

SCHOOL SCOPE 14

Alum becomes youngest First Marine Division Band drum major.

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Saratoga's Madronia Cemetery holds rich history.

SPORTS 18

Boys' basketball team wins four straight to start league season.

THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION



Friday, January 28, 2022

Saratoga High School | Saratoga, CA

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OMICRON WAVE SHIFTS POLICIES

BY Victoria Hu
& Sarah Zhou

Note: Statistics in this story were last updated on Jan. 20.

Following the return from winter break, the school experienced a large uptick in COVID-19 cases due to the omicron variant. Before the return to school on Jan. 3, at least 29 students and five staff members had initially tested positive, assistant prin-

cipal Brian Thompson said.

The weekend before, the district distributed over 1,000 free at-home rapid testing kits to gauge the spread of COVID-19, and combat the rise of the omicron as a result of travel during the break, Thompson said. The district also increased on-campus PCR testing opportunities with Inspire Diagnostics. Because many students and staff were considered to be close contacts,

>> TESTING on pg. 5



FALCON // SELINA CHEN, ANDREW LIN, MINA YEAP, SARAH ZHOU

12- to 15-year-olds receive boosters after approval

BY Selina Chen
& Sanjoli Gupta

The school partnered with Safeway to host a COVID-19 Vaccination and Booster Clinic on Jan. 22, following the Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s approval earlier in the month of Pfizer-BioNTech booster shots for 12- to 15-year olds.

Students who have just become eligible are now receiving their boosters to enhance protection against the omicron variant; however, the surge of positive cases due to omicron has also thrown students into an unexpected dilemma with current policies.

Sophomore Nidhi Vadlamudi, 15, is

making plans with her parents to get the booster shot.

"Getting the booster shot is the best way to control the spread of [COVID-19], and extra immunity is the best way to combat new variants," Vadlamudi said.

According to the Harvard Gazette, the purpose of a booster shot is to increase the "quantity and quality of antibodies that are produced." These new and matured antibodies can "be more effective at recognizing variants with multiple mutations," thus protecting against omicron.

When it comes to the speed of approving the booster, Vadlamudi sees both sides

>> BOOSTER on pg. 5

School to remain in-person unless trends worsen further

BY Sarah Zhou

New cases can be tracked using the District's COVID-19 Dashboard.

Despite the rise of the highly transmissible new omicron variant, the district said that Saratoga and Los Gatos High Schools are unlikely to return to remote learning. District leaders say they are following all COVID-19 Safety Guidelines established by the County Health Department and Office of Education in an attempt to ensure students remain healthy and in classes.

The district currently partners with Inspire Diagnostics to host biweekly PCR testing for all students and staff at both schools,

and though there has yet to be a severe outbreak, it has prepared a contingency plan to transition online in the case of one, assistant principal Brian Thompson said.

A community outbreak, according to the CA School COVID Safety website, occurs when "three or more people with COVID-19 within a 14-day period have had identifiable connections to each other at school." Returning to remote learning is a decision that would be made by the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health and the Santa Clara County Office of Education, not the district, said Thompson.

"The site itself does not have the ability to

>> ONLINE on pg. 5

Community mourns loss of 23-year teacher Todd Dwyer

BY Christina Chang
& Atrey Desai

The school is mourning the death of longtime teacher Todd Dwyer, who passed away at age 60 on Dec. 10.

Dwyer carved a unique career path and held occupations ranging from military service to a construction worker to a social studies teacher. He is survived by his mother, brother, wife, children and

granddaughter.

Throughout his 23 years at the school, Dwyer was known for his firebrand personality and strongly held views. He gave numerous interviews to both the newspaper and yearbook student journalists over the years and expressed his own opinions published in the Mercury News.

>> DWYER on pg. 4

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newsbriefs

Negotiations result in pay increases for teachers

Following continuous efforts to rally for higher pay in the fall, the members of the District Teachers Association (DTA) came to an agreement with LGSUHSD in December.

The agreement entailed a 5% raise for three consecutive years for a total of 15%, along with improvements to dental and vision healthcare plans.

The chief negotiator representing Saratoga High and Los Gatos High teachers was Marcy Cooper, a teacher at Los Gatos High while the chief negotiator for the district was associate superintendent Carrie Bosco.

Teachers said their salaries in recent years weren't close to matching inflation and fell far short compared to other local districts, like Santa Clara and Mountain View-Los Altos.

While most teachers voted in favor of the agreement, roughly a third voted against it, including history teacher Mike Davey.

"We didn't get the average raise we wanted, even though it's not the fault of our negotiators," Davey said. "The district played hardball and they won. I'm really disappointed."

For her part, Bosco said this was the largest total raise provided in the district at any time and is much larger than those granted by most other local districts in recent years.

"This recognizes the skill and dedication of our staff and keeps our total compensation highly competitive in the area," Bosco said.

— Christina Chang and Martin Xu

District maintains bell schedule for second semester

After receiving negative teacher and student feedback for the first semester bell schedule that lacks a daily tutorial, district leaders sent a survey to the students, parents and staff members at both campuses before winter break to gauge which schedule changes the stakeholders would like to see. There were three options, some with shorter passing periods and others with daily tutorials or consistent end times.

On Dec. 15, superintendent Mike Grove announced that the fall bell schedule would carry over to the spring semester after 50.5 percent of all respondents preferred to stick with the current one.

Grove said the decision to maintain the status quo was aimed at preventing pressure on teachers with their tight schedules. Additionally, changing the bell schedule immediately was not an urgent demand from most stakeholders.

Even though the district chose to stay with the current bell schedule for the spring semester, a new bell schedule that includes a daily tutorial is likely for next year. By state law, it will maintain an 8:30 start time.

— Andrew Lin and Nikhil Mathihalli

Newly credentialed teacher hired in social studies

After recently graduating from San Jose State University's Teacher Credential program, social studies teacher Bismah Siddiqi was hired as a long-term sub in January to teach the classes of longtime teacher Todd Dwyer, who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in December.

Siddiqi teaches four periods of world geography and one period of economics. She hopes to quickly get settled and help her students to the best of her abilities.

Before getting her teaching credential, she attended and graduated from California Polytechnic State University with a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology and Geography and a Master's degree in Multicultural Education.

Siddiqi said she has always wanted to become a teacher. Not only does she enjoy the process of lesson planning, presenting and talking to students, but her parents also emphasized the importance of education early on in her life, which left a great impression on her.

"The students here seem ready to learn and engage in class which I appreciate as a teacher," she said.

— Martin Xu

picturethis



Robotics | Senior Shreyas Rana connects the robot circuitry to ready a prototype drivetrain for the software team to test with on Jan. 17; the team recently attended the FRC kick-off on the week of Jan. 8.

Courtesy of SHEEBA GARG

Speak Up For Change announces this year's theme: Stepping Forward

THE EVENT, WHICH WILL OCCUR OUTDOORS DURING TUTORIAL ON FEB. 4, REVOLVES AROUND DESTIGMATIZING MENTAL HEALTH

By Christina Chang
& Lynn Dai

During the 2022 Speak Up For Change assembly on Feb. 4, students will share their experiences overcoming adversities related to the theme "Stepping Forward," which emphasizes the importance of openly discussing mental health in order to break its stigma. The event is slated to take place outdoors during tutorial.



Yang

Each year, the Speak Up For Change commissioners submit three themes to the school's administrators and ASB, who then choose one theme for the event.

"Stepping Forward," the theme that was chosen, is also our favorite, so we're really excited," senior outreach commissioner Catherine Kan said. "Last year's event was virtual, so there wasn't much participation. Our speakers are really great, so I'm also pumped that we're going to have a crowd this year."

Kan said this year's Speak Up For Change was more difficult to plan compared to previous years because the commission is far more limited, with commissioners split between outreach (the commission responsible for hosting Speak Up For Change) and other leadership branches. She and senior Alex Yang — another commissioner — had to enlist additional officers from leadership groups to work with them.

According to Yang, they selected the theme of mental health because the youth mental health crisis has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Last year, Speak Up For Change was held live over YouTube, a platform that Yang said "lost the intimacy" of being able to actively engage with and relate to students' experiences.

We hope that the event will make students feel more connected and comfortable in the school environment," Yang said. "For me, seeing the upperclassmen talk about their struggles throughout

high school boosted my confidence. I saw that these stellar kids who seemed to achieve so much without any problems also struggled as well, and that sort of realization brings our school community together."

Since the event is in person this year, commissioners also encouraged clubs to participate in order to increase the inclusivity of the event, as well as encouraging different parts of the school to work together. Clubs like Sources of Strength, Singing for Smiles, Crafting Club, Yoga for All Club, LEO Club and Chinese Club will be providing activities to boost wellness throughout the week, which starts on Jan. 31.

Chinese Club, for example, is hosting performances to simultaneously celebrate the 2022 Lunar New Year on Feb. 1. Sources of Strength will be making wellness posters and putting them up around the school.

The commission has tried to avoid "commercializing the event" in an inconsiderate way.

While commissioners posted a speaker sign-up QR code on the @semicolonsaratoga Instagram page, Yang said the commission team has tried to avoid "commercializing the event" in an inconsiderate way, as topics like mental health are sensitive.

Instead, each commissioner reached out to specific students they felt would be comfortable speaking and invited them as speakers for the event.

Senior Raya Khanna and juniors Ishir Lakhani, Allison Tan, Jasmine Ispasiou and Elsa Blom are among the featured speakers.

Khanna said she had been hard on herself for not putting much effort into changing the community around her for a long time, so she

decided to speak up at the event to share what she has gone through.

Her speech will revolve around how her mental health experience has affected her over the course of high school and how she has worked to overcome it.

You're usually not the only one who's going through something. A lot of people relate to you, even if you don't recognize it.

SENIOR Alex Yang

Junior Ishir Lakhani's speech will focus on how he overcame the nadir of his mental health through the support of friends and community.

Junior Allison Tan will be speaking about her mental health journey, with a focus on bringing awareness to topics like depression and suicide prevention.

Tan, Ispasiou and Blom — all officers for Semicolon Saratoga, a platform Tan created for students to share mental health experiences in 2021 — will cover the pervasive taboo of mental health in the community along with letting the school know that the organization is a resource.

For Kan, the event has impacted her on a personal level in past years. Specifically, she recalls resonating with Class of 2020 Ritika Kuppam's speech during the 2020 Speak Up For Change week themed "Know No," in which Kuppam spoke about "finding confidence in oneself and promoting a world of diverse interests and acceptance."

Kan said she's excited for the event and hopes the speakers' stories will be just as impactful for others as it has been for her.

"Since we get such a big audience, everyone gets to hear messages that we, [as commissioners], think are important for them to hear from people that have really great stories," Kan said. "I think it has a good effect on others." ◆



ICAC plan Bombay in the Bay show amid Omicron

By Meher Bhatnagar
& Nikhil Mathihalli

The Indian Cultural Awareness Club (ICAC) officers are planning to be under the bright lights of the McAfee Center again next month with their annual Bollywood show, Bombay in the Bay (BNB), on Feb. 17, 18 and 19.

Last year, due to COVID-19, audience members watched a pre-recorded show from their cars at the SHS parking lot. The funds from the show, obtained from the ticket prices and the food profits, will go toward the Tamil Nadu foundation, which supports underfunded government schools in India. They provide resources like laptops, computers, better instructors and better facilities.

The public schools there suffer a lack of basic technology or working bathrooms, said senior club officer Kavya Narayan, saying, "We helped them [the Tamil Nadu foundation] out a few years ago and they were a really easy charity to work with. They even had someone fly out to watch our performance a few years ago."

A typical BNB show consists of 18 dances — grade-level dances and specialty dances including Tamasha, Classical, Singing and Bhangra — paired with an ongoing skit throughout the show.

This year, the skit will be based on the Bollywood movie "Dil Dhadakne Do." Each grade hosts a boys, girls and co-ed performance. The seniors also hold all-girls

and all-males dance (AMD), which are selectively for seniors who have performed all throughout their high school years.

Tickets for the show will cost \$15 and will be open for sale online in late January.

Similar to last year, practices are still being held outdoors with masks on. Showing vaccination cards may also be mandated before audience members enter the event.

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MAP equipment worth \$30,000 stolen, later recovered undamaged on roadside

By Anamika Anand
& Victoria Hu

On Monday, Jan. 3, the first day after winter break, school staff discovered that about 30 cameras along with several microphones, tripods and batteries were missing from the library.

During first period, Media Arts Program teacher Alex Hemmerich's sophomores went to the library to retrieve cameras for a mini film project to learn how to use certain features of the camera, such as exposure and sensitivity, but the equipment wasn't there.

MAP teacher and technology coordinator Joel Tarbox was one of the first to be notified of the issue.

"Hey, there's no cameras or tripods here," he said. "And so I went over and looked, and she was right."

Tarbox proceeded to ask other teachers and contacted school administrators. Later that morning, the office staff received a call from a CalTrans officer: He had found the missing MAP equipment on Highway 9, just outside of downtown Saratoga, Tarbox said.

The cameras were found neatly placed inside four large duffel bags and the tripods were shrink wrapped and put inside trash bags. Despite the rainy weather over break, the equipment was clean, dry and undamaged.

According to Tarbox, there were about 30 camera kits and tripods, 15 microphones, 10 boom poles, five portable lighting kits, a digital audio recorder and an assortment of batteries and other small items. Although the stolen equipment was old and not nearly

as expensive as other devices like the MacBooks and laptops kept in the library, each camera was \$800, each tripod was \$110 and each lighting kit was \$250 — totalling approximately \$30,000.

"I'm very relieved because we're so dependent on it for second semester projects."

MAP TEACHER Joel Tarbox

Tarbox said, "It is what our boosters have paid for, some things the district has paid for and some things the foundation has helped us with, so I'm very relieved [that we found the equipment] because we're so dependent on it for second semester projects."

Tarbox met with two sheriff deputies and CalTrans officers at the scene and brought the equipment back to the library. Assistant principal Matt Torrens led the process of counting, sorting, photographing and checking the serial numbers of the equipment to confirm that nothing was missing.

The administration is currently reviewing two weeks' worth of security footage and working with the sheriff department's investigation into the break-in. No suspect has been identified.

The library was locked over break and had an alarm system active and security cameras operating, Torrens said. Even so, the burglars somehow managed to enter and exit the library with the equipment

without triggering alarms. The administration has contacted the security system company, Sonitrol, to try to figure out how the intruders may have managed to bypass the alarm system.

After this incident, the administration has added additional cameras and locks to the library for strengthened security — just in time for a second break-in attempt during the first weekend after break. The cameras recorded footage of what appears to be a tall man in a white outfit unsuccessfully trying to enter the library by accessing a roof hatch. It may or may not have been the same burglar.

These two recent break-in attempts are only the latest in a string of incidents at schools in the area. Over the spring break of 2020, a group of burglars broke into the school library and stole equipment that was stored in the same area as the recent case's MAP equipment. The week before Jan. 3, Prospect High was also broken into, Torrens said.

Although the thieves from two years back were caught stealing on camera, Torrens theorizes that the recent break-in could have been done by the same group, citing the similarities between the break-ins.

In both cases, the thieves "didn't pull everything off the shelves, and cherry-picked certain things," he said. "When they were here before, they spent 45 minutes inside. And they may have found a key or something that allowed them access this time."

While the thieves' motives for stealing and then dumping the equipment remain a mystery, Torrens thinks that seeing labels and traceable QR code stickers on the

equipment may have dissuaded them from keeping the equipment to resell. They avoided expensive but easily trackable technology such as MacBooks entirely.

"Unfortunately, this is the way that our society is now," Torrens said. "Even in Saratoga, you see that there are thefts. People come here and are finding ways to try to make easy money. So as far as with the school, we're going to look at ways to increase our security in and around the library."



Courtesy of GREG LOUIE

Surveillance cameras recorded a person trying to enter the library through a roof hatch.

Sophomore wins Congressional App Challenge

By Anamika Anand

ing language Python.

In addition to code, Kaya manually entered information based off her research on ways to manage and treat specific diseases.

To use the app, the user holds their device over a plant. The app uses AI to scan the plant for any diseases using the phone's camera. If any diseases are found, the app provides the next steps for the user to manage or treat the specific disease.

However, her success didn't come easily. While building the app, Kaya experienced technical challenges, one of the biggest being compiling enough data and images for each disease.

"It's hard to find enough images of plant leaves for the app to be able to predict what diseases are in a plant accurately."

SOPHOMORE Zeyneb Kaya

Kaya said the Congressional App Challenge provided the perfect opportunity to share her app with a bigger audience. Upon deciding to enter, she made some modifications to her app in order to better fit the competition's criteria.

To her surprise, her dedication paid off and she was one of the winners. "I was so excited that my work on Cultive had been recognized and that I would get the chance to reach more people," Kaya said. "I want to continue to improve the app and learn more from experiences like this one."

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The app uses data from over 40,000 images of plant leaves for the most accurate results in identifying a plant disease. Kaya also used image augmentation to increase the amount of data.

Another trying task was making the app usable on mobile devices. "You have to convert one coding language to another, and that took some time," Kaya said.

While there are other existing apps that provide information on plant diseases, Kaya believes that Cultive is more in-depth, accurate and affordable, providing resources for prevention and keeping track of their plants and their conditions on a map to control

THIRDPERIOD STAFFPOLICY

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

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

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opinion

Schools should be able to go online again

order to ride out the current COVID-19 surge.

For a district like LGSUHSD, online learning could end on February break, with either travel restrictions or a mandatory quarantine period.

Although a transition online may lower the quality of education that students receive for a couple of weeks, the school's current system, which remains almost identical to pre-omicron times, isn't fair to students who, for example, choose to stay at home for fear of catching and transmitting the virus to an elderly family member.

Grove, however, has stated that the district will consider transitioning online only if it has more teachers out sick than substitutes available, or if "a large percentage of the school population has tested positive within a short timeframe." Grove has also reminded parents and students that district leaders cannot unilaterally shut down in-person learning and would need authorization from county and state officials — the waiver that allowed for distance learning expired in June last year. Currently, schools need to apply for a waiver from both the county and the state to shut down entirely, and schools can only revert to online if "every family member in the class signs a waiver, agreeing to switch."

While the county and state's decision to keep schools in person is understandable, considering the consensus among students and teachers that online education results in a significantly poorer quality of education, state officials currently need to prioritize student safety and renew the distance learning waiver instead of waiting until COVID-19 overruns individual communities and forces districts to transition online. This would allow districts to preemptively revert to an online format in

the county and state's decision to keep schools in person is understandable, considering the consensus among students and teachers that online education results in a significantly poorer quality of education, state officials currently need to prioritize student safety and renew the distance learning waiver instead of waiting until COVID-19 overruns individual communities and forces districts to transition online. This would allow districts to preemptively revert to an online format in



online learning, parents may feel safer sending their students back to school knowing that the spread of COVID-19 has stopped or decreased.

The state's decision to not allow distance learning has already forced some schools to make tough decisions regarding student health and surging COVID-19 cases. For example, Hayward went remote from Jan. 10 to 18 due to lack of staff — 365 staff were out and 81 classrooms were uncovered — and testing kits against the recommendations of state and county officials. The school reportedly lost \$2.5 million in state funding per day online, and it was forced to circumvent the lack of a distance learning waiver by hosting areas on campus where students could attend online class in person.

If the situation worsens, districts like ours could face a situation where hundreds of students quarantining at home struggle to learn and students in person struggle to learn due to a lack of substitutes. A better solution is to seriously consider a short-term move online. ◆

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief Andy Chen
Anouk Yeh
Opinion Editors Harshini Velchamy
Tiffany Wang
Reporter Jonny Luo

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 26-12 in favor of this article.

them to engage in distractions.

With the repetition of procedures, students become increasingly more complacent with an online lifestyle. Succumbing to the same day of constrained activities deliberately harms students' overall health, and it's unsustainable for extended periods of time.

Currently, however, the in-person policies put in place by the district have been adequate, and a pre-emptive switch to online learning makes little sense.

Required COVID-19 testing for close contacts that evolved into the new weekly testing mandate available on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays are necessary precautions the district has taken, along with providing better N-95 and KN-95 masks to all students and staff.

The district has also had a comparatively low number of cases as of late, so we still have time to tame the virus before any drastic steps need to be taken.

In-person schooling remains imperative to maintain the academic and social wellbeing of students. Online school will only place a steep roadblock in their success, halting their academic momentum and incentivizing

quencies have resulted in an uptick in mental health issues.

According to a report by the CDC, as of February 2021 around 41.5% of adults and adolescents report symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorder due to online work and school.

Why return to this if we can help it?

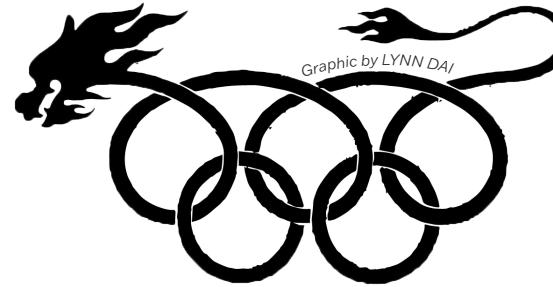
If we regress back to an online setting due to the increasingly more problematic variants, our options regarding social interaction will become woefully limited. Without such interaction, students will begin to feel cornered in their own home, which will slowly but surely deteriorate their mental health and lifestyle, which has lasting implications even if online school ends.

I am very

Boycott of Beijing Olympics: IOC officials need to step up their game

By LynnDai

On Dec. 6, the Biden administration announced that the U.S. will be diplomatically boycotting the upcoming 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, citing "ongoing genocide and other human rights abuses" in Xinjiang. The U.K., Australia and Canada joined the boycott shortly after, and as usual, the People's Republic of China (PRC) responded with a biting threat of unspecified, "resolute countermeasures" — to have the U.S. "pay a price for its practices."



In Germany, despite protests from the U.S. and other sports officials citing the persecution of Jews. When former IOC President Avery Brundage maneuvered the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States to a close vote in favor of sending a team to Berlin, they came to see giant swastikas plastered all over the walls of the stadium.

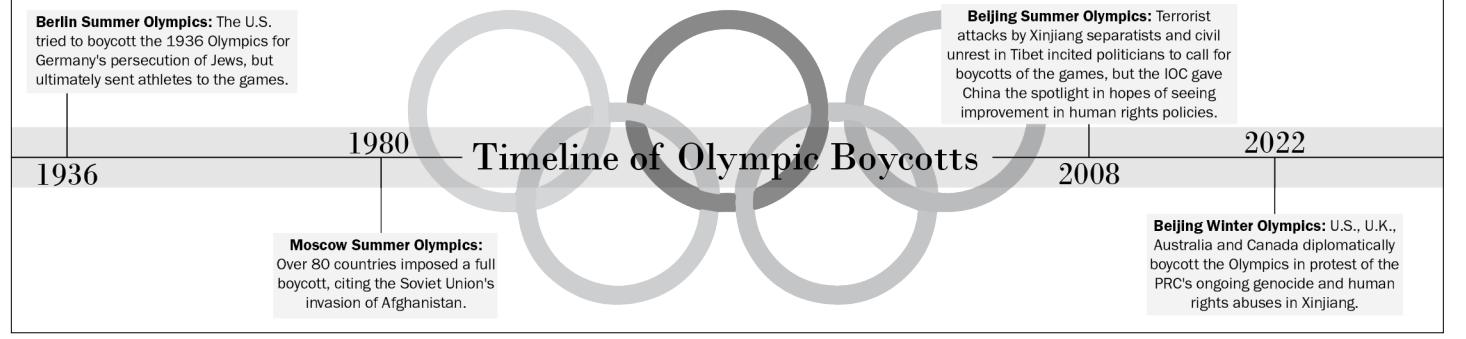
There was great hope that other countries' actions during the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics would change China's human rights policies for the better: According to the book "Inside the Olympics" authored by Richard Pound, former vice president of the IOC, the decision to give the games to China "was made in the hope of improvement in human rights."

At the time, the city was under scrutiny for civil unrest in Tibet and terrorist attacks by Xinjiang separatists. In the months leading up to the games, violent protests broke out in Tibet against the PRC's repressive policies, resulting in some 30 Tibetans being jailed, some for life.

Other sporting organizations, such as the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), have already established their stance on political issues. After accusing a top Chinese leader of sexual assault, Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai quickly disappeared from public view for weeks in November. Following her disappearance and China's warning against "malevolent investigation" into her case, the WTA pulled out all games in China.

It was "naive," however, to think that the Olympics would change China in ways the U.S. — along with more than 60 other countries — previously imposed a full boycott of the 1980 Winter Olympics in Moscow to protest against the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. The protests were to no avail: Troops from the Soviet Union stayed in Afghanistan until 1989, and the games were hurt by unruly behavior from spectators, cheating by officials and intrusive security. The only real harm was to protesting athletes, many of whom lost their only chance to participate at an Olympics.

In 1936, Olympic officials gave Hitler's Nazi Party the go-ahead to host the games



Meat from plants: a revolutionary invention

By AnamikaAnand

by 18%.

Another Oxford study showed that every 70g per day higher intake of red meat is associated with a 15% higher risk of ischaemic heart disease and a 30% higher risk of diabetes. Cutting down your meat consumption can lower the risk of getting these diseases, especially as you get older.

After all, what I lost in taste, I gained in moral standing; growing regular meat is harmful to the environment because of its heavy reliance on energy as well as pollution of water, land and air. Specifically, 65% of nitrous oxide and 37% of methane result from livestock farming.

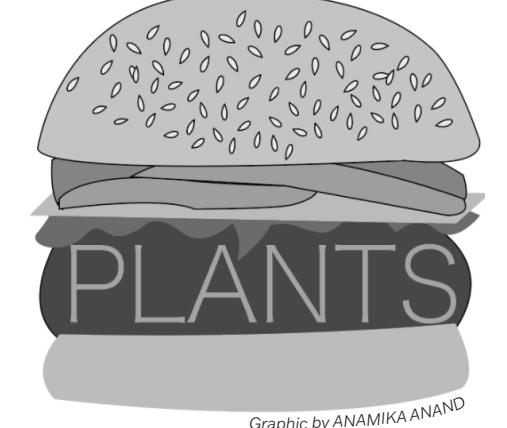
With this in mind, I resigned myself to a vegetarian lifestyle — honestly not a bad choice, when you consider that the process of livestock farming is incredibly inhumane. Each year, millions of animals are taken from their mothers, crowded in cages and slaughtered. The root of the problem is that most meat-eaters don't witness the horrors firsthand.

Many meat-eaters are also unaware of the health risk that comes with eating meat. A study by Oxford University with 1.4 million participants found that for every 50g per day higher intake of processed red meat, the risk of coronary heart disease increases

vegan or vegetarian.

Most plant-based meat, such as Beyond Meat, is made of healthy ingredients such as peas, potatoes and beets that, when combined, taste like meat. Plant-based meats have no cholesterol and much less sodium, so it's a much healthier option that still tastes good.

I highly encourage you to take a chance and try plant-based meat, whether it's a burger, chicken nuggets, pork or meatballs. You may end up liking it, and you'd be doing both you and the planet a huge favor. ♦



Boycott of Beijing Olympics: IOC officials need to step up their game

bertin characterizes the Olympic Games: "The important thing in life is not the triumph, but the fight; the essential thing is not to have won, but to have fought well."

Coubertin's words represent one of the Olympic System's most important principles: Participation is paramount.

But how can the IOC hold itself responsible for these words if it can't manage to select an appropriate country to host the games?

In people's hearts, the Olympics stands as a token of ultimate sportsmanship and talent, not politics. Yet the 50th Rule in the IOC's handbook, which prohibits political, religious and racial propaganda in Olympic venues, has never stopped nations from using the games as a platform to broadcast their stances on political issues.

From the Olympics' long history of boycotts, the IOC cannot expect nations to turn a blind eye to controversies such as human rights abuses. By choosing to remain silent about these issues and thereby prioritizing their principle of political neutrality, the IOC in turn undermines its own core values of participation and respect.

The administration's actions are praiseworthy — it's protecting athletes' personal rights and simultaneously acknowledging prevalent humanitarian issues on a national stage, providing needed media attention and awareness — but no effective change will take place so long as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) continues to allow abusive countries like China and Russia to host the Olympics in the first place.

While the U.S.'s current diplomatic boycott still allows athletes to attend the games, the U.S. — along with more than 60 other countries — previously imposed a full boycott of the 1980 Winter Olympics in Moscow to protest against the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. The protests were to no avail: Troops from the Soviet Union stayed in Afghanistan until 1989, and the games were hurt by unruly behavior from spectators, cheating by officials and intrusive security. The only real harm was to protesting athletes, many of whom lost their only chance to participate at an Olympics.

Since its inception in 1894, the Olympic Movement was founded with the intent of "blending sport with culture and education to help communities and nations live in harmony with each other," according to the Olympic Charter. Founder Pierre de Cou

OVERTURNING Roe v. Wade jeopardizes more than just abortion rights

By StephanieSun

On Jan. 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court officially ruled that a Texas statute banning abortion was unconstitutional, establishing that a woman's right to an abortion was implicitly protected under the right to privacy in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

Roe v. Wade was a landmark decision from the court. It decriminalized abortions, which had been illegal in most states.

In early December 2021, the current conservative-dominated court placed Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health on its docket. The new Mississippi law in question would severely restrict the ability for women to get an abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy — well before the 24-week time period of fetal viability presented in Roe.

It is ignorant to pretend that both Dobbs and its addition to the Supreme Court's docket are not direct challenges to Roe, and that the motivations of the court, which currently holds a 6-3 conservative majority, are anything short of purely political. Conservative Justices Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett and Clarence Thomas, who are anticipated to vote in favor of the law, have already proved through their arguments that their reasons for overturning Roe are only ideological.

Kavanaugh, for example, argued that the court's history of overturning cases in the past have helped the U.S. progress to where it is today. While this is true, the cases Kavanaugh listed such as Brown v. Board of Education and Obergefell v. Hodges, involved the court overturning precedents that gave excessive state power over what should be perceived as individual issues. This is the exact opposite of Dobbs challenging Roe.

Furthermore, Kavanaugh's argument points out the extended ramifications of states' rights that will follow overturning Roe.

Roe v. Wade did not invent abortion in the U.S., but is a landmark case for women's rights. A state's right to dictate abortion, granted through Roe, was based on the precedent set by the 1965 case Griswold v. Connecticut, when the Supreme Court legalized contraception for married couples and found a constitutional right to sexual privacy for adults.

Griswold also paved the way for many other cases all under the basis of privacy found in the 14th Amendment, specifically those which legalized consensual sex for adults regardless of gender and established the right to same-sex marriage. This theory of the right to privacy, substantive due process, has established multiple other rights over the course of the last several decades, including Loving v. Virginia, which legalized interracial marriage, and Eisenstadt v. Baird, which allowed unmarried people the right to birth control.

Overturning Roe v. Wade means there is little protecting these other cherished rights. While Roe seems to be in grave danger, the court's decisions have been unpredictable in the past. Perhaps the justices will come to their senses and not endanger these wide range of rights that are now embedded firmly in the fabric of American life. ♦

lifestyles

Perm-anently against a perm

By ShannonMa

I remember — as clearly as if it was yesterday — the day I walked into the hair salon with the naturally curly hair that had frustrated me for years, and walked out five hours later with the silky, bone-straight hair I had always wanted. I felt pure joy knowing that the days when a single shower washed away my straightened hair were now behind me — I'd keep my new, sleek hair for another 10 months.

The first few months were heaven. I no longer feared blow-drying my hair and I could finally brush it thoroughly without producing a static fluff of disaster. The amount of time I saved every day, especially on school mornings, was extremely refreshing.

About four months in, I noticed two changes: One, sometime between the excitement I felt getting straight hair and getting used to it, I had developed a longing for my natural hair.

My straight hair was so ready to go each morning that I paid little to no attention to it anymore — its charm had vanished for me. Not to mention, many of my friends remarked that they missed my old hair, with one friend even innocently inquiring, "Shannon,

have you been straightening your hair every day?"

I wished the perm would wear off faster.

The other change: My baby hairs were getting noticeably curly, which brings me to my next point.



Aside from the emotional facet of getting a perm, another perm hazard to be aware of is the stage when your natural hair has grown back to a substantial length from your roots.

That half-half phase where the top half of your head is covered in curls but the bottom half is slick

straight? Awful in appearance and inconvenient to manage, because how are you even supposed to brush that?

Especially if the perm was high in endurance like mine, the dismal half-half stage lasts for ages. I experienced the worst case scenario: My perm never wore off. I waited more than a year for a completely new batch of curly hair to grow in. Then, as soon as it was long enough, I cut the remaining perm hair off.

In the end, I learned that natural wins out over (semi)-permanent alteration.

We were all born with our unique hair texture for a reason, and we are meant to bring the most out of it, whether that's through the right products, the right hair care routine or the right haircut — which, altogether, will still cost less than a perm.

Don't get me wrong — permitting your hair may not end unfortunately for everyone. If you put in a significant amount of evaluation and receive opinions from a large sample of friends, family or acquaintances who are not afraid to deliver 100% honest feedback on your appearance, it can work out.

If not, you can join me in the land of perm regret. ♦

POP POTIONS

By VickyBai

My love for mixing sodas at the soda machine started with an empty cup. I had my heart set on Coca Cola, but it ran out mid-pour and I was left with a cup half empty ... or half full, if you're feeling optimistic.

Reluctantly, I filled the rest of the cup with root beer — the next best thing. Little did I know that this simple half-half creation would send me off on a lifelong journey of questionable soda combinations.

My favorite base soda to start off with is Diet Coke. It carries a mellow flavor, and topping off Coke with 10% of any flavorful, diabetes-inducing drink like Dr. Pepper or Orange Fanta turns the relatively bland Coke into unicorns and rainbows in my mouth.

If anyone is looking to hire a barista for mixing sodas, I'd be more than happy to stand at the soda machine, ready to serve my top-secret soda combinations.

Mixing isn't just a practice; it's a lifestyle. The next stop: mixing cereals.

You'll catch me pouring 25% Frosted Flakes, 50% corn flakes and 25% Rice Krispies into my milk bowl.

That's right, I pour milk (still testing out the best ratios of soy milk, dairy milk, and oak milk) in the bowl before cereal, too — I'm a monster. ♦



By LenaAribi & MeherBhatnagar

one at least once ... or maybe it's just us? Imagine a seemingly random set of numbers written out in long lists in increasing order on a note which has now extended almost 50 rows — 102,376, 103,101, 103,409 and 103,998, for example.

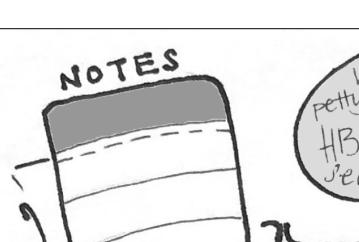
Our explanation: Seeing that guys we are interested in have left us on delivered while their Snapchat Snap score still goes up is infuriating, so keeping track of people's Snap score has become a "hobby" that we just can't stop.

At first glance, our notes look like utter chaos. There have been many times when we opened Notes only to find a list of random words staring back at us.

Like, what account does the password "unlock" unlock? Why are grocery lists, wish lists and random drawn out math problems all on the same note? What was the password for the locked note "Untitled 33"? We couldn't answer these questions if we tried.

But not all notes are for our eyes only. Our friend groups share communal notes with lists of random information ranging from wish lists to ideas of what to do when we hang out together. It's fun being able to communicate random information on a shared note instead of an iMessage group chat — it's like a Google Doc, but less formal.

Who would've known the Notes application had so many uses? From passwords to Snap scores to rants, this simple app stores it all in a safe space with no judgment.



As admittedly petty people, we confess that in the past, we've made long lists of the names of people that wished us a happy birthday so that we would wish those people — and only those people — back on theirs. It might sound mean, but neither of us plan on going out of our way to say "Happy Birthday" to someone who couldn't even bother to remember ours.

OK, everyone's done this next

CARINA YEE stress in art

BY ChristopherChen

At Art Hub Academy, student artists work on their paintings propped up on desks and on easels lining the walls. The well-lit room smells heavily of oil paints and carries the ambient mix of audio — folk rock artist Don McLean's lyrics blending with teachers talking to students and rough brush strokes against canvas.

Most of junior Carina Yee's oil paintings are created in this studio and at her home, with canvases carried back and forth between each location.

Although Yee started drawing at 5, she began to take art seriously as a teenager. To Yee, art is a calming influence in her life — as long as she meets her own deadlines! — and it has taught her to explore topics on a deeper level.

Each piece Yee creates starts with an idea or a prompt and a collection of reference photos, with her generally using photos of "mundane things" as inspiration. In the search for things that appear visually interesting, she also looks to connect them to something she could portray in her art.

For example, Yee was inspired to paint a moth mask because she was interested in the insect's aesthetic; she looked at pictures of moths online and connected the predator-repelling eyes on moths' wings to human eyes to create a mask.

A recent painting, "Trapped in Curtains," features a figure whose torso and head are completely surrounded by a thick gray curtain. The curtains trap the figure, symbolizing the feeling of academic stress and other responsibilities engulfing students.

"I was just taking pictures of curtains and I wanted to see how I could twist it visually to fit my message," she said. "Often I hold myself back, and I feel like what seems easy in concept — staying organized, paying attention, and being on top of responsibilities — is always difficult for me. I should just be able to stand up and take off the curtains, and things would be clear, but then I just sit there waiting for something to change."

For this piece, Yee took inspiration from a hotel room where she stayed, incorporating the hexagonal pattern of the curtains to add dimension and create interesting shapes. Although this patterning was a struggle, they were also what Yee was most proud of.

Yee chose heavier colors for this piece, shifting the tones from clean and bright colors to pallid greens and browns, to emphasize the concept of stressors. "It's not a super pleasing color palette to look at, and I wanted people to be vaguely confused and put off when they looked at the piece," she said.

Yee said she usually starts paintings with

"Trapped in Curtains" (oil on canvas)

SAMIIKA AGARWAL anxiety in art

BY LynnDai

Bold strokes of orange melt across a frame littered with scraps of assignments and tests. A dark abyss of blacks and blues drips down the right of the painting, framing the silhouette of a frowning leaning against her desk, arms crossed. Thin threads of orange and black entangle in a mess above her head.

These are snapshots from "Tangled Shut Down," a selection from junior Samika Agarwal's AP Drawing portfolio. She felt that the mixed-media painting was "eating her alive."

"I was so invested in it, I couldn't sleep," Agarwal wrote in one of her progress-check-ins, online Canvas discussions where she and her classmates can share the inspirations behind their works.

Her AP Drawing portfolio explores a range of mental health issues and the perceived toxic competitive atmosphere of high school in ways that Agarwal says she can't express through words.

"You understand complex things through art that you can't say through words, and you're connected to a certain feeling or thought," she said. "It's important that artists use that voice."

In many of her artworks, Agarwal illustrates the ways she deals with the stress and frustration of schoolwork.

One of her favorite pieces, "I need to play tag," showcases a somber, black-and-white collage of ripped homework, tests and notes crumpled underneath two hands. Doodles of cartoon animals and childishly-drawn buildings are etched throughout the canvas, representative of the childhood innocence she longs for.

At the bottom of the painting, four children hold hands as they run across a field, the bright colors of their clothes pervading the mundane gray space around them with shades of pink, purple and blue.

The painting illustrates a prevalent process Agarwal uses in her paintings: She often takes bits of homework, newspapers and Post-Its and pieces them together to create the background and framework for her paintings. Agarwal said the process of destroying things and pasting them back together allows her to portray her feelings and communicate directly with her intended audience: high school students, who she hopes can relate to and resonate with her work.

The hands-on approach also allows her to work more quickly and keep pace with the rigorous workload of the school's AP Drawing course taught by Diana Vanry, where students are expected to complete 15 quality pieces based on a self-selected theme in just under

nine months.

Unlike most other AP Courses, AP Drawing has no formal test. Instead, the assessment consists of a "Sustained Investigation," a portfolio submission graded out of five points on the artist's ability to explore their chosen theme with a variety of materials, ideas and processes of creating the works. At school, Vanry and AP Drawing students critique each other's work in a group meeting at the back of the class, once for every piece they complete.

"I'm not a very patient person," Agarwal said. "I try to pour everything into my artwork, but when I work on a piece for too long, that initial excitement for the idea fizzles away."

As a result, she said she doesn't follow a structured way of approaching her paintings but instead "works in the moment." Agarwal spurns the traditional process of planning out her pieces in small sketches called thumbnails in favor of working on her pieces directly. This spontaneous way of working has often led to "accidents" that turn out for the better, she said.

While Agarwal mostly draws inspiration from her daily experiences with high school, she has found inspiration in the works of modern artists like Banksy, a street artist and activist known for spray-painting poignant, black-and-white images on buildings, and historical movements like the Bay Area Figurative Movement of the

1950s and 1960s.

"Learning from other artists and immersing myself more in the art community will help me build a stronger portfolio," she said. "These artists take experiences from their own lives and spread messages about issues people should be more aware about, and I want to do that with my art."

Agarwal's latest art piece, as yet untitled, is a continuation of her theme of deteriorating mental health in the face of anxiety and stress. It depicts modern students' struggles with school, a system which she said is both "built for students but also against us." The piece juxtaposes the act of destroying textbooks and learning from them through cut-up sections arranged to represent a stomach, an analogy for the feeling of a knot-in-stomach test anxiety.

While she hopes to continue painting throughout her life, Agarwal believes pursuing traditional art wouldn't be feasible financially. Still, she hopes to explore her creativity by combining the field with technology and other areas of study in interdisciplinary majors like industrial and communications design.

"I create art because I enjoy the process and looking at my completed pieces makes me happy," Agarwal said. "But most importantly, it's a platform for me to advocate for what I care about. When promoted the right way, art can have such a strong impact on people."

SHANI CHIU fear in art

BY AnnieLiu & JoAnnZhang

A rough sketch in graphite or charcoal, then creates an underpainting — an initial layer of paint to help plan out where the rest of the colors should go.

Her style incorporates bright highlights, smooth gradients and fuzzy edges in a semi-impressionistic way. She attempts to emulate Mark Tanen's high contrast and "collage-esque" artworks, as well as the "raw emotion" of Egon Schiele paintings.

For each art piece Yee creates, she thinks carefully about how to incorporate her ideas and messages into the piece, twisting the original image into something new and different.

"Instead of just having the imagery of someone trapped in a curtain, I wanted to see how I could turn feeling of the artwork into an unsettling experience," she said.

In college, Yee plans to major in fine arts. Although she is certain on pursuing traditional art over digital formats like design, the uncertainty of financial success as a fine artist deters her from pursuing that career path, and pushes her instead to a career as an arts professor or art curator.

"I've been doing art for such a long time that I feel like it's just a part of who I am," she said. "I try to revolve my life around furthering my art."

"I tried to portray an unsettling feeling. I like how scary art is able to affect people," said Chiu, whose AP Art and college portfolio centers on phobias. "It's fascinating that people have these different reactions toward certain things."

In another portfolio piece, captioned "fear of drowning in quicksand," a terrified eye just barely surfaces from the sand, which subsumes the rest of the face. "I wanted to show how desperate and afraid the person was despite not being able to see many of their features," Chiu said. The same sense of nearly feral helplessness is present in much of their work, but a greater motivation towards understanding and empathy drives these frightening

"Sketch" (digital art)

"Claustrophobia" (graphite and ink)

"Tangled Shut Down" (mixed media)

"I need to play tag" (mixed media)

+ ARTISTS at work in Toga

pieces.

"Fear is something that is stigmatized, looked down upon and not often addressed," said Chiu. "People are unable to understand each others' fears, so I tried to create art pieces that would inflict the same feeling the person with that phobia [would experience]."

Themes of the taboo, particularly regarding mental health, also color much of Chiu's work. Their art often reflects what goes on in their life: In an untitled painting made at a low point in their life, somber blues surround a figure with roughly painted red horns and wings. Raw-edged brushstrokes and a face replaced by scrapes of red are unnerving and unsettling.

During difficult times in their life and mental health, they "tend to go more towards a morbid theme" and add more emotions and the feeling of helplessness.

Their usual sources of inspiration are aesthetics and their mood, and also different media — as an artist with ADHD and autism, Chiu often hyper-fixates on games and TV shows, and enjoys drawing characters and celebrities.

Chiu also creates their own characters, with complex and often marginalized personalities — sociopaths, psychopaths and sadists.

Chiu wants people to feel conflicted when they see their characters' personalities. Their inner turmoil and their divergence from the norm make the characters interesting for Chiu, who admits they "really like making characters with a bit of a crazy personality."

One of the characters Chiu is currently working on, a girl with an eyepatch on her left eye, stands with her hands on her hips in a tough, belligerent

"My brother is a really big influence on me," said Chiu. "When I was younger, I would always watch him drawing, and it really inspired me to do the same."

Chiu's friends and family are extremely supportive of their artistic career path. "They already had to go through my brother so they're already eased into the idea of it," Chiu said. "And my friends, they're not in that traditional mindset but they're also involved [in art], so they understand."

As they approach the end of their high school career, Chiu is considering attending San Jose State University or Laguna College of Art and Design. But ultimately, they just want to go with the flow and see where life takes them.

"If you don't enjoy yourself, then what's the point of doing something?" they asked. "I want to show people that no matter who you are, if you love doing something, then you can do it."

Art courtesy of SAMIIKA AGARWAL, SHANI CHIU and CARINA YEE
Graphics by AUDREY MAH and JOANN ZHANG

Math and CS teacher Jarvin Bayona brings lessons from games to class

By SamBai
& AidenYe

While video games and education are commonly viewed as two non-overlapping fields, AP CS and Precalculus Honors teacher Jarvin Bayona regularly incorporates the lessons he learned from video games into his daily teaching.

Bayona started his gaming journey at age 2. He remembers playing video games on his parents' Nintendo Entertainment System.

He especially liked "Bubble Trouble," a deceptively simple video game where the only objective was to pop bubbles.

"Dota 2" and "Call of Duty."

Bayona not only enjoys the games themselves but also the ideas and concepts that can be applied to real life.

For instance, video games often reward perseverance and learning from mistakes. Mirroring this philosophy, Bayona tries to give his students the opportunity to fix their mistakes through test corrections and quiz retakes.

"There are times where you make mistakes. Let's say you are playing Mega-Man or Mario and your character dies," Bayona said. "You have multiple lives to try again and learn the level better."

While Bayona believes that second chances are necessary, he does worry that a policy of giving second chances can be easily abused by students.

He said this can be compared to "save scumming" in gaming, the act of saving right before a boss fight in order to restart in case the fight goes badly.

"For some game developers, this is not the intended way to play the game — maybe if you die the first time, you may think, 'I'm not strong enough' or 'I need to do more side quests or pick up some more items,'" Bayona said. "But you can't just brute force your way through the boss."

Bayona's experience as a Twitch video game streamer has also helped improve his



Teacher Jarvin Bayona enjoys playing games such as "Monster Hunter" and "Dota 2" at home.

class. On Twitch, Bayona loves to shoutcast his favorite games, commenting what is happening in the game.

Because of this, Bayona feels like he has had a lot of experience breaking down any given situation — whether that's in gaming or math.

"Shoutcasting has helped me in my speaking, whether I'm doing live coding or explaining math problems," Bayona said.

Because of shoutcasting, Bayona said his verbal stamina has increased: He's able to talk for hours on end in the classroom without needing a break. ♦

Bayona said that, without his gaming experiences, he may not have learned the key lessons, gained the crucial experiences or obtained the important practice that helped create his own teaching style. Although gaming and teaching are viewed as polar opposites, Bayona hopes that he can bridge the gap between the two of them, bringing one world to the other.

"Seeing how students are performing in my class and how that reflects the grades I'm giving them, I think I'm doing a good job so far combining the two subjects," Bayona said. ♦

"My verbal stamina has increased due to [playing games]."



TEACHER Jarvin Bayona

Ever since, Bayona estimates he has clocked in over 4,000 hours on games like

'GoT' prequel may correct missteps in original HBO series

By SarahZhou

Three years after the end of "Game of Thrones" (GoT), the most-watched television show in history, its long-awaited prequel, "House of the Dragon," will premiere on HBO in 2022 with 10 episodes.

"House of the Dragon" — which is set 200 years prior to GoT — was announced in October 2019, replacing a previous prequel for the show that was set thousands of years in the past. HBO reportedly spent over \$30 million on the pilot but scrapped the show a few months later. HBO executives decided the show "just didn't work."

Christopher Chen & Jonathan Si

play a role in producing and directing the show.

"House of the Dragon" will illustrate the world of Westeros before the events of GoT. "House of the Dragon" tells the story of House Targaryen, going in-depth with the ultimate downfall of Aerys, the last Targaryen to control the Iron Throne (the ultimate symbol of power in Westeros).

Though highly anticipated by critics and fans, the show's cast features almost no recurring characters from the GoT cast, and many of us would much rather see a sequel or rewrite to GoT to mend the ruined plot development after the unsatisfying ending replacement for Season 8.

Indeed, none of the main characters from GoT will be appearing in the series, which many fans, myself included, would have looked forward to seeing.

"I'm cautiously excited for the prequel," said senior Dana Steinke, who watched the show this past summer. "I haven't seen movies or shows featuring the new actors for this show before but I'm excited to see new depictions of the Targaryen family." ♦



Courtesy of WARNER MEDIA

Production for "House of the Dragon" began in April 2021 at locations in Northern Ireland, England, Spain and Morocco, though filming was temporarily paused in July due to a positive COVID-19 case.

The show — starring Olivia Cooke, Matt Smith, Emma D'Arcy and Emily Carey — derives its plot from "A Song of Ice and Fire" series' prequel book, "Fire & Blood: 300 Years Before A Game of Thrones," written by GoT creator George R.R. Martin. Additionally, Martin will also

be involved in the show's production.

Riot's 'Arcane' delivers a plot enjoyable for any audience

By ChristopherChen

& JonathanSi



Courtesy of RIOT GAMES

Riot's first foray into TV shows was a success among critics and audiences.

Currently, the entire first season, consisting of nine 40-minute episodes, is available on Netflix.

While the first season does end with a cliff-hanger, the show will continue in a second season slated for after 2022.

The plot is deeply complex, featuring several interconnecting stories and developing main characters. From scientists Jayce and Viktor's development of Hextech, a technology that utilizes magic crystals as its energy source, to the straining relationship between sisters Vi and Powder, plot points become increasingly connected and ultimately factor into the overarching story: the conflict between the two sides of the city.

"Arcane's" plot stands out because of its character development. All the characters have cohesive motivations and believable actions, with even the antagonist of the show, a meticulous, idealistic drug lord named Silco, having a sympathetic character arc. Despite the show's long runtime, it's probably being able to predict the show's ending, "Arcane" is still able to maintain high dramatic tension by introducing new, com-

plexing characters and showing how characters transition into their present selves. (In fact, the show might even be better if you haven't played the game.)

Powder's hallucinations are especially impressive, resembling childlike drawings and audibly shrill echoing noises, stemming from her childhood trauma that is explained in the first three episodes.

Similarly, another fight scene she appears in carries similar weight. Aside from graphics, the character's designs and costumes and the overall environment are intricately detailed.

Multiple characters needed to be created for the show, and each were given different appearances that reflected their circumstances in the show.

For example, the affluence of the two cities is reflected in the symmetry and asymmetry of its architecture and clothing styles.

Though the show is centered around the characters in "League of Legends," its cohesion, character development, visuals, and music provide for an experience also enjoyable for viewers unfamiliar with the game. ♦

By JonnyLuo

Warning: major spoilers ahead.

When I watched Amazon Prime Video's animated series "Invincible" over the summer, I was immediately hooked by its excellent animation and emotional voice-acting.

Adapted from its namesake comic written by Robert Kirkman, "Invincible" starts off like any other coming-of-age superhero story: Mark Grayson, son of Omni-Man, the world's premiere superhero, suddenly gets his father's powers and learns how to be a superhero. What sets this show apart from the rest, however, is its extreme use of violence.

For example, when Invincible (Grayson's hero alias) fights the series' main antagonist — whose identity I won't reveal due to spoilers — during the season finale, one scene includes said antagonist holding Invincible in front of an oncoming subway through Invincible's eyes.

Viewers see the visceral killing of hundreds of subway-goers, with their blood and organs spilling all over the screen, just so that the show's antagonist can prove a point about the pointlessness of human lives. The show also progressively ramps up the violence throughout the season, with the title card shown at the beginning of each episode gradually gaining more blood.

Though some may see the show's excessive use of violence as unnecessary for a superhero cartoon, I loved how the show showed more realistic implications of someone having super-strength or super-speed. Punching someone wouldn't just knock them unconscious or even crack their neck; it would literally rip their head off their shoulders.

Besides the realistic violence, the show's ability to include huge battles in almost every episode without blowing through mountains of cash. A show that I think falls prey to this is "The Boys," released on Amazon Prime in July 2019, because some episodes just felt dull without the large fights that I've come to expect from superhero media.

Some live-action TV shows actually are able to pull this off, such as Marvel's phase four shows, but those had much larger budgets than most studios are able to afford; some Marvel phase four shows, including "Loki" and "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier" had reported budgets of over \$25 mil-

lion per episode.

So, seeing as how "Invincible" was a huge success, I hope that more future, mainstream superhero media can be made through animation. The show also feels realistic compared to other superhero works — the government is actually competent and doesn't totally rely on supernaturals to save the world. Additionally, characters are written believably, and no one overreacts simply by adding drama to the show.

"Invincible" stands out for its excellent plot and its intriguing twist villain. Twist villains are dramatically ironic characters with motives that aren't necessarily meant to be a surprise to the audience but rather meant to surprise the characters. Shakespeare does this well in many of his plays, where audience members know of a character's deception and thus feel scared for the victim whenever they have screen time.

If you're already hooked on watching the show, I'd stop reading here and start watching on Amazon Prime Video to find out who the twist villain is for yourself. Otherwise, here we go:

"Invincible" reveals the villain to be Omni-Man, Grayson's father, in the very first episode, when most, if not all other characters still think of him as a powerful, benevolent hero. The show leaves audience members hanging for his underlying motives until the season finale.

While I was watching, I truly felt scared for the characters in the show, especially Omni-Man's wife, who was conducting her own investigation on who killed the Guardians of the Globe. When she finally confronts Omni-Man about the murders, I truly had no idea of whether she would live or not — if you haven't watched the show, you'll just have to see for yourself.

I'm excited for the next season to air, even though I've already spoiled the entire plot for myself by reading the comics. And since the show is animated, hopefully, it won't have any production delays due to the pandemic. ♦

ACHIEVING PERFECTION AFTER NINE TRIES: SPIDER-MAN NO WAY HOME

By SamBai
& AndrewLin

Warning: spoilers ahead.

2021 was a big year for the film industry. Despite the pandemic, over 500 million people went to theaters to see movies on the big screen, more than doubling 2020's movie attendance. A whopping 12,307 movies were released just last year in the U.S.

Among all the excellent films we saw, one stands out from the crowd for us: "Spider-Man: No Way Home."

In monetary terms, "No Way Home" overshadowed all other releases this year, with worldwide profits exceeding \$1.3 billion as of January, replacing "Black Panther" as the No. 12 highest-grossing film of all time. Compared to Marvel's "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," which was originally the most successful film of 2021, "No Way Home" surpassed it in the United States and Canada by a factor of four.

Even though he was declared innocent in the court of law, Parker was still perceived as guilty in the court of public opinion. This is illustrated through the constant public harassment of the Parkers — news helicopters keep circling their apartment building and someone throws a brick through the apartment window. The media and public's harassment — along with Parker's friends' rejections from MIT — sets the premise for Parker's decision to try and erase the public's knowledge of Spider-Man's secret identity.

Parker asks his friend Doctor Strange to cast a spell, making everyone forget that he's Spider-Man. However, Parker ruins the spell, which forces Strange to contain it in a box.

to cast a spell, making everyone forget that he's Spider-Man. However, Parker ruins the spell, which forces Strange to contain it in a box.

outstanding movie by itself, even without watching the preceding "Homecoming" and "Far From Home."

Although Holland's Spider-Man still retains his endearing nerdiness, his character becomes more independent, flawed and realistic. The film deals with themes of loss and guilt, and the Spider-Man at the end of the film is a far cry from the meek and submissive Spider-Man in "Homecoming."

Many iconic villains from previous Spider-Man worlds are brought back such as Doc Ock, as well as many heroes. The characters look identical to how they did years ago, bringing a sense of nostalgia for many older fans.

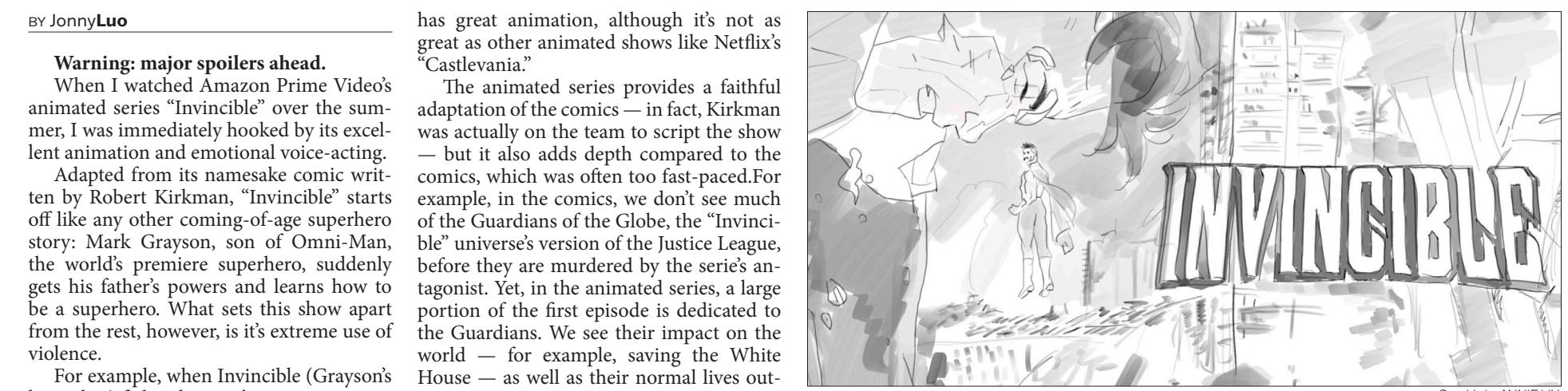
This separates it from other movies made this year, being the only one to bring in characters from separate reboots of the same movie franchise.

These old characters are also given a major role in the plot, and their inclusion caters to fans who watched the original movies decades ago. This commitment to dedicated fans brings "No Way Home" from a fun action movie for kids to a film that acknowledges and gives closure to the original two movie series, neatly tying together the entire Spider-Man franchise.

Even though there were a lot of strong contenders for the best movie of last year, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" has to be the best. It combines over 20 years of Spider-Man into one movie, a move unexpected to anyone. Now Sony and Marvel will have to decide whether there will be a sequel or a reboot. ♦



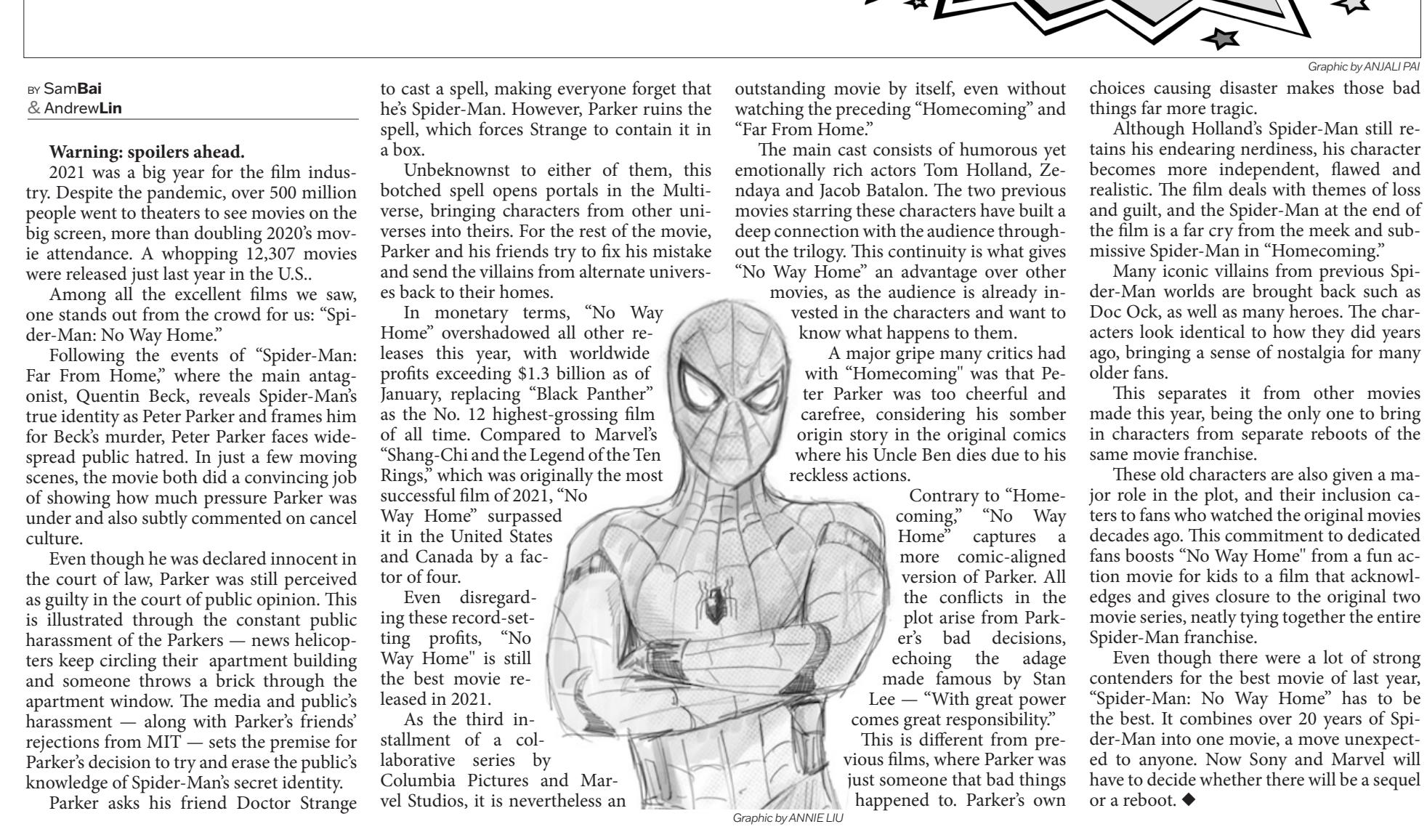
Graphic by LYNN DAI



Graphic by ANNIE LIU



Graphic by ANJALI PAI



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

2019 alum Caroline Okuno trains to become youngest 1st Marine Division drum major

BY HowardShu

In early October, when Staff Sergeant Jay Black, a recruiter from RSS San Jose South, walked into the SHS band building and introduced himself and the San Diego-based Marine Division Band, junior Alison Okuno and senior Christopher Okuno eagerly anticipated watching their older sister Caroline Okuno perform in the professional band.

Caroline, a class of 2019 alum, returned to the school as drum major for the 1st Marine Division Band San Diego to perform for 1st and 3rd period band students in early October.

At the beginning of the period, music students could hear the band warming up just outside the room.

The introduction concluded with Black saying, "OK, here they come."

Alison and Christopher heard Caroline's voice coming from outside, and immediately following that, the 40-person band came into the room, marching in formation to the tune of the drumbeat.

"It was perfect. Their uniforms were pristine; each member was perfectly in step with everyone else," said Christopher, who is one of three drum majors in the SHS band this year.

"I was proud of Caroline and just really impressed by everything that [the band] was doing."

SENIOR Christopher Okuno

After they finished playing their first piece, the band introduced themselves and talked about their experiences before playing the next piece, which mainly involved the brass band, and a few jazz pieces in a New Orleans style.

The band then discussed how high schoolers could enter their program and performed one more piece before marching out.

"I was proud of Caroline and just really impressed by everything that they were doing," Christopher said.

Caroline pitched the idea of performing at the school when she visited SHS in July during band camp.

She talked to band and orchestra teacher Michael Boitz about her work and experience in the Marines and Boitz asked her if her group could come play for the school band.

Following that, Staff Sergeant Eric N. Gonzales, the official drum major and narrator for the First Marine Division band, planned and helped organize the event with Boitz.

Though Caroline said it felt a little strange to return to the school and see a new group of students, many of whom she had worked with when they were in the fifth grade beginning band, she very much enjoyed the experience.

"Seeing how the school changed and then getting to still be involved with it was a really neat experience," Caroline said.

Caroline's musical background

Caroline, who is the youngest musician ever invited to be trained as a Marine Drum Major, is not the only musician in the Okuno family. Christopher plays the euphonium and Alison plays the trumpet. The three siblings also have an older brother named Michael who is currently a member of the Second Marine Division band in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

According to Christopher, the goal of the Marine Division bands is to perform in as many places as possible, from all 50 U.S. states to other countries like France, to rep-

resent the Marine Corps.

"Every Marine is first and foremost a rifleman," Christopher said.

"They've given the same training as any other military job is given, so they're trained in shooting, and they're also kept to physical standards and have several hours of [physical training] every day."

Members of Caroline's band also practice individually in addition to their regular group training.

On average, the Marine Division band performs around two to five times a week, but during peak weeks, they can perform up to 12 times a week.

For example, when they were in the Bay Area during San Francisco Fleet Week, which is an annual public event that honors the contributions of people in the U.S. Armed Forces, the band performed two to three times a day for a total of about 12 performances throughout the week.

Caroline said she first discovered her passion for music when she started learning and playing the flute when she was in fifth grade.

Going into high school, she started playing the piccolo for the school's music program, specifically wind symphony and symphonic wind ensemble, trombone for the marching band and saxophone for the jazz band.

Christopher said he knew Caroline's passion for playing instruments and her leadership grew because of her consistent participation in the SHS band program during her high school years.

"A lot of people were really inspired by her because she really committed to marching band and raised the underclassmen in a lot of ways," Christopher said.

"She really committed to experiencing marching band and having the best time possible. A lot of us are still affected by that today."

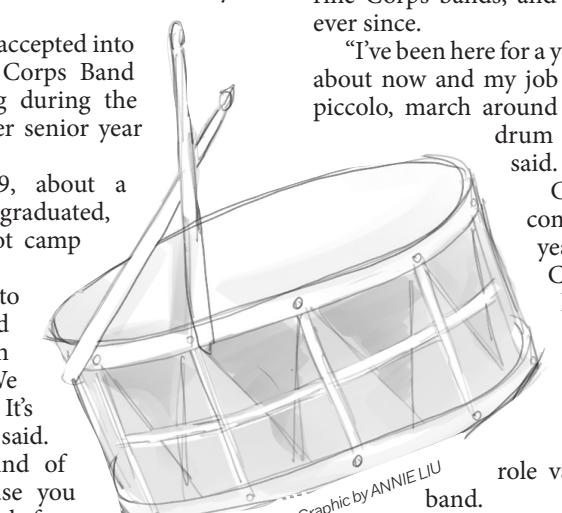
The Marine Band training process

In her senior year, Caroline made it into the county Honor Band and All-State Band, after which a Marine Corps recruiter found her name on a list of All-State musicians around the time when she was applying for colleges.

After the recruiter talked to her about the Marine experience and subsequent opportunities, she was convinced to try to join.

Caroline was accepted into the 1st Marine Corps Band after auditioning during the last month of her senior year of high school.

In July 2019, about a month after she graduated, she went to boot camp for 13 weeks.



Alum Caroline Okuno of the 1st Marine Division Band performed at SHS on Oct. 8.

Courtesy of CHRISTOPHER OKUNO

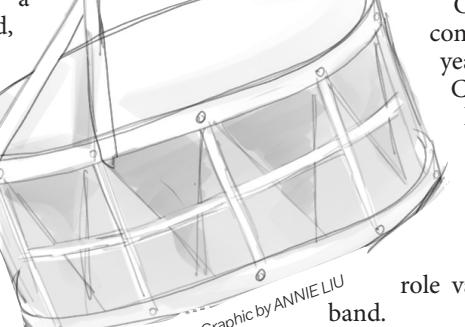
the fact that she did manage to do it because she's really amazing."

Though Christopher is not looking to join the Marine Corps Band like his sister, he said he is still inspired by the path she has taken.

"In terms of her skills as a leader and her pathway of always achieving excellence, I aspire to be like that," he said. "When she presents herself to an audience, she's bold and knows what she's doing."

Throughout her journey being in the marching band at Saratoga High, Caroline said one of the most important things she learned was to take initiative.

"You can't expect things to come to you in life and you have to go out and work for them," she said. "I put a lot of work into that marching band trying to improve myself and improve the people around me, especially once I got to be a section leader with the trombone section. Being responsible for their well-being and for their success really taught me to find a place and fill that role wherever I go."



Caroline is now coming up on two years as a Marine Corps musician and has begun the necessary training to become a drum major for the band since March.

The drum major's role varies from band to band.

Oftentimes, they serve as representatives of the marching band and lead performances, meaning they are at the front, often conducting with a baton.

The drum majors also have the responsibility to perform and be "clean," exact and precise, since they are essentially the face representing the marching band and the first person spectators see when the band enters.

Caroline's responsibilities as drum major in the performance at the school included calling the commands to get the band's attention and get them to start marching off.

"Caroline has a lot of natural skill and she's also very strong mentally," Christopher said. "I never expected or forethought of the possibility of her becoming drum major to this extent or doing anything beyond just being a musician, but I'm not surprised by

The Basic Musician's course, the course



To watch the Oct. 6 performance at SHS, scan the QR code above.

To encourage reading, English teachers check out books from classroom libraries

By ChristinaChang

Walking into English teacher Amy Keys's Room 006, students see bookshelves hugging almost every wall, organized by genre, author and topic. Books range from poetry and anthologies to science fiction and mystery, carrying titles like "The Great Gatsby" or "The Round House" and authors from Shirley Jackson to Louise Erdrich and John Steinbeck.

With her father being a former English teacher, Keys grew up reading aloud and listening to audiobooks with her family, which led to her love for reading. She recalls that in elementary, middle and even high school, her friends would go over to her house to "flop down and read," especially during school breaks.

Keys said she wanted to have a mini library of sorts in her classroom to "entice students with accessible books and reading for pleasure." She noted that the "terrible paradox" of school, which she experienced herself in both high school and college, was that students are too busy to read for pleasure, despite the importance of reading as a central foundation of education.

"I think we should keep reading all the time," Keys said. "It's important for our brains, our mental health and emotional well-being to have another world to escape into and gain another perspective on things. It's something that keeps us going creatively."

She said she likes to "ship students with books," to find the book that's going to speak to them, excite them or get them inspired to read other books.

With a wide range of books in the classroom, at least one book is checked out weekly, Keys said.

To check out a book, students pick one off the shelves and bring it over to Keys, then take a notecard, write their name, the date and chosen book title on it before placing the card into the book checkout box.

Students can keep the books for up to one semester, and every couple of weeks Keys's TAs look through the book checkout and send messages to students with overdue books.

The most popular books have been "The Round House" by Louise Erdrich, "Friday Night Lights" by H. G. Bissinger and "All the Light We Cannot See" by Anthony Doerr.

For Keys, a good and compelling book lives in her psyche even when she is not reading; she finds herself thinking about literature.

Keys and Herzman first met in 2007; Keys worked as a teacher mentor for the New Teacher Project (NTP) in Santa Cruz County and Herzman taught English at Scotts Valley High School at the time. Keys would often bring relatively new teachers



English teacher Amy Keys showcases her collection of books, including "The Sentence" and "The St. Paul Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald."

from the NTP to observe and learn from Herzman.

With Herzman coming to work at SHS in 2009 and Keys in 2011, the two have continued to cultivate their tight-knit friendship, along with English teacher Natasha Ritchie. Now, the three frequently discuss reactions to books and recommendations, among other topics.

Similarly, Herzman invites her students to discuss books during tutorials, after class or after school.

To entice students to read, Herzman has an anecdote on the topic which she tells her classes every year. Her first job out of college involved lots of commuting as she lived in San Francisco and worked in Richmond in the East Bay. Every day, she would take a 45-minute BART ride to and from work, bringing a

book along with her to read.

One day, a man sat next to her and told her she was lucky that she could read. At first, Herzman assumed he meant literacy was important, but the man went on to explain that while he could read and decipher words, he was unable to lose himself in the book the way she could. Herzman realized she had always taken that ability for granted.

Herzman said she sees her classroom library as a means for readers to communicate; she could recommend the perfect book by simply grabbing it off the shelf.

"In our discipline, when you think about what it is that you hope students leave high school with at the end of it all, it's that they may become lifetime readers," Herzman said. ♦



Herzman

Cutback Cleanups promotes environmental awareness

CLUB FACES CHALLENGES IN ORGANIZING PROJECTS WHILE OPERATING WITHOUT ASB APPROVAL

By SarahZhou

that encourages environmental awareness. But that collaboration hasn't worked out so far, with Kaypaghian saying the Green Team hasn't responded on social media and hasn't been meeting regularly.

When the club decided to reapply with a carpool system for beach cleanups, Kaypaghian said they were denied again due to ASB officers thinking their club was too "cliché."

"I love the idea of having students evaluate clubs," Kaypaghian said. "Overall, I think ASB generally does a great job of evaluating clubs. However, Cutback Cleanups feels that ASB needs to track club participation better because of our experience with the Green Team."

However, Cutback Cleanups is unlike other Saratoga clubs; while it is an approved club at Los Gatos High School, Soquel High School and West Valley College, it has run in Saratoga without ASB approval for two years.

"We want people to know our club is representative of multiple schools (LG, Santa Cruz and Saratoga)," Kaypaghian said. "We have never claimed ASB affiliation at SHS, but we would like to be able to say that our club is inclusive of Saratoga High School students."

SENIOR Marina Kaypaghian

ASB-approved clubs receive ASB endorsement at events such as Club Day, which help increase participation, Kaypaghian said.

"We definitely have more events and projects than ASB-approved clubs because we need something to keep our members engaged," senior co-president Elizabeth Lemberg said. "We have become super active on our social media platforms in order to advertise our events."

Kaypaghian and Lemberg have been actively working with Los Gatos club president senior Hailey Anderson to turn the club into a nonprofit organization. All Cutback Cleanups officers from different schools meet together over Zoom every Sunday to discuss future plans and upcoming projects. Cutback Cleanups provides various opportunities each month for members.

"We started out only doing beach cleanups but now we have a variety of different events and projects," Lemberg said. "Every month, we collaborate with Groundswell Coastal Ecology in watering plants for the monarch butterflies. Over the summer, members created informational skits on climate change for Save Our Shores, an organization that we partnered with."

Currently, the Saratoga branch of Cutback Cleanups is undecided on reapplying for ASB approval, as both Kaypaghian and Lemberg are soon to graduate.

"We definitely have more events and projects than ASB-approved clubs because we need something to keep our members engaged," Lemberg said, "but without the help of ASB, it's hard to find out what underclassmen would be qualified to keep the club running." ♦

A walk through Madronia Cemetery to explore what life was like in earlier times

THE 12.5 ACRE PROPERTY BEGAN OPERATION IN 1863 AND IS THE RESTING PLACE FOR HISTORICAL FIGURES

BY LenaArabi
& MeherBhatnagar

A large fenced gateway marks the entrance to Madronia Cemetery, a Saratoga historical site located about half a mile north of Saratoga Village. A blooming arboretum and walkway of beautiful flowers line the entrance. Placards engraved in stone cover the front wall of the cemetery.

Begun in 1863, the cemetery was named after the madrone trees that cover the site. Despite the cemetery's rich history, visitors are rare because of its tucked away location, according to office staff Sandra Gonzalez.

Since Madronia is an "active cemetery," burials are still taking place. In the past, new land was purchased near the back of the cemetery to accommodate more burials, but Gonzalez said that new land is not currently being bought because "the existing land will last up to 30 years."

At least 5,400 people have been buried there, including family members, community leaders, and prominent historical figures.

Madronia is also known for its arboretum, which features many varieties of trees representing "people from all over the world," assistant principal Matt Torrens told

us during a tour we took with him one day during first semester.

There are currently 294 trees from 91 different species located around the cemetery grounds. Benefactors have donated small half-curved benches that surround the trees, giving guests a place to sit and relax amidst the shade.

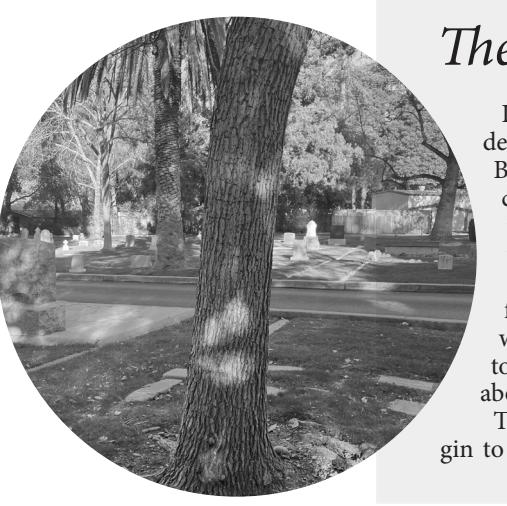
In the middle of the cemetery is an area in which guests can fill up a plastic can and water flowers placed near or on top of the cemetery's headstones.

Near the back of the 12.5-acre cemetery are cremation boxes to be filled with ashes. Instead of spreading ashes, people can buy

a box to put the ashes in, keeping them in a wall at the cemetery near other gravesites. On the boxes, visitors can engrave information as one would on a tombstone.

According to Gonzalez, a landscaping company comes in once a week to tidy the cemetery. However, the company does but does not touch or clean the tombstones — each individual is responsible for maintaining the shade.

As the cemetery continues to grow, housing Saratoga's loved ones, its reputation as Saratoga's oldest institution still prevails — many historical figures are buried right under the cemetery's ground.



The first person interred: C.B. Buckman

In 1854, Saratoga had its first death: a young boy named C.B. Buckman, who drowned while crossing the Saratoga Creek. Since there were no established cemeteries at the time, residents decided to bury him on a plot of land farther up from the sawmill that was located near today's downtown so his body wouldn't float above ground in case of flooding.

This death led the residents to begin to bury bodies at the same plot of land, which eventually became Madronia Cemetery Torrens said.

A placard at the front of the cemetery informs visitors that the cemetery land was donated by Don Jose Ramon Arguello, the principal owner of the Quito Ranch, in 1863.

Today, the land donated by Arguello is considered to be the "Old Section" of the cemetery. Ever since, new land has been purchased to expand the plot of the cemetery's ground and allow more space for graves.



Mary Brown: wife of famed abolitionist

Mary Ann Day Brown's grave is the most visited site in Madronia Cemetery. Mary was the wife of radical American abolitionist John Brown, a wanted man who killed slave owners in May of 1856 during the Pottawatomie massacre.

Mary was just 17 when the two got married — John was 36 and had taken a fancy to Mary's looks, Torrens said. They had eight children together; two died of tuberculosis within a week of being born,

and another died in a burn accident after a pot of boiling water fell onto her head.

Eventually, one of their daughters moved to California after John Brown's death and convinced Mary to move as well. They settled in California and moved to Saratoga. Mary and two of her children are buried in the same location at the Madronia Cemetery.



John Pourroy: soldier from World War I

John Pourroy, a World War I veteran, was a Saratoga Elementary School graduate who died at war. He was buried over 110 years ago at Madronia.

Over time, a tree has been planted and grown on top of his gravesite. The tree is fully grown — those who wish to see Pourroy's grave need to use their

hands to brush the dirt and leaves away from the base of the tree.

Pourroy's name is also engraved into the arch that stands at the entrance of Saratoga Village alongside five other Saratoga Elementary graduates who also died at war. Pourroy and the other veterans buried at Madronia have special headstones etched with their veteran status.



Mark Bingham: hero of Flight 93

On Sept. 11, 2001, Flight 93, originally bound for California, had been hijacked and directed to the White House. Three hijacked flights hit their targets that day: the North Tower, the South Tower and Pentagon — but Flight 93 never did.

Some passengers aboard — including Los Gatos High School graduates Mark Bingham, 31, and Todd M. Beamer, 32, — rushed into the cockpit and forced the plane into a nosedive into a Pennsylvania field before it could reach what was believed to be the White House, sacrificing



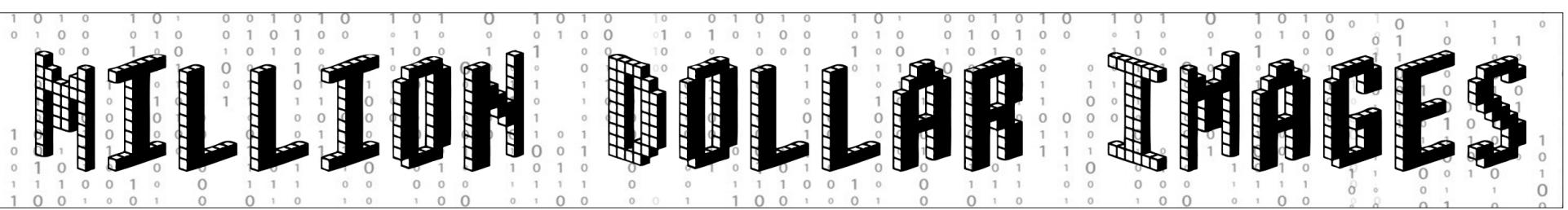
All Photos Courtesy of HARSHINI VELCHAMY

The Saratoga Falcon

January 28, 2022

The Saratoga Falcon

January 28, 2022



IN-DEPTH

17

STUDENTS PROVIDE INSIGHT ON THEIR RISKY NFT INVESTMENTS AND THEIR POTENTIALLY LUCRATIVE RESULTS

BY GeorgeHuang
& JonathanLi

Cryptopunk #9998 sold on Oct. 28 for \$532 million to an anonymous buyer. This jaw-dropping price soared so high largely because it was transferred to various crypto wallets owned by the same individual until the price reached \$500 million. It is now on sale on Larva Labs for 250KE or a whopping \$796.31M. Nevertheless, this figure only represents a fraction of the value of non-fungible tokens currently circulating the internet.

\$2.5 billion of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) were sold in the first half of 2021, but this number almost tripled by the end of 2021. These little bits of "screenshootable" media — digital assets that supposedly can be easily copied — are being valued by some at prices that have led some to wonder whether they'll lead to great wealth while others are left scratching their heads.

NFTs can be best compared to art and other similar collectibles in the sense that their value is determined solely by investors. High net worth individuals often acquire pieces for various purposes from art collection to tax evasion.

"We've never had a technology like this before," Li said. "The more you know about blockchain, the more you realize the full range of things you can do with it."

Li believes that blockchain represents the next major phase of innovation. He compared it to the internet in the 1990s and early 2000s, emphasizing that "all applications we use today can be rebuilt for better on the blockchain."

Like currencies, NFTs derive value from demand. Without it, the token is worthless regardless of the blockchain. Among less popular and liquid NFTs, a common practice is to sell it to themselves to artificially increase demand.

Another popular series is the Bored Ape Yacht Club, sporting computer generated pictures of monkeys with different expressions and costumes. Of these, the most expensive is #2087 worth 2.3 million.

However, investors can also find NFTs on sale for mere cents or even fractions of a cent. The series MetaShiba, where an investor purchases an NFT as a character to play in the MetaShiba game, was valued at \$11.75 million, 7.67 million and 7.6 million respectively.

As of Jan. 5,

So how can you buy an NFT? The first step is to create

a crypto wallet, which is a digital wallet to store crypto currencies. Afterwards, you can send the crypto tokens you purchase into the wallet. Now, you can connect this wallet to a marketplace that sells NFTs and you can bid on ones you want. If you win, the NFT is yours, though you may have to pay extra transaction fees based on the market you are using.

Class of 2021 alumni Isaac Le has been one of the many trading these assets this past year.

"I found it extremely risky at first," Le said. "But when it started gaining traction on mainstream media — that was when I decided to jump in."

Le bought videos and images of various basketball players. At the time, digital collectibles generated by Top Shot were quickly gaining traction, and Le hoped to benefit from the fluctuation of the prices of these assets. In the end, he said he made several thousand dollars on his transactions.

At a broader scale, fueled by

social media and the support of various notable influencers such as Katy Perry and Jay Z, NFTs are now one of the most popular assets traded on the market. Proponents herald their blockchain technology, decentralized nature and empowerment of lesser-known artists.

At the same time, NFTs are highly controversial, considered by many investors to be potentially worthless and unreliable.

"[The crypto space is] disgusting and contrary to the interest of civilization," Charlie Munger, right hand man to Warren Buffett, said during Berkshire's annual shareholder meeting.

"I don't welcome a currency that's so useful to kidnappers and extortionists and so forth, nor do I like just shuffling out of your extra billions of billions of dollars to somebody who just invented a new financial product out of thin air."

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The volatility and manipulability within certain NFTs is no different than pump-and-dump schemes in other markets.

However, NFTs — like other cryptos and assets — are considered to be property by the IRS and are not a security. This allows investors to sell for a loss, and then use that loss to eliminate capital gains taxes on other assets such as stocks. Investors can quickly buy back the crypto they sold, and in doing so, avoid any losses. This tax loop-hole is called "tax-loss harvesting."

Despite the relative volatility and lack of regulation, senior Dhruv

Singh believes NFTs are opportunities for wealth building in the near future.

"NFTs are distinctive even within the crypto-asset sphere, since the tokens serve as a 'bridge' between the virtual and physical worlds through corroborating digital ownership, which furthers blockchain adoption, and allows a variety of households to participate in the digital economy," Singh said.

"It's easy and completely understandable to laugh off this recent trend," Singh said. "At the end of the day, you get to do what you like with your money." ◆

With highly volatile markets and cash flows impossible to determine given the nature of the asset, the risks for NFTs are hard to ignore for many investors. Yet over the past few months, an increasing number of auction houses have adopted NFTs, indicating that this market is beginning to be accepted.

In the long term, Singh said that he does not believe that NFTs are only a "fad," and is looking to take advantage of the market by hedging against the asset by taking short and long positions.

"It's easy and completely understandable to laugh off this recent trend," Singh said. "At the end of the day, you get to do what you like with your money." ◆



WHAT'S INSIDE AN NFT?

1. 32-BIT RANDOM NUMBER

2. 256-BIT HEADER NUMBER

3. DATA OF YOUR CHOOSING

Graphic by SHAAN SRIDHAR

Falcons fall to Gunn, still lead league 4-1

by Esther Luan
& Howard Shu

After a 4-0 league season start, the Falcons were outplayed by Gunn at home last Friday, losing 55-37. According to senior wing Ishaan Bhandari, the loss resulted from poor individual performance on key plays; the Falcons dragged behind Gunn by 10 points for much of the game.

Before this loss, they had beaten Wilcox 61-33 on Jan. 18 and won a back-and-forth 52-47 home game against Los Gatos on Jan. 14, a key victory against one of the strongest teams in the El Camino league.

The Falcons also won 49-45 and 64-54 against Monta Vista and Fremont on Jan. 8 and Jan. 10, respectively.

These wins come in spite of missing key players. Shooting guard senior Som Teymouri, the team's current leading scorer, was out for the first game; senior forward Ishaan Bhandari and junior center Mateusz Palusinski were out for the first two; and junior forward Mason Wang was out for all three due to injuries.

"Obviously, not having [Teymouri] was a huge loss, but I don't think there was ever a moment I believed we wouldn't win," junior guard Niveydh Pai said.

The team has a motto to "go 120," which tells the team to give over 100% effort, senior point guard Christopher Liu said.

"This year we have 15 guys on our team, which means we can go all out because we're going to have another rotation coming soon," Liu said.

In their well-attended home game against Los Gatos, they edged ahead in the second half. The starting lineup consisted of senior point guard Christian Li, Teymouri, Pai, senior power forward Ayaz Shah and senior center Giulio Morini-Bianzino.

It was a physical game with high defensive intensity, as both teams were full-court

pressing, fouling often and double teaming at half court. The game remained close during the first half, with neither team being able to build a lead of more than five points.

After trailing 24-23 at halftime, the Falcons rallied to a 5-point victory thanks to key plays from sophomore shooting guard Bryan Wang and great defense. The game was decided after Liu scored back-to-back fastbreak layups to give the Falcons a 49-39 lead with a minute remaining.

"I think this game was super different because of the big crowd. It was a really good turnout that I was super happy about," Liu said. "The game was a lot more exciting."

In their home game against Fremont on Jan. 10, they won 64-54, bolstered by Teymouri's return and a great performance from Pai, who finished with 22 points.

Pai sprained his ankle on a bad landing during the game against Los Gatos, but appeared to be recovering quickly, Li said. The team is anticipating having all their starters in upcoming league games. Though a concentrated offense has been vital to the team's success so far, Li identified defense as their strongest suit; head coach Patrick Judge's Falcons have been tough on defense because of their full-court press and the steals it creates. "We weren't playing as usual [against Fremont]," he said. "We're known as a defensive team, but in the first half we were just out of place and missing assignments."

They led 31-29 at the half, but were able to take a 10-point win because of playing better defense and taking better shots in the second half. In their first league game against Monte Vista on Jan. 8, the team won 49-45 despite underperforming.

"I'd say our team chemistry was a bit off because we had four missing players, especially a few who played a lot," Li said. "But after each game, we're just getting better."

The recent spike in COVID-19 cases has



From left to right: senior Christian Li, juniors Julian Berkowitz-Sklar and Mateusz Palusinski, and senior Christopher Liu celebrate after Liu scores against Los Gatos on Jan. 14.

FALCON // HOWARD SHU

I feel like we're finally grouping together, playing together the way we should be."

SENIOR Christopher Liu

said. "We have five guys on the court that know their own position."

The team is already locked in for CCS after being seeded in due to the 9-2 pre-season, but they have sights set on winning the league. They are currently first in the El Camino league, but Liu believes the team still has not reached their full potential.

Their major competitor in the league looks to be the Lynbrook Vikings, a team they will play at home on Feb. 1. ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

COVID-19 sidelines key players, losses pile up

by Christopher Chen

"For those games, all three teams we've played have had larger benches than us. They are able to substitute more people so that they are constantly having a fresh set of five on the court," Campbell said. "Most of us have to stay in the game for extended periods of time, and some play the entire game without any rest."

The quad day game against sister school Los Gatos on Jan. 14 wasn't an exception. Although the game was evenly matched at first, they fell behind in the second half due to a lack of height and tiring out, with only six players available compared to Los Gatos' full bench.

Following these four games, the team was mostly complete in a game they won against Wilcox 46-33 on Jan. 19. With a full team going forward for upcoming games

against Los Altos and Lynbrook, the team is looking stronger than before.

Although the team is "definitely pretty small" junior point guard Tanya Chai believes lack of height is not a big issue, as she thinks the team has strong guards and posts. However, she believes the team needs to work on producing consistent offense.

"It is too stagnant, but I feel that's an issue only because we have just started playing together and we're trying to learn each other's personal and overall skills," she said. "Building on-court chemistry and implementing an overall offensive game plan has been something we are trying to key in on."

Senior Amarangana Tyagi found the team's offense strong in the match against Wilcox on Jan. 19.

"I think our biggest problem was lack of

WRESTLING

Unable to fill weight classes, Falcons forfeit matches

by Mitchell Chen

The wrestling team has faced an uninsured opponent early in its 0-4 start to the season: COVID-19 concerns and absences.

With increasing rates of COVID-19 transmission, wrestling has been hit especially hard because athletes aren't willing to risk their health on the mat, members on the team said. Forfeits have been common.

As a result, of the 20 athletes on the team, only 12 have been willing to go on the mat during meets and tournaments.

Sophomore Andy Cao is among those

sitting out.

"I am hesitant to wrestle in meets because I wanted to take extra COVID-19 precautions," he said. "It really sucks because I was really looking forward to using some of the new techniques we learned in practice."

While the pandemic has greatly impacted the team, it wasn't the only thing that factored into the rough start to the season. The lack of conditioning and preparation the team has done this year has also contributed to their losses,



Graphic by VICTORIA HU

senior captain Kendal Jarvis said. Wrestlers haven't pushed themselves and each other to the best of their abilities — and they have much room for improvement.

As a result, in addition to regular practices, the team also conditions twice a week, either on the track or in the weight room.

"I think our conditioning at the moment may not be the best, but as long as we incorporate live wrestling with other workouts, we should be fine," Jarvis said.

During a recent dual meet with Santa Clara on Jan. 20, members of the team felt that while conditioning has helped their performances, there is still more to be done.

"I think we need more conditioning," sophomore Justin Jiang said. "During my match at Santa Clara, I was tired after the first round. If we had more conditioning during the season, it would be effective."

Despite losses, the team is trying to stay healthy and work harder to better prepare themselves for future meets and tournaments. Their next meet was scheduled for Jan. 27 against Mountain View. ♦



toga6thman

Follow



25 posts

410 followers

633 following

Official Saratoga 6th Man

Keep up with Saratoga's sporting events!

Created by senior Parsa Hashemi during the fall semester, the account aims to bolster the school's sports culture and audience engagement.

POSTS

REELS

TAGGED

the word about sporting events."

@toga6thman primarily posts infographics made by junior Kaeli Trateng to encourage students to attend games for all sports. Trateng will most likely take over the account once Hashemi graduates.

Kaeli approached me and offered to help with graphics, which took a lot of weight off me," Hashemi said. "She talked about her desire to create a more spirited community at the school, and it was really admirable."

Trateng's infographics include a visual, along with the game's time, and opponent; these graphics are advertised further through assistant principal Brian Thompson's school-wide emails. Thompson got involved shortly after the account's creation.

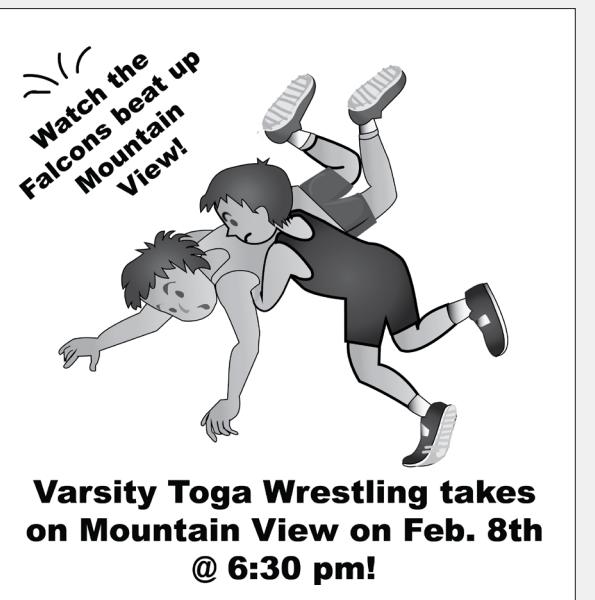
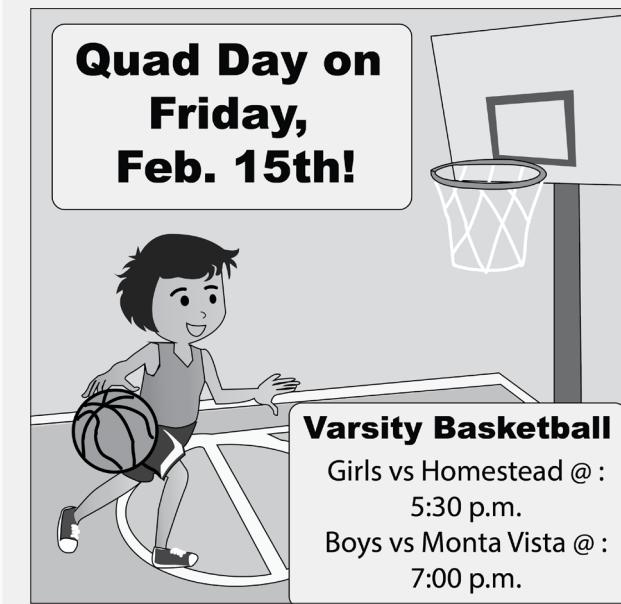
The account's promotion of the varsity basketball games

against Los Gatos on Jan. 14 — as well as ASB's newly implemented "game of the week" — attracted a large number of students. Senior varsity basketball co-captain Ayaz Shah attributed the team's win to the student section.

"It warmed my heart to see so many Falcons show up for the team," Shah said. "It always makes us play better when we have a supportive crowd when we're playing."

Shah added that the infographics posted by @toga6thman leading up to the game were "very influential" and he appreciates Hashemi's efforts to bolster school spirit.

"I feel like we're only worried about our own little communities, but sports culture brings that sense of unity," Hashemi said. "It's a really good way to bring everyone together and fight for something in common instead of against each other." ♦



BOYS' SOCCER

Falcons get off to strong start

by Annie Liu, Nikhil Mathihalli & Tiffany Wang

to place many athletes with varsity potential

The boys' soccer team began its league season with a 3-1 record after a 2-1 loss to Lynbrook on Jan. 18, a 5-2 win against Monta Vista on Jan. 13, a 5-1 win against Cupertino on Jan. 6 and a 2-1 victory to Fremont on Jan. 4.

With 10 returning varsity players on the 14-member team, the Falcons attribute their early success to strong team chemistry. These team bonds have been additionally strengthened through the preseason games, junior attacking midfielder Nathan Lim said.

A normal practice, which typically spans for around two hours, consists of warm-up stretches and some keep-away games which are followed up with defensive practice.

The team recently played a game against Monta Vista, one of the best teams in the league, which was their "first real test of where we lie," according to senior captain and center back Aidan Costello. The Falcons' 5-2 victory gave them high hopes for the rest of the season.

Prior to the game against Monta Vista, the team played Fremont, and though they won against Fremont early in the season, they were unsatisfied with their performance. The team scored two goals in the first 10 minutes but not again.

"We just didn't really find ourselves after that, so they scored another goal. We didn't think we played very well at all and most people were really upset with that win," Costello said.

The Falcons were scheduled to play Fremont and Cupertino on Jan. 25 and Jan. 27, and the team hopes to secure another win against Milpitas on Feb. 1. ♦

BY Jonny Luo & Arnav Swamy

The girls' soccer team began the league season with a 0-0 tie against Fremont on Jan. 4, a 3-0 win against Monta Vista on Jan. 13, a 5-1 win against Lynbrook on Jan. 18 and a 5-0 victory over Wilcox on Jan. 20 — leading to a 3-1-0 record. Their record continues a strong 4-1-1 preseason record.

The first league game against Fremont was one of the hardest games for the team. They were able to shut down Fremont's offense, but struggled to score.

"We developed our team chemistry and learned how to play really cohesively with each other," said senior outside forward Anjali Nuggehalli, who is new to the team after playing competitive club soccer alone in recent years.

However, the Falcons' schedule has been impacted by the pandemic. A game against Cupertino was rescheduled to Jan. 20 due to COVID-19 cases on the opposing team, and a game against Milpitas was rescheduled to Feb. 5 because the school went online due to the omicron surge.

The team has also seen two COVID-19 cases (1 player and 1 coach), but has not been significantly affected, Nuggehalli said.

"The surge in cases has made us play harder because we never know if a game is

going to be our last," Nuggehalli said.

Nuggehalli, who has been recruited to play Division 3 soccer at Pomona College, has played soccer since age 5; however, this is her first year playing on the school team due to transferring to De Anza ECNL, which — unlike her previous club, U.S. Soccer Development Academy — lets her play both club and school soccer.

"It's been a new experience being the oldest on the team and playing with younger girls," Nuggehalli said.

Players such as senior co-captains and outside defenders Casey Gilligan and Emma Foley are also critical members of the team because of their speed, Nuggehalli said. She added that senior co-captain midfielder Lauren Yarrington is an essential part of the team's offensive play.

"All three seniors are amazing leaders both on and off the field in their own unique way," said Nuggehalli.

With goalie Raina Hirakatur's powerful defense paired with Nuggehalli's, Yarrington's and sophomore Katherine Oberhauser's coordinated offense, Nuggehalli is looking forward to a strong season with a well rounded team.

"We have a lot of depth on this team and a lot of girls who specialize in different things which make the team strong," Nuggehalli said. "I'm having so much fun playing with these girls, and it has been amazing to have gotten so close to them. I'm optimistic for the rest of the season, as long as we keep up the intensity and execute well in our games." ♦

All graphics by CHRISTINA CHANG AND ANJALI PAI

The Falcon Crossword: Friday, January 28, 2022

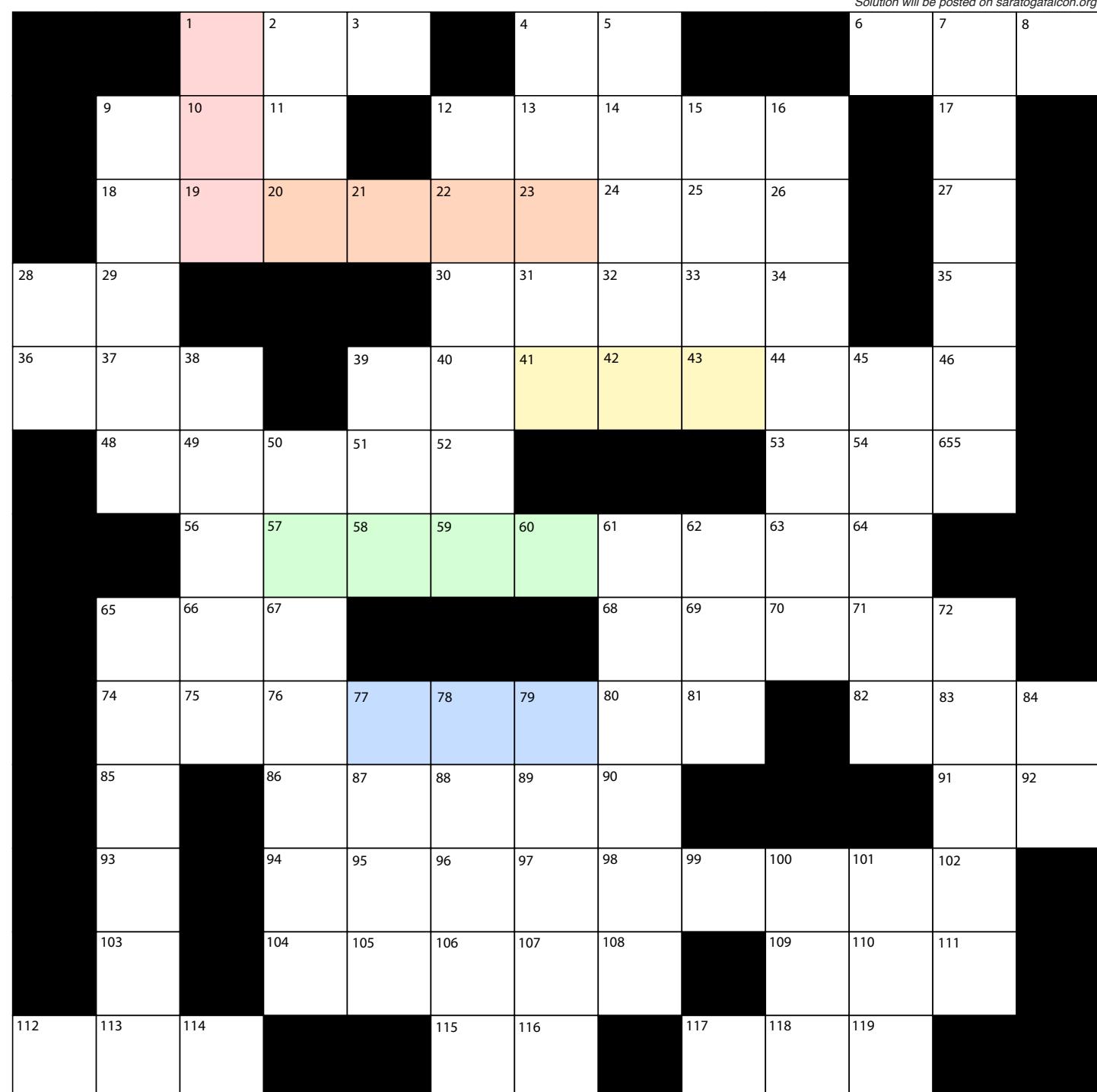
BY BillYuan

ACROSS

- 1 The region of California that we are from, in slang
 4 TV Channel that aired Teen Titans, The Powderpuff Girls, Ben 10, abbr.
 6 Stock that was pumped by r/wallstreetbets in January last year
 9 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen
 12 A Brazilian state along the atlantic coast that is the eighth-largest Brazilian State by population
 18 Music producer?
 28 Type of battery
 30 Pointed at, or set yourself a goal
 36 A cap for a jar
 39 Our country's armed forces
 48 Used to point during presentations, also illegal to shine in the sky
 53 See 45-Down
 56 A diagram that might depict an electric circuit
 65 A board game of comparison, abbr.
 68 This is ain't your first...
 74 A headache and nausea, after a night out, perhaps
 82 Cells that transport oxygen throughout your body, abbr.
 86 Household appliance company, most known for their vacuums
 91 As opposed to restrictive early action, say
 94 What all the highlighted boxes are
 104 Standardized test for lawyers, plural
 109 To grow older
 112 Tom Holland's weapon of choice in his most recent action movie
 115 Chevrolet Camaro variant with a 6-cylinder engine
 117 Standardized rating system used in competitive chess

DOWN

- 1 Greek prefix meaning life
 2 Trajectory of a football
 4 Subject of the Rhodes Colossus
 5 Scott, actress who played Jasmine in Disney's 2019 remake of Aladdin
 7 A person who is killed because of their religious beliefs
 9 Futile, to no _____
 12 Foy who plays Queen Elizabeth II in The Crown
 15 Review of Research, Education, and Treatment, abbr.
 16 Instructions that you may see on a chemistry lab
 38 Pappardelle, fettuccini, or rigatoni, for example



example
 39 Expressing a lack of interest or excitement
 45 Along with 53-Across, what a NASCAR driver is
 50 The XYZ Affair, Watergate, and class of 2022 driver's ed cheating, for example

61 Areas where sports events are held
 62 Router commonly used to access the deep web, abbr.
 65 "It all makes sense now!"
 72 Medically defined as 30 BMI and above
 77 Cheats or swindles someone

78 What the Academy Awards are more popularly known as
 79 Measures electric potential
 84 Old way of saving music
 100 Khan, founder of popular educational website
 101 Inflated, especially for Freud ♦

Becoming a professional exterminator

insect murd-arah

Sarah Zhou

It all started a few weeks ago at 2 a.m. one unfortunate morning. I was groggily getting ready for bed when I walked into my room, only to discover a gigantic brown blob on my wall. I wasn't about to get up close and inspect it, so since I have bad eyesight, I got my glasses.

The second I saw what the gigantic brown blob was, I wished I hadn't. It was a huge hairy spider glaring down at me. Finding a creepy insect in your room seems like such a small problem for most — or at least for the people who make fun of me for my anxiety about them. Just grab a towel or cup and kill it, right?

So that's what I did. I calmly walked to the kitchen, got a paper towel and killed the spider without throwing a tantrum or screaming for 3 minutes.

Just kidding. I threw a tantrum and screamed for three minutes. My neighbor literally came banging on the door thinking some disaster had occurred. You can imagine the eye roll he gave when he

found out it was "just a spider."

Obviously, my mom yelled at me for making a big deal over a tiny little insect that was "also probably afraid of me."

And after everyone else had gone back to sleep, I still had this spider to deal with, since no one else was being proactively attentive to my issues.

So I sat there. For three hours. Don't believe me? Ask my mom. She got up four times in the next few hours to find me still having a meltdown while engaged in a staring contest with the spider relaxing over my bed.

So, how did I get rid of the spider? I called my dad. He drove an hour to kill my "measly" little spider, and to maintain his sanity — and mine — began to bribe me to kill spiders by paying me \$5 each time I killed one. Sounds like easy cash right? Wrong.

My first job was only days later, hovering on the wall. The spider was really tiny and appeared to be harmless. I didn't realize at the time, but I would soon find that this spider was trained in gymnastics. As I got close to it with the paper towel, it jumped onto the towel and jumped again onto me. Obviously, I had yet another meltdown. Still got \$3 for "participation" though.

Eventually, after days of pretending not

to see every insect in my house, there was a huge one on the ceiling. My mom told me to kill it because I'm 3.5 inches taller than her. The ceilings in my house are 14 feet high. Gosh, my extra 3.5 inches are really going to help us here.

I was standing there calculating the cost of an exterminator when my mom decided to go shopping. She went SHOPPING.

After regretting looking up at the ceiling for a good ten minutes, I decided to rant about my insect troubles to my friend. She made fun of this and jokingly suggested that I poke it to death.

Desperate to continue with my day, I grabbed the long wooden stick perched above the sliding door to the backyard and climbed on the countertop. As I blindly poked at the general area of the spider, praying that I wouldn't shatter the glass roofing, I realized that the spider was gone.

I looked down to find the spider's mangled little corpse on the floor and heaved a relieved sigh.

From there on out, I always used the same long stick to kill all insects, which I dubbed "The Exterminator." The stick allows me to reach high places and keeps me a good 6 feet away from my target, preventing any jumping spider mishaps.

top ten

EXCUSES FOR NOT RETURNING YOUR FRIEND'S PENCIL

- 10** "I thought I gave it to you already." If you're the type of person who actually says this, you're extremely bad at lying.
- 9** "I left it at home." Can I borrow another pencil?
- 8** "I'll bring it tomorrow." You're not charging interest, right?
- 7** "Here you go — I only replaced the lead, body and eraser." That's basically the same pencil in my books.
- 6** "My friend borrowed it." They needed it really badly for a test, and I'm extremely selfless.
- 5** "My dog ate your pencil." A classic.
- 4** "I ate your pencil." A modern classic.
- 3** "What pencil?" I don't remember borrowing a pencil from you, not at all. It was \$30? Interesting.
- 2** "I'm not finished using it yet." There's still three inches left for me to use!
- 1** "I lost it." Honesty is the best policy.

>> Nikhil Mathihalli and Aiden Ye