, only 22% of total students signed the petition against Jones, which makes it even more shocking that NYU conceded to such a small portion of student voices. It is not right to tell high-level teachers to soften their classes, lower the bar of entry to the medical field or tell students it is acceptable to fire their teacher when their work gets too difficult.

Although professors should be held under some amount of scrutiny, there should be a limit to how easy it is for students to get them fired. In this case, it seemed the bar was too low. If a credentialed, internationally acclaimed professor at NYU can be removed over a relatively small number of student complaints, it's time to reevaluate how much influence modern college students are having — and why administrators would cave into their demands. ♦

succeed in chemical work, as well as mental fortitude to learn from their own failures.

Maitland Jones Jr., an 84-year-old Organic Chemistry professor who taught at New York University (NYU) for 15 years, was fired from the school on Oct. 6 because 82 out of his 350 total students signed a petition arguing his course was too difficult.

Jones, however, is highly qualified for his field. In 1964, he founded the Jones Research Lab at Princeton University and studied there until 2004. During his tenure, Jones published papers with 63 undergraduates, 30 graduate students and 34 postdoctoral fellows and visitors. Along with his expertise in organic chemistry, a course notoriously known for its difficulty, Jones had been teaching Organic Chemistry at NYU since 2007.

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However, as most applicants will have little to no professional research experience, the selection process hinges almost entirely on an applicant's commitment to studying a topic, as well as their desire to learn from more experienced researchers. If anything, reaching out to others in the hopes of finding research opportunities helps build social skills and courage.

So those who are interested in a career in STEM should go out and find a research opportunity that feels suitable for them. Research in STEM won't necessarily wow admissions officers, but given enough effort, anyone can learn niche knowledge and basic communication skills along with a better — and earlier — understanding of whether a field is a suitable fit. ♦



During Taylor Swift's acceptance speech at the MTV Video Music Awards, West barged on stage and claimed Beyoncé's music video was better.

His ventures, along with the money that his father made through consulting giant Infosys, were his means of getting even richer. Ironically, Sunak's policies essentially prevent someone from ascending in the way he did. He is reducing chances for immigrants to break into the traditionally non-diverse politics sphere while being the son of an immigrant himself.

To me, his desires to cut public spending reek of naivety and ignorance. With a 700 million pound net worth, Sunak likely will be unaffected by the compressed money in the economy. On the other hand, the middle class, representing the majority of the U.K., will be hurt.

And Sunak seems not to care. He famously said that he "didn't have working-class friends," and on another

instance proudly announced depriving the large urban areas of necessary funds. With the urban areas of the U.K. heavily composed of people of color like himself, Sunak seems to be cutting hands from those who metaphorically fed him.

During his time as an integral part of Boris Johnson's cabinet, Sunak pushed forward some of the most racist policies in recent history, particularly through his attempt to put the Nationality and Borders Bill into action. If this law had passed, the British government would have the right to revoke the citizenship of anyone it claimed had ties to another nationality.

This is abhorrent. It seems like Sunak doesn't want anyone who looks like him to take the path he managed to take. What's worse is that Sunak persistently reiterated his desire to implement a variety of anti-immigration laws even after taking the nation's top leadership position.

Migrants being forcibly accommodated on dingy ships is an appalling law in itself, but those seeking sanctuary in the U.K. forcibly being shipped off to Rwanda is disgusting.

These laws demonstrate that Sunak cares little for anything but his own advancement and wealth. With his harshness and lack of concern toward immigrants, Rishi Sunak is not someone to admire. And that's left me rather disappointed. ♦



2022

Many brand deals and sponsorships have cut ties with West in response to his recent actions

"I'm going death con 3 On JEWISH PEOPLE"

Infographic by ANDREW LIN

## There's no more excusing Kanye West's behavior

BY EmmaFung &amp; AndrewLin

Lives Matter (BLM) movement is a scam that has been sold to the majority of our population, because money that was donated was never actually given to Black people.

Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, shook the entertainment world on Oct. 9 when he vowed to go "death con 3 On JEWISH PEOPLE (sic)" in a now-deleted Tweet. Some fans stared in dismay while others rallied in support of the rapper.

West, the artist behind era-defining hits like "Heartless," "POWER" and "Gold Digger," has come under intense scrutiny recently for other contentious actions such as wearing a "White Lives Matter" shirt and harassing family and former friends online. Fashion and financial magnets like Balenciaga, Vogue, Gap, Adidas and JP Morgan Chase have all severed ties with West, resulting in billions of dollars in lost revenue.

West has been a household name in entertainment since the release of his first hit album "The College Dropout" in 2004, which is why his behavior and beliefs are so dangerous. Because he is so intertwined with popular culture, his words carry greater weight and give power to hate groups, who are jumping at the chance to name-drop him in an effort to advance their causes.

West's iPhone, the most advanced and powerful of all time, has been breaking smartphone barriers for decades, and the meticulous thought that goes into each new iPhone model makes them worthy of high prices that start at \$999 and go as high as \$1,499. With Apple's emphasis on user experience, the iPhone stands out from the rest of its competitors in numerous ways. As Steve Jobs once said when the iPhone was first introduced in 2007: "[The] iPhone is a revolutionary and magical product that is five years ahead of any other mobile phone."

The first flame was lit when West wore a t-shirt depicting the bold words "White Lives Matter" at his Yeezy collection show during the 2022 Paris Fashion Week. He did not hesitate to share his newfound beliefs with Tucker Carlson from Fox News, who, of course, eagerly agreed with everything he said. West argued that the Black

people are "supposed" to think.

This exact type of paranoid and hateful thinking is what led to the dramatic increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans during the pandemic. Buzzwords like "China virus" and "kung flu" combined with scapegoating Asians for COVID-19 drew eerie parallels with the historical ste-

reotype of Jews being money-grubbers. The media's negligence encouraged West to spout more nonsense over the years

As West went from starting minor drama to spewing blatant prejudice, nobody said anything until it was too late. West is surrounded by a posse of yes-men who seek only to serve themselves.

For example, he recently began a deal to purchase the conservative Twitter alternative Parler, which was previously owned by Candace Owens' husband George Farmer. It's not hard to connect the dots and see that West is being conned out of thousands of dollars by a right-wing grifter who cares nothing for him. He has alienated most of his family and friends, and the ones that stay behind are too afraid to criticize him.

Despite starting and ending relationships with Julia Fox, Irina Shayk and others, he had a problem with Kardashian dating as well. West repeatedly harassed Davidson on Instagram and told his fans to do the same, even releasing a music video for his single "Eazy" which featured a claymation depiction of him burying Davidson neck-deep in the desert and planting roses in his face. Davidson claimed that he had to seek therapy due to the barrage of abuse from West.

Fans should have drawn the line during the Davidson debacle, but most either joined West in ridiculing the comedian or watched the fiasco from the sidelines.

West needs to realize that his recent remarks reflect poorly on himself and perpetuate the normalization of anti-Semitism in right-wing media. His paranoia cause him to make remarks that are relied upon by the general public, and this surely leads him to feel even more paranoid, bitter and hostile.

To break this circle, West should abstain from the toxic cesspool that is social media and focus on his mental health. West has an army of fans ready to support him if he puts aside his ego and admits that he isn't always right. ♦

This echo chamber has been made worse by bipolar disorder, which he was diagnosed with in 2018. Though it is clear that his manic episodes influence his outbursts, the illness cannot fully justify his bigotry and targeted harassment. As his fans with bipolar disorder have noticed, the disorder does not cause anti-Semitism.

West is a smart man, and was at one point rather self-aware as well. In 2018, he tweeted, "My eyes are now wide open and now realize I've been used to spread

# Falcons explore cultural cuisines



## Food connoisseur recounts dining in Malaysia

BY NatalieChua

As a cuisine influenced by the culture of neighboring nations, Malaysian food largely consists of a blend of Southeast Asian spices and coconut products. Sold mainly on the humid streets of Malaysia are Indian mee goreng, roti prata, laksa and ais kacang — some of my favorite Malaysian foods.

Although Malaysia holds beautiful coastal lines, beautiful Buddhist temples, and famous landscapes like the twin towers, food is the best cultural aspect of Malaysia. Even though I lack knowledge of Malaysian culture and history, the food was always something I looked forward to on my vacations to Malaysia, as it allowed me to connect with relatives.

During my visits to Malaysia, my relatives would always take me to the Gurney streets of Penang, a vast strip of food stands that stretches for miles. The noise of vendors promoting their food created an unpleasant and loud sound of shouting on the streets, and the smell of rich and savory foods filled the air. My family settled on a table while I sought out to buy my usual breakfast, roti prata, and milo, a common chocolate drink in Malaysia. Indian street vendors sold their roti prata in various combinations including Nutella, cheese, eggs and other varieties of toppings, along with the popular mee goreng dish.

Crunchy on the outside and soft on the inside, my roti prata with eggs served with canai malay curry was the perfect savory snack. I'd stuff mouthfuls of the mee goreng my dad ordered, which left a pleasant, aromatic and spicy sensation in my mouth.

Originating in Indonesia, mee goreng is a popular fried noodle containing potatoes, bean sprouts, peanuts, tomato sauce, tofu and chicken.

On our way home, my family stopped to get ais kacang at a stand nearby to cool off from the hot and sticky weather. The shaved ice, flavored with Sarsi syrup and topped with overflowing red beans, eased my dry mouth and relieved the uncomfortable sweat drenching on my back.

I would recommend Malaysian food at Banana Leaf in Milpitas or Killiney Kopitam in Palo Alto, particularly dishes like roti prata, mee goreng and laksa, to anyone who enjoys spicy, creamy and flavorful food. Ais kacang is also a great dessert option to top off the meal. ♦

### Ais Kacang Recipe:

**Ingredients**

- 2 cups ice cubes or crushed ice
- Syrup (1/4 cup dark brown sugar, 1/3 cup water, 3 drops red food coloring)
- Toppings (2 tbsp condensed or evaporated milk, 2 tbsp canned red beans, 2 tbsp grass jelly, attap chee, palm nuts)

**Instructions:**

1. Add all the syrup ingredients in a small sauce pan and mix over medium heat. When the sugar melts and the syrup starts to bubble, turn off the heat. Set aside and let cool.
2. Prepare shaved ice by using a blender.
3. Transfer the shaved ice to a bowl and add 2 tbsp syrup, followed by all the toppings. Serve immediately and enjoy!

BY AnirudhIyer  
& DanielWu

From the legendary Romans to the wise Greeks, the Mediterranean is a historically rich and cultured region.

The same can be said about Mediterranean cuisine. Rich and flavorful, Mediterranean cuisine incorporates simple and hearty ingredients such as olive oil, vegetables, dried spices, cheese and pita bread.

With Mediterranean restaurants becoming a common sight in the Bay Area, it seemed only right to try it for ourselves.

Following a quick search on Google Maps for Mediterranean restaurants, we decided to visit Dish N Dash, a quick 10-minute drive away from the school in Cupertino, on Stevens Creek Boulevard.

We opened with an appetizer: a couple of classic pita breads with freshly made hummus.

The pita bread was light and fluffy and the hummus suited well, featuring a mix of tangy and savory flavors.

Afterwards, we proceeded to order entrees, which consisted of a traditional chicken shawarma with falafel and baba ganoush.

The falafel should have a slightly crunchy texture upon first bite, but soften as it stays in one's mouth. Its taste should resemble a deep fried fritter.

Though the meat-based dishes stood out, the vegetarian ones managed to outdo them.

With a combination of fresh greens, artisan breads and delicate sauces, vegetarians can expect top-notch dining.

From what we'd seen and heard about the frequency of meat use in Mediterranean dishes, we thought we'd be limited to quite unfulfilling, calorie-lacking food.



To complement our dishes, we also chose a side of tabouli, a tangy Levantine salad made of chopped parsley, tomatoes, mint and onion dressed generously in olive oil.

The chicken shawarma arrived piping hot, perfectly cooked throughout. A variety of sauces such as garlic yogurt were available which further enhanced the experience.

The wrap was too irresistible. What immediately stood out were the aesthetics of the dish. On previous occasions, we've had messily assembled wraps with sauce dripping out and loose onion slices all over the plate.

This wrap, however, was perfectly arranged; everything from falafel to hummus fit inside of the pita, and the wide-ranging color of vegetables sprinkled on top made the wrap visually appealing.

Taste-wise, the wrap was phenomenal. The falafels were perfectly toasted and tasted exactly right — common issues such as overbaked exteriors or extremely soft insides didn't pose a problem.

The variation of flavors inside can be best described by a symphony metaphor; hot peppers provided sharp crescendos to supplement the subtle softness of the cucumber, corn and sweet-ish hummus. With its incorporation of various flavor profiles ranging from mellow to piping hot,

However, that was not the case. We decided to order a veggie wrap, and though we've both been trying to cut our calorie intake, we went ham with this one.

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every bite was unique. Overall, this dish was wholeheartedly one of the best Mediterranean meals we've had, receiving particular approval from Anirudh, who is vegetarian.

The combined cost of our meal was around \$32, with the vegetarian dish being \$14 and Daniel's \$18.

Though we're pretty ignorant in the realm of Mediterranean cuisine, we can discern when food is good. Our experience was overwhelmingly positive, and we'd recommend it to anyone on any sort of diet.

With its array of flavor profiles, perfectly assembled breads and almost velvety sauces, Dish N Dash was outstanding all-round. ♦



# Restaurant receives approval from vegetarians and meat-eaters alike

BY AnirudhIyer  
& DanielWu

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## Students' and teachers' shared love of food strengthens bonds with family and friends

BY KathyWang

Given Saratoga High's wide range of cultural backgrounds including Asian, European, Middle Eastern and Hispanic countries, many students and staff members have diverse opinions on their favorite cultural cuisines.

Spanish teacher Stephany Marks highly recommends Brazilian food. She especially enjoys Brazilian lasagna, which is similar to the generic Italian lasagna, except instead of marinara sauce, it is baked with an Alfredo sauce and Catupiry cheese.

"Whenever I would go to Brazil, I would make sure to bring a ton of [Catupiry cheese] back," she said.

Marks was introduced to Brazilian cuisine by her close friends and family who lived in Brazil. Before COVID-19, she often traveled there to visit them in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

One of Marks' most memorable moments with Brazilian food was spending time with her mother-in-law. She recalls watching her make Brazilian pizza every Friday while listening to soap operas.

"[My mother-in-law] would always make the pizza with Catupiry cheese because she knew I loved it so much,"

Marks said. Sophomore Ryan Heshmati enjoys Spanish cuisine, especially Spanish tapas. Tapas are small appetizer-like dishes traditionally served in Spain and usually shared among a group.

"I remember [at one restaurant] the tapas were so good so we kept ordering," Heshmati said. "When we finally asked the server how much the bill was, it ended up being \$250, so I was like alright, we can stop."

Heshmati recalls going to a tapas restaurant in Los Gatos called Teleferic Barcelona and sharing croquetas and patatas bravas with a group of friends.

"I like that family style, so whenever I go out with my friends we can order and share the same dishes," Heshmati said. "We go out with our friends and family and we eat the same dishes, so we can share the same food and it's more fun." Meanwhile, sophomore Richa Kandlikar enjoys the abundant spices and rich flavors of Indian cuisine.

Growing up in an Indian family, Kandlikar has eaten Indian cuisine for as long as she can remember. One of her favorite dishes includes butter chicken, which is a popular Indian dish that consists of cream, butter, tomatoes, chicken and an array of Indian spices.

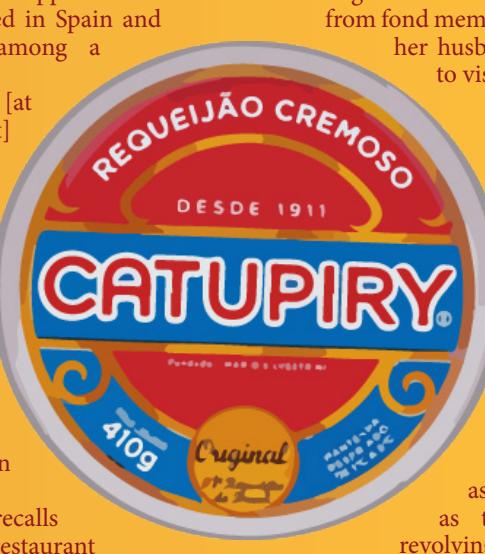
Kandlikar's favorite aspect of Indian cuisine is the creativity associated with each dish, and how so many flavors can be produced with similar ingredients.

"There are so many spices and different flavors, and there's just so much variety," Kandlikar said.

She recalls going to an Indian restaurant in Milpitas called Mirch Masala every Friday night with her family as a small, yet heartwarming, tradition.

"I remember being really tired and sleepy during those Friday nights, but I was always really excited to go," Kandlikar said. "My sister and I would order butter chicken and my parents would order paneer."

By sharing their favorite cuisines with friends and family, students and staff members kindle stronger bonds. "[Spending time together while eating meals] brings us really, really, really close," Marks said. ♦



All graphics by ANJALI PAI and ARIEL ZHOU

# Marching band caps off season in Sacramento

by Shannon Ma

In the chilly morning air on Nov. 5, senior woodwind captain Helen Kao held her breath as she stood in formation with 174 members of the marching band on the vast field of Sacramento State University, facing hundreds of audience members in the bleachers. The Western Band Association (WBA) NorCal Super Show regional championships in Sacramento marked the band's last of three competitions.

Fortified by over three months of grueling practices, the band gave a successful final performance of their show "Blossom," earning fourth place overall, second place in Visual Performance Caption and third place in Percussion Caption against 20 other high schools.

This year was vastly different compared to their previous season, where half the marching band was new to field performances after a year of online classes.

While new freshmen lacked middle school marching experience, the band continued to improve on their technique and overall synchronization as the season progressed.

"As the season went on, new members responded to feedback much faster and showed improvement with every rehearsal," said Kao, who plays the flute.



The marching band won fourth place at the Sacramento regional championships on Nov. 5.

Aside from competing at the WBA NorCal Super Show, the marching band also attended Cupertino Tournament of Bands (TOB) and the Sierra Cup Classic in Fresno. At the Sierra Cup Classic, percussion was awarded first place in preliminaries, helping the band advance to the final round.

"At the last competition, it was really clear how dedicated each one of the new members was and how much they had pushed themselves to get better," Kao said.

Tirthapura felt the show's theme of "Blossom" encapsulated the band's growth not only over this season, but "throughout the years one does marching band."

Attempting to train during COVID-19 and then competing fresh out of lockdown was challenging, said band director Jason Shuan in a past Falcon interview. But their persistence and love for their craft allowed them to endure obstacles and ultimately thrive in the 2022 fall season. ♦

## >> falconfigures

1st placement at the Sierra Cup Classic in Fresno

20 other schools competing in Percussion Caption

91 days of practice before giving their final performance

174 students participating in marching band this season

## CRUCIBLE

*continued from pg. 1*

"It went fantastic. We had a really good crowd, and the play seemed really well received by the audience," Brotzman said. "The actors did a fantastic job, the tech ran smoothly and we had an overall amazing show."

Brotzman said he noticed no major slip-ups by the actors, something he attributed to the countless hours of practice put in by the cast.

The preparation gave them the skills to improvise on the spot when anything went wrong. During rehearsals, actors sometimes forgot their lines, in which case another actor would improvise theirs to keep the flow of the production going without any hiccups.

**"For an actor, there's nothing more fulfilling than seeing a full theater."**

SENIOR Eli Tsives

Brotzman also thanked the local sponsors who helped "make the play possible" by providing monetary contributions for accessories and pamphlets.

The play featured 36 cast members, including eight from Redwood Middle School.

The decision to include middle schoolers was due to the low number of high school cast members this year, as they did not have enough members for the ensemble — the middle schoolers generally played non-speaking roles.

Brotzman said it was a great

opportunity to introduce drama to middle schoolers, which they may also do during the spring musical of "Mamma Mia."

"There's no drama electives or clubs in junior high, and [middle schoolers] really only have the yearly musical," Brotzman said. "We wanted to give them more opportunities [to act], and they were able to jump in with little rehearsal and do the show. They were fantastic."

The set was hand-built by Cris Vaughan, who worked with the Saratoga Theater team during the three weeks before the show first aired.

Costumes were designed by sophomores Claire Zheng and Ivy Tian.

Brotzman said there were a lot of student designers on the show, which excited him greatly.

The visually striking stage set and costumes awed many in the audience, including junior Kathryn Fritz.

"The attention to visual detail made everything appear super realistic," Fritz said. "I loved seeing new characters walk onto the stage and taking in how their costume differed from the other actors."

In addition, Fritz admired the actors' attention to accurately portray their characters. A particular detail that stood out to her was the utilization of accents, which she believes provided depth to the characters and enhanced the overall quality of the production.

Senior Eli Tsives, who played the protagonist John Proctor, expressed heartfelt appreciation for the turnout on opening night.

The packed audience was a factor which greatly motivated him along with many of the other cast members.

Other star players included



Tsives

## Design Club creates collaborative posters

by Sanjoli Gupta

Design Club embodies the motto "two minds are better than one" as it works to collaborate with other school organizations to design posters and magazines.

Co-presidents senior Kasie Yang and junior Angela Zhao started the Club with the mission to expand student engagement with digital design. Originally applying as two separate clubs, Design Club and Poster Club merged during the ASB club application process to create a single club focused on design.

Tsives mentioned that the audience turnout was partially driven by extra credit opportunities offered by a number of teachers.

The proposal was initiated by Tsives himself, as he felt such an incentive was necessary to fill the seats.

In spite of the slightly disappointing reality, Tsives felt that the performance served as a great opportunity to allow students to see their fellow classmates perform.

"I would rather have every seat full and give everybody an extra 3% on their grade as an added benefit," Tsives said. "Because for an actor, when you're on stage, there's nothing more fulfilling than seeing a full theater."

Tsives lauded his fellow cast members and was proud of the hard work they put in. With their stunning opening night show, he said it paid off brilliantly.

"It was amazing and very emotional. My last opening fall play," Tsives said. "I think this is the first time we have ever successfully run the show without anyone slipping up, and I am very grateful for the amazing cast." ♦

Other star players included

# Inktober proves to be a daunting challenge

by Sam Bai  
& Victoria Lin

## Victoria: Scurry (Oct. 2)

It was a lovely Sunday evening. I sat at my desk, twiddling my thumbs, when suddenly I realized the day's prompt was "Scurry." Naturally, I scurried over to my desk and picked up a pen.

The light in my room casted an ambient glow over the thick, white paper — the good kind of paper from Michaels. Because I hadn't completed my homework yet, I knew I had to hurry through the prompt.

I scrawled on a piece of scratch paper to get the ink flowing. I didn't want to waste paper so I opened up the same page I drew my first Inktober drawing on and started scribbling on the paper.

This was my favorite prompt of Inktober and I knew exactly what I wanted to create: a rat with a hat and its footprints behind it to show how it was "scurrying."

With a few simple lines and dots as the footprints, I finished my second and second-to-last Inktober drawing. I gave up after because I didn't really like the prompts.

## Sam: Flame (Oct. 5)

This day was packed full with preparing for my unit three math test the next day. It was 10:45 p.m. and I had to sleep soon or else I would bomb my test. I looked at the problem in front of me with my sheet of binder paper alongside it. The problem made zero sense in my brain.

So, instead of preparing for the math test

as I was supposed to, I spent the rest of the day drawing for Inktober, keeping up my streak of drawing one art piece a day.

The prompt was perfect. Right in front of me on my desk was a piece of text that I wish could go up into flames so that I would never have to touch it any more.

Mr. Yim: If you are reading this, I love math <3.) With a deep hatred growing inside me, I flipped to a new page on my sketch book and started drawing.

I played some relaxing dubstep music and started replicating the calculus book onto my sketchbook.

However, near the top of the textbook, I drew a kindling flame, almost waiting to burst and engulf the entire "James Stewart Calculus, Single Variable Calculus Early Transcendentals."

Looking back, I really wish I used a ruler to draw the spine of the textbook. After an arduous period of studying, my hand was extremely weak and the lines I drew turned out super squiggly.

The end result looks probably be a block of jello. Instead of a square the sides were super wobbly.

After completing my inked drawing, I looked at the time, and went to sleep, praying that I would be able to do well on the math test the next day.

## Sam: Kind (Oct. 13)

When I thought about the prompt "Kind," my mind immediately went blank. Unlike the other concrete prompts, this one was abstract.

I instantly started thinking about the definitions of kind. A group of objects can be a kind, but then a problem arose: what would the group of objects be?

After finding a dead end in that string of ideas, I started wondering what the kindest thing I knew was. Suddenly, the Disney movie "Big Hero 6" and its iconic character Baymax, the marshmallow-like assistant-doctor-help-mech, became a prime example of "kind."

I then started drawing: first his round and squishy body and then the suit of armor that he wore during the latter half of the movie.

However, just a blank blob inside a suit of armor would be quite boring, so I started incorporating clouds and birds into the background along with rocket boosters so it would look like Baymax was flying through the sky.

Although Inktober is a fun challenge, it also requires quite the time commitment, as drawings take anywhere from less than a minute to over two hours daily. However, even though we skipped days and didn't last until the end, it was generally a fun experience and encouraged us to challenge our creativity. ♦

## Laufey brings a twist to pop with hit debut album

by Jason Cheng  
& Hannah Lee

to the theme of fragility: "The soft candle glow, the music so slow, your skin on my skin... I've lost all sensibility... I've never been so fragile."

In her second and final verse, Laufey homages to her Icelandic roots, referencing a "polar day" — a summertime Arctic phenomenon where the sun remains visible 24 hours of the day.

Born to a classically trained Chinese violinist mother and a jazz-loving Icelandic father, 23-year-old Laufey displays her classical background by creating a style of music that blends the best of both worlds with her voice and her production crew.

"Everything I Know About Love" consists of 13 intimate tracks, perfect for old souls and hopeless romantics.

**By the end, listeners are left captivated and eager for more of Jónsdóttir's ethereal symphony.**

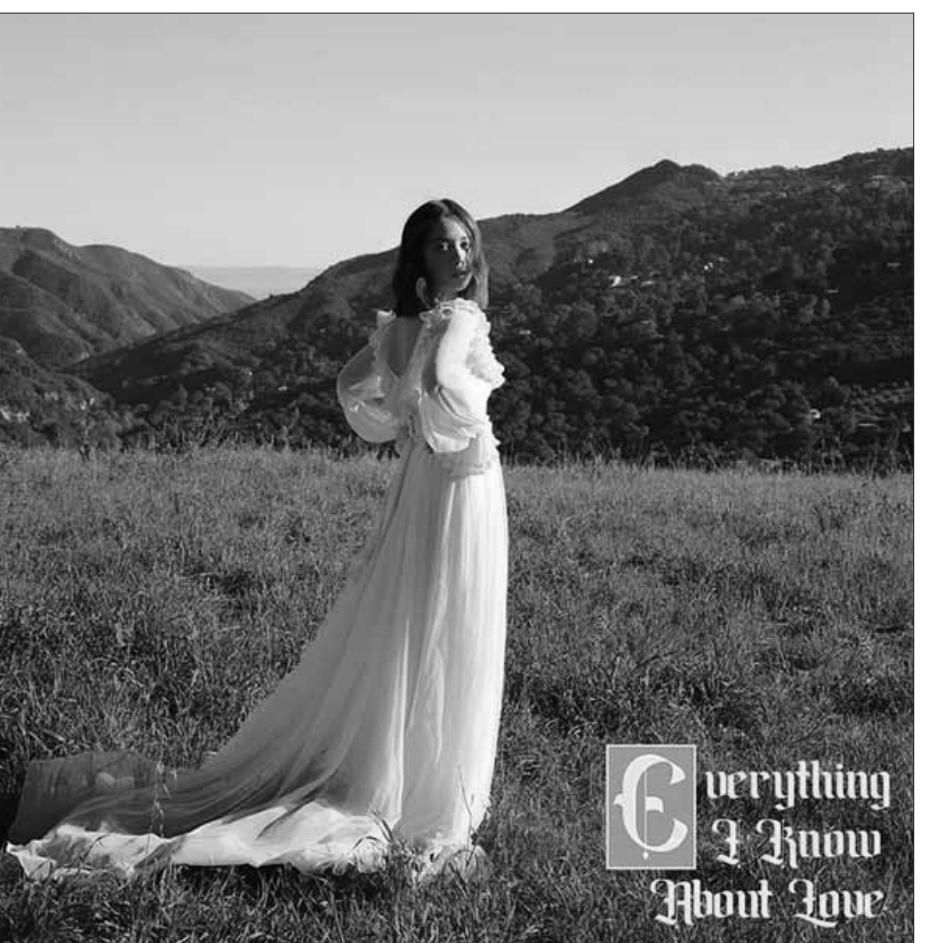
Weaving pieces of Tchaikovsky and Bach throughout Jónsdóttir's dreamy and disarming harmonies, the cinematic album chronicles her experiences of falling in and out of love. By the end, listeners are left captivated and eager for more of Jónsdóttir's ethereal symphony.

This song tells the story of all of the magical things Laufey was told falling in love would be like, but hasn't yet gotten to experience. With a punchy piano stacked upon strings and harmonies, Laufey includes a homage to her classical roots in this track.

While "Everything I Know About Love," leans more on the vibrant side, "I've Never Been In Love Before" is a much more emotional interlude, and pays homage to Chet Baker.

Laufey melds elements of modern music with jazz standards, beginning with and ending with an acapella, articulating the push and pull of love.

Jónsdóttir draws an analogy between the act of falling in love and glass: both are as transparent and fragile as they are violent and sharp. Shattering the metaphorical glass that encases her — in this case the emotional barrier between her and her lover — Jónsdóttir lets her guard down and opens herself to newfound intimacy, tying it back



**E**verything I Know About Love

Courtesy of SPOTIFY

occasional shortcomings, such as the somewhat unwieldy lyrics ("I'm scared of flies / I'm scared of guys") is one such culprit on 'Valentine'.

From the carefully crafted hopeless-romantic lyrics to the soft, jazz and classical reviving instrumentals, "Everything I Know About Love" is a refreshing listening experience in an oversaturated music industry.

Laufey proves that sometimes the unconventional succeeds, and she does so with her unique take on pop and voice for the age. Laufey is one of a kind, and a voice on the rise. ♦

## Senior crochets sweaters, animals and more

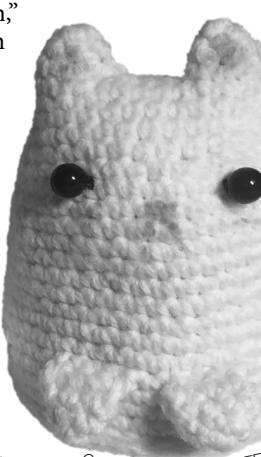
by VictoriaLin  
& JonnyLuo

Last December, then-junior Miranda Yee crocheted a durable and environmentally friendly plastic bag using recycled household materials, or "plarn," plastic used as yarn, for Kristen Thomson's AP Environmental Science project.

Her final product was eventually voted as Best Project by her classmates.

Now, as a senior, Yee has continued exploring this hobby in her free time. Yee learned how to crochet, a craft where a hooked stick is used to string loops through another string, in the summer of 2020 at the start of the pandemic.

Before picking up crocheting, Yee first attempted to knit with her sister senior Carina Yee as a child, but both siblings gave up when they were younger.



Courtesy of MIRANDAYEE

Yee later grew to love crocheting because of the variety of creative pieces she could make. Previously, Yee made rabbits by knitting square pieces of cloth, but as she tired of the simple activity, she moved on to crocheting.

Her most recent piece was a sweater for Halloween, inspired by a TV show called "Gravity Falls."

Yee typically steers away from larger, more time-consuming projects like sweaters.

Instead, she usually makes "amigurumi," small animals crafted from crocheted yarn and filled with stuffing.

Despite the small size of the pieces, which are roughly the size of an orange, each one is still highly time consuming because of the precision required.

**"During the Christmas season, I make several pieces per week."**



SENIOR Miranda Yee

For example, she crocheted a white cat for Media Arts Program teacher Mike Davy and created a small plushie for math teacher Jennifer Mantle.

Yee often finds inspiration from TikTok and Instagram reels, where people post short instructional tutorials on how to crochet.

She gets most of her supplies such as yarn and crochet hooks from Michaels, as the store allows her to stack coupons and save money.

Yee currently runs the Crafting Club, which meets in Room 408 on Red Day Thursday, but she plans to start a separate group dedicated to crocheting.

"I'm hoping to gather a small group of people who are interested in learning how to crochet," Yee said. "I think that has potential to be really exciting."

After starting the hobby over two years ago, Yee has appreciated its benefits.

"Crocheting is really relaxing, repetitive and fun. I love doing it because it gives me the freedom to make anything I want," Yee said. ♦

## New history teacher uses emoji grading system

by SaachiJain

Students who walked into new history teacher Holly Royalty's World History and AP Gov/Econ classes in August received a surprise when handed their syllabus.

Rather than grading on a typical scale — where tests and homework have different weightings — they learned that Royalty uses emoticons ranging from a red button indicating an assignment is in trouble to a fire emoji, symbolizing "above and beyond."

A check mark is considered the baseline, and directly tests the knowledge acquired in a lesson. On the contrary, a fire emoji next to an assignment means it relates to questions that apply the concepts of the lesson, and usually ties back to an Essential Question defined at the beginning of each unit. To achieve the fire level, students must use critical thinking and analysis, two skills the classes emphasize.

Royalty's system also differs from the traditional grade weighting system, where most history classes count tests as 40% of the overall grade and homework as 10%-20%. Instead, she has created three categories with different weightings: skills of historians, content, and community and civic engagement. Skills of historians — which includes image analysis and close reading — is weighted at 50% of the grade, since it focuses on assessment techniques which are applicable in different courses and disciplines.

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"Switching to this changed the conversation I was having with my students," Royalty said. "I've seen a shift in their approach to learning, and the productivity levels during class are much higher." ♦

### » whatitmeans

- Above and beyond (85 to 100)
- Proficient (64 to 85)
- Practicing (50 to 64)
- Emerging (43-49)
- Minimal to no evidence: (0 to 42)

## Wellness Center hosts weekly staff meditation

by KathyWang

On recent Thursdays in the wellness center, staff members closed their eyes as lead therapist Shobha Vaidyanathan instructed them through deep, relaxing meditations. The sessions are breathwork and meditation workshops for teachers and administrators, also known as Thoughtful Thursdays.

"We do a lot for the students here in the school, and I was thinking, 'why not do something for my co-workers who also need this [de-stressing environment]?' Vaidyanathan said.

Vaidyanathan hopes that Thoughtful Thursdays, which are limited to staff members, will serve as a place where participants can reflect on themselves and connect with their co-workers.

### Thoughtful Thursday leader shares her experience with meditation

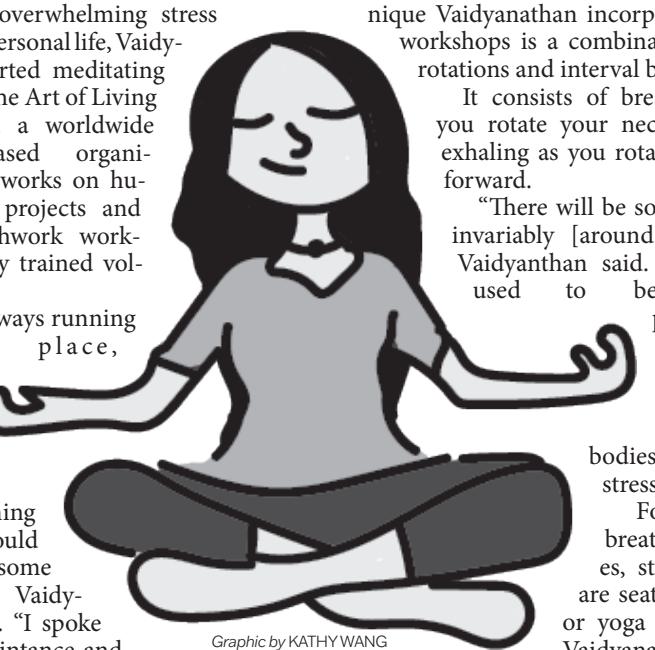
Due to overwhelming stress and a busy personal life, Vaidyanathan started meditating in 2010 at The Art of Living Foundation, a worldwide volunteer-based organization that works on humanitarian projects and hosts breathwork workshops led by trained volunteers.

"I was always running all over the place, balancing too many things, and needed something that would give me some grounding," Vaidyanathan said. "I spoke to an acquaintance and they said, 'try guided meditation; it's fantastic.' I tried it out, and it was great."

Her experience attending the guided meditation workshops inspired Vaidyanathan to start Thoughtful Thursdays at the school.

"Meditation and breathwork made a huge difference in my life," Vaidyanathan said. "I'm more centered, calm and energetic. I want to share that with the staff here."

After completing 1,000 hours of training for meditation and breathwork at the



Graphic by KATHY WANG

# FEELING LIKE YOU'RE NOT DOING ENOUGH?

by ChristinaChang

### What is duck syndrome?

In a highly competitive school like Saratoga High — which ranks as the No. 1 best college prep public high school in California according to Niche — students uphold a reputation of high grades, impressive extracurriculars and polished resumes. But underneath this seemingly flawless exterior, many struggle with an academic pressure cooker culture that fuels "duck syndrome."

Duck syndrome describes the phenomenon in which students put up a calm facade, seemingly floating peacefully along the surface of the water; at the same time, they hide their internal feelings of distress or self-doubt, paddling frantically underwater as they struggle to stay afloat.

A similar syndrome is "imposter syndrome": feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt that persist despite evident success.

To learn more about duck syndrome and related syndromes, The Falcon interviewed Geoffrey Cohen, a Stanford professor of psychology in the Graduate School of Education, who has conducted research on the threats of losing a sense of belonging and self and its implications for social problems. He has found that conditions of self-doubt concerning one's belonging in groups have become especially prevalent in recent years.

"The defining feature of our era seems to be that few groups feel confident in their belonging," Cohen said. "Feelings of inadequacy such as duck and impostor syndrome are manifestations of conditions where people feel that they have to present an inauthentic self to feel like they belong."

To focus on the body, teachers engage in light yoga to relieve tension and restlessness that is bottled up throughout the day. The level of difficulty of the yoga is based on people's physical needs and comfort level.

After finishing yoga, Vaidyanathan switches to breathwork. One effective technique Vaidyanathan incorporates in the workshops is a combination of neck rotations and interval breathing.

It consists of breathing in as you rotate your neck back, and exhaling as you rotate your neck forward.

"There will be some tightness invariably [around the neck]," Vaidyanathan said. "We are so used to being on computers or focusing we don't realize that our bodies are getting stressed."

Following the breathing exercises, staff members are seated on chairs or yoga mats, where Vaidyanathan leads them through a guided meditation.

Finally, after guiding them back from the meditation, Vaidyanathan ends the workshop by conducting a reflection session where everyone shares what worked and what didn't.

"I usually never hear [reflections on what didn't work out] because they are so relaxed by that time," Vaidyanathan said. "This meditation is so light, so easy, it's almost effortless. It's just meant to give some additional support to our staff." ♦



### Ways to cope

In order to mitigate the effects of these issues felt by so many young people, Cohen suggests a few simple interventions. He said creating support groups and safe spaces to share stories with others who are quietly struggling against adversity can be a powerful remedy.

"Take a risk and express your own vulnerability. Of course, you have to be careful: I do feel like sometimes if you're vulnerable, you can be shot down," Cohen said. "But if you're in a safe space with people that you trust, sharing those struggles and even strategies for overcoming them is going to be very helpful."

Cohen added that the lack of discussion regarding duck syndrome contributes to its toxicity. This leads to a "double-whammy effect" known as pluralistic ignorance, in which individuals feel that they are uniquely miserable because nobody shares their struggles.

"I think people don't understand that if you hang in there, talk to people and make connections, eventually you [overcome duck syndrome]. That's the kind of wisdom that's wasted on the older generation," Cohen said.

Cohen related one of his own struggles with belonging uncertainty to illustrate his point. He said one of his worst experiences of belonging uncertainty was when he was going into his first year as an assistant professor at Yale University.

"Even just in our day-to-day lives, we have a little superpower to help other people feel like they belong through just sharing vulnerabilities and sharing stories," Cohen said.

"One of the most important things for our own health is some kind of unconditional self-regard, a kind of belief or faith in ourselves that transcends what other people think," Cohen said.

PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY  
Geoffrey Cohen

Cohen

Another intervention he suggests is value affirmations, or structured writing assignments in which people write for a few minutes about their most important values. This helps people ground themselves and remind them of their authentic selves.

Additionally, he said so-called subtractive interventions, where harmful stereotypes are removed, may also help.

Similarly, using social media less may also ease the problem. Cohen said that social media has created a norm in which individuals are constantly in a "performative mood" and "obsessed with getting likes," making them focused on social validation over self-worth.

"It's a distressing state of mind to be in," Cohen said. "It's bad for our health, psychology and our persistence and intrinsic motivation; it's really hard to be motivated and passionate about something when you constantly feel under threat of not fitting in." ♦

"The sweet spot of success without stress is ideal, but people want to push past that, leading to duck syndrome."

junior Hannah Dimock

junior Ariana Tootoonchi

senior Brendan Sharp

### Causes of duck syndrome

Cohen said periods of transition from one life stage to another, such as from high school to college or college to profession, are often when people are most vulnerable to experiencing duck syndrome, a pattern he attributes to the lack of strong social bonds when attempting to integrate into new environments. In these situations, students trying to learn challenging new concepts see how much they're falling short compared to their peers.

Describing this period of transition, Cohen referenced an interview on the art of storytelling with Ira Glass, host and producer of the radio and television series "This American Life," in which Glass discussed "the gap" between where a person is and where they want to be. Applying the gap concept, Cohen said duck syndrome is especially prevalent during the beginning of transitions into new competitive environments like selective colleges.

From an evolutionary perspective, Cohen said that humans are a social species who have evolved to go through life together and are "exquisitely attuned to threats to our inclusion in our group." As such, he emphasizes the importance of belonging and community. Lack of connections has grave implications that worsen as people grow older.

Social isolation and loneliness are associated with a 50% increased risk of dementia, 29% increased risk of heart disease, 32% increased risk of stroke and higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In their 2007 research paper "A Question of Belonging: Race, Social Fit, and Achievement," Cohen and Stanford Associate Professor of Psychology Greg Walton coined the term "belonging uncertainty," a state in which susceptible groups are more sensitive to feeling as if they don't belong in a given community.

Their study suggested that in academic and professional settings, groups coming from socially stigmatized, negatively stereotyped, marginalized or underrepresented groups are more prone to belonging uncertainty, as they often experience subtle acts of bias or microaggressions that may hinder their sense of belonging.

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All graphics by LYNN DAI

# POLITICAL POLARIZATION

**One family's experience shows how opposing political beliefs need not cause deep personal divides**

MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!

2016

Zachary Zinman  
on political understanding



As I gaze across the long wooden table in my family's dining room, my parents can't help but smile, seeing my entire family gathered together in one location. When my grandparents on my father's side fly in from New Jersey for their annual visit, we celebrate with large quantities of food. As we dig in, my grandfather — better known as Poppop by my family — politely asks for his nighty glass of wine, a tradition he's practiced for over 60 years.

If my paternal grandparents aren't singing heartfelt duets from incredibly old musicals, they're taking turns reciting horrible jokes from memory. Regardless of the conversation, they always seem to be equipped with a joke or pun to suit the occasion. Imagine a terrible dad joke, but amplified because it's your dad's dad; that's the type of comedy that graces the dinner table.

#### Differences in a family's political views

A few years ago, as each of us went around speaking about our day, my father, a man who devotes incredible amounts of time to keeping up with politics, mentioned that he thought Donald Trump was unfit to be president. My jaw immediately dropped in realization of the mistake he had just made. The equivalent of a civil war in the Zinman house had erupted. You see, Poppop is a full-fledged Trump-loving Republican.

From his bright red "Make America Great Again" cap to his treasured letter from Antonin Scalia — a former conservative judge on the Supreme Court — he is open about his right-wing beliefs.

In this age of political polarization in the American public, which has grown in the past 7 years, it's essential, now more than ever, to appreciate diverse perspectives and the remarkable beauty of disagreement.

Whether my father meant to or not, he had fired metaphorical shots across my grandfather's bow, and Poppop felt compelled to respond.

As a former bankruptcy lawyer and professor, my grandfather often views political disagreements from a very technical perspective. To my grandfather, Trump's policies financially benefited him and the entire country. Ergo, Trump deserved his vote.

As their disagreements escalated, I feared

the peace at the dinner table was disappearing quickly.

Aggressively trying to strike down each other's perspectives, they countered one another with no room to breathe in between sentences. They bounced back and forth, throwing rhetorical jabs, neither landing a knockout blow.

#### How political differences can be unifying

Though my family's partisan bouts may sound hostile at times, their disagreements are never really mean-spirited. That night when my family discussed Trump, I looked closely at my father and grandfather's faces and noticed slight smirks. I slowly realized that my father and Poppop treasure these exciting moments of conflict.

As they discuss and debate each other's political beliefs, in a strange way, they grow closer. Their disagreements force their perspectives and personalities to clash, urging them to recognize their opposing viewpoints and understand each other on a deeper level. I've found that discussing opposing viewpoints with others — like my father and Poppop — can sometimes lead to heightened understanding and empathy: Instead of engaging in political conversations with a mindset of trying to "win," trying to understand the other side better can lessen the effects of polarization.

After eyeing these minuscule details in their disagreement, I can't help but smile, mostly because I see a lot of myself in them. Growing up in a household in which these types of debates are encouraged and enjoyed, I have developed into a passionate, argumentative person.

**A need for understanding**  
Even my Poppop points out that the goal of every political debate should be to compromise, telling me:

"Our nation grew from the concept of compromise and finding new solutions to various problems."

When we engage in tense political discussion with the sole purpose of winning the argument, people lose sight of what the conversation should be about — understanding. Rather than attempting to degrade the beliefs of others, Americans, even in this time of extremes, should aim to grasp the differing political viewpoint, for the best way to truly make an impact on another person is through understanding.

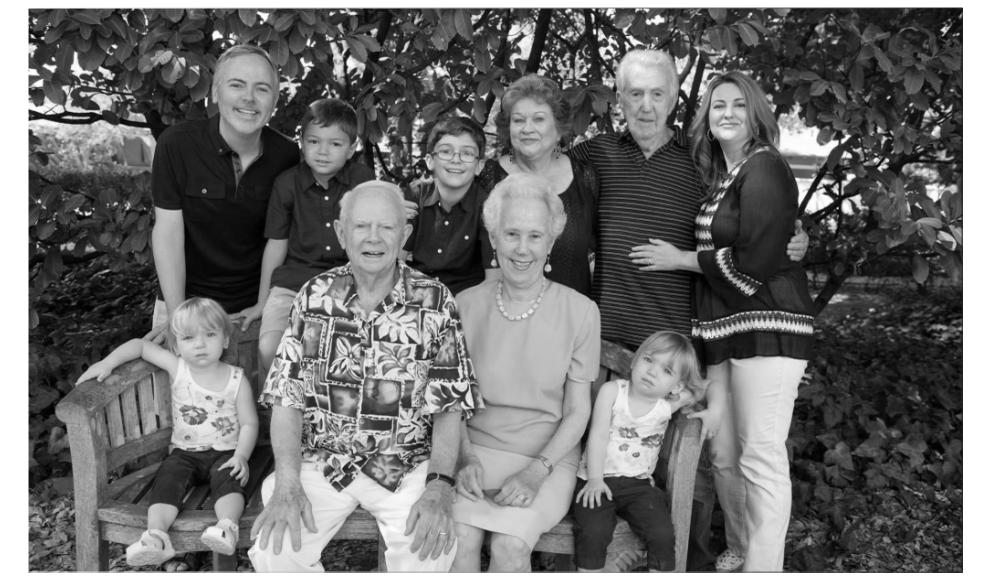
"I don't agree with a thing that comes out of my father's mouth about politics," my father said. "But I still love him." ♦

## THE UNITED STATES IS MORE POLITICALLY DIVIDED THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN

During the presidential election of 2020, candidate Joe Biden received **81.3 million votes** (51.3% of votes), and Incumbent Donald Trump received **74.2 million votes** (46.9%). 90% of supporters of both candidates believed that electing the other candidate would lead to long-standing harm.

Data from BALLOTPEDIA and PEW RESEARCH CENTER

All graphics by JONNY LUO



A photo from 2015 with Zinman's grandfather in the front row and his father on the right.

as my father has told me. If believers of the two opposing sides to an argument strive to understand the details of the other point of view along with reasons for holding the particular belief, a change of heart becomes far more likely.

When I brought up my observations with them, my grandfather and my father both said that their personal relationship with one another had not been affected by their opposing political views.

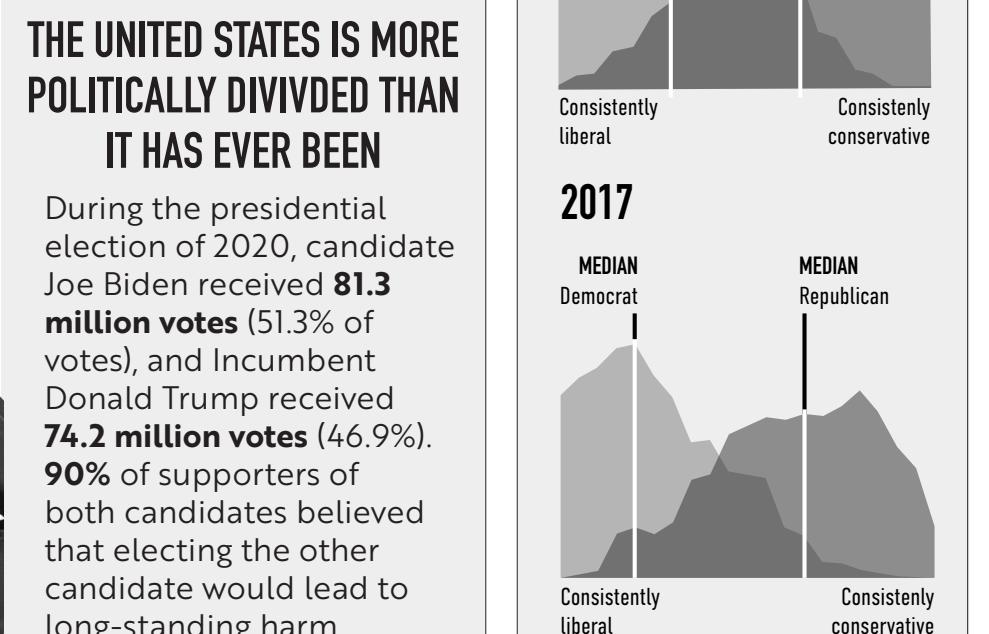
"Our differing views represent a microcosm of the problem in America today," my father said. "The news outlets people watch or read play a huge role in determining their political beliefs, and people should learn to receive input from various sources to develop an informed opinion." My father mainly watches MSNBC and CNN, while my grandfather is a Fox News viewer.

Even my Poppop points out that the goal of every political debate should be to compromise, telling me:

"Our nation grew from the concept of compromise and finding new solutions to various problems."

My father and Poppop's disagreements show that relationships don't have to end because of opposing beliefs; in fact, they can flourish. Though they bicker about politics, they still value and cherish one another, agreeing that politics shouldn't be the reason for hatred within families or friend groups. Enjoy the disagreement.

"I don't agree with a thing that comes out of my father's mouth about politics," my father said. "But I still love him." ♦



#### GIRLS' SOCCER

## Team struggles with a small 16-player roster

By Victoria Lin  
& Isabelle Wang

Angelina Hong is playing the position. Partially alleviating these losses is the recruitment of two freshmen: Sasha Prasad and Keaton Spendlove.

One of the team's main goals this season is to improve chemistry with the new players, allowing everyone to feel welcome and bolster their performance during games.

"I want us to stay focused and on track mentally throughout the entire season," senior wing Aleks Verga said.

As one of the captains guiding the team, Verga plans to be a good role model and leader. Compared to her previous years on the school team, she expects a larger role of responsibility to guide the other players and help them improve.

The team achieved a record of 8-0-1 in the De Anza league last season and advanced to CCS semifinals where they lost 5-2 to Santa Cruz.

"I want to give the juniors a good example of how they should step up next year," Verga said.

To help build up the team's relationships, head coach Ben Maxwell and assistant coach Andrew McRobbie often encourage them to do bonding activities outside as a team, such as weekly boba runs together on Thursday afternoons.

"If we're going to have a good season, we really need to rely on the group as a whole," Maxwell said.

The coaches have tried to emphasize the team aspect of the sport and resisted relying



FALCON // NATALIE CHUA

on key players.

With their first home game against Los Gatos coming up on Dec. 1, there is a lot of anticipation as to how the team will do.

Their record last season allowed the team to move up to the De Anza League, competing against more advanced schools such

as Fremont and Wilcox. However, due to a small roster, many injured players and a loss of key players, the advancement will be a major challenge.

"We might win less games, but we will still play all the games with the same amount of intensity and heart," Maxwell said. ♦

#### BOYS' BASKETBALL

## Coach Davey implements new techniques to improve his players

TEAM MOVES UP TO DE ANZA LEAGUE, GAINES KEY PLAYER TJADEN

BY George Huang  
& Zack Zhang

Junior Bryan Wang will start as the point guard. Another key player is senior Mateusz Palusinski due to his height and experience as a center. Seniors Niveydh Pai and Julian Berkowitz-Sklar are also strong guards and Mason Wang will start as a forward.

Former coach Patrick Judge departed in the offseason, the Falcons have welcomed back returning coach Mike Davey, who has over nine years of coaching boys' basketball experience up until the 2008 season.

Davey also holds the record as the coach with the most wins in SHS history, leading the Falcons to a total of 231.

While he believes they still have a lot of work to do, Davey said, that the team has a lot of potential, and they are currently working on defense, rebounding and execution for further improvement.

"Last year we started off strong, but then we started losing the winning streaks after January," senior captain Mason Wang said. "I think the reason was a lot of the players were burnt out. We were playing without any breaks between the weeks, so we would have 14 days of consecutive basketball."

The team went 16-8 and placed 4th in the El Camino, but they lost in the CCS second Round to Sobrato 78-74.

Although they lost key players like center Giulio Morino Bianzini and shooting guard Sam Teymourian to graduation last year, the new varsity players will manage to fill in their shoes.

"Our offense depends on how our defense is," Iyer said. "If we're strong defensively, we can get good looks on offense."

In order to improve on their defense, the team has been practicing a drill called the "Shell Drill" in which the team splits into offense and defense.

With good team chemistry and an ultimate goal of making it further into CCS, the team looks forward to a successful season.

"It doesn't matter how slow we go," said Iyer. "As long as we keep practicing, we'll get to where we want to be." ♦

— Emma Fung and Amy Luo

ment," senior guard Julian Berkowitz said. "We know there won't be repercussions for not understanding a play or a set. Davey's really good at that."

Davey's coaching expertise means there are no surprises when it comes to what to expect from other teams.

On Nov. 17, the boys team played their first official preseason game against Aptos High School, wallowing the Mariners 64-35.

"Obviously a win is a win, so we're excited about that. But I think the whole team, including the coaching staff, knows we could have played better in the first half," Berkowitz said.

He attributed their main problem to the intensity of their play, something they improved on moving into the second half.

The bigger players on the team such as Tjaden and Palusinski stepped up during the second half, cutting the 12 offensive rebounds in the first half to just two.

Their decisive victory and room for improvement shows the team's great potential, Davey said.

"We ended up fourth in the El Camino League last year and made our way to the De Anza League this season, which is a huge jump I've never heard of before," Davey said. "But [the players] are working hard and making huge progress in a lot of fundamentals that were not our best before. We are quick. We shoot it well. So as long as we keep working up I believe we can make it." ♦

FALCON // WILL NORWOOD

#### Young girls' basketball team sharpens their defense

Though the Falcons remain in the upper league, the upcoming season will be hard with only three seniors on the team due to the graduation of key players.

"They were good rebounders and playmakers for us, so it's tough without them," sophomore guard Urvi Iyer said.

Despite only six out of 11 players being upperclassmen this year, the team's chemistry is strong, Iyer said. The team is also focusing on building a more resilient defense, which sets up a stronger foundation for their offensive plays.

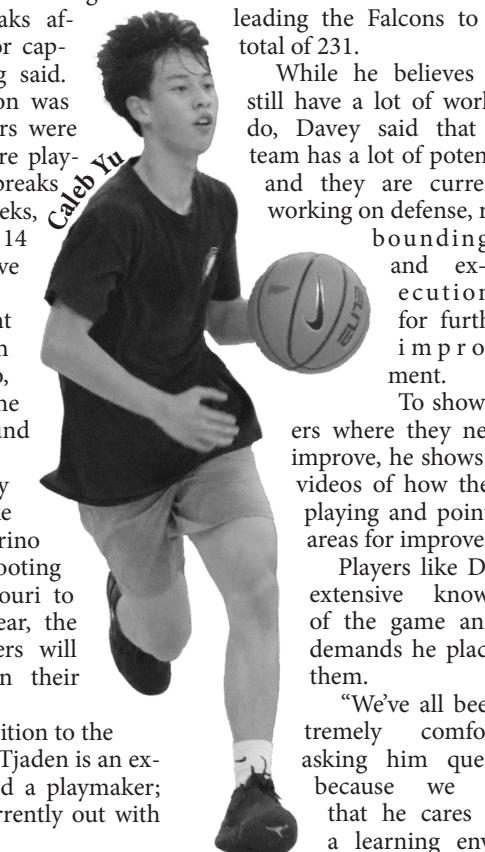
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— Emma Fung and Amy Luo



Caleb Yu

While he believes they still have a lot of work to do, Davey said, that the team has a lot of potential, and they are currently working on defense, rebounding and execution for further improvement.

To show players where they need to improve, he shows them videos of how they are playing and points out areas for improvement.

Players like Davey's extensive knowledge of the game and the demands he places on them.

"We've all been extremely comfortable asking him questions because we know that he cares about a learning environment."

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## FOOTBALL

# Falcons beat Lynbrook 11-6 in senior game win

by Parav Manney  
& Aiden Ye

In the last football game of the season at home against Lynbrook on Nov. 4, the Falcons' defense held fast, securing an 11-6 win.

Senior wide receiver Seth Hulme scored a touchdown followed by an extra point. After a couple of defensive stops, senior wide receiver Nathan Lim kicked a field goal. Sloppy defense by the Falcons allowed for Lynbrook to score a 10-yard pass giving Falcons a 11-6 lead by the second quarter. No more points were scored. It was an emotional senior day for players, and the Falcons were delighted to get the win to cap off a tough season on a high note.

"Everyone was crying," said senior wide receiver and captain Max Timmons. "It shows how much work we put into the season and how much this team meant to us."

This year, the Falcons ended with a division record of 1-6 and an overall record of 3-7, placing 7th out of 8 teams in the Peninsula Lake Division. In particular, junior quarterback Shane Timmons stepped up and threw for 22 passing touchdowns and ran two rushing touchdowns during the



Courtesy of KAI OTSUKA

The Falcons beat Lynbrook 11-6 in the final game of the football season on November 4th.

season. He ranked 6th out of 100 quarterbacks in the California Central Coast Section with his 1946 passing yards. Despite the injury-caused forfeit against El Camino due to a lack of players, Timmons said this season was one of the best in recent years.

"We had some close losses," he said. "It's not what we wanted but it was a lot better than last year and we just formed a really tight bond with all the teammates."

The team lost close games against Fremont and Mills with scores of 42-36 and 30-28 respectively, and fought hard against Woodside but lost 64-34, the best team in their division. However, their brotherly mentality and a tight union between every single player as well as an unwavering passion for football, outweighed their frustra-

tions over scores, Timmons said.

"We're a family, and the record did not represent how well the season went because, it was just so fun," Timmons said.

Timmons mentioned that the new captains — senior wide receiver Seth Hulme, senior running back Conner Call, and junior offensive guard Joey Schoonmaker, served as key leaders for head coach Stephen Matos. Despite their stronger performance this year, and great team spirit, Timmons said that they could have done better if more athletes were on the team.

"There's only about 25 players," he said. "There's five juniors on the team, mostly seniors and a few sophomores. I know we could have more juniors, but more people just need to come out. Football is really a game in which teams have strength in numbers, but nonetheless, we managed."

Similar to last year, the team was slowed by the numerous injuries their members sustained. Looking beyond this year, though, Timmons voiced his appreciation of the memories formed with his teammates.

"I'm just so thankful that I was part of this team. The experiences I've had are ones that I'll never forget," he said. ♦

## CROSS COUNTRY

# Girls and boys place No. 7 and 6 respectively in CCS

by Saachi Jain  
& Kathy Wang

The cross country teams ended their season with the first round of CCS at Crystal Springs in Belmont City on Nov. 12. The course was approximately 2.95 miles, with rough dirt trails and steep hills, and the team ran in the division four race.

Coach Ian Tippett worked with the CCS runners by combining a variety of high-intensity track workouts such as Oregon drills — where the athletes run in a figure-8 shape with segments at different paces — and sprint workouts. Additionally, runners trained at Rancho San Antonio Park, a steep hiking trail in Cupertino, with easy-paced 3- to 6-mile runs.

"I had a mental block and was worrying too much during races," junior boys' captain Jacob Merrill said. "But Saturday morning runs with team breakfasts afterward were memorable because those were the days when I enjoyed spending time with my teammates."

"Neither of us expected to place that well, so it was really fun to achieve that with my teammates," Stoiber said.

Despite the setback on the girls' team, they were able to place No. 7 out of 26 schools, along with the boys' team who placed No. 6 out of 23 schools.

Senior captain Khan led the boys' race, placing 18th out of 104 boys with a time of 17:04:50. Right behind him was junior Steven Sun, who placed 19th with a time of 17:05:30. Leading the girls' race was senior

girls' captain Stoiber, who placed 18th out of 101 girls with a time of 20:29:20. Eight out of the 13 runners attained personal records.

"My mentality during the race was to just go for it and to stay relaxed while moving forward," Stoiber said. "When people passed me I focused on trying to stick with them for as long as possible until I reached the finish line."

For Stoiber, this season was especially memorable because it was her last one. One of her most special memories include winning top-25 medals during the RAM invitational with Rahut, who placed 22nd and Goswami, who placed 28th.

"I think I did pretty well considering this was my first time running in CCS and competing with the varsity girls," Gho said. "I PR'd more than I expected so I'm satisfied with that as well."

Although no runners qualified for States, the team reached new heights and potential as a result of their newfound diligence and dedication. Along with rising stars like Gho, they hope to see even more success next season, with the growth of underclassmen.

"The team atmosphere changed very much since it combined girls and boys," Merrill said. "I think the whole team improved greatly this year and I can't wait to see what happens next season." ♦



Courtesy of KATHY TIPPETTS

Sophomore Pranav Rajan strides up a hill at Crystal Springs during CCS on Nov. 12.

## GIRLS GOLF

# Freshman Millie Wang makes state championship

by Beverly Xu

Despite a bumpy start to their season, the girls' golf team, led by head coach Dave Gragnola, found surprising success late in its season, qualifying to league finals with a record of 3-7.

The team's top two players did well in post-season play. Sophomore Sarah Lim finished seventh in league, and freshman Millie Wang finished fifth. Both advanced into CCS, where Wang qualified to the Northern California Golf Championship (NorCal) and then the State Championship, which took place in San Gabriel Country Club on Nov. 16.

At CCS, which was at Laguna Seca Golf Ranch on Nov. 1, Lim had to withdraw from the competition due to a delay from heavy rain and wind and she had to catch a flight to a Louisiana golf tournament she had already committed to attend. But Wang played on and managed to shoot 3-under-par during

the first nine holes and 3-over-par in the last nine — a great return.

She tied for first with four other players and advanced to the Northern California Golf Championship at Berkeley Country Club on Nov. 8. In the playoff for first place, she bogeyed the first hole along with another first place player, ending CCS in fourth place after losing a scorecard playoff with her 3-over-par back nine.

Later at NorCal, Wang shot a 3-over-par 75, placing fourth and dodging a five-person playoff by just one stroke. Her high placement not only qualified her for the State Championship, which she said she looked forward to, but also got her nominated in Mercury News Athlete of the Week voting. During the State Championship, she shot 11-over-par 83, placing her in 40th place out of 54 individual players.

Their regular season contained many fluctuations in performance. In their first three matches, the Falcons beat Monta Vista twice and Gunn once.

Their season took a downward turn when they faced both Lynbrook and Palo Alto in the same match. Because they played against two different teams, which meant that they were separated into more groups, they ended up all being paired up separately and cycled through holes with no access to support from each other. In the follow-

ing weeks, they continued to lose matches against Los Altos, Gunn, Monta Vista and Lynbrook. Nevertheless, the team saw more success than the previous year, when they had a record of 2-7.

"It's really important to stay positive while you play, so when I notice my teammates being negative, I try to tell them something funny," Lim said. "It's important that we have fun and really enjoy why we're out [on the golf course] in the first place."

Lim said she believes playing well and being a supportive teammate are equally important, and as such, she continues to focus on improving her play and bonding with her teammates. Regardless of whether she loses or wins, Lim said she improves by watching players from different schools.

With the season at its end, Lim holds high hopes for next year's season.

"I'm nervous, but I think it'll be a really good experience since I've never gone to this sort of event before," Wang said. "It's go-

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FALCON // NATALIE CHUA

Freshman Sasha Prasad and sophomore Lera Polyakova warm up with drills on Nov. 16.

on key players.

With their first home game against Los Gatos coming up on Dec. 1, there is a lot of anticipation as to how the team will do.

Their record last season allowed the team to move up to the De Anza League, competing against more advanced schools such

as Fremont and Wilcox. However, due to a small roster, many injured players and a loss of key players, the advancement will be a major challenge.

"We might win less games, but we will still play all the games with the same amount of intensity and heart," Maxwell said. ♦

## BOYS' BASKETBALL

# Coach Davey implements new techniques to improve his players

## TEAM MOVES UP TO DE ANZA LEAGUE, GAINES KEY PLAYER TJADEN

by George Huang  
& Zack Zhang

Junior Bryan Wang will start as the point guard. Another key player is senior Mateusz Palusinski due to his height and experience as a center. Seniors Niveydh Pai and Julian Berkowitz-Sklar are also strong guards and Mason Wang will start as a forward.

Davey's coaching expertise means there are no surprises when it comes to what to expect from other teams.

On Nov. 17, the boys team played their first official preseason game against Aptos High School, walloping the Mariners 64-35.

"Obviously a win is a win, so we're excited about that. But I think the whole team, including the coaching staff, knows we could have played better in the first half," Berkowitz said.

He attributed their main problem to the intensity of their play, something they improved on moving into the second half.

The bigger players on the team such as Tjaden and Palusinski stepped up during the second half, cutting the 12 offensive rebounds in the first half to just two.

Their decisive victory and room for improvement shows the team's great potential, Davey said.

"We ended up fourth in the El Camino League last year and made our way to the De Anza League this season, which is a huge jump I've never heard of before," Davey said.

"But [the players] are working hard and making huge progress in fundamentals."

COACH Mike Davey

"Last year we started off strong, but then we started losing the winning streaks after January," senior captain Mason Wang said.

"I think the reason was a lot of the players were burnt out. We were playing without any breaks between the weeks, so we would have 14 days of consecutive basketball."

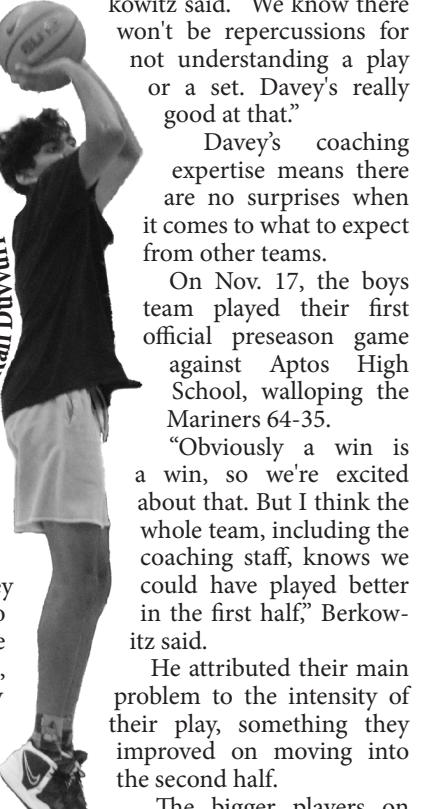
The team went 16-8 and placed 4th in the El Camino, but they lost in the CCS second Round to Sobrato 78-74.

Although they lost key players like center Giulio Morino Bianzini and shooting guard Som Teymouri to graduation last year, the new varsity players will manage to fill in their places.

Players like Davey's extensive knowledge of the game and the demands he places on them.

"We've all been extremely comfortable asking him questions because we know that he cares about a learning environment."

FALCON // WILL NORWOOD



Caleb Yu

## Young girls' basketball team sharpens their defense

Though the Falcons remain in the upper league, the upcoming season will be hard with only three seniors on the team due to the graduation of key players.

"They were good rebounders and playmakers for us, so it's tough without them," sophomore guard Urvi Iyer said.

Despite only six out of 11 players being upperclassmen this year, the team's chemistry is strong, Iyer said. The team is also focusing on building a more resilient defense, which sets up a stronger foundation for their offensive plays.

"Our offense depends on how our defense is," Iyer said. "If we're strong defensively, we can get good looks on offense."

In order to improve on their defense, the team has been practicing a drill called the "Shell Drill" in which the team splits into offense and defense.

With good team chemistry and an ultimate goal of making it further into CCS, the team looks forward to a successful season.

"It doesn't matter how slow we go," said Iyer. "As long as we keep practicing, we'll get to where we want to be."

— Emma Fung and Amy Luo

## GIRLS GOLF

# Freshman Millie Wang makes state championship

by Beverly Xu

Despite a bumpy start to their season, the girls' golf team, led by head coach Dave Gragnola, found surprising success late in its season, qualifying to league finals with a record of 3-7.

The team's top two players did well in post-season play. Sophomore Sarah Lim finished seventh in league, and freshman Millie Wang finished fifth. Both advanced into CCS, where Wang qualified to the Northern California Golf Championship (NorCal) and then the State Championship, which took place in San Gabriel Country Club on Nov. 16.

At CCS, which was at Laguna Seca Golf Ranch on Nov. 1, Lim had to withdraw from the competition due to a delay from heavy rain and wind and she had to catch a flight to a Louisiana golf tournament she had already committed to attend. But Wang played on and managed to shoot 3-under-par during

the first nine holes and 3-over-par in the last nine — a great return.

She tied for first with four other players and advanced to the Northern California Golf Championship at Berkeley Country Club on Nov. 8. In the playoff for first place, she bogeyed the first hole along with another first place player, ending CCS in fourth place after losing a scorecard playoff with her 3-over-par back nine.

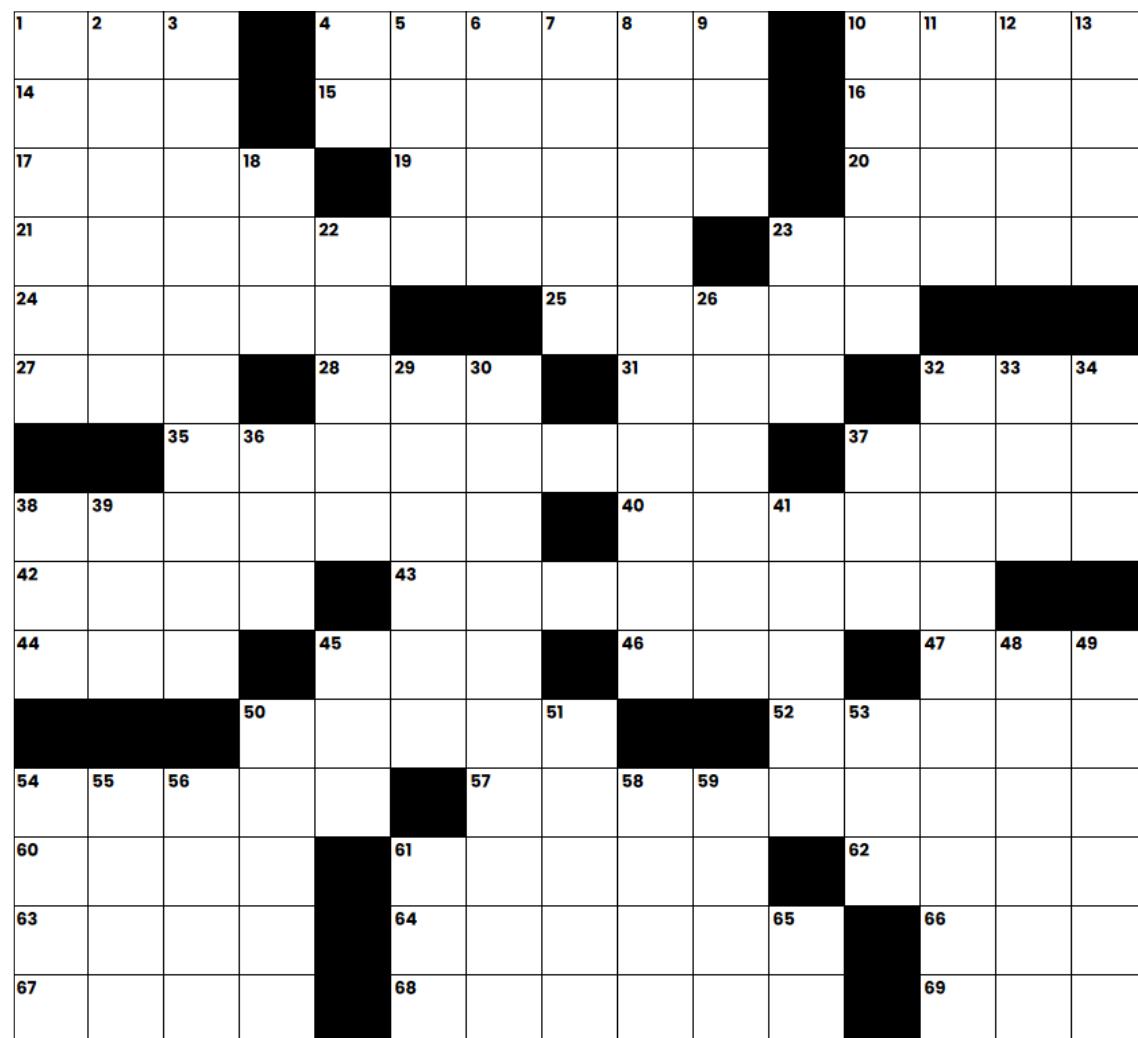
Later at NorCal, Wang shot a 3-over-par 75, placing fourth and dodging a five-person

playoff by just one stroke. Her high placement not only qualified her for the State Championship, which she said she looked forward to, but also got her nominated in Mercury News Athlete of the Week voting. During the State Championship, she shot 11-over-par 83, placing her in 40th place out of 54 individual players.

Their regular season contained many fluctuations in performance. In their first three matches, the Falcons beat Monta Vista twice and Gunn once.

Their season took a downward turn when they faced both Lynbrook and Palo Alto in the same match. Because they played against two different teams, which meant that they were separated into more groups, they ended up all being paired up separately and cycled through holes with no access to support from each other. In the follow-

# The Falcon Crossword: Comics and cartoons



BY Christopher Chen

**ACROSS**

- 1 Slang for a lie
- 4 Freddie Falcon, e.g.
- 10 A baby cow
- 14 Single, prefix
- 15 The cousin to llamas
- 16 Garfield's nemesis
- 17 Fabrications

- 19 \_\_\_\_\_, Polo
- 20 The 1941 movie Citizen \_\_\_\_\_
- 21 Environs, singular
- 23 Example products
- 24 Spanish for January
- 25 Title used by Slavic monarchs, plural
- 27 Acronym for a calculation companies use, measured in sales days

- 28 Internet protocol, alternative to UDP
- 31 Acronym, "three words, eight letters, say it and I'm yours"
- 32 Might be exchanged for a tat
- 35 Careful of this when you fish, or you'll end up with it in your skin
- 37 Fe
- 38 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle

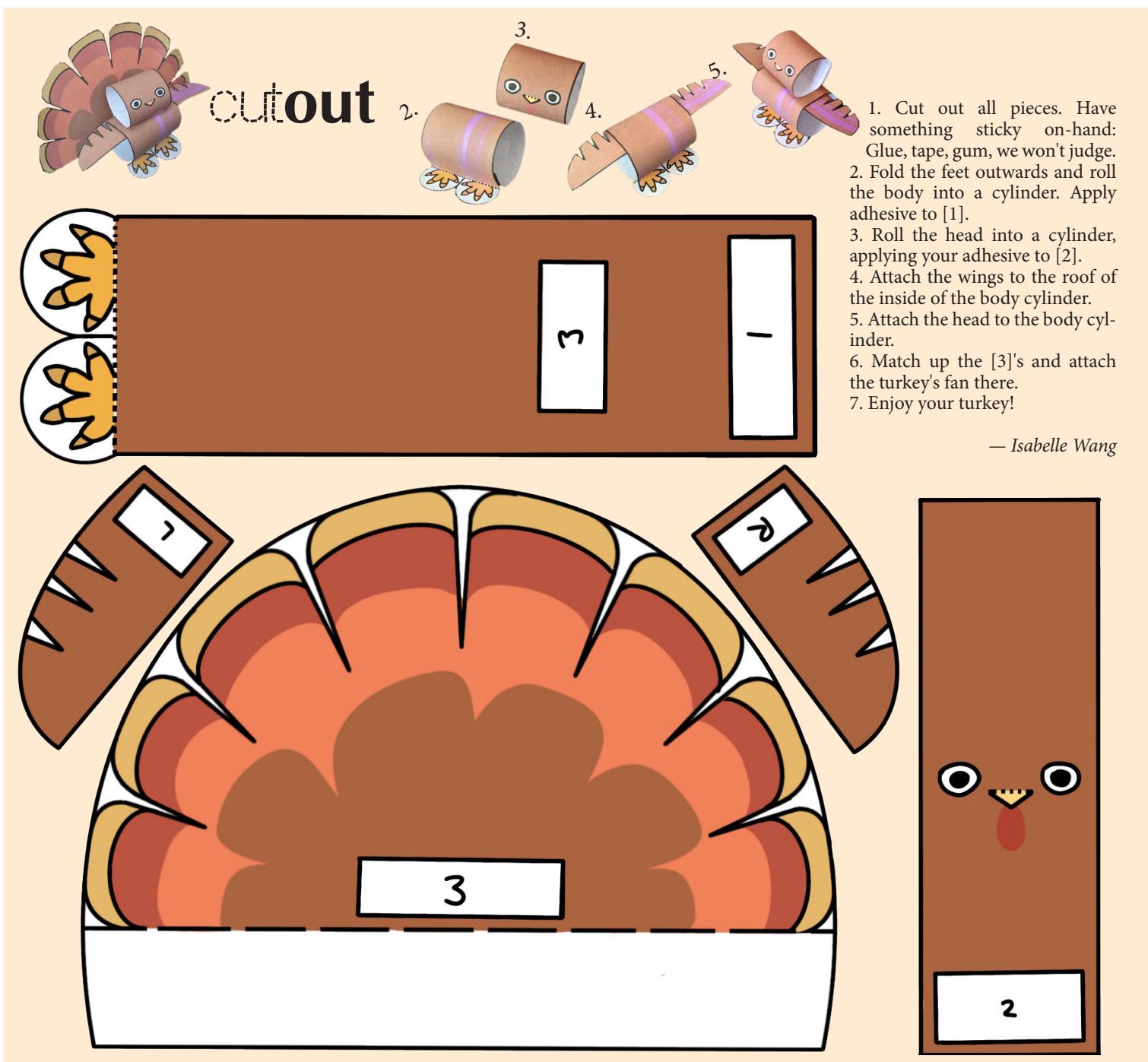
- 40 Something you might do when getting a manicure
- 42 A long-legged wading bird
- 43 Penguin who does analysis
- 44 A friendly wasp
- 45 Freshwater wetland
- 46 A covering for a container
- 47 Association for people with learning disabilities
- 50 Has a gang of chipmunks
- 52 Relating to a city
- 54 French for hello
- 57 French expression of surprise
- 60 \_\_\_\_\_ above the rest
- 61 A pore on a leaf surface
- 62 Two-syllable units
- 63 Crazy
- 64 Both a vegetable and a fruit
- 66 Acronym, affected soil around an excavation
- 67 1974 spy comedy film, directed by Irvin Kershner
- 68 Clothing for both genders
- 69 Decentralized name service for websites and cryptocurrency

**DOWN**

- 1 Slaughtering select members of a herd, past tense
- 2 Opposite of cations
- 3 Alliterative, unit of dessert
- 4 Abbr., The Baked Bean State
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ mater
- 6 A practice fight
- 7 ^
- 8 Infrequent
- 9 Underlying natural order of the universe in a Chinese philosophy
- 10 The drink nemeses of Pepsi
- 11 Eve's counterpart
- 12 Short for a type of flooring made with linseed oil
- 13 Something paid for a privilege, plural
- 18 Acronym for an organization

of men descended from Revolutionary War veterans

- 22 A large amount
- 23 Not wet
- 26 In chemistry, a type of basic salt that dissolves in water
- 29 Russian Star Trek character portrayed by Walter Koenig
- 30 Element of fire hypothesized before the oxygen theory was developed
- 32 Cutting a new path through the wilderness
- 33 Speed of radiation in one medium compared to other
- 34 Explosive, kaboom: maybe to your computer as well in Minecraft
- 36 Christian symbol, Greek transliteration of Jesus
- 37 And others of their \_\_\_\_\_
- 38 Most have 12 pairs of these
- 39 Honest \_\_\_\_\_
- 41 I can't go to the winter formal, that's when my assignment \_\_\_\_\_
- 45 Type of sandwich
- 48 A computer program that runs in the background
- 49 Half jackal, half god of death
- 50 Cars, plural
- 51 First name of Tyra Banks' rival
- 53 Acronym, a run in baseball that is driven in by a batter
- 54 Possessive, often short for Salvatore
- 55 An excuse is \_\_\_\_\_-out
- 56 Has a crush on Schroeder
- 58 Plural acronym for awards for country music, which selected "Buy Dirt" as Song of the Year in 2022
- 59 Every calc student loves solving related \_\_\_\_\_s
- 61 Gary \_\_\_\_\_, the counterpart to Mary Sue
- 65 A strong animal ♦



— Isabelle Wang

## topten

WAYS TO ASK SOMEONE OUT

- 10** Give them a box of chocolates. Just hope they're not lactose intolerant.
- 9** Invite them over for Thanksgiving. You can bring your parents, too — fun for the whole family!
- 8** Procrastinate on asking them out. Put those homework procrastination skills to good use.
- 7** Have a friend set you up. Strategize to have a large meetup and get everyone ditch except for your crush.
- 6** Suggest watching a movie. Having no time to talk mitigates the chance of embarrassing yourself.
- 5** Hold a staring contest. According to the American Psychological Association, two minutes of an unbroken gaze can significantly increase "feelings of passionate love."
- 4** Ask on April 1. If they say yes, congrats! If not, no worries — you're just joking.
- 3** Buy them a 10-carat diamond. Money buys happiness.
- 2** Avoid them. The relationship will probably work out better if it remains hypothetical.
- 1** Send them this Top 10. If you received this, hint hint, wink wink ;)

&gt;&gt; Sam Bai and Christina Chang