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THE saratogafalcon

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'He turned average into remarkable.'

— former assistant principal Karen Hyde



Alumni players Rick Worman, Rich Orlando, Kevin Ruf, Steve Worman, Larry Worman, Kevin Tanner, Rob Orlando and Kyle Heinrich (left to right) pose with coach Benny Pierce (center) at the annual Thanksgiving Turkey Bowl reunion game against Los Gatos on Nov. 26, 1992.

Courtesy of KEVIN TANNER

Benny Pierce, the school's legendary longtime football coach, dies at age 89

BY TaraNatarajan

The first time former assistant football coach Kevin Tanner heard the name Benny Pierce was years before he was in high school. During a fourth-grade Little League game, Tanner collided hard with another player at the plate. As he lay slightly shaken on the ground, he heard his father call at him from the stands, "Get up right now if you ever want to play for Benny Pierce!"

Pierce was the head coach of the Saratoga High football team for 34 years, from the school's founding in 1959 to his retirement in 1994.

His impact was such that the school named the football field after him. Over the seasons, Pierce led the team into 269 wins, 84 losses and four ties. He had 31

winning seasons, 16 league wins and four CCS championships. When he retired and for several years thereafter, he was the coach with the most CCS wins of all time, according to the Mercury News.

Pierce died of natural causes at 89 on Feb. 11. He is survived by two children and a generation of students, colleagues and friends whose lives he influenced during his time at school and after.

To those who knew him, Pierce was more than a coach — he was a consummate teacher. His legacy is defined not just by a legendary record or a stacked list of accolades and achievements such as CCS victories and powerhouse teams, but by the thousands of lives he touched during his time at the school and after.

Tanner was one of those people.

Tanner, who graduated from SHS in

1981, ended up not just playing football for Pierce, but later working with him as an assistant coach. In his sophomore year, he joined the varsity football team and played as a right defensive tackle for 23 consecutive games until his senior year, where he switched to offensive tackle for 13 games. He went on to play for Santa Clara University. In 1989, Pierce asked him to be a defensive coordinator for the team. Tanner saw the team through the final years of Pierce's career and for 18 years after that.

"Coach Pierce was truly a special person," Tanner said. "He was probably the man who most influenced [the person] I ended up becoming."

>> BENNY PIERCE on pg. 6

>> BASEBALL on pg. 3

Baseball field renovations completed

BY SaachiJain
& DanielWu

Fresh green turf shines on the newly remodeled \$4 million baseball field as Falcon players step between the foul lines this spring.

Refurbished dugouts are packed with players awaiting their walk to home plate, where they stand ready and proud with the word Falcons written in large red text on the turf behind them.

To sophomore varsity player Samanyu Ram, the new field has boosted the pride of the team.

"It's great that we now have something to call home territory," Ram said. "We feel even more motivated to defend it against opponents."

The old field featured noticeable dips and imperfections which often led to injuries.

Captain Lucas Dennis, a senior who plays shortstop and is also the team's top pitcher, said the new field also greatly improves upon player safety. The old grass field that dated back to the 1960s featured noticeable dips and imperfections, which often led athletes to trip and sustain injuries such as rolled ankles.

"From a safety standpoint, the new turf is a lot safer than grass, and we expect to see fewer field-related injuries this season," Dennis said.

In addition, Dennis said the field was completed at the perfect time given the unusually heavy rain this season. With the old field, a rainstorm would put the field out of commission for days as the surface would be deemed too slippery and muddy to safely conduct practices or games. With the newly renovated field, the turf can dry in a matter of hours or even minutes because of vastly superior drainage.

School seeks new assistant principal

BY ChristinaChang
& CarolynWang

A job listing for a full-time assistant principal position at the school was posted on EdJoin, the nation's No. 1 education job board, on March 1.

According to Los Gatos Saratoga Union High School District Public Information Officer Tanya De La Cruz, one current assistant principal will be leaving, and a new one will be hired to begin serving at the start of the 2023-24 school year.

The district declined to say which of the school's three assistant principals will not return or why that person is leaving. The

school's three assistant principals are Abra Evanoff, Brian Thompson and Matt Torrens. None have made an official announcement regarding resignation or departure.

According to 44951 of the California Education Code, if a district decides to release a faculty member or administrator, notice must be given by March 15 of the preceding school year.

The posted annual salary for the assistant principal position varies based on experience, but is estimated to range between \$175,644 to \$197,690. The deadline to apply for the job is March 26. De La Cruz said applicant screening and interviewing will take place thereafter. ♦

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newsbriefs

A COVID-era landmark: Inspire testing terminates

The end of California's State of Emergency and decreased usage led Inspire Diagnostics to end their PCR testing service on Feb. 28 due to low revenue. The school will still provide free take-home tests.

District Nurse Lisa Tripp attributed the drop in test numbers to the convenience and accessibility of free, at-home COVID-19 tests provided by the district. The district is planning to place an order for more tests to provide students, families and staff with free, readily-accessible tests until the end of the school year, as the local County Office of Education will no longer be receiving tests from the government.

Following updated California Department of Public Health quarantine guidelines, the school has changed quarantine policy to allow students to return to school after five days of isolation, with day zero being the day a student tests positive.

Students must feel well, have improved symptoms and be fever-free for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Students must wear masks upon returning to school until day ten, and they can take off masks after two sequential negative tests at least one day apart. ♦

— Jonny Luo

Atmospheric river brings severe damage to facilities

Saratoga was drenched in heavy rain Tuesday, March 14, as California saw yet another powerful atmospheric river — a type of storm "named for their long, narrow shape and the prodigious amount of water they carry," according to the New York Times. This follows a previous atmospheric river that loomed over the state last week.

The National Weather Service issued a High Wind Warning for the San Francisco Bay Area at around 12 a.m. Tuesday morning. Saratoga and its surrounding area saw gusts of wind 55 to 70 mph. The conditions are forecasted to continue until 11 p.m. Tuesday night.

With heavy winds toppling trees and powerlines, some families reported power outages. However, Saratoga High still had electricity; principal Greg Louie announced the Student Center would be open until 6 p.m. Tuesday night for student use.

As a safety measure, students were required to eat indoors during lunch so as to remain protected from the strong winds and falling tree branches. Some campus activities, such as swim and Speech and Debate practice, were canceled due to the inclement weather and power outages. ♦

— Christina Chang

ASB officers for 2023-24 school year announced

Voting for the 2023-24 ASB officers opened on March 9 and closed on March 10. All freshmen, sophomores and juniors were able to vote through the election link sent to their school emails.

The winning candidates were announced on March 14: Junior Taylor Chu will be the next ASB president, junior Emily Ta will be the next vice president, junior Scotty Rich will be the next treasurer and sophomore Anisa Taymuree will be the next secretary. The two club commissioners will be juniors Carine Chan and Joshua Ta.

To be eligible for ASB candidacy, students must have one year of experience in the leadership class. Those running must submit a self-nomination form one week prior to campaigning week, where candidates can put up physical posters around campus and post promotion videos online via social media. As future ASB president, Chu said one of her main goals next year is to increase school spirit.

"I plan to keep everyone involved so they feel like they are all a part of the student body," Chu said. "I want to organize more food truck events as well as encourage participation in rallies." ♦

— Victoria Lin and Zack Zhang



Photo by EMMA FUNG

March Madness | Senior Mateusz Palusinski scans the court for a pass over junior Kali Duvvuri and sophomore Caleb Yu on March 16 during a March Madness basketball game at lunch in the large gym.

New coaches train Guard for 'Eclipsed' performance

BY Kathy Wang

A wave of orange and blue flags flashed across the Arcadia High School auditorium as a team of 24 students — one half dressed in an ombre blue Winter Guard uniform representing the moon, and the other half dressed in an orange uniform representing the sun — performed "Eclipsed," which follows the story of the sun and moon as they fall in love.

At the eval and their previous three competitions, Winter Guard performed "Eclipsed," which follows the story of the sun and moon as they fall in love. "Eclipsed" consists of partner work between eight sabres, eight flags and eight dancers.

With the four new coaches, Winter Guard feels that they have improved a lot. Sophomore guard member Diya Kapoor said that the new coaches give tips that are straight to the point, apply to the practice well and encourage members to push themselves to the best of their abilities.

"The addition of new instructors and leadership makes Winter Guard feel more cohesive, as we are reaching a new era," Kapoor said. "They often encourage us by saying, 'It's a marathon, not a sprint!'"

Since Winter Guard performs the same show for each competition, they're able to improve their technique each time by improving dance positions and staying more in sync with one another. As of now, they spend most practices working on "cleaning" — refining the dance so it becomes more organized and pristine.

"Winter Guard is so much fun because you form so many strong friendships and such a close knit environment because you spend 15 hours a week with these people," Kapoor said. "We never feel like we're being judged, and there's a healthy type of pressure that encourages us to do well." ♦



Kapoor

An "eval" is a show where Winter Guard teams can showcase their choreography.

Based on the judging, the Winter Guard teams are placed into these two divisions in descending order, Independent and Scholastic. Independent: Independent World Class, Independent Open

This story has been shortened for print. To read more about Winter Guard's performances this season, scan the QR code to the right.



placement itself is important, a big goal for members is to have fun with the show and pull the audience in, ensuring that everyone feels connected and "flows with the same harmony."

"I feel like for the first competition, I was performing a lot and wasn't too focused on choreography," Kapoor said. "But at the last competition at Fremont, I was focusing on choreography and not performing. I hope that for the competition, I'll be able to do both."

To maximize their performance quality, the Guard team practices on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"Though it seems like it takes a lot of time, practice is really something that I look forward to, and it's not really energy-sapping at all," Kapoor said. "At the end of the practice, I feel happy and satisfied."

Their practices typically consist of stretching, practicing dance techniques across the floor, individual practice and finally, piecing everything together for the competition performance.

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**Scholastic Art and Writing Awards: 47 students earn regional recognition for 2023 competition**

BY Sam Bai

Many students enter the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards competition — dubbed "the nation's longest-standing, most prestigious recognition program for creative writing" — every year.

Of the thousands of students across the Bay Area who entered the competition this year, 11 Saratoga High students received regional writing awards and 41 received regional art awards. Those who earned gold keys were automatically advanced to the national competition.

Writing award recipients included freshman Jane Lee; juniors Maithreyi Bharathi, Lynn Dai, Sanjoli Gupta, Grace Li and Anais Sobrier; and seniors Christina Chang, Channie Hong, Dyne Lee, Shannon Ma, Carolyn Wang and Adam Xu.

Inspired by her own experience learning music, Dyne Lee wrote a flash fiction piece titled "Imperfect Authentic Cadence" about a high school senior's relationship with her teacher during her last piano lesson before leaving for college. The piece earned an honorable mention. "The title refers to a type of cadence in music, which is a sequence of chords at the end of a phrase," Lee said. "It's based partly on my experiences learning music since elementary school and also my mixed feelings as a senior getting ready to leave home in a few months."

Despite the challenge of being limited to 1,000 words while also staying true to the spirit of flash fiction, Lee said she was still able to express the characters' emotions by drawing from her own experiences.

BASEBALL FIELD

continued from pg. 1

"We've lost minimal playtime, which is really beneficial to our training, and it definitely sets us up for an advantage over other teams which practice on grass fields," Dennis said.

Sophomore pitcher and outfielder Aidan Chen also found the dugouts to be a big improvement from the ones in the old field, which were often small and unable to fit everyone's belongings.

"It has an almost pro-style design to it, and it is super exciting and fun," Chen said. "With more space, the atmosphere has become much more comfortable."

As the team showcases its skills on the new field, Chen said he wants to make baseball as widely celebrated as football is.

"We can hold our own against anybody, but the crowd's energy feeds us even more. Let's get as many people out to games as possible!" Chen said. ♦

While the PTSO receives funding from its memberships and matching donations, it relies primarily on donations of \$150 from families, said Lingling Sun, the group's current president and mother to a class of '21 alumnus and a current freshman.

This year, the PTSO set aside \$71,450, with the added donations carried over from the previous year, to help fund classes and programs on campus. The PTSO helps fund lunches with teachers, grants that help teachers buy necessary school supplies, school library needs and senior graduation night.

With less money in its coffers this year, PTSO had to cut and downsize on multiple planned events. For example, the organization normally hosts mental health seminars called the Parent Education Panel for parents, and they had hoped to budget around \$2,000. However, since speakers normally cost \$2,000 to \$10,000 and they were unable to reach their target goal, they had to stop the program.

The organization has instead been leaning more on the school's mental health program to educate parents, given the difficulty of bringing in speakers.

Inflation has also affected the program,



Photo by ISABELLE WANG
Renovated baseball field open for players.

>> falconfigures

246 families donated
\$39,785 in the
2022-23 school year

37 more families donated
this year than the
previous year

33 percent of the student
population needs to
donate for PTSO to
reach their goal



Courtesy of KASIE YANG

Kasie Yang's "Quarantine Lifted" wire sculpture placed on various benches next to a street.

This was submitted as part of her AP Art portfolio last year and upon submitting it to the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, earned her a gold key. She also received honorable mentions for two sculptures, also from her portfolio: "Sweet Memories" and "Quarantine Lifted."

"Sweet Memories" is a bike sculpture covered in gummy bears of all different colors and uniform size around the plastic frame of a bike.

"At first, it felt awkward to be carrying such a large thing around. People were looking at me, but it was also amusing to see people's reactions," Yang said.

Yang remembers one group of people who came up to her and thought the sculpture looked very "really cool."

"I think art is able to break the boundaries between people."

SENIOR Kasie Yang

with events costing more than it had in previous years. Usually, it costs the school around \$2,000 to host the teacher's luncheon for Lunar New Year, but it ended up actually costing \$3,000 this year. For the Holiday Lunch at Saratoga Inn, which was an event for parents to come together and get to know one another, the cost totaled to approximately \$2,500 while the budget was set to \$2,000.

Although the school eased back into in-person learning over two years ago, lingering effects of the pandemic have continued to impact the PTSO's outreach efforts, as fewer parents are aware of the PTSO or what the organization does, Sun said.

This slow ease back into everyday schedules and lack of donations has led the year to conclude with a shortage of funds. Sun urges families to pitch in small donations so that the PTSO can continue providing financial support to improve the quality of the school's education. Parents can donate through the school website or support fundraisers that various sports and programs organize in order to fund the rest of their seasons. Students benefit greatly from these donations, improving their educational opportunities and school experience.

"I hope more parents can become more involved in their children's education through donations," Sun said. "As a parent myself, once I started donating money, I began to pay more attention to where that money went. I hope that I can motivate families to pay more mind to the PTSO and our own students too." ♦

The organization has instead been leaning more on the school's mental health program to educate parents, given the difficulty of bringing in speakers.

Inflation has also affected the program,

2 years after COVID-19, PTSO still struggles from pandemic effects

Clubs aim to engage school in 'food fight'

by Sanjoli Gupta

The school's LEO Club and Hunger at Home Club will lead participation in the first "Food Fight" competition hosted by Martha's Kitchen — a non-profit soup kitchen that works to alleviate food insecurity — during April. The goal is to promote awareness and encourage volunteers to combat food insecurity.

After LEO Club packaged 270 sandwiches for Martha's Kitchen on Jan. 25, they wrote back: "It was a joy to work with Saratoga High's LEO Club. The sandwiches they made were the highest standard that we have had delivered by a high school club. So many thanks for their dedication and attention to details."

About a week later, Martha's Kitchen invited the school again to participate in the competition. High schools, including Bellarmine, Presentation, St. Francis, Valley Christian and Notre Dame, will also participate. The competition uses a points system, with points attributed to different actions. A website will be updated weekly tracking each school's progress, and the one with the most points at the end will be declared the winner.

The month will include opportunities for schools to earn points. Food donations are four points per pound. Containers will be placed near the front of the school at the foyer of the gym, the McAfee Center and the music building. A food list will be sent out for shelf safe items such as rice, beans, cereal and canned fruit to help students find suitable donations.

Eight points are awarded for each hour of community service. LEO Club president, senior Christina Chang and Hunger at Home Club president, junior Sam Bai plan to host two on-campus events to bolster student engagement. One will be a sandwich packaging event like one LEO Club hosted in January. Another will be to decorate meal service bags. Monetary donations are also accepted at one point per dollar.

To promote the competition, marketing will be directed toward freshmen in the school's Health and Driver's Education program — a course requiring students to get involved in community service. Additional volunteer shifts were created for the month in light of the school competition; students may volunteer during the first, second, third or fourth week of April. There will also be school-specific QR codes around campus for sign-ups.

"We are really excited to participate in friendly competition with other schools since all the work is toward a great cause," junior LEO Club vice president Naina Tallak said.

Volunteering shifts are two hours, morning shifts are three hours and volunteering is mostly indoors. Masks, aprons, hairnets and gloves will be provided.

While the final reward is still to be determined, Martha's Kitchen has suggested the school that wins may receive a certificate and have the school mascot printed on their vans.

"Food is something that brings people together to share and enjoy, and we think it's important that everyone has the opportunity to unite in this feeling," Tallak said. ♦

Veteran robotics team qualifies to Worlds after regional tournament

by Saachi Jain & Martin Xu

After months of preparation, two of the school's FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) teams qualified and competed at the FTC Northern California Regional Championship over the weekend of March 4 at Kathleen MacDonalds High School.

Five teams — including one from Saratoga High — will advance to the prestigious FIRST Championship in Houston from April 18 to 22.

While the Cuttlefish have advanced to the Worlds' Championships, the school's FIRST Robotics Challenge's (FRC) robotics team, 649 MSET Fish are competing on the weekend of March 18 at the FIRST Robotics San Francisco Regionals (with an additional competition on April 7) for their chance at qualifying for the FIRST Championship.

This year, the three-team robot game alliance and Inspire Award runner-ups advanced to the FIRST Championships.

6165 MSET Cuttlefish

The 6165 MSET Cuttlefish, the school's flagship FTC team, had high hopes for both the robot game and award selection after organizing various outreach initiatives and continuously improving parts of their robot.

"Our drivers stayed calm under pressure — something they practiced a lot for especially before regionals."

SOPHOMORE Asheeka Noronha



While playing on the same alliance during one of their matches, the MSET Cuttlefish and Bettafish teams race to stack blue cones on top of poles that are stationed around the field.

Courtesy of ELLIOT SHEM

period, junior hardware member and driver Naomi Hsieh was confident to make it into Division finals with their alliance partners 8872 Robopocalypse and 11311 Paragon. By the time the team had reached the semi-finals, the autonomous period had been adjusted to fit the new field.

But an unexpected defeat happened. They had lost 226-224 due to what Hsieh believed to be a missing or by one of the scorekeepers, costing them 20 crucial points.

The next match, the team was rotated off for team 11311 Paragon to compete for their alliance. Hsieh and her teammates lost hope as the match continued to move toward what seemed to be a decisive loss.

As unexpected as the first match, Hsieh and her team looked up with disbelief — their alliance partners had won the match due to a massive 80 points of penalties incurred by the opposing alliance.

The team went on to win the third match and headed off to division finals where they lost 2-0. They were awarded the Inspire 2nd Place Award, placing them second in the advancement slot to Houston.

To prepare for the FIRST Championship, the team plans to do more driver practice and develop game strategies as they go. In addition, the team hopes to refine their autonomous software to fit a firmer field.

"I think one unique part about FIRST is that we're able to talk to all these other teams and make friends with them," Song said.

7641 MSET Bettafish

For the rookie Bettafish team, the regional competition was a learning experience in terms of the robot building, engineering portfolio, as well as students' presentation and interview skills. ♦

"Our drivers stayed calm under pressure — something they practiced a lot for especially before regionals," sophomore hardware lead Asheeka Noronha said. "They would even blast memes to practice keeping their focus during their many driver practice sessions, and it showed."

As the day progressed, the Bettafish experienced wins and losses, most of which were against the top teams in the region. However, the team continued to think ahead toward the next match and their potential strategies, rather than dwelling on losses.

"When we finished a match, it always gave the drivers a few minutes of rest and relief, and I could always learn something from the gameplay of our opponents to apply in the next match," Hu said.

During alliance selection, the Bettafish accepted an invitation to join the second-place team in their alliance.

"Our slides broke toward the end of qualification matches, and we weren't sure if teams would be as inclined to pick us then," Noronha said.

After their elimination from the robot game, the Bettafish began looking to the awards ceremony as their advancement to Worlds. However, the entire ceremony passed without them receiving any award.

Despite this disappointment, they are now looking to learn from the gaps identified during Regionals and improve their outreach going into the offseason and next year.

"I feel great pride in what came out of this competition because the result is literally the embodiment of all the hard work we had accomplished over the season," Ko said. "All of our hard work paid off for us to make it this far into the season as mostly rookies."

Despite issues with their autonomous

Soundings puts on its first exhibition

by Isabelle Wang

Soundings, the staff hopes to print roughly 1,000 magazines, coming up to \$4,000 with an addition of the \$500 grant from PTSO.

In previous years, Soundings used profits from the yearbook's advertising to fund their magazine. However, after COVID-19, profits from yearbook sales dropped.

"The fundraising is threefold," Keys said. "One is to raise the money but also to raise the profile of the arts, along with giving writers and artists an opportunity to share their work to publicize it for an audience that's more than just their teachers."

Soundings staff members, the school's art and literary magazine, organized the event to showcase student-produced writing and art. About 90 people attended the showcase.

In the recent past, the staff has produced two online issues and one print edition each year. The Soundings program began in the 1980s; in the past four years, has been advised by English teacher Amy Keys and students in her Creative Writing class.

This year, the Soundings staff held their first ever art and literary exhibition and auction.

"The exhibition also gained revenue by selling ceramics donated by ceramic students, so they can celebrate and publish their work to inspire others," Keys said.

"The exhibition was a successful start to a new tradition future staffs can carry on for years to come."

Because a lot of students submit to



Soundings staff set up their art and writing exhibition in school's library on March 3.

With a startup cost of \$100, the Soundings exhibition raised a total of \$1,928.80: \$838.80 from food, auctioned works and tickets sold at the door, \$240.00 from tickets sold online, \$75.00 from their GoFan and \$275.00 from the Webstore.

"I'm really proud of our staff who put this exhibition together and students who presented their works. I'm also thankful for all who attended our event," Chang said. "The exhibition was a successful start to a new tradition future staffs can carry on for years to come."

Because a lot of students submit to

A testflight at age 11 plants a seed for pursuing pilot's license in high school

by Kathy Wang

Senior Anand Agrawal's parents gave him the gift of three demo flights for his 11th birthday. Six years later, he is now licensed to fly a Cessna 172 plane on his own.

His first three flight lessons took place at the flight school AeroDynamic Aviation in East San Jose. During the lessons, his instructor allowed him to conduct simple control over the plane once it was 5,000 to 6,000 feet in the air.

"Ever since I took those three lessons, [flying] has always been in the back of my mind, but I've never really had the opportunity to go back," Agrawal said.

Since the minimum age to get a pilot's license is 17, he couldn't pursue flying until he reached high school. Meanwhile, he sometimes visited San Francisco Airport to watch planes. His favorite viewing spot is BayFront Park, where there's a clear view of planes taking off 200 to 300 feet away on four runways.

After turning 17 last year, Agrawal decided to begin taking lessons in July.

To attain a pilot's license, the first requirement is to pass a written exam, which has around 40 multiple choice questions surrounding all federal aviation regulations and functions of a plane. Trainees are also assigned to a Chief Flying Instructor (CFI), who teaches them how to fly a plane for a required number of hours, which varies depending on the flight school and whether



Courtesy of ANAND AGRAWAL

Senior Anand Agrawal checks the fuel quantity in his Cessna 172, AeroDynamic Aviation.

Upon learning how to solo, trainees are required to complete a list of flying requirements, one of them being cross country flying, which is any solo flight of over 50 miles. Agrawal did a long cross country solo flight of over 150 miles, flying to Paso Robles and back.

"My flight instructor was really nice and kept pushing me to go," Agrawal said.

In addition to all of these requirements, there is a license test, also known as the checkride. The checkride test takes three hours to complete, along with a three-hour flying exam. The flying exam evaluates trainees on around 100 tasks, and if any one of the tasks don't meet the satisfactions,

then the trainee cannot pass the test.

By flying three to four hours a week and spending 400 hours intensively studying for his license, Agrawal was able to pass the test on his first try and attain his pilot license on Jan. 22.

"Flying is really relaxing, even though there's a lot of multitasking going on," Agrawal said. "There's just something about being in the air at 6,000 feet by yourself. It's just an unmatched feeling."

Agrawal's pilot license is rated to fly a Cessna 172, a single engine plane that has under 200 horsepower and can seat up to four people. His favorite landing places include Half Moon Bay and the Norman Y. Mineta San Jose Airport.

"The approach onto Half Moon Bay is just beautiful because you have the entire ocean to your left and the mountains to your right," Agrawal said. "San Jose Airport is also really nice to land because it has huge runways and you're landing next to big commercial jets that are right in front of you."

Though Agrawal doesn't have plans to become a professional pilot, he does plan on studying aerospace engineering in college and getting more instrument, commercial and twin ratings, which are official skills to attain as a pilot.

"I can't see myself going down that [airline pilot] career path," Agrawal said. "But a pilot's license is a lifelong skill in my opinion, and it's something that I really want to be able to enjoy for the rest of my life." ♦

SpeakEasy: Student wins contest creating speech app

by Anirudhlyer & Daniel Wu

SpeakEasy is a client-server application; the client layer — the medium through which users interact with the extension — is programmed with HTML, CSS and JavaScript. The client layer receives user text input and directs it to a PaaS server. The server constantly listens for requests from the client-layer.

Altogether, Hough implemented three AI engines to accurately rephrase user input. He first developed a custom LSTM neural network with TensorFlow trained on thousands of Twitter tweets flagged as controversial and non-controversial. The neural network processes tokenized words in the form of numeric values into nodes structured similarly to neurons in a human brain — hence the name "neural network."

This example showcases just a sliver of Hough's latest software project, SpeakEasy. SpeakEasy functions as a downloadable browser extension that uses AI to detect potentially offensive content in real-time and suggest alternative wording.

Hough's neural network is used jointly with Perspective's API, an AI interface that analyzes text and predicts its perceived impact on conversations. If Hough's neural network and Perspective's engine deem a user sentence to be potentially controversial, the sentence is sent to OpenAI's GPT-3.5 to rephrase the sentence to be less controversial. Finally, the sentence is returned to the user.

Hough is marketing SpeakEasy at zero cost to a wide customer base, from writers and journalists to students and social-media users.

"I created SpeakEasy so it could be used by anyone, which is partly why I decided to build it as a browser extension rather than a full-on app," Hough said. "Nearly every device has a built-in browser, whereas applications are often limited to certain operating systems."

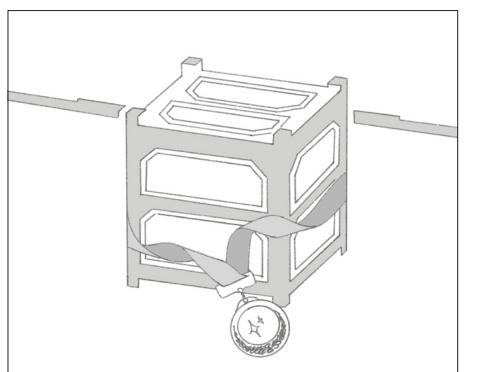
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Junior wins prestigious CubeSat satellite award

by Natalie Chua & Sanjoli Gupta



Junior Sannidhi Boppana's love for STEM stems from its analytical nature. Computer science's ability to keep her thinking and looking for solutions to complex problems is why she loves working on computer science projects.

This love eventually translated to hard work which won her awards: Boppana received an Honorable Mention award from the National Center for Women and Information Technology (NCWIT) in January for a portfolio of coding projects that she compiled over the fall semester, including the MIT Beaver Works Summer Institute CubeSat competition and the Synopsys Science Fair.

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"I prefer logically analyzing to memorizing," Boppana said. "Computer Science has always come very naturally to me just like math."

"The biggest challenge was connecting the actual satellite to the ground station."

JUNIOR Sannidhi Boppana

During Synopsys, Boppana presented a poster entry on reduced precision neural networks to a panel of judges who assessed her work.

In the CubeSat competition, Boppana worked with a team of five high school students to build a mini satellite.

The team, which also included two other Saratoga High students — sophomore Samanvi Boppana and junior Ameya Saund — faced multiple challenges as they advanced through every round of the competition.

By experimenting with different softwares, the team finally discovered a solution and went on to win second place overall. Sannidhi compiled her projects into one mega submission that ultimately won her recognition from the NCWIT.

"The award came as a complete surprise, and it was so unexpected I started to cry," Boppana said. "I thought I couldn't compare to the people applying and believed it was a long shot, so I am especially grateful!" ♦



Diet culture should have a healthy middle ground

by AndrewLin

Modern culture seems to gravitate toward the extremes, and online diet advice is no exception. Social media is heavily populated by content creators or influencers showing off their perfect bodies, getting their audience to believe they can attain this physique by eating the same foods shown on the screen.

Instead of a sensible response to this cacophony of performance-enhancing drug abuse, plastic surgery, product placement and outright lies, diet culture has triggered the other extreme: the fat acceptance movement. Individuals who are hundreds of pounds overweight and clearly struggle to perform basic functions such as walking trumpet the message that "big is beautiful" and blame everyone other than themselves for their struggles in society.

While beauty is subjective, heart attacks, strokes, diabetes and organ failure are not. Neither are the gastrointestinal problems, developmental problems, fainting, anxiety and depression brought about by eating disorders stemming from social media's unrealistic body image standards and a misguided preoccupation toward health.

It seems like people have to choose the lesser of two evils when deciding their attitudes about food. On the other spectrum, there lies the scourge of anorexia and bulimia, which affects millions of Americans. Eating disorders are well documented and remain a highly prominent issue for people of all ages.

Because our society is hyper-fixated on weight loss and dieting, influencers can easily gain starry-eyed followers by promoting sham diets with inadequate nutrient profiles. Sugar, carbohydrates and fats have been demonized and the unfor-

tunate masses are instructed to adopt highly restrictive diet plans to attain an arbitrary standard of thinness.

Not only is being skinny a perceived sign of attractiveness, diet culture has made it an indicator of a person's character. Overweight people are still implicitly deemed "lazy" or "undisciplined" since the classic beauty standard is so ingrained in our minds.

Hence, influencers effectively take advantage of our insecurities and desperation to fit in by endorsing self-imposed starvation in the pursuit of superficial appearances. With the mental and physical strain that comes along with it, this lifestyle is far more harmful than a few pounds of belly fat.

Additionally, with the resurgence of online fitness content during and after quarantine, influencers have also added another layer to their business model. Rather than just encouraging weight loss, influencers appeal to people aiming to build muscle and lose body fat. Much of their audience are teenagers with little experience in fitness, and as a result they do not have realistic expectations for the amount of progress they can make in a given amount of time.

Some of the misinformation is fairly harmless, such as the myth of the "anabolic window." This concept purports that one must consume protein within 30 minutes of finishing a workout in order to build muscle.

However, not everyone has the time or money to consult a doctor for a simple diet, so there are some things one can keep in mind when considering the reliability of an online source. If the creator of a video cites studies or other scholarly sources to support their claims, you can look up those studies yourself to check their validity.

The wider issue with diet culture is the sheer prevalence of misinformation online. Most influencers are not licensed medical professionals, and it's a good bet none of them care much about you as a person, or know anything about your personal health.

Influencers say what they say because they have something to gain, whether it is revenue or profits from selling supplements, diet plans or workout routines.

Because thousands of videos are posted online every day, large-scale fact-checking is impossible. The only people you should trust when it comes to dieting are certified medical professionals.

However, not everyone has the time or money to consult a doctor for a simple diet, so there are some

things one can keep in mind when considering the reliability of an online source. If the creator of a video cites studies or other scholarly sources to support their claims, you can look up those studies yourself to check their validity.

While there are plenty of influencers with large followings that give terrible advice, large influencers also fall under higher scrutiny from the general community.

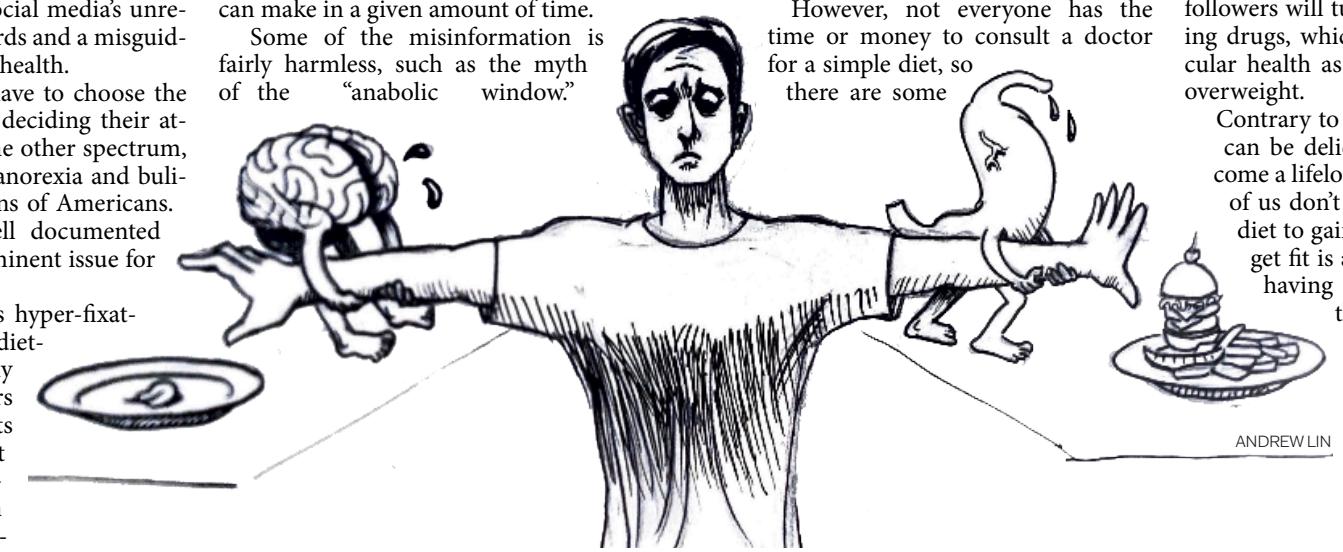
If the general consensus from other online creators is that the influencer in question makes reputable, science-based content, it could be worth listening to them. Of course, one should take everything found online with an enormous grain of salt.

Predatory influencers also pander to instant gratification. They offer strange diets and ineffective workout routines, spewing promises such as toned abs or bigger arms in just 30 days. Making noticeable progress in the gym takes months of planning and sustained effort, so when these online diets and fitness routines don't deliver on their promises, many beginner trainees give up.

In rare cases, influencers or desperate followers will turn to performance enhancing drugs, which are as bad for cardiovascular health as being hundreds of pounds overweight.

Contrary to popular belief, healthy food can be delicious, and eating it can become a lifelong habit. Truth be told, most of us don't need to follow an elaborate diet to gain or lose weight. Wanting to get fit is an admirable goal — simply having that goal places you above the majority of Americans.

Self-hatred shouldn't be the motivation. Instead, it's best to see dieting as one of the greatest acts of self-love. You can't be healthy at every size, but you can safely and smartly pursue your health goals. ♦



Throwing food at paintings is not an effective activism

by NicoleLee
& IsabelleWang

In recent months, some climate change activists have gained notoriety by throwing smashed cream pie into the face of King Charles' wax statue or flinging mashed potatoes on a Claude Monet painting.

The trend began in Paris's Louvre museum on May 29, 2022 when a man attempted to smash the bullet-proof glass protecting Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa." He then smeared cake onto the glass and threw roses everywhere while telling the audience to "think of the earth."

Our planet is indeed in danger. Since 2021, global average sea level has risen 12-inches and is expected to reach 13 feet by 2150. Combined land and ocean temperatures have also been increasing at an average rate of 0.14 degrees Fahrenheit per decade.

Today, around 11 billion metric tons of carbon are added to the atmosphere each year due to human activities like burning fossil fuels and clearing forests. If this trend continues, global temperatures are expected to increase at least five degrees Fahrenheit by the end of this century.

Activists need to stick to traditional non-violent protests that spread their message without damage. Objecting to the negative impacts of pollution shouldn't be done by more negative outbursts, instead, peaceful ones that garner positive attention that would gain more respect and support.

A well-known example occurred when Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man in 1955. Simple and peaceful yet clear acts such as this led to a larger movement, the Montgomery bus boycott, with the Supreme Court eventually ruling segregated public buses as unconstitutional a year later. These peaceful movements are what allow changes to happen, whether by boycotts, sit-ins or marches.

For example, Just Stop Oil believes in opposing fossil fuel licensing and production agreements in the United Kingdom, so expressing their points by trashing Van Gogh's painting is completely irrelevant to their intended goals.

While their stunts were certainly shocking to the viewers, their effect has been minimal.

A select group of climate change activists have also taken a different approach by promoting veganism through violent means. In 2018, militant vegans in France harassed butchers through death threats and throwing fake blood on butcher shops.

The militant vegans in France had also strayed from their initial cause. Their ultimate goals were to promote greenhouse gas reduction and lower energy consumption, but they now break windows, spray graffiti

and utilize violent means to communicate their beliefs. Some butchers have even asked the French government for protection from constant threats.

This new wave of activism begins to question where to draw a line at acceptable forms of protest like sit-ins, boycotts and marches.

Many believed that the militant vegans' form of activism was too extreme. Instead of raising awareness of climate change, their behavior has raised infamy, and many audience members quickly lost respect for the activists and their movement, a dangerous attitude that can inevitably affect non-violent activists too.

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We do need to acknowledge that activists have resorted to these extreme acts because they are desperate to capture the public's attention and spread a sense of urgency. And some of these issues definitely worth paying attention to.

Still, according to a study by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, only around 72 percent of Americans believe that global warming is happening.

Wathuti, has planted over 30,000 tree seedlings in Kenya to encourage the youth to discover and care for nature. Younger activists such as Greta Thunberg initiated a solo protest outside of her school, which led her to attend the United Nations climate conference in 2019 to express her thoughts. Many other student organizations, including Saratoga High's Green Committee, are also implementing activities within their community to help raise awareness for the cause.

Such actions have garnered respect rather than emotional reactions. They effectively convince people that change is needed without inflicting unwanted harm or destruction of property. While it is necessary for the public to learn more about climate change, activists do a disservice when their otherwise sound messages go too far. ♦



Medical misinformation and its role in the pandemic

by Saachi Jain

it is shown on people's feeds by auto-generated software that matches content to users' personality and interests. However, shocking medical discoveries that are oftentimes not true are spread by humans, who repost it and share it with people they know.

In the rush to publish more medical information during the pandemic, the spread of this misinformation has increased so much that the World Health Organization (WHO) coined a special term for it — the "infodemic," representing the spread of too much false information.

Misinformation surrounding COVID-19

Following the outbreak of the pandemic, varying and outdated information on major news outlets from healthcare professionals contributed to a loss of public confidence and unity in combating COVID-19, placing lives at risk.

Confusing narratives regarding the spread of COVID-19 also led to a sharp decline in visits to outpatient care facilities as well as hospitals for non-COVID-19 related emergencies, even when they were in

were in

grave danger.

Due to the endless stream of data and flood of information, people were overwhelmed by the number of opinions and sources. More popular home remedies for COVID-19 emerged, such as the consumption of highly-concentrated alcohol-based cleaning products, leading to the deaths of more than 5,800 people who weren't even hospitalized for the virus in the first

A recent article by Heathline debunked the myth that eating apricot seeds can cure cancer, for example. Between 1921 and 1974, the dental company Listerine falsely advertised that their mouthwash could cure colds and sore throats, a claim that was also disproven by the Federal Trade Commission in the 1970s.

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One of the most publicized cases of medical misinformation is the belief that the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) causes autism, a misleading correlation that led many individuals to opt out of taking it. In actuality, the signs of childhood autism often appear at the age that the MMR vaccine is administered, and therefore makes many parents assume that the events are linked.

This cast doubt is considered the catalyst for what would come to be known as the "anti-vax" movement, a collective group of people refusing to take immunizations for fear of poisoning themselves, opting for natural treatments instead. The spread of misinformation regarding the MMR vaccine and vaccines in general led to the rallying of a group of people who turned it into a disinformation campaign that continues to affect communities till this day.

A study conducted by Web of Science in March of 2018 assessed the spread of misinformation on prevalent social media platforms such as Twitter. It found that false medical information, regardless of the source, was three times more likely to spread than information which was accepted as true. This phenomenon can be attributed to the right-winged nature of some media algorithms: When a news story is published,

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THE bigidea

Medical Misinformation

What are the effects of questionable home remedies? The consumption of these home remedies have resulted in the deaths of around 5,800 people who weren't even hospitalized for COVID-19 in the first place.

Other than the media, where else can misinformation come from? Scientists can be a source of misinformation, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Was California Bill AB2098 effective? Although it was made with good intentions, the Bill is ambiguous about what medical professionals can and cannot say.

kinds of statements may put them at risk of being penalized.

His sentiment was echoed by other medical professionals and attorneys, including lawyer Greg Dolin, who is representing a group of doctors arguing against the law. Dolin called the law an attempt to silence doctors whose views aren't aligned with that of the state government and a violation of the 14th Amendment, which states that "no state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States."

Biotech company AstraZeneca was found using outdated data from their clinical trials.

Other doctors arguing against the law cited the violation of their First Amendment Rights, and quoted other accountability systems already in place for doctors who spread misinformation directly to their patients. For example, medical boards in Florida and Idaho sanctioned eight physicians for spreading misinformation.

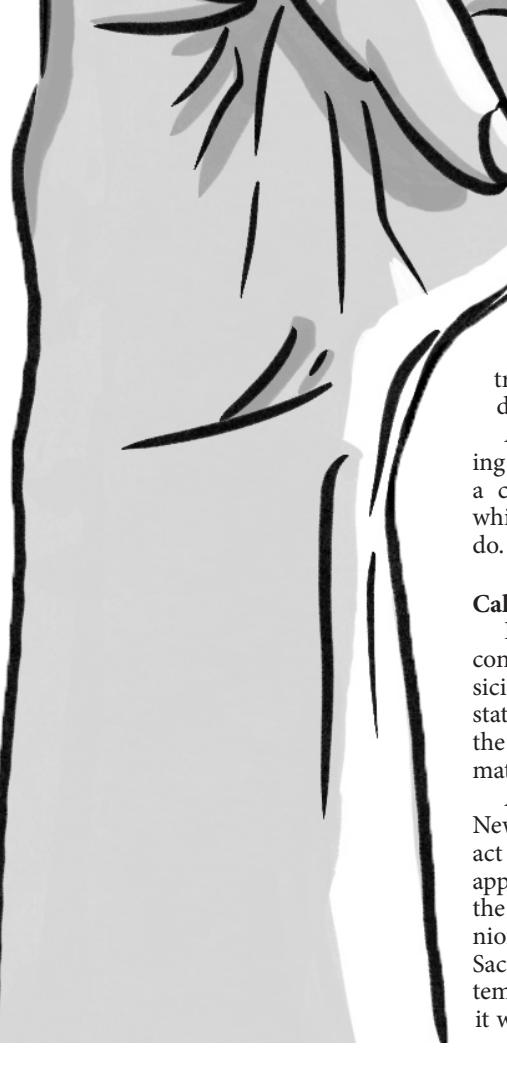
The law fails to distinguish misinformation from disinformation. Allowing doctors to express their personal views of a certain issue allows for the discourse that has continuously ensured scientific rigor.

State and Government Action

Though the California bill was created with good intentions, it does not clearly outline what medical professionals can and cannot say. Rather than generalizing the punishment to "all [sources of] misinformation," the bill could specify that if a medical professional is found saying something that is blatantly accepted as false, they should be punished. However, once someone's word is passed through countless sources — especially the news — it can be spun in ways against them and be deemed as "against the law" later.

Another, more conservative method of combatting disinformation is to address it at its most likely source — social media and news media. With countless people on the internet spreading their opinions as fact, true medical information becomes hard to find and invalidates the word of medical professionals speaking the truth.

Misinformation during the pandemic resulted from a number of reasons, including the fast progression of COVID-19, quickly-outdated information and an overflow of seemingly reliable sources presenting contradictory information. However, this misinformation quickly became disinformation, two very different inaccuracies that the California bill fails to distinguish. If physicians are unable to distinguish if what they are saying is against the law, a more centralized and specific approach needs to be taken in order to enact real change. ♦



PRICE OF THE IVIES

Mental health needs to be accounted for

by NicoleLee & AidenYe

On Nov. 30, five current and former Yale students filed a lawsuit against Yale University alleging that school officials discriminated against students suffering from mental health issues. In one example from the lawsuit, officials recommended that Hannah Neves, a student recovering from a suicide attempt, drop out without a medical notice or be involuntarily removed from the school.

According to the Daily Pennsylvanian, the official student publication at the University of Pennsylvania, at least 14 Penn students have taken their lives from 2013 to 2018. There's a common denominator in all these situations: Instead of trying to help students who are battling mental health issues, many Ivy Leagues instead resort to kicking them out of the school.

In the process of looking for a college to apply to, major points of consideration for applicants are the school's reputation, academics and teaching quality. However, another factor which is just as important is how the college actually treats and values mental health. Ivy League schools push students with mental health problems to take leaves of absence. When these students do decide to give their minds a break, however, many colleges instill additional steps into their process in order to prevent students from returning to school. At Yale, for instance, students trying to return after leaving due to mental health issues must submit two letters of recommendation, a personal statement and a reinstatement application form.

Colleges are often vague about why they enforce such policies for students struggling with their mental health. The effect of these mental health policies, however, is that colleges wish to tell students who have any mental health history that they aren't welcome back. If their goal is to lower the percentage of mentally ill students on their campus to make their statistics look better, they are succeeding thus far.

Instead of hiding away from the per-

>> falconfigures

10	Columbia students committed suicide every year since
20	year-old students committed suicide most often
4	times higher suicide rate at MIT than national average
25	percent of Harvard students had thought of suicide

Data from THE DAILY PENNSYLVANIAN and SURVIVING IVY

vative issue of mental health and only addressing it when the issues are brought to light, schools should be accepting of mental health problems and promote more wellness programs to help their students.

Because of flawed business-oriented models, many colleges' main concern is ultimately their reputation and bottom line, not their students' well-being. By reducing the number of students with mental health issues, the university appears to be a school with positive student health.

Schools should be accepting of mental health problems and promote more wellness programs.

Since a "poor mental health" reputation can result in a lower yield rate and can negatively affect the school's rankings and overall reputation, universities try their best to artificially manipulate their numbers at the expense of their struggling students.

While Yale claims to have improved its policies for medical emergencies, officials' refusal to be considerate toward mental health-related problems persists.

To its credit, Yale has removed the mandatory interview that returning students had to pass, but the process required to take a break from an elite school is unnecessary and seems to purposely discourage students from taking a leave.

According to Surviving Ivy, Ivy students may be up to three times more anxious than the average student because of their schools' stressful environments. In researcher Miriam Heyman's paper "Mental Health in the Ivy League," which gradudated student mental health levels at each Ivy League, no school scored above a D+.

Harsh treatment toward students certainly makes matters worse. Instead of accepting their students' issues, most Ivies treat mental health as an inconvenience.

Mental health problems don't just exist in Ivy League schools, but many are exacerbated through their teachers' and peers' high expectations of them.

Students who find themselves underperforming in an overly harsh environment have no way of focusing on self-improvement or learning.

We see this issue at ever-competitive Saratoga High too. Constantly comparing ourselves to others — in terms of test scores, grades, extracurriculars and more — only promotes a less healthy culture.

Applying to prestigious colleges is tempting. Getting in and choosing to commit to said college is even more so.

However, before applying to the most prestigious colleges that come to mind, students should consider existing rankings for ivy league's mental health and ask themselves: "Is this really the environment I want to spend college in?" And "do I have a safe place to recharge?" ♦

Middle class suffers most from tuitions

by ZackZhang

In an ideal world, tuition should not be a factor that affects students' choice of college. Sadly, though, many lower- to middle-class families save up for years, only to find college costs too much. The tuition for Ivy League schools range from \$57,410 to \$65,146, without the living cost. Additionally, when compared to the national average of public and private colleges' annual tuition — \$25,620 and \$34,740 respectively, according to ValuePenguin — the Ivy Leagues are among the most expensive colleges in the country. Though many believe low-income students face challenges with tuition, in reality, middle-class students suffer the most from high costs and the inadequate financial aid system.

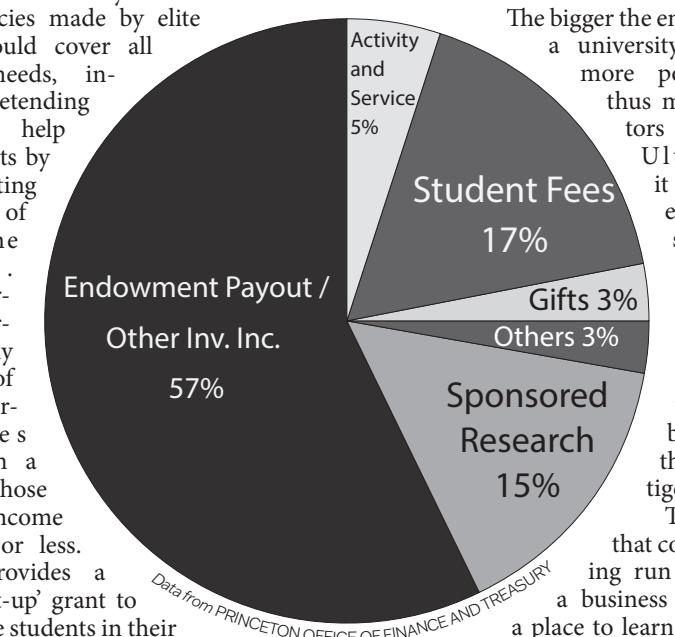
The policies made by elite schools should cover all students' needs, instead of pretending that they help their students by only assisting a number of low-income families. Take Harvard University: "Nearly one out of four undergraduates comes from a family whose annual income is \$75,000 or less. Harvard provides a \$2,000 'start-up' grant to each of these students in their first year," The Harvard Gazette reported. In great contrast, "upper-families with incomes above \$156,000 will be asked to pay proportionately more than 10% [of their income] based on their circumstances," according to Harvard's financial aid policy.

Although Ivy Leagues like Harvard specify that those who earn more than \$150,000 may still qualify for financial aid, these middle-class families rarely qualify because they are just slightly above the income cutoff line.

Colleges will always prioritize students with the lowest income for financial aid. Yet middle-class students, whose income can range from as little as \$47,189 and up to \$141,568, make up more than 67% of Harvard's population. The financial aid system is unfair for those who are between low and high income.

Despite the Ivy Leagues aiming for their students to graduate debt-free, their efforts aren't effective so far. Still, I do acknowledge that elite schools have such a high price because of the high demand and short supply. Students are applying to receive elite college educations around the globe.

However, a big reason why Ivy Leagues charge more is to distinguish themselves from other colleges, which points to the highly business-oriented nature of many colleges nowadays. Despite the top-tier resources and quality of teaching that elite schools provide for their students, with so much money in their endowments, Ivy League schools should help middle-class students can't afford tuition without mountains of debt. ♦



charge students an above-average price when they do not need this portion of income? While only financially supporting a small number of students whose family's income is below average, these universities' claims to help a larger number of middle-class students don't seem possible. With a little over 8,500 students, Princeton has fewer students compared to other Ivies; the situation is likely to vary between schools. But because elite schools do not rely upon the tuition to operate, it is time to consider whether unaffordable tuition is necessary.

The Ivy Leagues have remained wealthy over the years because more than \$16 billion worth of endowment assets in the U.S. go to only a few schools — for example, Harvard receives \$39.2 billion. The bigger the endowments a university has, the more power, and thus more investors are drawn. Ultimately, it seems an endless stream of income will be invested into these elite universities because of their prestige.

The fact that college is becoming run more like a business instead of a place to learn and refine knowledge is truly concerning. Despite the seemingly reasonable low-income financial aid policies, the terms and requirements to qualify for financial aid are not easily met by middle-class families. Aside from a few fortunate individuals who may be granted a tuition reduction through receiving merit scholarships or negotiating with the financial aid office, the rest of the student population will either have to give up on a certain college because of the high price or reach out for student loans, which tend to be harmful in the long term.

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Al graphics by LEYNA CHAN and ZACK ZHANG

High school dos and don'ts for dummies

TWO SECOND SEMESTER SENIORS SHARE THEIR TIPS ON HOW TO SURVIVE THESE FUNDAMENTAL FOUR YEARS.

by JasonCheng
& HannahLee

great and all, but making your friends drive you around everywhere is probably driving them crazy (literally). Also, being able to drive to and from school while going off campus during lunch is probably going to become the best part of your day, so go get that license at 16, kiddos!

Oh, and whatever you do, don't crash.

No. 3: Attend school events

We get it. Staying in and taking a fat nap might sound better than being at school longer than you have to, but these school events become key memories and experiences. This doesn't mean you have to attend every basketball game or spirit rally, but attending at least a few events a year will be a valuable opportunity to show support for your classmates and create memories. You'll feel a part of something larger than yourself.

Let's all do our part in preventing remote learning 2.0.

No. 2: Get your license

If anything, take a short FaceTime call or video game to the event. Contribute to rekindling the school spirit we severely need — and you won't regret it.

High school does revolve around sched-

No. 4: Avoid being a freeloader

There's always a freeloader in every class, or so it seems. We're not naming names here, but please, do your part financially in a group. It's a team effort, and slacking off while your classmates reluctantly cover for you does absolutely nothing for your learning experience and social reputation.

Moreover, when you venture off to college, it's a player-versus-player world. Develop some good habits now, and you won't be left in the dust when you're stranded thousands of miles from your parents with no one to whine to in college.

Sorry, not sorry.

No. 5: Don't be an NPC

NPC: Non-player character. Sometimes, we have our off days. We don't feel like communicating or conversing, but it's generally more acceptable to be slightly more outgoing in front of peers. We're not telling you to be an extreme extrovert and speak every second, but try to be approachable at the bare minimum.

High school does revolve around sched-

ules and routines, but break out of the loop sometimes and try something new.

Not everyone's the main character they make themselves out to be, but you don't have to be the side character in the story either. Make life enjoyable for yourself, and at the end of the day, do what makes you happy in order to follow your dreams beyond high school.

No. 6: Please avoid PDA at all costs

We're saving our most passionate rant for last, and believe me, no one, and we mean no one, wants to see kissy-kissy in the hallways. Forget lip-on-lip action — also, get your hands off of one another. Is it that hard to keep your hands to yourself? Bring back social distancing.

We know you're dating. We know you're in love. We know you have deep feelings. We know everything. But we don't need a physical demonstration at 10 in the morning before a physics test. Back-to-back traumatic experiences within an hour — dear lord.

Now, there are certain aspects of this guide that might not suit everyone's needs or sensibilities. From personal experience, we can assure you that we have all the credentials to ensure a smooth high school experience, but in the end, no guide is the be-all and end-all of guides. ♦

Seven off-campus lunch locations to savor or skip

by MichelleWan

ambiance are worth the price, making Saratoga Bagels a friend group favorite.

Taco Bell

Overall rating: 4/5 Falcons.

From Crunch-wrap supremes to Doritos Locos Tacos, Taco Bell offers an exquisite array of options. The foods are just enough to satisfy a craving and their Baja Blast Freeze makes the school day just a little bit better.

Not to mention, the prices are affordable, making the store a popular option.

On the downside, it's farther away and Saratoga Avenue traffic is often congested, so those who go need to plan out their time well or run the risk of being late.

Cafe LaTTea

Overall rating: 3/5 Falcons.

Cafe LaTTea is a boba shop that not many students consider an option — and for good reason. Located on Stevens Creek Blvd next to Mainstreet Cupertino, Cafe LaTTea is only an option for drivers with serious green-light mojo or a heavy foot that risks speeding tickets.

Despite the store being a 10-15 minute drive away, ordering ahead makes the long drive a better bet.

Although they are mainly known for their boba, the popcorn chicken is heavenly. The price is reasonable considering the amount of chicken you get, so it can be a nice treat once in a while.

Super Duper

Overall rating: 1/5 Falcons.

Super Duper can only be considered an option if attending your next class period isn't set high on the priority list.

Their choices of traditional American food, although made very well, are not going to ready in time to make it back to school on time.

Its offerings are on the pricey side, with a plain bagel and cream cheese costing \$4.25. Regardless, the quality of food and shops

forcing students to pick: food or school. In conclusion, Super Duper is not a super wise decision for lunch.

Starbucks

Overall rating: 4/5 Falcons.

The most "chain" of chain restaurants, Starbucks, lying in the heart of Argonaut Center, is always bustling with students when the clock hits noon.

With people barging through the doors and online orders filling up the queue of the coffee shop, lunchtime is imaginably a nightmare for the poor workers unlucky enough to have that shift.

Their broad assortments of sandwiches and pastry items, without even counting their popular caffeinated drinks (which are an absolute necessity for any average teenager), seem to be the most appealing items for all.

Chipotle

Overall rating: 3.5/5 Falcons.

Yet another popular chain restaurant, Chipotle, located 5.7 miles away on Blossom Hill Rd, also draws crowds: a bowl and chips with a side of guacamole can be just enough to keep a student from starving to death after AP Biology.

However, its tight parking lot poses a large risk of car crashes, specifically hit-and-runs. The wait time can also be long. Go there at your own risk.

Off campus lunch location ratings

Safeway: 3 Falcons

Saratoga Bagels: 4.5/5 Falcons

Taco Bell: 4/5 Falcons

Cafe LaTTea: 3 Falcons

Super Duper: 1 Falcon

Starbucks: 4 Falcons

Chipotle: 3.5 Falcons

All graphics by ANJALI PAI

Honorable mentions:

Lastly, some other potential destinations for students that haven't made the main list include: Five Guys, McDonald's, Mod Pizza, Super Chix, Trader Joes, 85, Yogurtland, ToGos, Pho & Jazen Tea, Fire Wings, Panda Express, Pizza My Heart and Ikes. ♦

THE GREAT TOGA COOKING SHOW

The Ground Rules

In a battle of culinary creativity, four ambitious young chefs, split into teams of two, competed in an ultimate cooking showdown recently.

In a span of two hours, and with a \$40 budget, the chefs — sophomores Sunny Cao, Emma Fung, Saachi Jain and Kathy Wang — managed to whip up exemplary three course meals including an appetizer, the main course and dessert. Although not an easy journey, with dedication and help from Kathy's home kitchen, we were able to put together two hearty meals for the judges — fellow sophomores Nicole Lee, Amy Luo and Isabelle Wang — to evaluate and enjoy.

Emma & Kathy

Inspired by our cultural backgrounds, we decided to prepare two Asian dishes. We served the classic miso soup, a traditional Japanese soup with miso paste, soft tofu and seaweed, as our appetizer. For our main course, we prepared one of our all time favorite traditional Chinese dishes: zha jiang mian, a dish consisting of wheat noodles coated in a savory black bean sauce. To finish it off with dessert, we decided to go for a common American comfort food: an ice cream sandwich with creamy vanilla ice cream stuffed between two soft, mega-sized chocolate chip cookies.

To our surprise, everything went smoothly, considering that we were inexperienced in the field of culinary arts. Starting off with the cookies, we stirred up a \$5 cookie mix into a buttery, doughy concoction. However, due to our general lack of experience, we overestimated the amount of dough needed and ended up baking six very large cookies.

Fortunately, the cookies still turned into a mouthwatering delight, and with \$6 vanilla ice cream sandwiched in between, it was pure perfection. While the cookies were baking, we started making our blackbean sauce for our zha jiang mian. To make the sauce, we started chopping our \$4 dou fu gan (a type of firm, dry tofu) and \$5 pork sausages into tiny cubes.

After stir frying them in a giant pan, we added our \$9 black bean paste along with water to de-thicken the sauce. Finally, we topped the sauce onto our \$7 boiled wheat noodles and mixed it to fully coat the noodles. We also added a side of \$5 sliced cucumbers and \$3 chili oil. Saving the best for last, we finalized our cooking expedition with our hearty appetizer: miso soup. The miso soup was relatively simple to make. We added \$5 miso paste to boiling water and allowed it to simmer with leftover tofu and \$3 seaweed. Finally, our three-course meal was ready for the judges to score.

Miso soup



Zha jiang mian



Chocolate chip cookies



TRY IT YOURSELF

MISO SOUP

Ingredients:

- 4 cups dashi (or vegetable broth)
- 1 sheet nori
- 3-4 tbsp miso paste
- 1/2 cup green chard (chopped)
- 1/2 cup green onion (chopped)
- 1/4 cup firm tofu

Steps:

1. Place the dashi or vegetable broth in medium sauce pan and bring to a low simmer.
2. Place miso into a small bowl and add hot water, whisking until smooth. Set aside.
3. Add chard, green onion, and tofu (optional). Cook for 5 minutes. Then add nori and stir. Remove from heat and add the miso mixture, stir to combine.
4. Add more miso or a pinch salt if desired.

Sauce:

1. Warm the remaining coconut milk over low heat. Add 3 tbsp brown sugar, stir to dissolve. Add more sugar if desired.
2. Scoop some rice into each serving bowl, arrange mango slices, and finish with a drizzle of coconut sauce.

MANGO STICKY RICE

Ingredients:

- 1 cup sweet rice
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 can coconut milk
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 5 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 to 2 ripe mangoes

Rice:

1. Soak rice in 1 cup of water for 20-30 minutes.
2. Add 1/2 cup water, 1/2 can of coconut milk, salt, and 1 tbsp of brown sugar. Stir well. Bring to a gentle boil, then partially cover with a lid. Reduce heat to get a gentle simmer.
3. Simmer 20-30 minutes. Turn off the heat with the lid on tight. Allow it to sit for 5-10 minutes.

Sauce:

1. Warm the remaining coconut milk over low heat. Add 3 tbsp brown sugar, stir to dissolve. Add more sugar if desired.
2. Scoop some rice into each serving bowl, arrange mango slices, and finish with a drizzle of coconut sauce.

Recipes of the day:



Sunny & Saachi

Spanning many cuisines and textures, we opted for a flexible meal that included a classic Italian bruschetta appetizer, followed by a Korean-inspired miyeok guk soup and ending with a Thai dessert of mango sticky rice.

Between figuring out recipes, staying under the budget, coordinating ingredients and bringing pots and pans, spices, measuring cups and tools, it was a lot. But everything came together last-minute and the cooking process was pulled off mostly without a hitch.

The preparation for bruschetta was simple enough: chopping up a \$7 bunch of tomatoes proved little trouble, and after that, it was simply a matter of getting the ratio of balsamic vinegar to olive oil right, which were both ingredients we already had at home.

The bright red of the tomatoes paired excellently with the mild beige baguette, and accompanied with the perfect crunch, it tasted great as well.

As for the miyeok soup, we split the work between cut

ting \$8 veggies, soaking the \$12 dried seaweed (a high cost as we purchased it in bulk) and watching the soup. This dish was slightly more challenging.

The broth to water ratio had to be precise; the dried seaweed had to be soaked with warm water before being put into the soup; the tofu had to be put in at the right time and with the right temperature to avoid it breaking apart; and the miso (which we borrowed from the other team) also had to be right, or else it would be too salty. Nevertheless, with it being neither of our first times cooking, we breezed through our dishes with ease.

Dessert was simple enough. We made some rice in a rice cooker, heated up sugar and two cans of coconut milk for \$10 each, waited for it all to cool, poured it over the rice and topped it with some \$2 fresh mango.

We all felt the anticipation slowly bubbling as the time limit crept closer and the dishes came together. As each team began to put the finishing touches on their dishes and setting the tables, the judges arrived.

Miyeok guk soup



Mango sticky rice



The Final Judgment

Our judges arrived two hours after we started the cooking process. They were presented with a table full of food, six dishes in total per person, and were quite overwhelmed by the amount of food presented to them. The four chefs observed with anticipation as the judges tasted the food one by one, offering their reviews of each dish.

To summarize the details, Luo's favorite dish ended up being the bruschetta from Team No. 2, Wang's favorite was the zha jiang mian by Team No. 1, and Team No. 2's sweet sticky rice with mango won Lee's heart. (She devoured the whole plate.) Each dish was rated out of 10, and the judges gave their opinions on taste, texture and presentation. In the end, the totals were super close, with Saachi and Sunny earning a total of 80.5/90 points, and Emma and Kathy obtaining 79/90 points. The 1.5 point difference in win by Saachi and Sunny meant that everyone did an amazing job.

Given the limited time and budget, both teams came up with impressive dishes. And, of course, the full table of delicious food was the best part of the process. After the judges had given their shared opinions, the competition was cast aside as everyone sat down and tried each other's dishes. Next stop: Hell's Kitchen. ♦



'Diary of a Wimpy Kid': Just read volumes 1-10

BY Saachi Jain

Sitting in the series section of my expansive bookshelf is a row of colorful books with "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" written in lanky font on the spine. The series by Jeff Kinney published its first book in 2007 and sold millions of copies worldwide. With one installment published per year, it became a tradition for me to put the newest Diary of a Wimpy Kid book on my Christmas wish list.

The series started out marvelously — lanky, socially awkward pre-teen Greg Heffley was in sixth grade alongside his immature and naive partner-in-crime, Rowley Jefferson. We explored the "Cheese Touch" throughout the first novel — a slice of cheese rotting on the school's basketball court which all the students are afraid to touch — and got

to see Greg struggle through friendships, relationships and middle school in the next seven books. However, with the addition of book nine titled "Long Haul," the series began its unfortunate downfall.

Until this point in the series, every novel seemed grounded in fresh ideas, though it began to feel as if Kinney was running dry. Regardless of the weaker plot, the book is still as funny as the others. This remained true for the 10th book "Old School." Just like its prequel, "Old School" is just as entertaining and quirky, though the plot runs thin.

In an interview with the Baltimore Sun, Kinney described being at a crossroads after publishing the 10th novel and did not know whether he should start a new project or continue on. Eventually, he decided that the large audience and joy that his books brought to

young children was worth his continuation, and it would simply require him to expand his creative realm.

In "The Ugly Truth," he goes through puberty and comes to accept his reality. Trying to get on the nice list, he enjoys a winter season with his family in "Cabin Fever." "The Third Wheel" and "Hard Luck" watch Greg go through a period of questions about his choices and how he turns to fate to make decisions for him. Finally, we see Greg wrestle with the dynamics of traveling in "The Long Haul" and "Old School" the penultimate and final installments of what I believe to be the old era of Diary of a Wimpy Kid.

Regardless of how long the series runs on, I will forever love the first 10 novels. They allowed me and countless others to have a relatable literary friend who would always mess something up and allow us to laugh out loud. ♦

'Dork Diaries': a perfect escape for 10-year-olds

BY Sunny Cao

There's really nothing else that can catch an average 10-year-old's attention as quickly as a book with a bright cover featuring animals, figure drawings or some kind of magical entity surrounded by sparkles. I'm sure every kid had that one book or series that was the defining factor of their childhood. For me, it was the "Dork Diaries" series.

The "Dork Diaries" series by Rachel Renée Russell is a collection of fictional diaries — as alluded to in the title. It follows the tale of main protagonist Nikki Maxwell in a series of 15 books. With endearing characters drawn in silly, cartoon formats and a totally relatable plot line where your crush likes you back, it was certainly captivating to



'The Magic Tree House': a nostalgic book series

BY Kathy Wang

I remember breathing in the scent of worn out paper while my 7-year-old self browsed through my local library's crowded bookshelves. My feet would lightly tap the dark blue carpet as I impatiently scanned past different book titles. But there was always one book series that'd catch my eye: "The Magic Tree House."

The series is written by Mary Pope Osborne, 73, and is still adding volumes to the popular franchise. The series is the No. 1 New York Times Bestselling children's historical fantasy chapter book series of all time, with the first book "Dinosaurs Before Dark," published in 1992.

Currently, there are 37 books in the series, which all revolve around two siblings, Jack and Annie, as they discover a tree house filled with books that magically whisk them away into adventures taking place during the historical past.

My younger self's obsession with the series started when I read, "Mummies in the Morning," where Jack and Annie used a book of Egypt to journey through their third adventure with the magic tree house. Throughout the book, the siblings helped a ghost queen find a volume of magical spells to help her travel to the afterlife. The book details historical events, cultures and traditions such as the Egyptian

royal funeral processions, a mummy wrapping process and treasures buried inside ancient tombs.

I remember experiencing every scene as if I was one of the characters, whether it be feeling the rush of adrenaline when the tree house spun Jack and Annie into a sandy Egypt or going through the same horror the siblings felt when encountering an unbandaged mummy with protruding bones, rotting flesh and empty eye sockets.

With each historical event, the book teaches educational facts such as the traditional preservation of mummies with salt and oil.

One of my favorite aspects about the series is that regard-

less of whatever dangers they may encounter through their adventures, Jack and Annie always make it home safely to the magic tree house, filling me with an immense sense of comfort and satisfaction. The "Magic Tree House"



All graphics by LEYNA CHAN and AMY LUO

'Let's Start Here': a psychedelic time machine

BY Andrew Lin

Lil Yachty, a member of the XXL 2016 freshman class (the annual listing of up-and-coming rappers by XXL magazine), is a major player in the trap scene. His signature mumble rapping style has garnered both appreciation and derision.

However, his latest album "Let's Start Here" is a complete transformation of Yachty's sound while still retaining his laid-back vocals. Contrasting with his previous works, much of the album employs live instrumentation, as opposed to electronic or sample-based beats. While its genre is undeniably psychedelic rock, Yachty's vocals are a reminder of the album's rap background.

The album opening, "the BLACK semitone," samples Pink Floyd — the outro of the song is just a distorted version of "The Great Gig in the Sky." It masterfully sets the tone for the album, with its meaty bass line and crisp electric guitar, paired with simple yet effective drums.

Perhaps because the previous song set such a high standard, the second song on the album, "the ride," is noticeably weaker. Guest artist Teezo Touchdown's crisp voice provides a nice contrast with Yachty's. However, Yachty's verses become rather mind-numbing quickly.

This slight interruption preludes seven tracks of pure greatness, "running out of time," one of the best songs on the album, juxtaposes its bouncy bass line and brass section with lyrics about the end of a relationship. Justine Skye, the feature, provides warm vocals on the track to complement the sunset imagery.

Following this pair is another pairing that seamlessly transitions, "shouLd i B?" and "The Alchemist." In "shouLd i B?", Yachty questions why he continues to forgive a lover that mistreats him, over an instrumental that evokes driving on a highway during sunset.

Completing the arc of the story that has happened over the past three tracks, "The Alchemist" is an aggressive proclamation

"pRETTY" is another standout. It exudes sensuousness, and guest artist Foushee contributes to the intro, the outro and a short but sweet verse.

"WE SAW THE SUN!" closely resembles the previous song's laid-back vibe in its nearly minute-long intro, but transforms into an otherworldly banger with an intoxicating chorus. With background vocals by Ant Clemons, an angelic bridge leads to a distorted outro sampling Bob Ross.

An upbeat soul-inspired beat immediately hooks the listener in "drive ME crazy!" Guest performer Diana Gordon delivers a sharp intro that precedes a chorus by both Gordon and Yachty.

"IVE OFFICIALLY LOST ViSION!!!!" is another peak on the tracklist. A vintage but creepy intro slides into hard-hitting electric guitar with lyrics referencing an acid trip. Diana Gordon returns for a soulful repose from the pandemonium before the anthem starts back up.

Almost like two parts of the same song, "sAy SOMETHING" and "paint THE sky" are both psychedelic ballads about uncertain love. The songs have clear distinctions with the latter taking on more of a vaporwave aesthetic.

Following this pair is another pairing that seamlessly transitions, "shouLd i B?" and "The Alchemist." In "shouLd i B?", Yachty questions why he continues to forgive a lover that mistreats him, over an instrumental that evokes driving on a highway during sunset.

Completing the arc of the story that has happened over the past three tracks, "The Alchemist" is an aggressive proclamation

of self-confidence. Heavily contrasting with Yachty's verses, Foushee contributes a melodic interlude and outro. Unfortunately, the incessant drumming overpowers and distracts from Yachty's vocals.

Despite that slight bump, the album ends strong with "REACH THE SUNSHINE," a 6-minute masterpiece with a prominent Radiohead interpolation sung by guest artist Daniel Caesar. The instrumental makes way for Caesar's melodic vocals while he is singing but swells to epic proportions between his verses, finally dying down into a baron synth leitmotif.

Yachty has released something very unique. The composition of each song indicates his deep respect for psychedelic rock. Though somewhat unremarkable as always lyrically, the album creates an intoxicating atmosphere, and despite the wide variety of songs, each track coheres to all the rest. However, despite its polished sound, "Let's Start Here" is derivative of existing music and does not contribute anything new. Yachty's unique vocals fit well, and there aren't any other artists in the rap industry who are making projects like this, but this soundscape had already been explored decades ago. As a result, even though the songs on the album boast high quality, they end up blending together to the point where some lack character.

Nevertheless, this is not a big downside. Even if it's been done before, Yachty's distinctive voice and the album's phenomenal production make the album a transcendent experience and a serious contender for album of the year. Even if you aren't a rap fan, you will likely find something unique on this album. ♦



Courtesy of SPOTIFY



JPEGMAFIA: a hidden gem of the hip hop genre

BY Arnav Swamy

N. Calvert" as he delivers smart, self-affirming lyrics. This low-key intro, while enjoyable, would not have prepared me for the next track, "Real Nega," which features a sample from rapper Ol' Dirty Bastard's "Goin' Down" of him wailing indiscriminately into the distance. Peggy loops the sample, layers some pounding drums on it and simply raps animatedly over it as he asserts his loyalty to only himself.

JPEGMAFIA, whose real name is Barington DeVaughn Hendricks and is known as Peggy among his fans, is a 33-year-old artist from Baltimore who makes some of the best experimental hip hop available.

Attempting to filter him into one of these subcategories is difficult given the volatility of his music spans. His records are all masterfully handled solo, from production, lyricism, rapping and creative direction for the project.

I started listening to Peggy's discography with "Veteran," his 2018 breakout album, where he delivers a trippy array of beats alongside acute social commentary as he details his experience in the military, his childhood of neglect and his thoughts on frivilities in society.

The album starts with a groovy mix of clicky drums and smooth synths on "1539

is a series that lets you fall in love with reading. There are a plethora of historical and magical events to choose from. Without a doubt, they will always leave young readers hungry for another adventure in another time. ♦

Peggy's discography is the fact that he pulls all of them off so seamlessly. If you need a song to go crazy for, he's got you covered. If you instead want sharp lyricism, he's got you covered. If you want extremely innovative production, themes with real longevity and ludicrous humor, he's also got you covered.

JPEGMAFIA by far is one of the most creative hip hop artists right now, providing a breath of fresh air to a genre that has been slightly monotonous as of late. A common theme among Peggy's albums is spiting those who never believed in him, but to be honest, I can't agree with him more. ♦

'Wave to Earth' sprinkles indie through Korean pop

BY Hannah Lee

With a rise in popularity of Korean culture in Western media and a growing subset of artists venturing into a chill, indie rock style, wave to earth is the next big thing. The highly melodic, classic indie rock band feels like the perfect ending to the day with its satisfying, softly layered instrumentals and raw vocals.

Across the rest of "Veteran," Peggy introduces the listeners to his gripes against an innumerable amount of social concerns. From blond Kanye to the alt-right, Peggy showcases his fearlessly confrontational energy against the superficial interests that American society fixates on.

Across

the

rest

of

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with

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satisfying

softly

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instrumentals

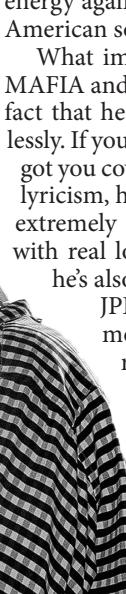
and

raw

vocals

Later that year, the band released their second EP, "Summer flows 0.02." The second track "ride" sets the album's mood, with dual electric guitar melodies overlapping one another. "Seasons" slows things down with keyboard introduction met with a subdued drum kit and bass guitar. As the longest track on "summer flows 0.02," this song will transport you onto a sandy beach, with a warm sunset, light breeze and calming waves, as you sway in a hammock with a warm sunset, light breeze and calming waves.

With their uniquely sweet and melodic sound, wave to earth is perfect to listen to anywhere and everywhere. If you're in need of some dreamy indie rock in your life, or are simply looking for something smooth, I recommend giving wave to earth a listen. ♦



Their first 2020 EP "wave 0.01" includes

The band's first comeback was with the gentle single "Light," one of their most popular songs.

Later that year, the band released their second EP, "Summer flows 0.02." The second track "ride" sets the album's mood, with dual electric guitar melodies overlapping one another. "Seasons" slows things down with keyboard introduction met with a subdued drum kit and bass guitar. As the longest track on "summer flows 0.02," this song will transport you onto a sandy beach, with a warm sunset, light breeze and calming waves, as you sway in a hammock with a warm sunset, light breeze and calming waves.

With their uniquely sweet and melodic sound, wave to earth is perfect to listen to anywhere and everywhere. If you're in need of some dreamy indie rock in your life, or are simply looking for something smooth, I recommend giving wave to earth a listen. ♦



Cuttlefish mentors Redwood teams

Starting last September, members of Saratoga's MSET Cuttlefish robotics team began weekly outreach sessions with their middle school FTC equivalents, providing feedback on their game strategy, proofreading their code and working through often complicated design processes.

For example, at the beginning of this year's season, one of the middle school teams' robots had difficulties with their pick-up mechanism and the orientation of their cones, which are moved in order to score points. The Cuttlefish team was able to help them orient them properly.

"We interact a lot with the [middle school] FTC and Vex teams, especially near the start of the season," said junior Kai Otsuka, Cuttlefish software member. "We discuss strategies, game mechanics, prototyping and iterate over previous designs."

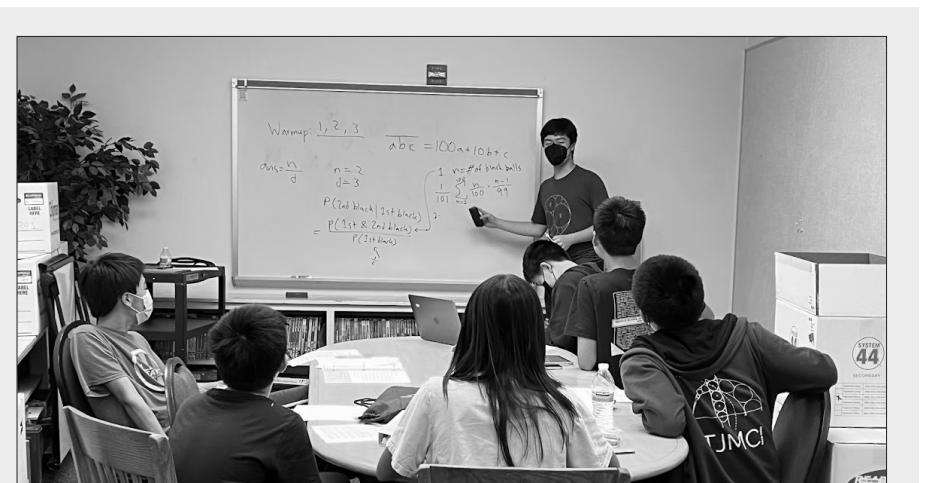
In addition, the team also gives presentations during the summer to help middle

schoolers learn more about robotics and host their own tournaments.

While the main goal of all these endeavors is to help the middle school teams, Otsuka said they have the added benefits of helping middle schoolers learn the values of the high school team and easing their transition into the upper level robotics scene.

When he was a middle schooler, Otsuka was visited by the high school MSET team members, including current team lead and robotics co-president senior Trevor Leung. This outreach motivated him to continue with the program as a high schooler and later engage in efforts to help the middle school teams.

"The game [in high school robotics] is hard, so these programs allow us to mentor the middle school teams, inspire them to join high school robotics and teach them our values of gracious professionalism and hard work," Otsuka said. ♦



Young mathletes advance with help

On Tuesdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m., 15 to 20 students from the Toga Math Club go to Redwood Middle School to coach middle schoolers as part of Toga Junior Math Club (TJMC), with the coaches split between four groups: black, blue, green and yellow.

"For each group, you have a head coach, one or more assistant coaches and rotation coaches," senior math club liaison Nilay Mishra said. "Rotational coaches are first time coaches; they rotate between groups in an equal amount of time to get an idea of which group they'd be the best fit for."

In addition to regular coaching, 12 to 15 middle schoolers are chosen to join a Mathcounts squad that practices together throughout winter break, taking tests and reviewing problem solving strategies with more experienced high schoolers. Along with the regular Tuesday meetups,

they also study together on Wednesdays and Fridays.

"Not only do middle school students benefit, high school mentors also get valuable experience," Mishra said. "Teaching allows high schoolers to understand and build empathy for their students while also forcing them to wonder, 'how can I best explain what I already know?'

Through coaching middle school students, many of the high school coaches are able to give back to the coaches.

"A lot of the head coaches and the normal coaches are former TJMC members," Mishra said. "They have participated in the clubs and they learned from high schoolers when they were younger. They have this sense of wanting to give back, wanting to teach the new generation and wanting to use the same ideas and principles to guide them." ♦



MESH program hosts tutor sessions

The Music Education with Saratoga High (MESH) Program hosts yearly benefit concerts with their middle school counterparts and, more recently, began tutoring middle school students in music. The program is split into two divisions: band and orchestra.

The event also served the dual purpose of helping high school speech and debate members practice speaking in front of an audience. ♦

combined band and orchestra divisions.

The high school volunteers used to physically attend middle school music classes and tutor in-person. During COVID-19, the program shifted to one-hour private online tutoring sessions, and as restrictions eased, changed to a hybrid format during the 2021-22 school year where mentors and mentees chose online or in-person teaching. This year, all lessons are done in-person at the high school music building or in mentors' houses. Pyun, who mentored students during her junior and senior years, found the experience to be "incredibly valuable and insightful."

"[Through the benefit concert], we're able to advocate for musical education at a local and regional level," senior violinist and orchestra head manager Carolyn Pyun said. For the past three years, MESH has also been tutoring middle schoolers, many of whom are new to their instrument.

According to Pyun, there are roughly 40 mentors and 120 students who meet for the



S&D gives presentations at Redwood

Although the middle and high school speech and debate organizations are separate, they collaborated on Feb. 2 to showcase the high school speech and debate team.

Middle schoolers were invited to a dinner with their parents to encourage high school club participation.

"We presented mock debates and individual speeches and all the middle schoolers could toggle between speech and debate to see what they were interested in," said junior Naina Tallak, who competes in Original Interpretation. "The high schoolers talked with the mid-

dle schoolers to see if they were interested or not."

Speeches covered an array of events: Dramatic Interpretation, Humorous Interpretation, Original Oratory, Original Advocacy and Original Interpretation. Debate performed their Public Forum debate topic regarding right-to-work laws in the Student Center. High school club members later answered any questions that the middle schoolers posed.

The event also served the dual purpose of helping high school speech and debate members practice speaking in front of an audience. ♦



Finding harmony in SHS through feng shui

by LynnDai

est of Chinese classics. The "Yi Jing," also known as the Book of Changes, encodes the fundamental concepts of yin yang wu xing in Chinese philosophy. In simple terms, the yin yang theory states that everything is governed by opposing, yet interdependent forces, and the wu xing theory perceives the world as dynamic states of constant change.

Feng shui of the school campus

Like the theory of yin yang "wu xing," feng shui also changes yearly with the directions and energies. However, the proper design of a structure may better allow qi to come in and circulate throughout the property, and the design of the campus ticks more than a few boxes:

SHS has an enclosed border, which allows energy and qi to stay and circulate. This prevents the risk of energy dissipating outside campus borders.

A row of trees enhance the "border" on the Western and Northern sides of the school.

In recent years, feng shui has become a popular practice for both Asians and non-Asians. Feng shui experts are part of the growing field of home design consultants who take on specific tasks of interior design such as deciding the wall color, art installations and aromatherapy. There have also been cases in China where the malignment of feng shui has instilled a \$30,000 penalty: In April 2019, a Chinese court fined a media company for publishing an article that implied a building in Beijing had violated feng shui.

The technique has been used for over

3,000 years and shares characteristics found in Chinese philosophy that are rooted in the "Yi Jing," a divination text among the old.

pus allows qi to enter, circulate and stay. The open design of the quad allows qi to come in through abundant sunlight. Qi is also retained as the quad is enclosed by classrooms on all four sides.

As students move in and out of the court into classrooms, qi from the quad spreads throughout the classroom wings. Each wing also has its own court and tree, which allows qi to reside there. There is a clear division between the Northern parking lot and the rest of the school, which keeps the "colder" energy from the North outside of campus borders.

There is a clear division between the athletic area (East) and classrooms (West), which is also facilitated by the school's excellent site planning. The athletic area is placed on the Eastern side of school, which is associated with positive energy as the sun rises from the East.

Feng shui of individual classrooms

Individual rooms can also be evaluated independently through their flow of energy and relative juxtaposition with the surrounding environment. Within a school campus, feng shui prioritizes the lighting and ventilation of classrooms over administrative offices and service facilities.

On campus, the journalism room at the back of the school uniquely facilitates both collaborations between students and a peaceful working environment due to its structure. The L-shape, with a longer section at the front and a shorter tail section, allows for two groups of students to work at the same time without disrupting each other. Conveniently, the teacher's desk is placed right behind the intersection of these two branches, allowing for a full view of all

classroom activity at any given time.

The placement of windows in the classroom also abides by a key concept in feng shui: the requirement for bright lighting and open, spacious ventilation throughout the room, originating from the philosophy of "zuo bei chao nan." The J-room only has windows lining its Southern and Eastern sides and blocks out the western sun and negative qi from the north through stone walls lining its Western and Northern sides.

Additionally, the placement of extra wall sections blocking a view inside the classroom through the open back door, a feature common in all buildings near the back of the campus, helps shield out distracting movement and noise from the back parking lot.

Similarly, the library also has large windows facing East and South, as well as skylights that have a brightening and enlarging effect on the interior space. It's also spatially sound — in regards to the entire campus, athletic fields included, it's located near the center of the school. According to the principles of bagua, an energy map comprising eight life areas, or levels of yin and yang, that form the basis of feng shui, the center placement is the pinnacle of balance between yin and yang energy, conducive for learning.

Like other concepts found in Chinese culture, feng shui is highly specific to each structure and must take into account a variety of factors. Its personalized nature, connection with Chinese philosophy and abundance of factors makes the practice extremely complex: True feng shui experts typically charge \$100 to \$400 an hour, compared to the average \$100 per hour cost for most housing consultants in the U.S.

Whether you believe in it or not, feng shui has merit in its philosophy that health and well-being are intertwined with the surrounding environment. A positive and energetic environment can, after all, support the people living in it. ♦

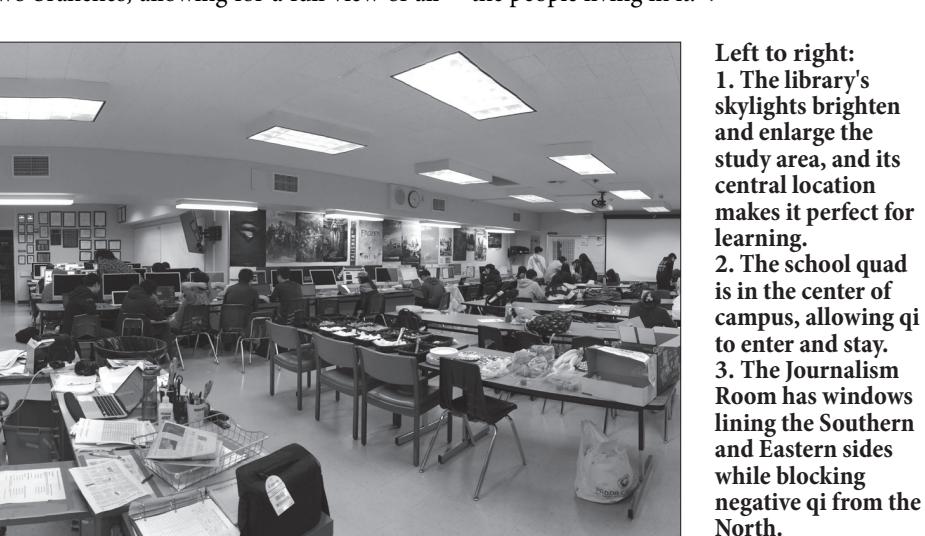


Photo by SANJOLI GUPTA

Juniors write for prestigious NCTE competition

by EricShi

Junior Sanjoli Gupta remembers seeing the prompt for this year's NCTE annual National Teachers Council for English (NCTE) writing competition and being intrigued. A few weeks later on Feb. 5, she learned she was one of two juniors whose pieces were chosen to be submitted to the competition. The other was Maithreyi Bharathi. Twenty students wrote for the competition.

Bharathi took a different approach to the prompt, instead writing a story loosely based on her own experiences.

The NCTE competition is a prestigious writing competition for 11th grade students. Schools nominate a select few students, making getting past the first phase of the competition an extraordinary achievement.

This year's prompt for the competition was just two words: "Education First." The theme was particularly relatable for many students because of its close connection with the high school experience.

"The prompt is important to me because education is such a vital part of our lives, especially as teenagers and high schoolers, so exploring that through a piece that I really connected with was my motivation to write for NCTE," Gupta said.

Additionally, the broad nature of this

year's prompt allowed students to branch out and explore.

"For my piece, I used short vignettes to explore the different ages at which I experienced learning and how they had an impact on me," Gupta said. "I also explored the wonder and curiosity that comes with being a child, and how learning is integral to our growth."

Gupta finished her first draft by February and did revisions with English 11 Honors teachers Amy Keys and Natasha Ritchie for two weeks. She emphasized Keys' and Ritchie's importance in helping her revise her essay.

"Ms. Keys and Ms. Ritchie were both extremely helpful during the process and both of them gave me feedback on my pieces, helped me get through the revision process and create a stronger, more compelling piece," Gupta said.

Bharathi echoed Gupta's praise of the English 11 Honors teachers, citing how their methodical suggestions involving grammar, style and the overarching message of her

"I explored the wonder and curiosity that comes with childhood."

JUNIOR Sanjoli Gupta

Although both stories were mainly driven by personal experiences, Bharathi's essay, titled "inheritance," primarily drew inspira-

tion from her family, while Gupta's piece, titled "The Magic of Knowledge," was largely based on her personal experiences.

"I remember waking up one morning and just having the idea to explore the use of short vignettes to convey my ideas," Gupta said. "I then wrote the piece before school."

Both writers, spurred by their love for writing, had an overall good time crafting their essays, with minimal hiccups during the writing and revision process.

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few rough patches she encountered in the process.

"I wrote the rough draft the day before it was due, so the revision process was pretty stressful and took a while because I wrote it in one go. Ms. Keys helped me through this, and gave me concrete things to work on,"

JUNIOR Maithreyi Bharathi

Home of the FALCONS

WHEN RACIAL TENSIONS SURFACED

1990s saw huge increase in Asian students, remaking school's demographics and culture

By Kathy Wang

Growing up in San Francisco, former assistant principal Karen Hyde recalls living in a multicultural neighborhood and attending a diverse school. However, after becoming an assistant principal at Saratoga High in the 1970s, she was shocked by how almost 97% of the students in the school were white.

During Hyde's 40 years at the school, the Asian American population here increased dramatically, particularly in the 1990s. In 1968, fewer than 2% were Asians, according to data gathered for the school's accreditation process through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Fast forward to 2012 and that year's report showed that approximately 34% of students were white and 57% were Asian.



Skelly

AP, baby' controversy

The changed demographics of the student body showed up in the school's increasing emphasis on top-flight academics. And in the 1990s, tensions between some whites and Asian Americans rose, according to guidance counselor Eileen Allen, who was a student at the school from 1997 to 2001.

As tougher courses were added to the curriculum and more students took them, a cycle of increasing academic competition grew. Many students, whites in particular, started to feel intimidated by the competitive environment, which they attributed to the influx of Asian American students, Allen said.

Former assistant principal Kerry Mohnike, who retired in September 2021 after working 30 years at the school, said there was "bound to be some sort of tension following a significant population shift in the environment."

"It's like jockeying for your societal status, and there are certain people that fall into that kind of



A mix of students from the Class of 1999 cheer against freshmen at a rally.

1984

SHS started implementing AP courses

1992

230K high-tech jobs added over next nine years — many filled by Asian immigrants

1997

Prerequisites for AP, Honors courses removed

2012

Over the previous 40 years, the white enrollment dropped by 900

All graphics by LYNN DAI

FROM A FIRST-GENERATION IMMIGRANT:

LEARNING TO PRESERVE TRADITIONAL CULTURE

my ama-zhang culture



Zack Zhang

"Xin nian kuai le!"

My family greeted two other friends' families at the dinner table in celebration of Lunar New Year here in late January. It's the most special time of year: Red paper lanterns hang from the ceiling and intricate traditional paper cuttings of fu, or the Chinese symbol for luck, stick to the windows. Several younger children, thrilled, jumped in excitement to receive red envelopes filled with money.

To my father, traditional culture is not just the clothing, cuisine or language of a group. At its core, culture comprises the values and practices passed down from generation to generation.

As an older brother, I try to engage them in more Mandarin at home. I am relieved my siblings were able to engage more in family conversations, connect closer with our grandparents and further appreciate the cultural norms.

Personally, I find it helpful to consistently practice my Mandarin and learn Chinese history through historical documents. During this process, I re-establish my relationship to my culture.

Maintaining a balance between assimilation and tradition

While some slight changes in the way people celebrate festivals are to be expected over time, my father sees the necessity for later generations to keep in mind what elements can be changed or compromised and what should not.

"I am also trying to find a way to balance assimilation and tradition for myself as I stay longer in the U.S.," my father said. "Much different from my younger children's situation, assimilation is harder for me than keeping hold of the traditions; I have spent half of my life in China and, essentially, since I do not have an immersive environment for language and culture in the U.S., it is challenging for me to fit into non-Asian groups."

New immigrants like myself may find it challenging to recreate the same excitement from their home country. The population of another culture is, after all, a minority in the foreign country; my family and I face the reality of attending smaller and more intimate celebrations. As a result, the heterogeneity and preservation of my culture are sacrificed. I can only try my best to preserve the most important elements of traditional practices to blend with components from the new culture.

To them, traditional festivals do not hold any special meaning; rather, it is just a day when they can enjoy a grander family dinner and have some extra free time.

While the reality upsets me, it also inspires me to learn more about the growing distance between immigrants and our traditional culture and how we can prevent it.

"Tradition embodies important values and beliefs that are shaped over generations."

FATHER Heng Zhang

I feel upset, worried and powerless to reverse the change, having experienced the arduous and gradual process of losing cultural connection with my siblings. It begs the question: Is there a way to prevent the younger generation of immigrants from losing connection with their culture?

One way to help young immigrants engender a closer connection with their culture is through language — a key gateway to culture as it intertwines with its traditions, values and beliefs. My father, worried he would lose touch with his children if they became distanced from their Chinese heritage, also brought classical Chinese readings, a practice that has since become an enjoyable family pastime. By learning their cultural language, the younger generation

can gain a deeper understanding of their heritage and the practices associated with it.

For young immigrants who may feel trapped between two cultures, learning their mother language not only helps build a stronger sense of cultural identity, but also improves communication with family members who speak little to no English. By understanding and embracing traditional culture, the younger generation can feel more grounded and confident about themselves.

Everything took a positive turn in my freshman year. Not only had my English skills made a leap, but there were also number of students from other school districts just like me.

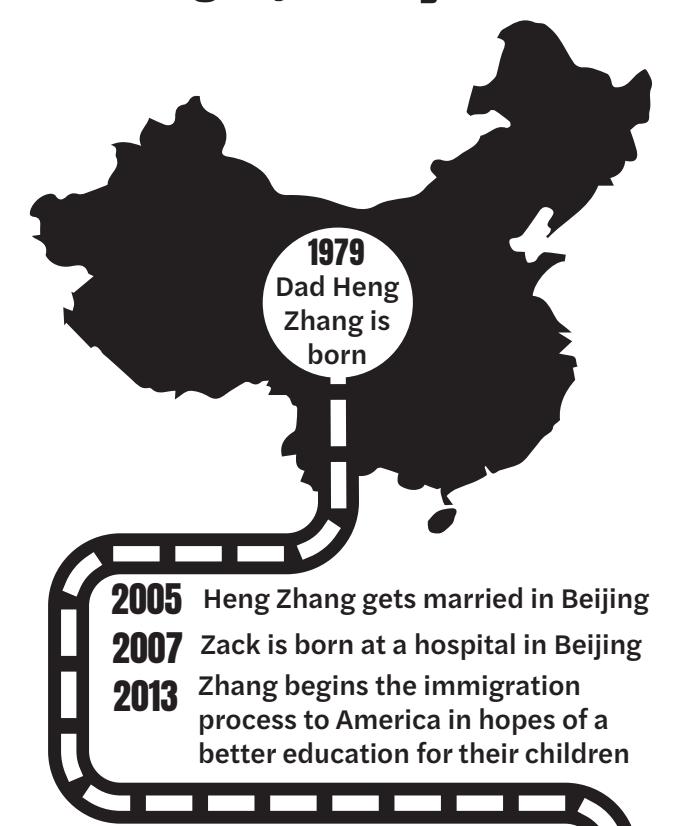
Once I found a middle point between the two cultures, I became more open-minded whenever I approach different situations or beliefs.

This balance between various cultures has improved in the last few years. My father believes these

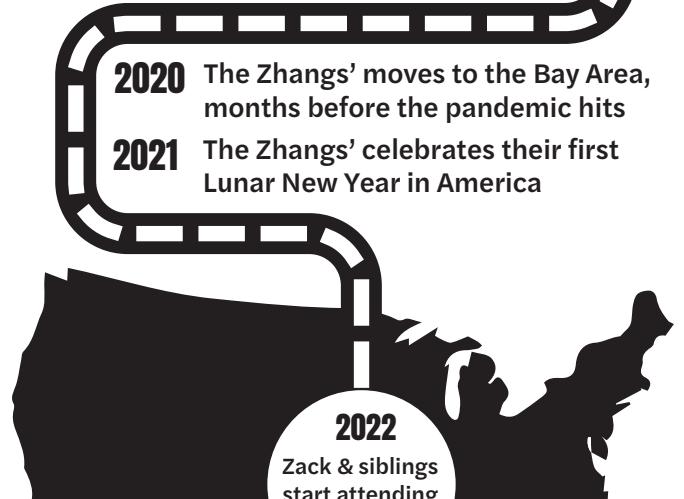
traditions have recently made a resurgence, in part due to the increasing number of Chinese immigrants to the U.S., which peaked at over 2.5 million in 2019.

"Because the number of Chinese immigrants has increased over the years, many traditional cultures are restored in people's hearts again," my father said. "Especially after the California governor recognized Lunar New Year as a state holiday last year, I feel proud and glad the festival is being celebrated more widely. With more appreciation, I believe traditional cultures will grow back. I hope my children will pass down the traditions which were brought from their country by first-generation immigrants like me." ♦

The Zhangs' journey to the U.S.



Zack's younger sister, now 9, is born 2013
Zack's younger brother, now 6, is born 2016
Zhang completes the immigration paperwork, and he begins the steps to prepare for life in America 2019



2020 The Zhangs' moves to the Bay Area, months before the pandemic hits
2021 The Zhangs' celebrates their first Lunar New Year in America
2022 Zack & siblings start attending Saratoga schools

All graphics by JONNY LUO

AN ATHLETE'S JOURNEY: LEARNING TO QUIT

by Christina Chang

After eight years of playing basketball, my athletic career came to an end my junior year. Unlike the senior night celebration many high school athletes envision, my years-long journey was capped off with a game where I sat on the bench the whole way through — much like the rest of the season.

So I quit.

As this year's girls' basketball season has come to a close, I've decided it's time I take the opportunity to reflect on that decision.

Many people talk about how quitting shows a lack of commitment. But by the start of my senior year, I realized quitting was actually the brave thing to do, and staying was the coward's way out — at least for me.

For me, it's easy to stay. I start something when I'm young; it becomes a hobby; I invest myself in it and spend dozens of hours a week doing it because it's what I love. And it becomes a routine — staying.

But quitting is straying from what's expected. It takes choosing to put yourself first and standing up for what's best for you. And that was my story with basketball.

Early years: perseverance despite initial setbacks

Mine was the generic story of an athlete learning persistence and perseverance through a sport. And I think that's still true. I was always just good enough to make a team, but not good enough to receive significant playing time.

I'd play six days a week at one point, at least two hours a day. Over the years, I played on several club and recreational teams: Buena Vista, Fremont Youth Ball Club, Tri City, Top Flight Elite Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), National Junior Basketball (NJB) and Silicon Valley Basketball Club. The goal since I started? To play on my high school varsity team. And I achieved that in my junior year. I'm proud that I did.

On the surface, it seems like just the picture perfect story of someone achieving their childhood dream. But below the surface, I faced a number of challenges with the sport.

I was told by my coach in fourth grade that basketball wasn't my sport — that maybe I should try something else. But I was given a second chance, and decided to continue.

Then I tried out for my middle school team in sixth grade. With two years of experience under my belt, I thought getting on the team would be easy. Turns out, that was not the case.

Receiving the email that I was one of only a few girls who didn't make the team — despite my years of practice compared to many who were completely new to the sport — was a punch to the gut.

What made it worse was that the day after tryouts, other students asked if I was



High school: the hard decision to quit

So when it was announced the NJB coaches would be the new JV girls' basketball coaches my freshman year, I was excited.

I thought I'd find that supportive environment again and maybe even be a starter. But halfway through the season, I was benched. I felt like the only coaches who had ever believed in me had lost their confidence in me.

I took sophomore year off due to the pandemic. By my junior year, the coaches were hired as the new varsity coaches. I had played for so many years just to make the varsity team, and junior year was my chance to achieve that goal. I signed up thinking maybe it would be different — with the starting seniors graduated, maybe I'd receive more playing time. Then I was benched pretty much the entire season.

Yet even into my senior summer, a part of me wanted to continue with the sport.

It was the sunk cost fallacy; I wanted to finish off strong. When you play senior year, you're celebrated. You're given an honorable leave with a dazzling senior night: speeches in your honor, heartfelt gifts, crowds cheering you on. Quitting doesn't earn that level of respect.

Years of dedication and hard work meant I began to tie my

going to practice. My cheeks flushed in embarrassment as I replied that I had been cut.

But as I dribbled on the sidelines during my older brother's practice (he was in seventh grade at the time), the coach — who happened to also be the coach for the girls' team — walked up to me and, ironically, asked why I hadn't tried out. In disbelief, I explained that I had tried out but didn't make the cut. He had me practice with the boys' team for the day and ultimately guaranteed me a spot on the following year's team, where he introduced me as "a valuable new addition."

That year, my teammate invited me to join an outside-of-school NJB team. I met coaches who, for the first time, believed in me from the very start — coaches who had confidence in me, who played me as a starter and who truly believed I was good at the sport.

Development of this story: end of an era

I've written many variations of this story. It began as a Journalism 1 personal column assignment. I later added a 2 a.m. brain dump I had written in my Notes app in the summer going into my sophomore year. A 5 a.m. rant written in junior year directly after the aforementioned conversation I had with a friend is also woven in. Additionally, I included a few senior year insights I gained upon reflecting on my experiences for a college essay.

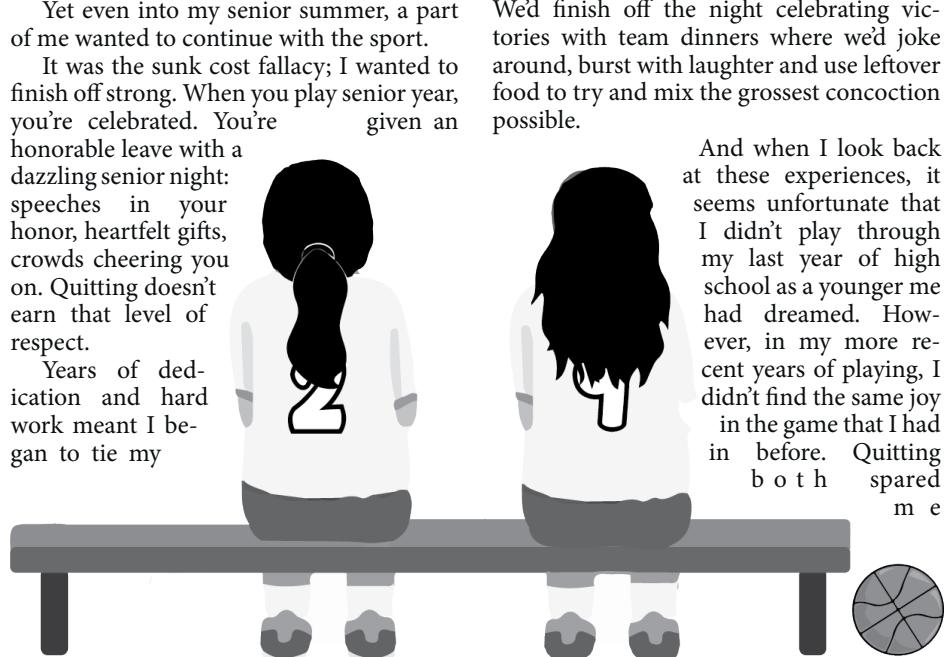
As painful as it was, I chose the latter. The conversation closed with him saying I had two choices: 1) continue playing, maybe get benched and be sad or maybe get more playing time next year and be happy; or 2) don't play and escape the anxiety and stress that may come with it, but maybe feel bad about not finishing through high school and regret it in the future.

While a small part of me still yearned to have my own senior night last month as friends I've played with and against posted on social media about theirs, I've found solace in realizing I made the right choice for me.

Some of my most cherished childhood memories are of weekends spent commuting all across the Bay for tournaments. My teammates and I would sit along the sidelines munching on concession snacks like Furikake Chex Mix and butter mochi as we watched friends on other teams compete.

When it came our turn, we'd feed off the adrenaline rush and play our hearts out. We'd finish off the night celebrating victories with team dinners where we'd joke around, burst with laughter and use leftover food to try and mix the grossest concoction possible.

And when I look back at these experiences, it seems unfortunate that I didn't play through my last year of high school as a younger me had dreamed. However, in my more recent years of playing, I didn't find the same joy in the game that I had in before. Quitting b o t h s p a r e d m e



>> falconfigures

8 years of playing basketball

6 teams Christina played on

8 players on the girl's varsity basketball team

6 days of playing a week at one point

All graphics by ANNIE LIU and MARTIN XU

Which local gyms are best? Here's the answer

by Meher Bhatnagar

As an avid gym goer and self-proclaimed gymrat, I have spent a lot of time this past year in different gyms to get my workouts in. With the wide variety of equipment, price ranges and auxiliary benefits that different gyms offer, it can be overwhelming to choose the one that best fits your needs. To help with this, I visited popular gyms in the Bay Area to rate them based on a few specific factors in this review: environment, proximity, size and overall ambiance.

Fitness 19 (Campbell)

Overall rating: 1.5/5 Falcons.

Starting off weak with the absolute worst gym I have been to is the Fitness 19 located off of Campbell Avenue. With the amount of people that go here, this gym is too cramped and has no air conditioning. It is always burning hot inside, making an effective workout nearly impossible (unless you're a fan of hot-box yoga).

The weights are all rusted and look like they have been rotting outside for decades. This gym is truly the definition of "you get what you pay for" with a low price point of \$14 monthly or \$50 annually. This is a big steal, especially if you aren't an avid gym rat who has time to go every day. However, if you plan on working out consistently, I would not recommend this gym because of the small space and minimal equipment.

Instead, a bigger gym with more space is a better investment if you plan to use the membership consistently.

One pro is that Fitness 19 is only a convenient 10-minute drive away from school, making it accessible for many students.

Crunch Fitness (Sunnyvale)

Overall rating: 3/5 Falcons.

Significantly better than Crunch Fitness, UFC Fit is a United Fight Club-themed gym with blue and white equipment that provides a uniform atmosphere. The walls are plastered with motivational quotes and the gym is spacious for the number of people who go here. Every time I have gone, it hasn't ever been overly crowded.

The gym is well air conditioned with relatively new equipment to choose from. There are also different classes that members can join free of cost. The overall cost per month is relatively higher than Fitness 19, coming in at about \$59. Members can also upgrade their membership from "fitness" to "contender," which gives access to amenities such as spray tans, cryotherapy and red boot light therapy. Additionally, the gym has a smoothie bar with an extensive menu where you can purchase handmade drinks at the end of your workout.

The only downside is its distance: 9 miles may be too long a commute for Saratoga residents. However, considering the gym's high quality features, it's worth trying out.

Despite the spacing issues, the equip-



Photo by MEHER BHATNAGAR

Clockwise from top left: Crunch Fitness, Fitness 19 Meridian Avenue, 49ers Fit and UFC Fit.

Fitness 19 (Meridian)

Overall rating: 4/5 Falcons.

The Fitness 19 off of Meridian Avenue is located in the Hacienda Gardens shopping center close to many restaurants. For the same cost as the one in Campbell, you have access to a gym at least four times the size and multiple rooms for posing and group fit classes.

Though it seems like the whole world goes here, the gym experience becomes that much more fun when you can run into people you know. It can be quite crowded, especially from 4-8 p.m.

The squat racks at this gym are dispersed throughout, which is a small downside for me, but the number of unheard-of machines near the wall of treadmills and stairmasters is a huge plus to this gym.

With a spacious, clean bathroom and amazing lighting in their posing room, this gym's affordability and cleanliness makes it one of my favorite fitness venues, even though it sometimes takes a bit of waiting to find equipment. For premium access to all Fitness 19 clubs, the membership comes to \$25/month, making it very convenient to get your workout in no matter where you are while also providing various amenities like recovery and tanning — similar to UFC.

For most Saratogans, this gym is a bit far considering it is an 18-minute drive; however, the drive is worth it for the low cost and the quality which it provides.

49ers Fit (Westgate Center)

Overall rating: 4.5/5 Falcons.

Saving the best and most reliable for last,

49ers Fit takes the number one spot for the best gym. Located off of Saratoga Avenue, 49ers Fit is a fully red themed gym that's located directly in Westgate Mall. Though this gym is costly, the \$59 monthly membership is worth it if you utilize it to its maximum.

The quality of the equipment is top notch and every machine is extremely clean. The members in this gym are friendly and will always encourage you to put in your best effort. Members are also particular about wiping down their machines after use to ensure cleanliness. This gym has all the machines you need for an intensive workout with spotless locker rooms, a yoga studio and HIIT workout rooms downstairs.

Since the gym is so large, it never feels too crowded. Personally, I wish there were more benches and squat racks because sometimes you have to wait for one to open up, but the majority of the time you can find one right away. The hours that I would avoid going to this gym are generally from 5-7 p.m. — it's way less crowded and a perfect workout environment at other times.

A certain downside is that guest passes are \$20 a day, which is quite pricey for one day of use. The location is quite convenient for students since it is just a 10-minute drive from the high school. ♦

Local gym rankings

Fitness 19 Campbell: 1.5 Falcons



Crunch Fitness: 3 Falcons



UFC Fit: 3.75 Falcons



Fitness 19 Meridian: 4 Falcons



49ers Fit: 4.5 Falcons



Shared interest in wrestling connect teacher and student

by Lynn Dai

Senior Tony Fernandes is a self-proclaimed class clown.

He admits he makes "dumb comments" every day in nearly all his classes, but especially in Kirk Abe's AP Government and Economics class, an openness he attributes to interactions with Abe outside of class in wrestling and Abe's friendly personality. Most of his top jokes in Abe's class push the envelope.

"He's a very friendly and open person, and he likes to banter with his students," Fernandes said. "Normally, I wouldn't pay that much attention to government and economics, but our friendship has definitely made the class more interesting and engaging to itself."

This story has grown with my experiences. As my high school years come to a close, it only seems right that I finally cap this story off. So I'll end it with this: Basketball served its purpose and more in my growing up. Sure, it was challenging at times, but it taught me a key lesson about moving on — that quitting is sometimes a testament to one's courage rather than one's cowardice. I still love basketball. I'm grateful for every experience I've had with the sport. But I'm proud of myself for understanding it's OK to grow out of something and quit when it no longer aligns with my current interests and future goals. ♦

Both Fernandes and Abe, who was the former head coach of the school's wrestling team from the 1990s to 2019, share a passion for the sport, an interest that's deeply ingrained in Abe's class culture. Whenever a student is caught with their phone out, for example, they're "required" to go to the open mat to witness wrestlers practicing for their matches.

"Immediately, I forgot everything and then hoped for the best and pushed myself through it," Fernandes said. "I was super out of control, but Mr. Abe was giving commentary on the sidelines because it was a home

match. He told me to 'break a leg' before the match, and I thought it was really nice that he was actually there."

Unfortunately for him, Fernandes did end up breaking a limb — his left elbow — later on in his training, sidelining him.

Gaining the skills necessary to contend on the wrestling mat is no small feat. During the season, the team practiced for three hours in the wrestling room — a small room few students have ventured into — to improve their stamina. These practice sessions often consisted of workouts called "going live," where wrestlers fight match after match and search for new partners to train against.

Other workouts, like the Iron Man, which Fernandes cited as one of the toughest aspects of the sport, tests students' cardio and persistence by matching pairs to train continuously for five rounds.

Ironically, while he started the sport for fun, Fernandes stuck to it for its tough nature. He plans to continue martial arts in college and hopes to try judo or jiu jitsu, Japanese grappling arts with some resemblance to wrestling.

"It's fun because you get to throw people around, but the whole point of the sport is to literally dominate people," he said. "It's a really rough sport, especially in the beginning because you get beat up every day. But by

sticking to it, despite its uncomfortable nature, you just do it to get better and it builds your character. It makes it easier to deal with discomfort and persevere even when you don't want to continue."

Abe has tried to help build the school's wrestling culture for decades. As a winter sport, wrestling starts in December and carries through the winter break, resuming from January to the beginning of February. As a result, Abe likens wrestling to constant running an ultra-marathon.

"It's such a tough sport, mentally and physically," he said.

After participating in the wrestling team at UC Davis for a year, Abe joined Saratoga High in the early 1990s as a teacher and assistant coach for wrestling to become more involved in the extracurriculars his students participated in. He later took some time off to spend more time with his kids, returning again in 2019 as a head coach.

"[The sport] has taught me to always, always strive to do better," he said. "You do what you can to reach your potential, knowing that you're always expecting to compete at the college level. I've coached wrestling in the past and have so much passion for it, because I know how much dedication and hard work wrestlers go through. I've always been surprised at the amount of resilience my wrestling students have." ♦



SENIOR Tony Fernandes

BADMINTON

Falcons find success after subpar 21-22 year

by Sunny Cao
& Saachi Jain

The badminton team has leaped to a strong start. The Falcons gained a 19-11 win against Palo Alto High on March 16. Although they were whipped 24-6 by Milpitas on March 14, they beat Wilcox 16-14 on March 7, and Cupertino 18-12 on March 9.

Last year, the team ended with a 1-9 record, losing against every team except for Gunn. Many players attributed this to the highly competitive nature of teams in the higher-level De Anza league, which they are still in this year.

The team is looking to get a new strength and conditioning coach this season that will allow all players to improve on their individual skills. The Falcons are coached by Thom-

as Ching who has emphasized strength and conditioning.

So far, they've seen overall improvement in team spirit and performance, something junior doubles player Stephanie Chung attributes early success to the team's new lineups.

"You really get used to who you're playing with, whereas last year, the lineups changed every match, and you had to get used to your partner during warmups," Chung said.

Both this year and last year, the team has seen an influx in freshmen on the roster.

Senior captain Tony Guo, who plays boys doubles, said that many freshmen who are looking to get out of P.E. see the sport as an easy way out but have learned to like the sport.

"At first I wanted to get out of P.E., but

then I realized how many friends I could make," freshman boys doubles player Lucius Ko said. "It is a lot more challenging than I thought, but it has been really fun."

"It is a lot more challenging than I thought, but it has been really fun."

FRESHMAN Lucius Ko

doubles.

All these players have already established themselves as strong members.

"I think a lot of them might be new to the sport, and they might not have the basics down right away, but I think they all have a lot of potential and are adjusting really quickly," Chung said.

Though they won three of their first four matches, the captains have begun to scope out their upcoming opponents — some potential difficult challenges they foresee are against Lynbrook and Monta Vista.

"So far this season everyone's been performing extremely well," Guo said. "It's pretty impressive how everyone keeps their fighting spirits till the last point, which is why we have so many great matches and a lot of tiebreakers," Guo said. ♦

BOYS' TENNIS

Early-season rain fails to dampen team's aspirations

by Daniel Wu
& Aiden Ye

The boys' tennis season has gotten off to a slow start due to inclement weather conditions. The Falcons, coached by Florin Marica, were originally set to face off against the Gunn Titans on Feb. 28 and the Mountain View Spartans on March 9. However, both matches were postponed due to heavy rain.

Senior captain and No. 2 doubles player Julian Berkowitz-Sklar said that while the team has been unable to gain sufficient on-court practice, they have sought work-

arounds through asynchronous strength training.



Berkowitz-Sklar

As of mid-March, the team had played four matches, with a 4-3 loss against Los Altos on March 2, a 6-1 win against Homestead on March 7, a 5-2 win against Monta Vista on March 16, and a 7-0 loss against Cupertino on March 17. Two athletes — junior No. 1 doubles player Shrey Jain and Berkowitz-Sklar — on the 14-player team have been injured. Jain injured his leg during a Bombay in the Bay rehearsal and is unsure of when

"It's very easy for freshmen to

come into a new school's varsity team and be immediately intimidated, but they are confident in their abilities and are ready rising to the occasion," Berkowitz-Sklar said.

Counteracting the influx of new talent, the team also experienced a major loss in former No. 1 singles player junior Kosei Ogata who is now being homeschooled as he is pursuing competitive tennis.

Berkowitz-Sklar noted that new additions No. 1 singles Somei Ogata and No. 2 singles Nikhil Srivasta, both freshmen, have been performing well.

"The team is really balanced, with a mix of experience and new talent, and regardless of the weather we'll be ready to give it our all," Berkowitz-Sklar said. ♦

BOYS' GOLF

Two early matches lost after rain delays season

by Saachi Jain
& Amy Luo

Due to heavy rains and unpredictable weather this month, the boys' golf team has seen several matches canceled and struggled to win when they've gotten onto the course.

As of March 17, the team had played three matches. A match against Lynbrook on March 16 ended in a tie at 189-189. In a home match against Los Altos on March 13, the Falcons lost 209-194. The team suffered a close 217-219 loss against Monta Vista on March 8.

"The team is almost identical to last year, so we haven't lived up to expectations in terms of winning matches," sophomore No. 3 Aidan Smith said. "We've all been a bit nervous, and luck has also played some part."

SOPHOMORE Aidan Smith

Ultimately, making it to CCS finals is their ultimate goal. To achieve this lofty aspiration, the team aims to consistently encourage one another, as well as offer feedback and constructive criticism.

Relying on key players such as Smith, Aswani and senior No. 1 Howard Shu, the team looks toward an away match against Cupertino High School on March 27. ♦

Team suffers lackluster preseason

by Anirudh Iyer

Spring sports have just begun, and with it, the start of a new baseball season. Though the Falcons lost a tough 0-2 nailbiter to Menlo School on Feb. 24 to kick off their campaign, they followed that difficult game up with two dominating wins: a 7-1 thrashing of Prospect on March 1, and a 10-2 dismantling of Del Mar on March 7.

Coming off a strong 2021-22 season, where the Falcons went deep into the playoffs and finished with a league record of 9-6, this year's baseball lineup has high expectations for what's to come.

In the game against the Prospect Panthers, after three 2/3 solid innings, sophomore pitcher Doug Bettinger relieved captain and pitcher Lucas Dennis and struck out the final batter in the fourth inning. Junior pitcher Shane Timmons closed the game out with three stellar innings of his own and excellent variety in his pitches. With those three and sophomore lefty Aiden Chen, the Falcons' pitching group is a force to be reckoned with.

Saratoga's last preseason outing, and every future game will now be part of the league season, with results going towards potential CCS qualification. The Falcons' first league game is against Cupertino at home on Mar. 16.

Next, the Falcons' game against Lincoln was postponed to a recent spell of rainy weather.

They followed that up with a 2-0 loss at Homestead on March 11. On March 15, Mountain View thumped the Falcons 8-0, a forgettable game filled with errors on defense and unproductive at bats.

Even so, Saratoga has piled up runs in most games: Dennis, Chen, Timmons and Bettinger have shown themselves to be high-level sluggers, with the former two possessing over a .300 batting average in the 2021-22 season.

Key contributors to an impres-



Senior Lucas Dennis stands on second base in the game against Del Mar.

sive 10 runs at Del Mar were junior infielder Abhinav Kiran, who went 3-4 with three runs scored and an RBI, and sophomore Samanya Ram, who crossed home plate on three separate occasions as well.

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Boys on the track distance team run a three mile post-meet recovery run during practice on March 17.

Photo by NATALIE CHUA

TRACK AND FIELD

Track meets canceled due to severe weather

by Natalie Chua
& Sanjoli Gupta

against Fremont and lost 80-24 against Mountain View.

Their second meet will be combined into a double dual with Monta Vista and Santa Clara on April 6.

Stoiber runs long distance events — including the 800m, 1600m and 3200m (two miles). Due to the delays, the team has been able to get more practices in before their first competition. Some practices also had to be canceled. Merrill and other members made up for the lost practice by practicing indoors on treadmills, stationary bikes or in the weight room.

Freshman Kyle Li also runs long distance, including the 800m, 1600m and 3200m runs. Before the track season, Li ran cross country and played soccer, but this was his first time in track. Even though there were setbacks for practices and meets, Li was able to improve his running skills and adjust to the team through coach Tippett's Saturday "On Your Own" runs, which make distance runners jog for 60-85 minutes, a time frame that can accumulate to anywhere between seven to 11 miles.

"In the future, I think we can definitely win our future meets against the same schools," Li said. ♦

SWIM

Small team size hinders Falcons' ability to win

by Jonny Luo
& Martin Xu

the past five years.

While swimmers continue to train in heavy rain, cold weather and strong wind gusts during practices, swimmers like Hong have noted that it causes certain difficulties in practices.

For example, practice on March 14 was canceled because the strong winds blew the pool covers into a tangle, preventing swimmers from swimming. When the weather allows, the team has been training techniques, such as learning open turns and practicing transitions between strokes for events like medley.

According to Allegretti, technique work involves utilizing a variety of drills to emphasize specific focal points within the strokes.

Allegretti would also like to encourage everyone to come out and cheer on their fellow classmates at their upcoming home meets on March 31, April 6 and between April 26-28.

With the last several years being impacted by COVID-19, Hong has noticed that the swim team isn't as close as he had hoped.

"A big problem in the last few years for us is just being a team instead of acting as individuals racing," Hong said. "We're trying to do a better job at [hosting more team bonding events]."

With more interactions at swim meets and after-practice team bonding events — such as eating out at Super Duper after the Los Altos meet on March 19, with more planned in the future.

"I think the swim season has been going very well considering the last couple of years has been through COVID-19," Hong said. "We're all slowly improving and as people continue to get in shape, we're all going to be better together. We all challenge each other and we all improve." ♦

SOFTBALL

Despite lack of experience, players stay persistent

by Natalie Chua
& Victoria Lin

Their most recent game was against Palo Alto on March 22 (not covered here because of printing deadlines). On March 15 against Monta Vista ended with a 13-3 win. The softball team had their first game of the season against Leigh High on March 7 in which they rallied back from a 6-3 deficit to win 7-6.

Currently, some top performers are senior first baseman Lily Guzman and Irene Frazier, sophomore pitcher Saira Ramakrishnan, and junior third baseman Vivienne Brooks. As there are about five remaining veterans on the team, it is up to

them and coach Mike Davey to mentor the 11 newcomers.

"We've been trying to teach the new girls the basics and getting a positive routine to feel comfortable with the environment," Frazier said.

During practice, new players learn the basics in batting, sliding and tracking the ball on the outfield. When they make mistakes or are confused on the field, veterans walk them through the steps of plays. For Vasquez, she had Brooks assist her.

The team plans to train more for base

running — a skill that they had trouble with during their first game. According to Guzman, a lot of it has to do with always thinking ahead, which can be difficult while the ball is moving so fast. However, the Falcons manage to work around the difficulties with their strong team chemistry and culture of encouragement. The strong communication between players aids the team when it comes to their defense position.

"It's like a family. I feel like the energy of the game [against Leigh] was perfect. Everyone was involved and cheering," Guzman said. ♦

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

Falcons endure rough start in El Camino League

by Andrew Lin
& Victoria Lin

after point as the ball slipped through the Falcons' defense. The set ended with the Falcons losing 25-16.

The Falcons seemed to make a resurgence in the third and final set, tying the score with Los Altos several times. A controversial decision by the referee in Los Altos' favor led the stands to erupt with boos and jeering, but it didn't matter. The Falcons lost 25-22.

Despite the 3-0 loss, coach Lori Gragnola is optimistic about the rest of the season since the team dropped to the less competitive El Camino League last year for the 2021-22 season.



Kau

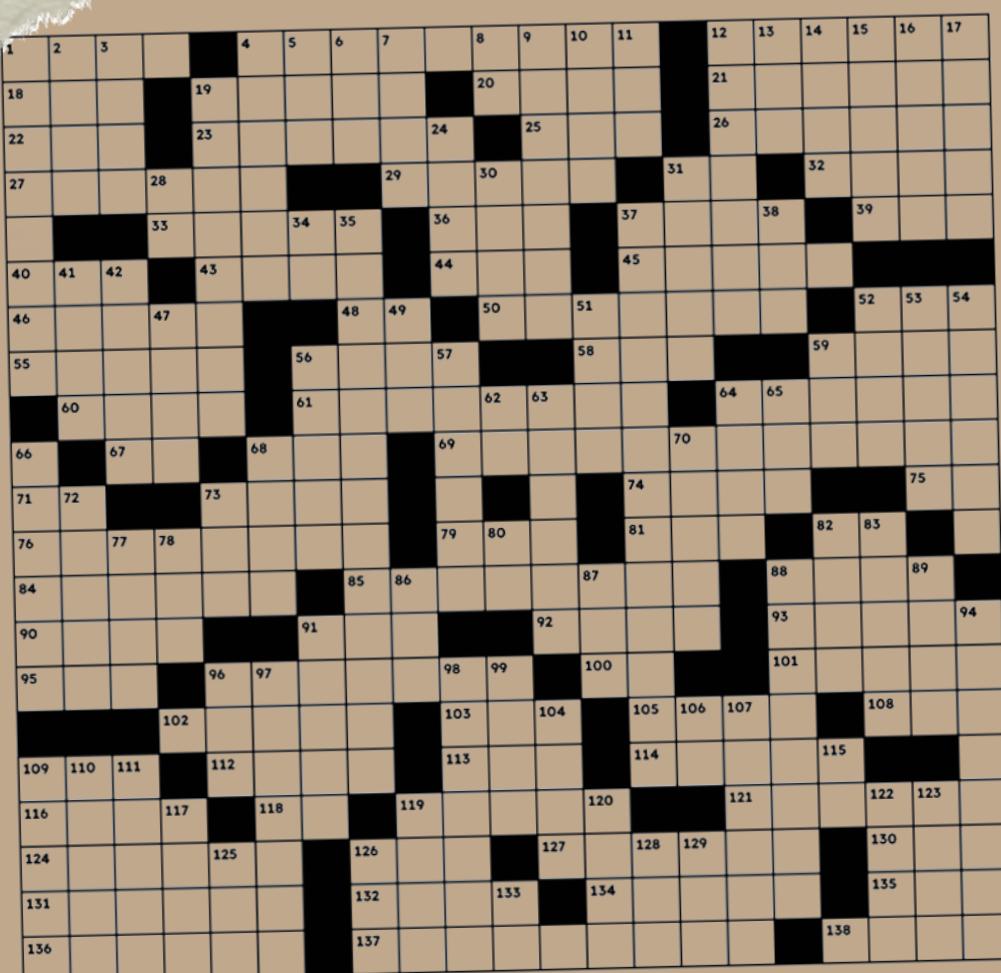
Junior team captain and setter Samuel Kau attributed the loss to their canceled pre-season, which left them ill prepared for their very first league game. "This was our first game, so we were a bit rusty. We'll pick it up though," Kau said.

Apart from these challenges, the team has improved in other areas.

Bad team chemistry, which Gragnola attributed to "weird dynamics between personalities," hindered the Falcons, leading to a winless season in the highly competitive De Anza league last year.

"This year is like a 180," Gragnola said. "They all get along great. We are working as a family with two freshmen that we've brought in under our wings." ♦

The Falcon March Crossword



BY ChristopherChen

Across

- Slang for a good song
- Something all tragic heroes have (alliterative)
- A dark igneous rock
- To ___ is human, to forgive, divine
- Formerly Malfoy house elf
- Island country, has bottled water with a blue sleeve
- At a particular location: ___
- American TV network owned by Warner Bros.
- Wealth
- Prohibition
- Los Angeles-inspired brand
- Assigned in English class, everyone hates these
- Pipe systems for waste
- "The" in Spanish
- City building simulators published by Ubisoft
- A type of steak, aptly shaped like a T
- A noise pirates make
- Columbus's first ship
- Time zone used by Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands
- Previous name for MacOS
- Generally black-colored gem
- Allow
- Country with pyramids
- Pseudonym for Samuel Clemens
- Trademark
- Both... and, ___ nor
- Athletic competition SHS teams need to qualify for
- Insane, or un___ d
- Dry and barren
- Explosives (think Minecraft)
- When birds shed feathers
- Plural, ammunition for guns
- Sports beverage
- An ideal world
- Chromosomes for most males
- Acronym for uncompleted works
- Singular, what ASB does after 2nd
- Turn this on when it's hot indoors
- ___ & Stitch
- ___ you so
- Manufacturer of computing goods, especially calculators
- Merry-go-round

- Throw
- Also known as SCEA
- Be ___ ease
- To be half-asleep
- An inhabitant of this country
- Cain's brother
- Dentists deal with ___ health
- Abbr., a type of deal you can only get once
- ___ to the highest bidder!"
- Cars drive in these
- Norse god who sacrificed his hand
- Sheldon Cooper's catchphrase
- 3.14
- A stand for paintings
- The best instrument
- Abbr. for account
- Star ___ (not George Lucas)
- Economic Research Institute
- I don't know
- Isle of ___, located between Great Britain and Ireland
- <link ___="stylesheet" href="z.css"/>
- Boats owned by the wealthy
- British, refers to fools
- "The" in French (masculine)

Three other uses for the Falcon

By SamBai
& LeynaChan

You've just finished your second class of the day, and you grab a copy of The Saratoga Falcon on your way out. After totally reading every story in the newspaper — not just skimming the top 10 on the very back and maybe filling out part of the crossword — you're unsure of what you should do with the newspaper. You could just throw it away or use it as a doormat to one of your classes, but there's so much more you can do with it.

Origami

Printed on tabloids, the newspaper is the perfect size for a number of origami creations. Its large dimensions allow you to fold designs ranging from intricate dragons to the simplest paper crane, and the thin paper allows for easy ripping, meaning there's no need to lick a crease over and over again before being able to rip a soggy edge in half. You can even make a classic newspaper hat by folding it into a hollow cylinder and putting it over a light bulb to

create a lamp. Just by folding one corner to the edge and making a square, you open a world of new possibilities, from squishy balls to snakes.

Impromptu raincoat

If anime characters can do it, you can too. When it rains, you can hold a copy of The Falcon over your head as you dart between classes.

Art

The newspaper is also the perfect place to practice art skills. No need to drive 20 minutes to a stationary store anymore and spend 10 dollars on a sketchbook when you can use The Falcon!

Using the back of the Nov. 22 issue, you can turn the Backpage folding kit of a turkey into an actual turkey by soaking sheets of it into a bath of glue and then plastering it over a model turkey to create a paper mache. Or by cutting out squares of paper from the Life double page, you can create the best paper collage ever, fully in color with the most juicy stories. ♦

- Sugary liquids
 - On indefinite ___
 - Desire to harm
 - Rapper who debuted with *Illmatic*
 - A bright source of light or inspiration
 - Informal suffix for somewhat
 - List of things to be addressed
 - Prefix meaning "flower"
 - Concur
 - Former name of Tokyo
 - A ___ statement says that you haven't incurred any damages
 - You need these to get into your home
 - Abbr., completing education
- Down**
- Something very large
 - Shiny spheres
 - Everything has ___ and cons
 - In *Macbeth*: "Scotland hath ___ s enough to fill up your will" (4.3.90)
 - American counterpart to BBC
 - Acronym used when admitting something
 - Plural affirmative votes
 - Abbr., surrender/forfeit
 - ___, égalité, fraternité
 - Slightly open (of doors, usually)
 - Opposite of an L
 - The science guy
 - First name of Bond girl Paloma's actor who also portrayed Marilyn Monroe in *Blond* (2022)
 - A long, dramatic story
 - Where gladiator fights happen
 - The Tower of Pisa ___ (present)
 - Fortune-telling cards
 - Skeletons in the Mario universe
 - US Navy ___
 - Two rivals are usually ___ odds
 - Brown birds mostly in the Americas
 - Seven ___ nine
 - Abbreviation for the state that has a well-known city with the same name
 - Statistical inference of a value
 - A principle that internet service providers should treat all content, sites, and applications equally
 - Yearly interest of credit cards
 - Moving in water (without drowning)
 - Drug used to treat anxiety
 - Rapper who released "Fancy"
 - A Massachusetts STEM university
 - ___ be like that sometimes
 - ___ and seethe
 - Last name Eastwood

top ten

WAYS TO "WALK"

10 **Regular walking.** The simplest way to get from point A to point B. Simple, effective, but bland.

9 **Speed-walking.** Combining the efficiency of walking with the speed of running. It's the perfect middle ground for anyone wanting to go relatively fast, but not tire themselves out.

8 **Sprinting.** Very fast and efficient. The quickest way to get from point A to point B. The only downside is that it gets exhausting real fast.

7 **Walking without moving your arms.** You'll look like you're gliding across the ground, given that people don't look down at your feet.



6 **The inchworm.** It's going to hurt your stomach, especially if you do it on something like concrete, but it's low profile and hard to mess up.

5 **Bear crawl.** Get down on all fours and start moving forward using all of your limbs. It's a bit slow and hard on your hands and knees, but that's how a lot of animals do it, right?

4 **Marching.** Walk like you mean it. Keep good form and make sure to follow a good rhythm.

3 **Galloping.** It's fast and fun, but just a bit energy consuming. Make sure to keep a steady pace and swing your arms high.

2 **NPC walk.** Get into a set pattern and embrace the animation you've been programmed to perform.

1 **Dr. Livesy walk.** Thrust your chest up high, point your chin up, smile and walk with great swagger. Don't forget the arms. Keep them swinging in a rhythmic fashion.

>> Eric Shi