



Indian Cultural Awareness Club hosts first Garba at school



Halloween memories delight and spook



An overview of California's 2022 midterm Propositions

THE saratogafalcon

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Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA

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NEW FACES ON BALLOT

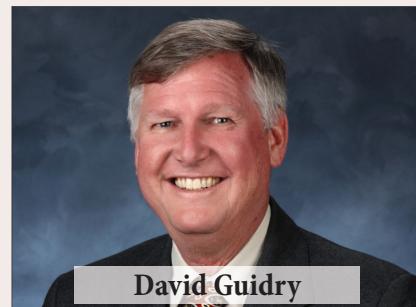
5 Candidates vie for 3 School Board Positions



Steve Chen



Misty Davies



David Guidry



Chris Miller



Alex Shultz

BY Shaan Sridhar

Three seats on the district board are open in the Nov. 8 election. Five candidates are vying for the seats: Saratoga High parent and project organizer Misty Davies, private school teacher Chris Miller, tech executive and incumbent David Guidry, former LGHS science teacher Alex Shultz and former Los Gatos High math teacher Steve Chen.

The Falcon reached out to all five candidates with a standardized set of six questions to understand their qualifications, priorities and stances on pressing issues.

>> BOARD on pg. 4

Graphics by ATREY DESAI and STEPHANIE SUN

Cuttlefish create robot for pumpkin-smashing event

BY Martin Xu

As the goop and seeds of a newly mashed pumpkin were launched toward all four walls of the transparent enclosure, members of the school's flagship robotics team, MSET 6165 Cuttlefish, cheered in relief. Earlier this month, the Cuttlefish tested their pumpkin-smashing robot for the first time.

Its goal is to decimate carved pumpkins in an attempt to reduce and bring awareness to food waste and composting, especially after

Halloween.

Cuttlefish will showcase their pumpkin smasher at an event, STEM Madness at Saratoga High (SMASH), on Nov. 2 at 4 p.m. SMASH is intended for anyone interested in composting pumpkins or simply looking to continue the fun of Halloween.

In addition to the pumpkin smasher, there will be a robotics fair in which the audience can interact with other robotics teams in the community. Partnering with West Valley Composting, the team hopes to compost 300 pumpkins

and deliver all of the food waste gathered from the event to a composting plant in Campbell to reduce the waste caused by Halloween pumpkins and jack-o'-lanterns in the community.

The inspiration of the Halloween-themed event came from senior hardware lead Emily Lu and her experience with composting.

Ever since her mom started composting for their garden in her freshman year, Lu said she has been fascinated with composting. After realizing food waste could be repurposed, she wanted to do more about it. Lu started off simple with vermicompost through a worm bin and composting food scraps.

Lu had previously learned of the numerous amounts of waste that pumpkins generate from Halloween, and after hearing about a team ramming pumpkins with their robots during a trip to Washington, D.C., she put the two concepts together to create a solution: a pumpkin smasher.

Composting pumpkins produces a significantly less amount of pollutants.

"There are a lot of jack-o'-lanterns and other decorations that

are usually thrown away right after [Halloween], it's really unsustainable and bad for the environment," Lu said.

"I wanted to focus on composting the actual pumpkin and bringing awareness to food waste. Composting pumpkins breaks them down and produces a significantly less amount of pollutants."

The team originally had two potential approaches when designing the pumpkin smasher: The initial plan was a simple guillotine design consisting of a heavy block dropped from a reasonable height to smash the pumpkin.

>> ROBOTICS on pg. 2

Band makes big strides

BY Allison Tan & Zach Zinman

As the marching band stepped on to the football field for a Senior Night performance on Oct. 14, a feeling of pride was easy to detect.

The countless hours of rehearsal over the past month and a half culminated in their 3rd to last home performance of the band season.

"The band worked really hard going into Senior Night," drum major Alison Okuno said. "It really paid off. There was just a re-

ally great showing of people and support for the seniors."

The band prepared all four parts of the show before the first competition. In previous years, learning the four movements didn't happen until the second or third competition.

"For as long as I've known the school's marching band, which has been since 2012, we haven't had the full show by our first competition, and this year, we did," Okuno said.

>> BAND on pg. 2

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BAND

continued from pg. 1

"It really paid off. There was just a really great showing of people and support for the seniors."

The band prepared all four parts of the show before the first competition. This differs from previous years, in which learning the four movements didn't happen until the second or third competition.

"For as long as I've known the school's marching band, which has been since 2012, we haven't had the full show by our first competition, and this year, we did," Okuno said.

To accomplish this goal, the staff pushed the band and leadership team to learn faster than previous years.

"We were smarter about how we designed the show," performing arts chair and band director Jason Shiu said. "From a teaching standpoint, I felt like we have been more vocal with the leadership team."

The first of four movements consists of Shiu's interpretation of Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody."

This planted the seed for this year's theme of "Blossom," a symbol for "reaping what you sow."

The second, the age-old ballad "La Vie En Rose," symbolizes "that first flower that blooms," Shiu said. The third is based on "Fantasia" and "Fugue in G" by Timothy Maher.

"Ode to Joy" in the final part of the show represents the idea of springtime when all of the flowers bloom.

This is represented by the color guard flags, adding a sudden burst of color that concludes the show on a high note.

"Hopefully we communicate something to the audience that makes them feel something special," Shiu said.

The band performed last weekend in Fresno in the Sierra Cup Classic (results were unavailable because of printing deadlines).

The next performance is in Sacramento at NorCal Super Show, happening on Nov. 5. ♦



Junior Naomi Hsieh, Rishab Melkote and senior Emily Lu work on the structural design of MSET Cuttlefish (6165)'s pumpkin smasher. The team organized the event to gain awareness and encourage composting in the community. Over the course of weeks, the team designed and tested the pumpkin smasher multiple times for their showcase which will occur on Nov. 2.

FALCON // MARTIN XU

ROBOTICS

continued from pg. 1

ran into while testing their first prototype was the lack of force when the plate came into contact with the pumpkin.

"It wasn't as exciting as I had anticipated," Lu said. "The plate was pretty large, so the pressure from the piston is distributed throughout the pumpkin and does not provide enough force to smash the pumpkin at one singular point of contact."

Lu had two possible solutions. The first was adding screws around the plate in order to guide the force in more concentrated areas or mimicking apple splitters. The second was attaching them to the plate to in order to guide the pumpkin into breaking points.

Ultimately, she decided to go with the apple splitters since it was much longer than the screws and could cut into the pumpkin more efficiently, which did the trick.

Lu described how the team spent a week on research and design meetings with mentors to ask questions and gain feedback on their ideas after committing to the idea.

The team began building in late August after researching and designing different parts for the pumpkin smasher with CAD (Computer Aided Design), and completed their first prototype by Sept. 6.

One of the main problems that the team

few weeks after the initial idea. Even then, we iterated really efficiently and solved the problems together. That was really impressive to me."

Additionally, Singh said his contributions on the design and build team for the pumpkin smasher have been one of the highlight of his time in robotics.

"You don't smash pumpkins on a daily basis, especially with a pneumatic piston that we've built as a team," Singh said. "Working with stuff that I don't usually get to, like pneumatics and wooden structural frames, was a really cool learning opportunity."

Ultimately, Lu said that she and her team are satisfied with the final iteration of the pumpkin smasher and hope that the event will be as successful.

It was rewarding seeing the pumpkin smasher come together from an idea to actually smashing a pumpkin for the first time," Lu said. "I'm really proud of our team for working together and our mentors for helping us with some of our challenges along the way. I hope that this event will bring fun and awareness to the community."

Junior Jarrett Singh, who works on the hardware team, said that the solution worked out, and that he was especially proud at how they came together to create the pumpkin smasher in a timely manner.

"I think it was a major success," Singh said. "Though we were all new to this type of engineering, we all worked together really well and got the first iteration only a

Language barrier sparks film passion

BY AnikaKapasi

When senior Darren Guo moved from China to Saratoga in seventh grade, he spoke little English. Until his English improved, he had a hard time in most of his classes — except during his media arts elective.

"Media arts and filmmaking was something that my language barrier didn't bar me from being good at," he said.

Guo liked the class so much that he took the same elective in eighth grade and, when he came to Saratoga High, he knew the Media Arts Program (MAP) was the "obvious choice" for him.

"There's the aspect of filmmaking [that allows] self-expression and fulfillment, which is what I [discovered in middle school]," Guo said.

While in MAP, his talent for filmmaking was recognized last year during SMASH'N, an event held at the end of the school year to award the year's best projects. In May, Guo won three awards for his films: best curricular project, best documentary and best American story. Mike Davey, Guo's history teacher in his sophomore and junior year, described him as a humble, responsible and quick-witted leader who must have had "extra hours in the day" to get all of his projects done.

Over the years, Guo's passion for filmmaking grew, and when the leadership class decided to create a dedicated commission for the tech aspect of leadership



Courtesy of DARREN GUO

Senior Darren Guo films former mayor Yan Zhao's campaign video.

events, Guo applied for and earned the lead position as a result of his filming and editing abilities. The homecoming reveal video played on Aug. 16 during the Food Truck Fest and the football hype film aired during the first rally on Sept. 19 were made by Guo and the rest of the commission. Along with creating films, they are responsible for handling the audio equipment and recordings for quad days.

Currently, the commission is creating a video for the Trunk or Treat event on Oct. 29, with the concept of the video being similar to the Homecoming theme reveal video. While he has often been told to submit his films to festivals, Guo said he has "never felt the time or need to do that." However, for his senior year, he is required to submit his group's MAP Capstone project, a 10-minute film, to a film festival and is curious to see the result of his submission. ♦

He said he hopes to pursue film in the future, applying to the film programs at USC, UCLA, Chapman University and Loyola Marymount College.

"To me, filmmaking is really like any other form of art," Guo said. "It's the process of having what you imagine coming to life in a tangible medium, which is the part I have found to enjoy the most." ♦



The Saratoga Downtown Starbucks location has been shut down as of Oct. 2. The shutdown is mostly due to staffing and lease problems.

FALCON // SHREYA RALLABANDI

Downtown Saratoga Starbucks closes

BY AtreyDesai, JonathanSi & AndyZhu

The Starbucks located in downtown Saratoga closed on Oct. 2 because of a combination of staffing problems and the end of a lease, according to senior Victoria Prillwitz, who worked at the location between March and August.

When contacted, Starbucks representatives did not respond for comment.

Prillwitz said the location was convenient because of its short distance from the school.

Still, despite the store's closure, Prillwitz said she thinks there won't be too much of a negative impact since there is a nearby Starbucks located at the Argonaut Center and Quito Village.

However, for senior Shan-

Soundings literary magazine seeks a larger audience

THE NEW STAFF HOPES TO PUBLISH TWO ISSUES: AN ONLINE EDITION IN WINTER AND A PRINT MAGAZINE IN SPRING

BY NikhilMathihalli

During a normal October tutorial, English 11 Honors and Creative Writing teacher Amy Keys' classroom was filled with students. Throughout the 50-minute period, students on the editorial board of the school's art and literary magazine, Soundings, discussed upcoming deadlines, finalizing issues choices and future fundraising possibilities.

Since

1986, when it was first created, Soundings has featured students' submissions that go beyond the standard English and art curriculum. It provides an opportunity for students to showcase their creativity in areas such as poetry, short stories, photography and art.

Additionally, Singh said his contributions on the design and build team for the pumpkin smasher have been one of the highlight of his time in robotics.

"You don't smash pumpkins on a daily basis, especially with a pneumatic piston that we've built as a team," Singh said. "Working with stuff that I don't usually get to, like pneumatics and wooden structural frames, was a really cool learning opportunity."

Keys

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be an online publication — due to the cost of print issues being high

— while the spring semester one

will be produced in hard copy.

Funding

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Graphic by SHAAN SRIDHAR

Steve Chen: former LGHS math teacher

What are your background and qualifications?

I believe I can bring a balanced and educated perspective to the board as a former LGHS teacher, parent to three grown children who've also attended LGHS and former sales executive.

I graduated from Stanford with a degree in electrical engineering. While I spent my first 30 working years in the tech industry, deep down I always wanted to teach.

So, about eight years ago, I pivoted and got my masters degree in education at Santa Clara University and have taught math at LGHS until this past June.

What are your thoughts on employee hiring and retention?

On retention, I would want to understand the reasons why our recently departed employees left, along with the top job dissatisfaction issues with the remaining staff.

I'd then work with the superintendent to make sure there is a plan in place to address these issues going forward.

For new staffing positions, I would re-

view the interview process to ensure there's a mutual match of skills, interests and organizational fit between the job candidates and the hiring team.

Better hiring practices should improve retention rates if the staff are better matched to their job function and work team.

That said, I think the board position is one of oversight. My job is to ensure that any final recommendation made by the administration is logical, thorough and includes input by all stakeholders: students, parents and teachers.

Do you support renewing the parcel tax?

Yes. I support the parcel tax. My highest priority as a board member is to ensure the renewal of this tax when it expires in 2025.

I would also work with the other board members, administration and community to determine if there is support for a tax higher than the current \$49 rate.

For example, our communities have recently approved a parcel tax of \$67 and \$335 (plus a 2% annual increase) for Saratoga Union School District (SUSD) and LGUSD, respectively. Can the high school district also pass a parcel tax with an increased rate?

I would continue to focus on messaging, making sure students, parents and staff are aware of these services and de-stigmatizing any negative connotations these services may have.

More importantly, I would want to create metrics to track how much each resource was being used to gauge effectiveness and to determine future needs.



Courtesy of STEVE CHEN

What are your other priorities?

Job one should be to investigate increases in other funding sources, either one-time or ongoing.

At the same time, we should go through the budget to make sure we are doing everything we can to streamline expenses that don't impact the classroom.

Optimizing the course curricula for both high schools with smaller student bodies will be an ongoing challenge. ♦

Misty Davies: SHS parent, project manager

What are your background and qualifications?

If elected, I will be the only member of the board who is a working parent and who currently has children in the district. My doctoral degree is from Stanford University in engineering and I manage engineering projects; so I understand how to interpret data and evaluate budgets. I've held many leadership roles across our local educational organizations, and have chaired math teams, musicals, robotics clubs and community events. I also received the 2018 Saratoga Union School District (SUSD) Volunteer of the Year Award and am endorsed by the LGSUHSD Teachers Association. See more at www.mistydavies.com.

What are your thoughts on employee hiring and retention?

Unfortunately, there is no way to monetarily compensate public school employees for what they are actually worth, and there is probably only so much that the district can continue to do to make sure that sal-

takes and improve.

What is the role of board members?

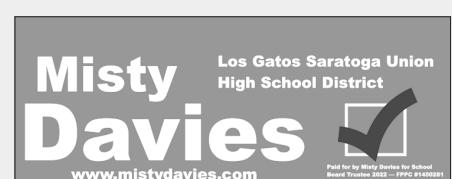
The school board has a responsibility to ensure that all interested parties have been consulted in major decisions, and to ensure that public funds are spent wisely and responsibly. If the board has done its job correctly in the hiring of the superintendent and approving top-level processes and budgets, most day-to-day administration should be the responsibility of the superintendent. The superintendent should then further delegate those responsibilities to the experts in his or her administration and staff.

Do you support renewing the parcel tax?

I applaud our district for its recent investments in wellness. However, much of this investment is focused on trying to repair damage that has already been done.

The next step is to change our school community cultures so that this damage is less likely to occur in the first place. To improve school culture and to help our community with resiliency, the highest priority needs to be on providing opportunities for every student for their individual success path, whatever that path is.

Students need to be given the space and grace to attempt new things, make mis-



Courtesy of MISTY DAVIES

can easily provide that clear communication and evidence.

What are your other priorities?

Substance abuse: This is a growing problem and a symptom of the mental health damage referenced in the question above.

Solar panels: Switching to renewable energy is not only the right thing to do, it is likely to have a financial benefit starting in the five- to 10-year time frame after implementation. With a plan in our back pocket, we can look for grant opportunities or public-private partnerships.

School safety: I've been approved as a Moms Demand Action Gun Sense Candidate. ♦

David Guidry: incumbent board member

What are your background and qualifications?

I am a current board member running for re-election, so I have four years of experience in this position. Previously, I was very active in the SHS community, including being President of the SHS Foundation and Chaperone Lead for the marching band. I have an engineering degree from UC Berkeley and a master's degree in business administration from London Business School, as well as a long, illustrious career in high tech. I'm also very involved in our community, including being President of the Friends of the Saratoga Libraries — this year's Organization of the Year! — and a Rotary member.

How can the schools better address student mental health?

This has been a primary focus for me, and the board, during the past four years and we have taken several steps to help address mental health. I'm particularly proud of our Wellness Centers and that we have added a College and Career Counselor at SHS. We have made great strides dealing with some very tough issues at LGHS, but we can do more to help SHS with key issues students face there. I'm particularly concerned about academic stress and I'd like to see us work closer with our students to find ways to better support them in dealing with this stress.

What are your thoughts on employee hiring and retention?

We recently experienced some big losses in our district for a variety of reasons, most not due to salaries, but we have been able to replace all of them with excellent people. Our district is considered one of the best places to work in our area and we

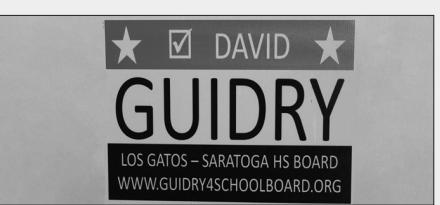
consistently have many candidates apply for any open position. Still, staff retention is very important and the key is providing competitive compensation and excellent working conditions. We accomplish these through negotiations with our unions and I'm proud that we reached agreement with them for over five years using the cooperative IBB method.

What is the role of board members?

The board is currently discussing this issue with our new superintendent now, as part of our effort to update the governance handbook. Board responsibilities include hiring a superintendent and evaluating their performance. The board is also responsible for setting the vision and providing guidance on the priorities for the district, and performing oversight of the district to ensure that we stay financially secure and are moving in the right direction. The board is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the district, nor should it directly manage any of the staff.

Do you support renewing the parcel tax?

We are one of several basic aid districts in our area, where our core funding is based on local property taxes rather than the number of students in our schools. These taxes currently supply 83% of our total revenue, with the parcel tax being less than 1.5% today. That parcel tax will be up for renewal during the next board's term and I am open to increasing it, but we



FALCON // ATREY DESAI
need to have a clear message for how it will be used so that we can get the support we need from our community to pass it.

What are your other priorities?

These are just some of the many issues that the board is addressing right now. One area that will be important for our district to address in the near term is declining enrollment and how we will continue to support important programs like drama with fewer students. We also need to continue working to achieve the goals we set in our latest strategic plan, which is focused on further improving the educational experience of our students. As a board trustee, know that I always have and will always do what is best for all of our students. ♦

Chris Miller: former LGUSD board trustee

What are your background and qualifications?

I graduated from Los Gatos High and attended Santa Clara University. In 2019, I received a doctoral degree in education in curriculum and instruction and recently graduated with a master's degree in clinical psychology. I enjoyed working as a substitute teacher at LGHS and SHS. In 2004, I was elected at age 23 to the LGUSD board, serving two terms. Currently, I am a 10th and 11th grade religious studies teacher at a high school in the East Bay.

How can the schools better address student mental health?

The mental wellness of our students, staff and faculty is of utmost importance. Sadly, approximately 40% of students at both LGHS and SHS in the 2020 California Healthy Kids Survey reported that they experienced chronic sadness or hopelessness in the previous 12 months. When students feel safe at school, they can learn. I am honored to have been involved in writing California Senate Bill 224, which was recently signed into law. School districts that offer health instruction must include a mental health component. You can learn more at this website: <https://steinberginstitute.org/champion/chris-miller/>.

What are your thoughts on employee hiring and retention?

Staff retention is an essential element of a successful organization, and we need to address the problem's physical and personal satisfaction aspects. Employee salaries must keep up with the cost of living, and quality health care should be offered to employees and their families. Also, we need to be sure that our teachers are supported by the administration and their departments. As a prospective board member, I will advocate for outside-the-box

thinking around teacher recruitment and retention. This includes the possibility of teacher housing and incentive programs within the district.

What is the role of board members?

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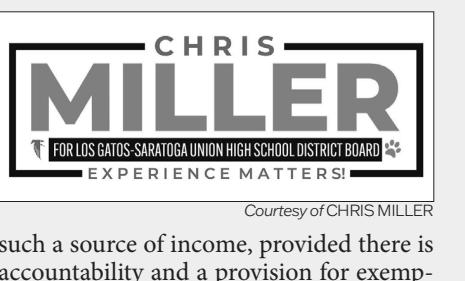
The five-member governing board is legally, morally and ethically responsible for oversight of the school district. How-

ever, the governing board has one direct employee — the superintendent. Ideally, the superintendent communicates with the stakeholders in a given situation and makes a recommendation to the board. The board then reaches a consensus and gives direction to the superintendent, who works with their administration at the district and school site levels to implement the board's decision. During my eight years as a trustee, I worked with five different superintendents. I learned the importance of having a superintendent who clearly understood the board's direction.

Do you support renewing the parcel tax?

I am intimately familiar with the school district's budgets, having served on the district Budget Advisory Committee (2018 to 2020), the district Parcel Tax Oversight Committee (2017 to 2021) and the district Bond Oversight Committee (2021 to present).

The district has an existing parcel tax of \$49 per parcel, in which the funds raised are split between LGHS and SHS based on the size of the student body. I support



Courtesy of CHRIS MILLER

such a source of income, provided there is accountability and a provision for exemptions.

What are your other priorities?

The district has done a poor job of communicating with constituents. In fact, the district has not issued an annual report since 2016. In contrast, other districts mail yearly reports. I will advocate for more communication with the broader community, including issuing an annual report. Also, in comparison to similar communities, LGHS has higher 30-day marijuana and alcohol use rates. If elected, I will advocate for implementing a positive community norms campaign, a research-based approach to reduce substance use among the adolescent population. ♦

Alex Shultz: former LGHS science teacher

What are your background and qualifications?

Many of our neighboring districts have headquarters to the world's largest companies, which gives them a tax advantage over our district, which is primarily a bedroom community for 36 years.

Over the long term, this will affect the quality of our programs. We must find a way to be more competitive if we are to maintain our place as one of the top-tier high school districts in the country. Our community values quality education and takes pride in the performance of our schools.

My professional and parental experiences provide me with a unique understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by those that make our schools great — our employees. Through this distinctive lens we can ensure the success of all students.

How can the schools better address student mental health?

In addition to providing on-site mental health counseling and guidance, we must continue to provide opportunities within our elective programs to meet the needs of and provide outlets for students outside the academic classes.

Students often find relief from daily stresses when they have a class like band, drama and the arts to look forward to on a regular basis.

These types of classes and encourage students to participate in them.

What is the role of board members?

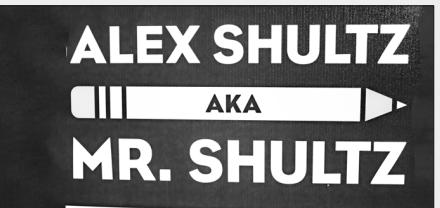
I'm a believer that the school site is the best place for most decisions to be made, as the people at the school site have the best understanding of the needs and culture of the school.

Certainly, the school board can facilitate discussions that help develop a consensus of opinion that finds the best solution to the problem.

Do you support renewing the parcel tax?

Yes, I think the best — and perhaps the only — way for us to compete for top-notch talent at all positions within our district is a larger parcel tax. We need to be sure we retain and attract quality teachers for today and the future. In order to raise our compensation for all employees, the community needs to consider raising the parcel tax.

It is vital that we retain and expand



FALCON // ATREY DESAI

I would like to partner with "coding bootcamps." The schools can provide physical space in exchange for spots for district students in the program. It might be possible for students to graduate from high school and go directly into the workforce in Silicon Valley.

Launching mentoring program for new teachers: I'd like to schedule an extra prep period for new teachers allowing them to work directly with an experienced teacher in their assigned subject area.

It would help them become integrated into their department faster as well as give them a better understanding of the school culture. ♦

What are your other priorities?

Introducing a new coding curriculum:

by Nikhil Mathihalli
& Anthony Wang

On Aug. 31, the FDA approved updated booster shots in an effort to mitigate threats posed by new Omicron variants. Despite this, many Americans aren't scheduling their boosters and seem to have dismissed COVID-19 as no longer a threat.

This past summer was filled with travel and social get-togethers — after two years of COVID-19 uncertainty, many people decided to leave the country, attend sporting events and even go to crowded concerts and rallies. In truth, the threats from COVID-19 are far from over as much as we wish they were. Immunity from both vaccination and past exposure continues to decrease, and new COVID-19 variants will continue to appear, throwing uncertainty into whether the established systems of protection against the virus are sustainable.

When it comes to preventing the spread of the virus, the CDC has decided to not pursue a policy of complete containment of the spread of the virus, shortening the isolation times for those who test positive to five days and lifting the requirement of self-isolation for those exposed to the virus, despite the steady daily cases. As such, the U.S. is heading toward a future in which the disease becomes endemic, turning into a recurrent seasonal phenomenon like the flu.

This decision by the CDC is sensible: It is very difficult to completely stop the transmission of highly virulent diseases like COVID-19. Zero-COVID policies like the

one currently in place in China significantly stunt economic growth, something undesirable for Western capitalist countries like the U.S.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, over 14 variants of COVID-19 have been discovered — the most recent being the Omicron BA.5 variant. As such, the threat of a new and possibly stronger variant of COVID-19 still largely exists. Just because the current variants are less dangerous than some of the original ones does not mean the world is safe.

Just because the current variants are less dangerous than the original ... does not mean the world is safe.

To contrast, look at the flu. Estimates of COVID-19's mutation rate vary wildly but generally lie in the range between 0.0005 and 0.002 nucleotide substitutions per site per year, comparable to the 0.0005 and

0.0026 average of Influenza A and B. Nevertheless, COVID-19 remains more than 10 times as deadly, with the biweekly case fatality rate, the ratio between deaths and cases, fluctuating between 0.5% and 1%, and the case fatality rate of the flu being around 0.06%.

Thus, these seasonal outbreaks are far less lethal than COVID-19. In fact, experts predict that even if the pandemic terminates by the end of 2022, it will likely still take another year for the mortality rate to begin to increase.

In addition, it is vital that the unvaccinated get vaccinated and continue receiving booster shots in order to keep our immunity high. Booster shots need to be advertised on a larger scale — pharmaceutical companies and local health offices have the power to encourage these booster shots and should do so.

Vaccination programs should be carried on with continuous support instead of letting their funding dry up. We cannot be apathetic and let a preventable wave or variant arise.

At this point, the threat of the virus is steadily decreasing. Let's do the best we can to ensure that this threat dies down as soon as possible. ♦

falconfigures



We wish the COVID-19 pandemic was over; it's not

by Zachary Zinman

Griner's plight, it's also easy to lose sight of the difficult position the basketball star's actions have put the U.S. in.

If the Biden administration fails to get Griner freed, the Russian regime could successfully humble the president by showcasing his foreign limitations, reflecting negatively on the U.S. as a world power.

If the Biden administration frees Griner, he will face the domestic backlash of de prioritizing the 40,000 Americans within its borders incarcerated for marijuana offenses, according to Forbes.

Biden has approved a prisoner exchange of convicted arms dealer Viktor Bout in return for the release of Griner and Paul Whelan, a former U.S. Marine who has been imprisoned in Russia for over three years on espionage charges.

At face value, this exchange seems fair — though, with some research, the swap starts to become questionable.

In 2012, Bout, nicknamed the "Merchant of Death" as one of the world's most infamous arms dealers, was sentenced to 25 years in a U.S. prison for terrorism charges.

He attempted to sell missiles to a Columbian militia group. Michael Braun, former chief of operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, called Bout "one of the most dangerous men on the face of Earth" in 2010.

Looking deeper into the details of the

prisoner exchange, it is imperative for Bout to stay in prison. It is not worth giving up a dangerous asset to terrorist organizations around the world for a high-profile athlete and former Marine.

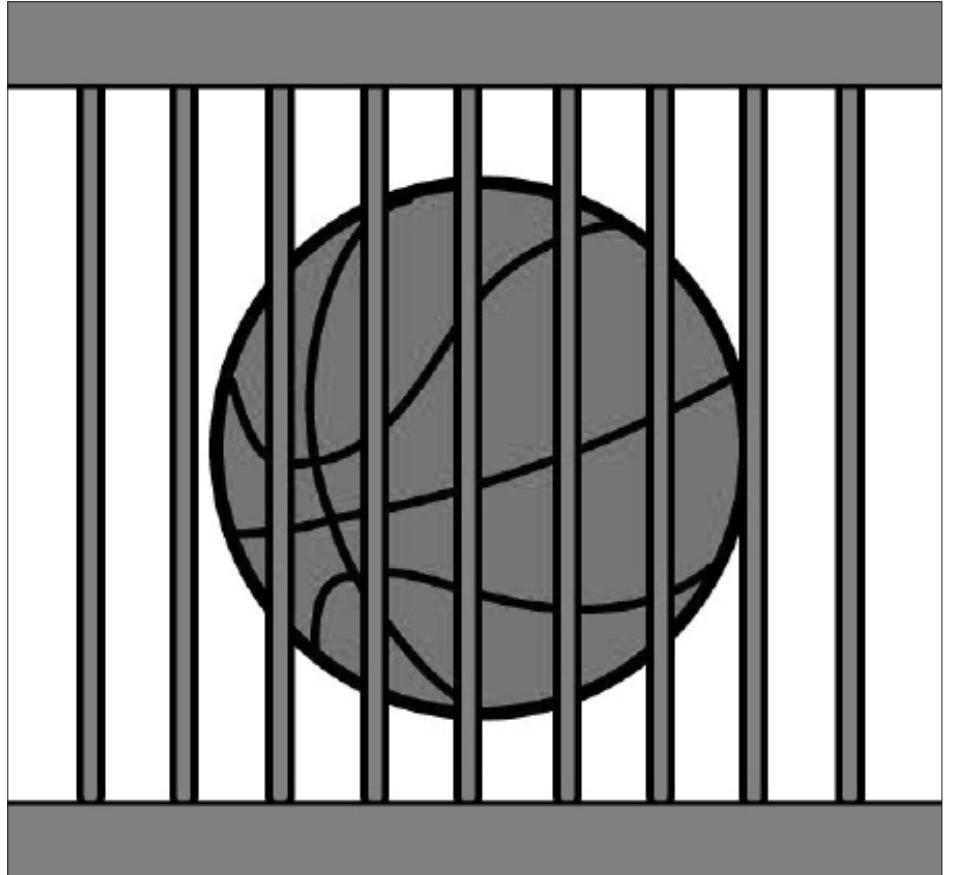
In addition, there are other Americans stuck in Russia who deserve the president's attention.

Around six months before Griner's arrest, Marc Hillard Fogel, a teacher and lecturer who taught the children of U.S. diplomats for over 10 years, was arrested in the same Russian airport for possession of a one-half ounce of marijuana in different forms.

Griner's advocacy for the other American prisoners abroad is commendable, but it does not change what has actually been proposed.

The president has not mentioned any sort of push to free Fogel — in this case, actions speak louder than words.

Now if the president's efforts to #FreeBrittney — pun intended — succeed, he



happened before Griner's. "I support the swap," Michael McPaul, a former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, wrote on Twitter. "I just hope they include Marc Fogel in the deal."

Griner should not receive special attention from the U.S. government because she is a high-profile basketball player. As Fogel himself wrote in a letter, "teachers are at least as important as ballers."

It is important to mention that Griner has written to the president directly, asking him not to forget about the other American detainees.

Griner clearly does not deserve her lengthy prison sentence because of the small quantity of marijuana that she claims she took accidentally.

Putin's regime is exploiting Griner, a prominent figure in the U.S., as a political ploy aimed at highlighting the limitations of American power; President Biden needs to alter his approach to free her by offering a different prisoner exchange to Russia and working to help all detained Americans there.

Though it's natural to feel sympathy for

should spend just as much time attempting to free the 40,000 Americans in jail for marijuana offenses. Perhaps the federal government should direct its attention to the fact that more than 5 percent of arrests in the U.S. are for marijuana possession, according to Newsweek.

Just like any other person, Griner is more than her occupation. She is a wife, a friend and an inspiration to many young female athletes.

"I miss my wife!" Griner said in her letter to President Biden. "I miss my family! I miss my teammates! It kills me to know they are suffering so much right now."

Griner clearly does not deserve her extremely harsh prison sentence, but releasing Fogel in exchange for her freedom would be an error.

Her mistake of bringing marijuana into Russia, should not be compounded by a diplomatic blunder from the president. Let's not have one mistake lead to another. ♦

At face value, this exchange seems fair — though, with some research, the swap starts to become questionable.

Griner, a 7-year veteran of a Russian women's basketball team called UMMC Ekaterinburg, has been detained since Feb. 17, after being arrested at the Sheremetyevo International Airport outside of Moscow. (Sadly, female professionals go there during their offseason to earn the bigger money they don't get in the WNBA.)

As she pleaded for the ruling not to "end her life" in the prison of Khimki, Russia, on Aug. 4, she heard the court's decision: a prison sentence of 9 years.

She was charged for breaking Article 229.1 of the Russian Criminal Code, which forbids the trafficking and smuggling of illegal drugs.

Griner clearly does not deserve her lengthy prison sentence because of the small quantity of marijuana that she claims she took accidentally.

Putin's regime is exploiting Griner, a prominent figure in the U.S., as a political ploy aimed at highlighting the limitations of American power; President Biden needs to alter his approach to free her by offering a different prisoner exchange to Russia and working to help all detained Americans there.

Though it's natural to feel sympathy for

ComedySportz wins crowd over with puns

by Victoria Hu
& Sarah Zhou

During the show, the 10 students were split into five-member "red" and "blue" teams, led by Brooks and junior co-captain Ryan Cagliostro. Team members competed both individually and together throughout the show. Points for the game were awarded based on which side the audience deems funnier by a vocal vote, which is referred to as a professional member of the adult San Jose ComedySportz team.

In addition to the intra-school game, the school team, advised by drama department head Benjamin Brotzman, also occasionally competes against other schools in the larger ComedySportz high school league. Since there are only roughly nine schools participating in the Bay Area, Brooks hopes to expand the league's reach.

"One of our goals for this year is to compete against more schools and help Los Gatos High start their own ComedySportz team," she said. "It would be fun to establish more connections with other high schools and even start an annual tournament."

In preparation for potential future competitions, Brooks is working on her own delivery as well as honing the skills of the four new members and five other returners. Leading alongside Cagliostro, she gives feedback and works collaboratively with members of the team to develop improvisation skills.

"Scenes and ideas come a lot more naturally to me now that I've been on the team for a while," Brooks said. "I'm still learning, and it's always cool to meet professionals and see what lots of time and practice can get you. Acting also made me close with my fellow teammates because we have to be comfortable stage-fighting each other on

the spot without prior warning."

Though she found that being in a leadership position can occasionally be stressful, Brooks finds it enjoyable nevertheless. One of her favorite memories was during her first show as a captain with Cagliostro last school year.

"We decided to come [onto the stage] with [Cagliostro] on my shoulder, and as he was getting off he tripped on his cloak and fell over while last year's blue team captain was giving a speech," Brooks said. "The entire audience laughed, and the poor blue



Courtesy of VIVIENNE BROOKS

On Oct. 15 in the Thermond Drama Center, juniors Ashly Henry and Ariana Tootoonchi and sophomore Jay Louie practice stage fighting alongside the other ComedySportz members.

team captain had no idea what was happening either."

Junior Ariana Tootoonchi, a member of the red team, describes ComedySportz as a fun and free space where she has been able to gain experience in the entertainment industry, an area she wants to pursue in the future.

"The improv and performances help with acting skills and it's a really fun and great space," Tootoonchi said. "I just want to make more memories that I'll always remember and laugh at in the future." ♦

Releasing Brittney Griner should only be the start

by Zachary Zinman

Fearful, crushed and remorseful, Brittney Griner, one of the WNBA's greatest talents, spoke through the bars of her prison cell. As she apologized for her illegal possession of four vape cartridges containing hash oil in Russia, her eyes repeatedly drooped to the ground, her voice monotone with utter defeat. Tightly clutching the bars of the cage, Griner visibly fought back her tears.

"I want to apologize to my teammates, my club, and the fans for the mistake that I made and the embarrassment I brought onto them," Griner said. "I never meant to hurt anybody. I never meant to break any laws here."

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Student band Peach Fuzz plays at school events

BY ShreyaRallabandi

A crowd gathered in front of a band setup during the annual Falcon Food Truck Fest on Aug. 16 as the drumline to "Sofia" by Clairo began. Student band Peach Fuzz grabbed the attention of students, drawing fest-goers from food trucks and backyard games to the corner of the visitor parking lot. Peach Fuzz consists of seniors Anirudh Iyer on keys, Woody Li on bass, Noah Marquez on guitar, Anastasia Ramirez on vocals and Zach Zinman on drums.

The band, originally composed of just Marquez, Ramirez and Zinman, formed after being asked to play together in October 2021 for a Culture of Consent rally. Although their busy schedules led to the trio stop playing last year, the band resumed practicing shortly before the food truck fest with the additions of Li and Iyer, who were both recruited by Zinman. The day prior to their performance, the five members rehearsed for several hours nonstop at Zinman's house. Zinman explains the story behind the band's name as an interesting one — Zinman and Marquez decided they were

in the imminent need of a band name since they were performing at the food truck fest, so Zinman sat down with his parents and asked for their suggestions.

"They asked, 'What words do you associate with the vibe of the band?'" he said. "And I said 'Well, I like peaches.' So, our name was decided as Peach Fuzz because it makes fun of teenagers both unironically and ironically at the same time."

Marquez said he feels that they are completely in tune with one another. The rest of the band has also naturally adapted into each other's playing styles which contributes to an uplifting rehearsing environment, Ramirez said.

Playing live, however, is a different experience. At the start of a set, Marquez, Ramirez and Zinman found performing to be stressful; it takes around a song for the band to fully get into the groove. Once the initial obstacle is gone, the aura completely turns around, Ramirez said.

"Sometimes, it's a little stressful at first," she said. "But once you're really in the group, it's an euphoric moment. It's like you're really living in the present."



Ramirez



Peach Fuzz performs in front of the McAfee during the Falcon Food Truck Fest on Aug. 16.

on the band. They also performed at the seniors' Homecoming quad day on Sept. 23.

In the near future, they hope to start booking paid gigs outside of the school. They have their sights set on 924 Gilman, a nonprofit music club in Berkeley where bands can get on their feet, play, meet other artists and gain recognition.

"When we were getting back to school, I thought performing would be fun," Ramirez said. "I hadn't performed with them in a while. I was missing it." ♦

Teachers decorate to keep students engaged

Room 1010: tinfoil and chemistry puns

When students walk into chemistry teacher Janny Cahatal's classroom, they see doodles on the whiteboard, lab equipment scattered around the room and a large periodic table hanging on the wall.

The most eye-catching part, however, is the "memory wall," filled with pictures surrounding a colorful "I 'took' AP CHEM" lettering in the middle of the collage.

Lower on the wall, where Cahatal places more recent photos, students can find many familiar faces.

Within these various pictures, past students hold up a whiteboard with chemistry jokes such as "Don't trust atoms, they make up everything" or Cahatal's well-known phrases such as "Late! Late! Shame on you!"

"The things that students write on their board are either making fun of me or them remembering the fun they had in this class," Cahatal said. "I want students who are coming into this classroom totally intimidated by the curriculum to know that we're going to have fun."

Cahatal takes memory wall pictures for her students at the end of each year — instead of trying to have the most beautifully decorated room, she aims to capture memories for herself, incoming students and past students to look at.

"I enjoy teaching my students a lot and I love it when they come back from college or after graduating to see pictures of themselves as well as their friends," Cahatal said. "They get so happy, and that makes me remember how much they have grown as a person."

Another valued part of her classroom is located at the top portion of the left wall, where there are various airplane, ball and spoon shaped objects made out of aluminum foil, representing the time when Cahatal taught Chemistry Honors. ♦



Chemistry Teacher Janny Cahatal's "memory wall" displays dozens of photos of her past students.



English Teacher Natasha Ritchie's decorations mostly depict scenes from books students read in her class.

Room 002: exemplary student paintings

Colorful paintings pack the walls of English teacher Natasha Ritchie's classroom, lighting up the room along with big windows on the left which are almost perpetually unshaded.

Ritchie enjoys showcasing her students' past work, believing she has some of the most impressive student art decorations at the school.

Most of Ritchie's decorations come from a creative final project she assigns at the end of the year, for which many students choose to make 2D art.

"I decided to use mostly student art for my own aesthetic pleasure and because I often reference them during the units," she said. "I can be like, this exact painting was based on the scene."

Additionally, Ritchie has received some "thank you" paintings from students.

One MAP senior project group gave her a painting of the beach, which is currently in Ritchie's office, as a gift for mentoring their project which had several scenes at the beach.

There is also a poster reading "A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only once" at the front of her desk, and the decorations behind reflect this attitude.

Most of the decorations are about fantasy books that she feels transports her mind to a different place and time.

Her decorations are an essential part of her welcoming classroom ambiance, Ritchie said.

In addition to celebrating iconic literary works and the efforts of past students, the artwork makes for colorful walls and a visually engaging environment.

"When my room was unpacked and there was nothing on the walls, it just felt like such a sterile environment — to me, that's not conducive to learning," Ritchie said. "I think students can zone out and look at the paintings and still be listening. If you have a lot of things to look at in your environment, it's stimulating and helps keep engagement." ♦

Room 303: movie and sports memorabilia

Room 303, also known as the J-room, looks drastically different this year compared to previous years since English 9 teacher and Falcon adviser Michael Tyler has not been able to put all of his decorations back up yet. Despite some barren wall space, however, students can still see student-inspired and student-signed movie posters all along the left wall of the room, as well as a 2022 yearbook cover and a sign that says Talisman Dr. on the top right corner of the whiteboard.

"I really like having the yearbooks in the room," Tyler said. "If I had a little bit more time, I would try to get more of the old yearbook covers and make sure we have every single year covered if possible."



Journalism Adviser Michael Tyler's classroom features memorabilia related to his past publication classes.

Though Tyler mostly decorates his room with things that are loosely journalism-related, he also tries including items referencing pop culture and sports such as San Francisco Giants and Golden State Warriors memorabilia. Many of his decorations are posters from the yearbook printing company, souvenirs from events or items he found in thrift stores.

In the following months, Tyler plans to put up the journalism program's award plaques and a toilet seat decoration from a class of 2006 alumni. He also might bring couches back into the journalism room for the first time since before the pandemic because he believes they make the room feel more like a home.

Despite this, he said he will never get the room set up exactly the way it was before construction.

"The room feels more like a home when you have a few decorations, but it's not so bad to start over in some ways too," Tyler said. "I think a lot of teachers used the construction as a chance to do a refresh or reset. It was not a typical year because of the construction, but I also think the move in went better than anyone expected." ♦

— All stories by Howard Shu

Library relies on technician's daily diligence

BY SarahZhou

For 15 years, from 7:30 a.m. to after 4 p.m. on school days, library technician Lee Tapley has been working in the library, handling various tasks such as opening, closing and organizing the collections, helping students find books and coordinating parent volunteers during textbook distribution. This year, she does this work alongside other library technicians Cynthia Cheng and Nada Maciesic, who primarily handle textbook distribution and collection.

Running the short-staffed library

Since librarian Kevin Heyman's retirement at the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the district has chosen to save money by not employing a credentialed librarian — someone who specializes in helping students and staff with information technology. This decision has left more of the day-to-day responsibility of running the library to Tapley, and frustrated teachers who have continually called for the district to re-staff the position and re-prioritize the importance of the library and research on campus.

Tapley, too, feels the frustration, as the lack of a certified librarian creates more work for her as it results in her being the only one staffing the library.

"I feel self-conscious about being absent or having my doctor's appointment during school hours," Tapley said. "I feel sorry when some teachers or students ask me for

something only certified librarians can do."

Though she is not a credentialed librarian, Tapley has assumed many of Heyman's responsibilities, such as ordering and cataloging books, taking care of library furniture and leading efforts for student book distribution at the annual Falcon Fests.

Tapley noted that, this year, there were many students who had not returned items before Falcon Fest, hindering the library's ability to prepare for distribution. However, she felt that parent and student volunteers greatly helped overcome these difficulties.

"The whole textbook distribution process was a wonderful experience," Tapley said. "Most teachers brought their classes on time, and students had their ID cards ready — it was like watching an orchestra. Without the parent and student volunteers' help, we couldn't have finished the job. Whenever I see parent volunteers in the school, I feel proud and grateful that I belong here."

Maintaining an organized environment

When the library generally hosts only a few students during class periods, Tapley busies herself shelving returned books and searching for new books to add to the library catalog based on student recommendations.

Tapley maintains the library's website, Destiny resource page, the school's research databases and resources for English and Creative writing classes.

The library currently owns 18,347 books and has loaned out 84 books since the school



Library technician Lee Tapley works on cataloging books at the front desk on Sept. 13.

year started. 59 of these books are overdue and 184 books are lost from last year.

Through PTSO funding, the library is also able to purchase roughly 200 new books each year, and students are able to purchase books on their own to replace lost or damaged books.

In her 15 years here, Tapley has observed that with the rise of textbook prices, students have become more attentive and caring for books, so the number of lost books has decreased yearly.

Tapley said she hopes that the library is a safe and comfortable place for students to study and read, and she works toward making the library a safe space for students to re-

lax. Through her time working at the school, she has also gotten to know students better. One of Tapley's favorite memories was when she stopped by a Subway sandwich shop on Saratoga Avenue about 10 years ago: While waiting to receive her order, she encountered a student with their parent.

"She had a broad smile and told me it was great to see me," Tapley said. "I couldn't recognize her for a moment, but she told her father I was one of her favorite librarians. I felt very thankful for what she told me. I did not think I treated her differently from others, but she was kind to say that to me. The encounter might be nothing to others, but it was an unforgettable moment for me." ♦

Redwood math club adjusts without Yim

BY SkylerMao

out with math clubs is enough." With an open position for TJMC adviser, Steve Hamm, RMS's principal, became the club's fill-in adviser since no one else has stepped up for the position. This switch has led to several changes. First, TJMC's location has moved from the SHS math quad to the RMS campus — specifically the library and rooms 7 and 23.

According to senior and TJMC Liaison Nilay Mishra, due to having been in the same location at the high school many years, this switch has been a little bit disorienting for veteran members.

In addition, many of the club's responsibilities, previously handled by Yim, have shifted to the high school coaches. Mishra said that he and other coaches now take care of much of the club's logistics, including writing placement tests, printing notes and grading tests. Parent volunteers also contribute to the club by posting announcements and coordinating competitions.

"There's more work to take care of," Mishra said. "And the challenge is trying to ensure that everything goes smoothly like a normal year."

Yim hopes that TJMC continues to be a place where motivated students are not afraid to express their passion for math.

"I don't want people to see the club as a means to 'get ahead,'" Yim said. "It's there for people who love math, and I want it to continue to be a safe place for people to do math." ♦



Yim

Jazz, rock and bossa nova: Abe drums through different genres

BY SarahThomas

When social studies teacher Kirk Abe first tried playing on his friend's drum set in fifth grade, he discovered a lifelong passion.

As the years went by, he began to play big band music, such as Maynard Ferguson, and continued playing his favorite songs from middle school to adulthood.

Although his musical focus has evolved throughout his life between a variety of genres such as jazz, rock and bossa nova, his love for playing the drums has never dwindled.

Abe noted his passion for music "blossomed" after his first year of playing instruments at the age of 13.

He began developing his skills through private drumming lessons with Terry Carleton and Dave Batanides. Abe began playing jazz drums in middle school, where he joined his school's jazz band to learn to play in a group.

He especially enjoyed jazz be-

fore song] as a bossa, a swing or as a ballad."

Around the time he started high school, Abe also developed an interest in '70s to late '90s rock music.

As a result, he formed a band with his high school friend and neighbor to cover their favorite songs — with Abe on the drums, and the other two as a guitarist and a bassist who also provided vocals.

"My first gig was a talent show at my high school," Abe said. "I played with my friends. It was fun."

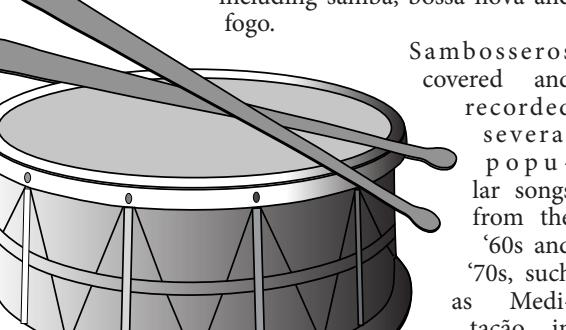
The band booked studio time at TRS, a studio in Sunnyvale, and recorded a few of their songs, although they never formally released an album because they didn't have sufficient content.

Further, Abe began playing gigs with various bands:

After his first gig at a talent show during high school, Abe continued to perform around UC Davis, his alma mater, with other bands.

Abe continued lessons in college with Dave Haddad, Scott Morris and Peppe Merolla, practicing songs by bands such as Rush and The Police.

"I love playing for people who appreciate music," Abe said. "The people I play with, we have a communication and connection with the music. I'm so grateful that I started playing drums, because it changed my life and has helped shape me into the person I am today." ♦



Graphic by VICTORIAHU

"I was a little intimidated," Abe said about his experience recording Gabiroba. "The recording engineer was this unbelievable drummer from Brazil, so I was a little out of my depth. Bossa Nova wasn't my strength, but it was really fun."

Although Abe doesn't have a specific band that he practices with now because he mainly focuses on jazz music, which doesn't require a set group, he continues to play with independent musicians in the Bay Area.

"I love playing for people who appreciate music," Abe said. "The people I play with, we have a communication and connection with the music. I'm so grateful that I started playing drums, because it changed my life and has helped shape me into the person I am today." ♦

BOYS CLUB no more

STEM ORGANIZATIONS TRY TO OPEN OPPORTUNITIES TO ALL

BY BeverlyXu

From 1970 to 2019, the number of women in STEM occupations in the U.S. increased by 8%, but as of 2021, women still only make up 28% of the STEM workforce — even though they make up 50.5% of the U.S. population.

One reason for this discrepancy is the lack of role models for female students, especially teens.

Research has shown that because specialized STEM classes are optional in high school, role models during these four years are pivotal to the development of long-term interest in STEM. Several clubs and organizations on campus are seeking to reverse these tendencies.

Among them are MSET Robotics, Females for Finance (F3) and Girls Who Code (GWC). In 2021, senior Eva Ruemmler decided to launch an F3 club with senior twins Samantha and Elizabeth Stoiber. All three of them participated in a spring females.for.finace course taught by Yale students. The course inspired them to become ambassadors for the program.

Introduction to SGM centric clubs

"There's a huge gender gap in the finance field," Ruemmler said. "In terms of typical finance buyers, [for example, private equity firms and hedge funds], women investors are a minority. We're trying to educate female students earlier on in high school so they know what career path they want to go into, and can have more exposure to that path."

Ruemmler explained that the goal of F3 is to bridge inequalities in the finance industry by empowering gender minority high school students through

teaching the necessary skills to increase financial literacy and even take steps towards building a career in finance. The club hosts speakers, teaches fundamental finance knowledge and runs a stock market simulation. The simulation pro-

vides members with hands-on experience to practice what they've learned.

So far, the club's gender distribution has been around 90% to 100% gender minority out of 15 regular members, which has allowed more students who identify as such to feel welcomed to the club. Junior Saemin Kim is a member of F3 and recalls joining after being intimidated by male-dominated clubs as a freshman. "I remember on the first day there were few girls, so I kind of ran away and didn't go there anymore," she said.

"I was freshman, there were a lot of people, it was online and I had little knowledge about coding, so I couldn't confidently ask questions or share opinions."

Kim and other members enjoy the comfort they have in the club. Since F3 is smaller than other finance clubs at school, Kim has been able to participate and contribute more, allowing her to better understand each industry.

She also joined Girls Who Code for many of the same reasons. Girls Who Code was started in 2014 to educate female students about cybersecurity and programming.

As a branch of the international Girls Who Code nonprofit, members have access to a ready-made curriculum, videos, newsletters and summer programs, as well as presentations given by club officers on various computer science topics. Club president Anika Verma has seen how the lack of male students has alleviated any STEM gender stereotypes in the club.

Establishing new norms can be hard

However, at a more established club like MSET Robotics, gender inequalities are much more difficult to address and change, some members say.

MSET, the school's largest robotics team, was established over 20 years ago, and although the gender distribution in the club has improved significantly, from 10.91% non-male members in 2010, to 34.07% in 2021, subtle gender stereotypes still persist.

Toward the beginning of 2022, seniors Druthi Palle and Mahati Kotamraju brought the problem to the attention of Sheeba Garg, the First Robotics Competition (FRC) team's lead mentor. The mentors then held a meeting for all female and gender minority students on the team to discuss their own individual experiences with misogynistic comments. Garg told The Falcon that "in MSET any student irrespective of gender who wants to learn and participate has an equal opportunity." Whenever concerns are raised around inequality on any grounds, mentors have addressed them with students."

Palle recalled the meeting with Garg and others and said the stories from female in the program were "eye-opening," adding, "The fact that so many of their experiences were so similar made it very obvious that this issue needs to be addressed."

Palle pointed out that the misogynis-

tic comments she has heard from male students at robotics that are sometimes justified as "jokes."

But she thinks the bars can be particularly hurtful, especially when they're made in open conversations during club work sessions. Discrepancies in female and gender minority student participation between technical and non-technical subteams, such as hardware and outreach, has also been raised as a discrepancy. Palle describes how stereotypes that female students are more fit for non-technical tasks, and a lack of female peers in technical subteams push them toward non-technical subteams.

For example, in 2021, 18% of the hardware and 36% of the software subteams were female or gender minorities, while 77% of the outreach subteam was. Efforts have occurred to deal with these imbalances, but Palle has been disappointed by the lack of progress.

"I have not seen any effort to change from anybody," Palle said. "We fall short as a club by not going past that point of recognizing the issue."

Taking action is essential for growth

Because the club strives to be a student-led organization, Palle believes that the path to change lies with changing the mindsets of student leaders. Instead of making redundant presentations about how to respect teammates, or having discussions with only the female and gender minority students, she urges club members to have casual conversations that are both respectful and professional, in order to stimulate genuine communication and understanding.

While clubs for women in STEM are amazing and are doing so much good for the world, excluding nonbinary people is an issue," she said.

"Including them as an afterthought, or grouping them as trans men in women's spaces, implying that they're not men, is just as problematic." Ispasoiu believes it's important to distinguish between clubs made specifically for female students and clubs for gender minorities, so as to avoid exacerbating the lack of gender minority representation by ignoring it.

female and nonbinary students, as an instructor's assistant, Ispasoiu had the chance to discuss gender inequities with students.

"It was really insightful for me, to hear what my students thought and what they had to say about inequities they've experienced," Ispa-



said.

The reason Ispasoiu de-

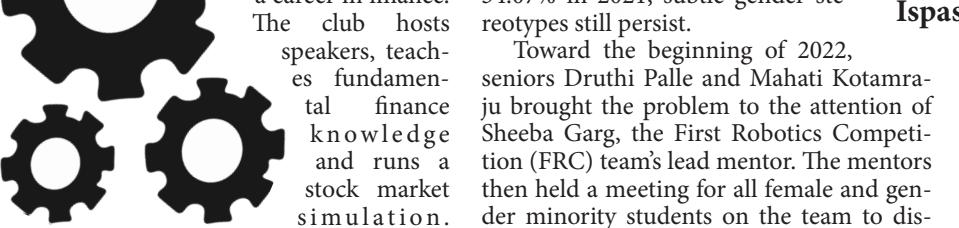
cided to work for KWK was the welcoming and comfortable community that they had found there as a student in the summers of 2020 and 2021. During one of their discussions, a student of theirs brought up the lack of queer representation in STEM spaces, which Ispasoiu has also observed in many classes and clubs outside of school.

While clubs for women in STEM are amazing and are doing so much good for the world, excluding nonbinary people is an issue," she said.

"Including them as an afterthought, or grouping them as trans men in women's spaces, implying that they're not men, is just as problematic." Ispasoiu believes it's important to distinguish between clubs made specifically for female students and clubs for gender minorities, so as to avoid exacerbating the lack of gender minority representation by ignoring it.

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SENIOR Druthi Palle



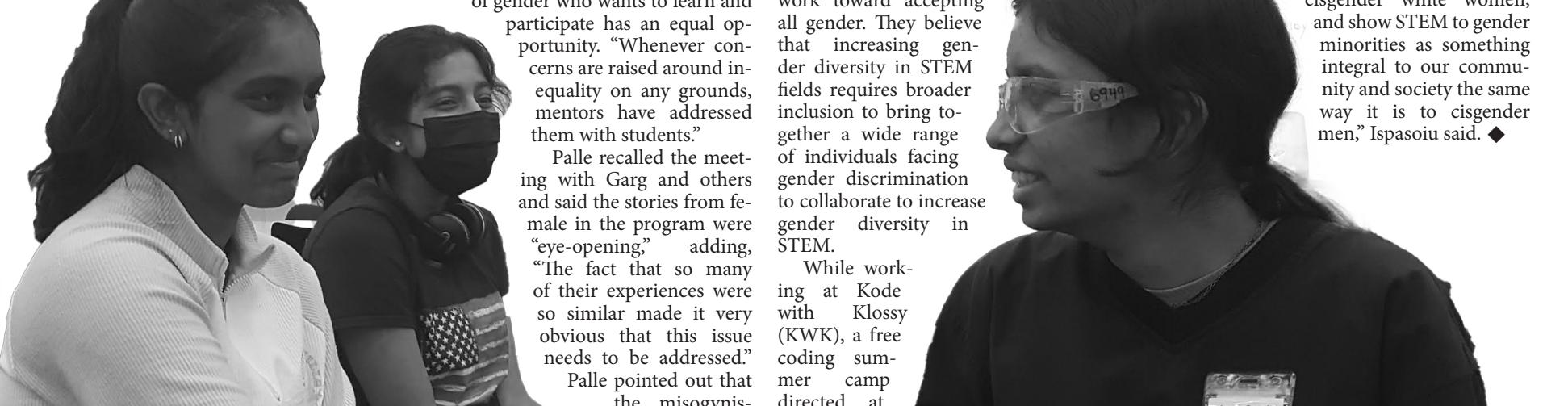
Juniors Ameya Saund and Nidhi Vadlamudi and freshman Parnika Kamath bond during a weekend MSET meeting to prepare for an upcoming competition.

All graphics by SARAH THOMAS and MINSUI TANG

FALCON // BEVERLYXU

Through their experiences, Ispasoiu has found that a club focused on both female and gender minority students can develop interest in STEM more constructively by welcoming all minority genders in such male-dominated fields.

"It's time to stray away from the 'girlboss' feminist narrative that has always centered cisgender white women, and show STEM to gender minorities as something integral to our community and society the same way it is to cisgender men," Ispasoiu said. ◆



Juniors Ameya Saund and Nidhi Vadlamudi and freshman Parnika Kamath bond during a weekend MSET meeting to prepare for an upcoming competition.

WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT?

★★★ THE FALCON'S GUIDE TO 2022'S MIDTERM PROPOSITIONS ★★★

by WilliamNorwood
& SarahZhou

States Army of Northern California, California Animal Welfare Association and Small Business California.

Proposition 27: Online sports betting
Similar to Proposition 26, Proposition 7 would legalize online sports betting for people age 21 and older.

The proposition would generate a 10% tax profit from revenues and licensing fees, which would then be dedicated to other causes: Homelessness programs would receive 85% of this funding, and 15% would go to supporting the Tribal Economic Development Account.

Supporters believe that the increase in funding will reduce homelessness numbers and create a permanent monetary source for all California tribes.

Opponents believe the proposition will increase underage gambling and encourage gambling addiction. They also believe that the majority of funds gained through online sports betting will go to out-of-state companies as opposed to helping tribes.

Supporters believe that such medical decisions should be made between the patient and provider as opposed to the government. They also support equal and unrestricted access to reproductive health care.

Opponents believe that the money spent on abortions — especially with late-term abortions — should instead go to California schools and infrastructure.

Proposition 28: Funding for the arts
The proposition would require K-12 education programs to allocate at least 1 percent of the total state and local revenues they receive under Proposition 28 to art and music programs.

Supporters of Proposition 26 argue that allowing tribal casinos to host sports betting would increase jobs and generate more revenue for tribal education and health care, while also increasing state revenues by tens of millions annually.

Opponents say Proposition 26 would increase animal abuse by expanding gambling to horse tracks and also give five dominant tribes a monopoly over gambling to exploit employees for labor.

It also introduces potential and current gambling addicts to a wider and more dangerous range of ways to go into debt.

Proposition 30: Taxing the 1% for climate funds
Prop 30 will increase taxation on the top 1% of Californians by 1.75% to raise funds to combat climate change.

In addition, schools with over 500 students would require 80% of the allocated

"zero emission vehicles"

and infrastructure. This funding would be placed into the Clean Cars and Clean Air Trust Fund (CCATF) and then be allocated to three sub-funds: Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Investment Plan, Zero-Emission Vehicle and Clean Mobility Sub-fund and the Wildfire Green House Gas Emissions Reduction sub-funds. These funds would aid the state in building charging stations and electric car infrastructure, and in hiring and training firefighters.

Supporters argue that we need to act as soon as possible to reduce air pollution from vehicles, which in turn will reduce California's increasing number of wildfires.

Proposition 29: Dialysis clinic regulations
This proposition would require dialysis clinics to have either a Physician, Nurse Practitioner (NP) or Physician Assistant (PA) present at a clinic while patients are being treated. It would also require them to report data on dialysis-related infections to the state and not discriminate based on a patient's source of payment. In 2018 and 2020, similar propositions failed with an overwhelming defeat.

Dialysis,

a medical procedure that removes waste products from the body when a person's kidneys do not function properly, is a key part of the lives of over 80,000 Californians.

Supporters argue that dialysis technicians are overworked and requiring physicians onsite would reduce some of the burden, as well as increase transparency for clinics.

Opponents say passing this proposition could hinder existing treatment options. They argue the proposition will force more than half of the state's dialysis clinics to cut back on services or shut down.

Some experts suggest that the price of dialysis treatment may rise, adversely affecting patients, as a result of the increased requirements to employ more physicians.

Proposition 31: Banning flavored tobacco products
Proposition 31 would uphold the CA Senate Bill 793, which banned flavored tobacco products from being sold. SB 793 was passed in 2020 without much opposition in the state Assembly.

Supporters argue that the sale of flavored tobacco products is directed toward youth, citing the use of flavored products as a "gateway drug" for youth to develop lasting nicotine addictions.

Studies indicate that four out of five teenagers who regularly use tobacco began with a flavored product.

Additionally, sale of flavored vape products is considered a direct assault on Black communities, referring to the widespread push of minty menthol cigarettes in these communities over the past few decades.

Opponents argue that it is already illegal to sell tobacco products to people under the age of 21 — implying that these flavors are not marketed to children's tastes and preferences — so the ban is an unnecessary prohibition for those aged 21 and older.

Proposition 32: Taxing the 1% for climate funds
Newsonom, the NAACP, the CTA, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the Cancer Action Network, as well as other major medical organizations and associations.

Proposition 33: Donations For & Against Propositions
Big Tobacco companies, the California Republican Party, ♦

Information from California Secretary of State

Davey returns to coach boys' basketball

By Neal Malhotra
& Andy Zhu

With the school basketball season approaching rapidly, longtime history teacher Mike Davey has accepted the job of coaching the boys' varsity team — a position he also held from 1992 to 2006.

After previous varsity head coach Patrick Judge and JV head coach Devin Southerland both left the program in the off-season, the team had significant coaching vacancies to fill.

Athletic director Rick Ellis described the departure as a mutual understanding and said Judge "decided to go his own way" and that "after seven years in a program, it was time to part ways."

Although players were surprised by the change, most are making the best of it by staying committed to working hard in preseason workouts under Davey's direction.

Senior varsity captain Niveydh Pai said Davey, who has been a teacher at the school for 30 years,



Davey

has already established a strict regimen with open gyms after every Blue Day. He believes the open gym is great for their team chemistry, something the team was unsure they could build before the season started.

According to Pai, it is essential for the team to be working in the off-season, especially since the team moved from the B-league to the A-league this year and will be facing tougher opponents.

Davey's style of coaching is different from Judge's in that he is much more defense-oriented — as a result, the veterans are still adjusting away from last year's offense-oriented game plans.

"He has been keeping the intensity very high," Pai said. "Everyone is appreciative of [Davey] taking us to lift and run to get ready for the A-league."

One of Davey's main philosophies is organization. Instead of letting players play an unstructured style during games, he said he expects them to run multiple different plays for different situations.

Davey grew up in a basketball family. His father, Dick Davey, predominantly coached at Santa Clara University, mentoring several future professional basketball players there, including basketball legend Steve Nash.

Growing up, Davey accompanied his father and attended dozens of basketball camps, including going to yearly camps in Montana.

Davey's new playbook consists of 54 plays, a significant increase from previous years.

"It's kind of like a fire drill," Davey said. "We're gonna have to put a whole new system in plays on offense and defense."

On the offensive end, Davey is making adjustments to have power forwards and centers play more in the paint in contrast to the old system of driving to the paint and moving the ball around for open 3-point shots.

Besides having a successful run as the boys' coach years ago, Davey coached the girls' varsity basketball team starting in 2008 and established stability in the then-shaky program, leading them to winning seasons and CCS success before he eventually stepped down in 2017.

The move to the highly competitive De Anza division, Davey said he is prepared to get the best out of the team by Oct. 31, when the winter sports season starts.

Davey has 30 years of coaching experience so I'm happy that he's our replacement," junior forward Kali Duvvuri said. "It's hard to find a replacement this late into the year, but he's a good coach." ◆



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS

Junior volleyball setter named 16U All-American

KALI DUVVURI AND HIS CLUB TEAM, BAY TO BAY VOLLEYBALL, WIN THE AAU BOYS' NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Tara Natarajan

Junior Kali Duvvuri always tapes two of his fingers together before a volleyball game, regardless of whether he has an injury or not. The first time he won a competitive volleyball game, his fingers were taped together as he leaped to set the ball before his teammate slammed it past the grasp of the opponents, winning the set for Duvvuri's team. Ever since, he has remained faithful to the pre-game ritual.

Although the taping is superstitious, Duvvuri does not leave the rest of the game to chance — as a nationally ranked volleyball setter, he spends hours on rigorous daily practice, with his weekends and summers consumed by both national and regional tournaments. Standing at 6'3" and blessed with a strong vertical jump, Duvvuri cuts an impressive figure on the court and seems certain to play the game at the college level.

This summer, he geared up to play at one of the most prestigious tournaments in junior volleyball: The 49th AAU Junior National Volleyball Championships in Orange County, Florida. The four-day tournament took place from June 28 to July 1, and the 16U division featured 51 of the best volleyball teams in the country, from Hawaii to New Jersey.

The month leading up to the national championship had not been easy for Duvvuri and his team, Bay to Bay Volleyball 16-1. His inconsistencies in play resulted in him leaving his position as a starter to being benched during the SoCal Cup tournament in early June. The team played worse than they had expected, eventually placing sixth in the 16/15 division.

About a month after their defeat, Duvvuri traveled to Orlando for the AAU Nationals. Initially, Bay to Bay ranked fourth. They began in a round-robin play with the five other teams in their pool, breezing through the first day of the tournament. On the second day, however, they lost their first set 25-19 against the Spike and



Courtesy of AAU VOLLEYBALL

"So I tried it out. It took about 10 minutes to fall in love with the game."

JUNIOR Kali Duvvuri

Duvvuri also experienced struggles with school athletics when he was temporarily placed on academic probation. Last spring, he was suspended from playing on the varsity team for three days due to a missing AP Computer Science A project. Although he was able to resolve the problem and return to the team when he turned in the assignment, the incident pushed Duvvuri

want to play volleyball, and my dad pretty much dragged me out of the car and told me to stop being a little brat and go try out," Duvvuri said. "So I tried out. It took about 10 minutes to fall in love with the game."

On the afternoon of July 1, Duvvuri walked onto the court to play the championship match against Balboa Bay Volleyball Club — their toughest opponent in the tournament, and a team that Bay to Bay had never beaten before. Despite their previous losses, they won both sets in a surprising victory against Balboa Bay, scoring 25-23 and 25-22 — winning the championship.

"Our team is very talented," Duvvuri said. "No matter who we face, I always have good expectations for us. This tournament was difficult because it was national, and each team brought their best game [against us]."

Winning the championship wasn't just a landmark achievement for Duvvuri and his team: He was also individually awarded the prestigious title of AAU All-American for his accomplishments as a setter.

For Duvvuri, winning All-American represents years of tireless commitment to competitive volleyball. His cousin Prathik Rao, a Monta Vista High graduate, was the first in the family to play the sport, and his older brother, class of 2020 alum Mohan Duvvuri, took an interest in it soon after.

However, Duvvuri was reluctant to follow his cousin and brother, until his father took him to his first volleyball tryouts at the age of 9 under the pretense of going out for ice cream. Until that point, he had avoided the sport ardently, having been convinced throughout elementary school that volleyball was a "girl's sport."

"I remember I was crying because I didn't

want to play volleyball, and my dad pretty much dragged me out of the car and told me to stop being a little brat and go try out," Duvvuri said. "So I tried out. It took about 10 minutes to fall in love with the game."

This year, Duvvuri has also been navigating the college recruiting process, intent on receiving a Division I offer by next year. He would like to stay in California, though he is currently in talks with coaches around the nation from Penn State, NYU, Pepperdine, UC Irvine and UC Santa Cruz.

He is familiar with the process, following in the footsteps of his older brother who plays for UC Santa Cruz. Regardless of what school he decides to attend, Duvvuri has committed to improving both his grades and his game during junior year to raise his profile in the recruiting process. Although academics and athletics can strike a difficult balance at times, he hopes to improve both substantially.

"I'm mainly just trying to be a much better student this year, because at this point, the primary reason a college wouldn't want to accept me is because of grades," Duvvuri said. "When it comes to my game, I think I need to work on my defense and my serve. My serve isn't aggressive enough, and I also need to improve my lateral quickness and speed to the ball."

As Duvvuri enters what may be the most important year in both high school and volleyball, he is supported by his family, including his parents, brother and cousins, who have encouraged him throughout his volleyball career.

Duvvuri said that his parents attend every tournament he plays, traveling with him across the country for important matches. His older brother and cousins, who were an early inspiration for him in the game, are always ready for friendly competition.

Although he doesn't yet know whether he wants to play professionally after college, Duvvuri knows that his passion for volleyball will only increase over time, and looks forward to the opportunities future seasons will provide.

"No matter where I end up, being able to play volleyball and being competitive is what I love the most," Duvvuri said. "Winning nationals and All-American is my proudest accomplishment by far." ◆

Senior makes U.S. men's junior field hockey team

By Anthony Wang

Only a day into the U.S. Men's National Team Talent Identification and Training Camp for field hockey in August, senior goalkeeper Siddharth Kamannavar felt a sharp pain in his thigh as he returned to his dorm after an evening scrimmage. (Field hockey has an only girls' team at SHS and other Bay Area schools, but is a popular sport for men on the East Coast and elsewhere.)

"As soon as I hurt it and put weight on it, it hurt so much my head was spinning," Kamannavar said. Determined to complete the camp — which would give him the best chance of being selected for the U-18 men's training squad, a group of 24 high schoolers from around the country — Kamannavar immediately wrapped his leg in an ice pack to ease the pain as much as possible right after returning to his dorm.

The next day he was back on the field, trying his best to persevere through the pain. His love for field hockey, communication skills and attitude were thoroughly tested through more scrimmages, intensive drills and tactical training sessions requiring players to judge the replays of professional players.

His toughness paid off a month later: On Sept. 9, the national team's coaching staff announced that Kamannavar had been selected as a member of the training squad. "I know that wherever I go, as long as there's a [field] hockey team, I will be playing," Kamannavar said. "The schools that I'm applying to are places which are very conducive to guys playing."

But, while college approaches, the community that has brought this far will continue to be important in his journey. Kamannavar said that he has become close friends with many of those he met playing field hockey, especially at selection camps.

These players have also served as guides and inspirations for Kamannavar, showing him that it is possible to attend college in America and play field hockey at the same

time, whereas in the past, many players would go to Europe to play. "They have already gone through this process already, becoming a male field hockey player in college," Kamannavar said. "Having seen others blazing that path, I know what to do now."

He also stresses that the Bay Area's community has been extremely encouraging. "I'm very thankful that, at least in Saratoga, a lot of people have been very supportive and receptive," he said. "When they find out that I play the game, they always ask 'How was selection camp? How was Cal Cup [a field hockey tournament]?' I don't think you got that feeling in other high schools."

Nevertheless, Kamannavar maintains that the supportive attitude of the community he has in Saratoga has been key in his enjoyment of the sport. "Being a guy in field hockey, it forces you to build a lot of character and a thick skin," he said. "You have to roll with the punches, questions like 'Isn't that a girl's sport?' I'm very thankful that at Saratoga, there's a network of support that makes it easier for me to talk about it in a casual situation." ◆

Fencer rises above insecurities

By Anika Kapasi

Before competitions, sophomore Vera Fung, a national-level fencer, tries to gain weight to have energy for her matches. Over the years, she has seen how this process has contributed to having issues with her body image and dysmorphia.

She said club volleyball isn't too time-consuming and has a manageable number of practices and games, sometimes presenting opportunities to travel to places like Reno and Sacramento for tournaments. Because the players in club volleyball have some form of prior experience, it pushes her to do better.

In August, she joined the JV team. Although the team has created a healthy environment, there is still a lot of pressure on the players during games, and her teammates ringling loud from the sidelines.

This is just one of dozens of memories from her season as a key contributor to the JV team.

Lew was introduced to volleyball in fourth grade at a volleyball summer camp, and mentors there were influential in her decision to take up the sport.

"There was a really tall volleyball player who was teaching us and she inspired me," Lew said. "I thought she was really cool and made me feel like I might want to start [the sport] later."

Fostering the hobby throughout her years in Redwood Middle School, she started playing volleyball in sixth grade but got more serious in eighth grade, making the school's varsity team. Though the coach was strict, he taught her the rules of volleyball and was significant in establishing her love for the sport.

Although he doesn't yet know whether he wants to play professionally after college, Duvvuri knows that his passion for volleyball will only increase over time, and looks forward to the opportunities future seasons will provide.

Particularly, she has progressed in passing and serving throughout the years as well as with her consistency.

"Because of fencing, I'm a bit more muscular than I'd like to be," Fung said. "Some parts of my body are more toned and bulkier than other parts and I feel I can't wear clothes as freely as I like to."

Sophomore Vera Fung poses with her former coach Bogdan Gurinenko after placing seventh at the North American Cup in Ontario, California.

Courtesy of VERA FUNG

elevates the stress that comes with her performance.

She said it has been hard to maintain friendships but is thankful that she has finally found a set of friends to lean on, making competing a bit easier to deal with compared to previous years.

Fung has fenced for five years and has enjoyed significant success. In July, she traveled to Minnesota to compete in Nationals, participating in the year 14, cadet, juniors, Division 2 and 3 categories. Her most notable achievement was placing fifth in the D2 category out of 123 fencers.

Throughout her experiences, she has grown into a mentally tougher athlete, one more able to better block out the parental and peer pressure of feeling the need to be perfect during competitions.

Fung is happy that her body image issues and health have improved and, even more, her love for the sport has grown as she looks forward to fencing through college. ◆

WRAPPING UP FALL SPORTS

FOOTBALL

Injuries lead to forfeit, 0-5 league record

By AnikaKapasi

After a 42-36 home loss against Fremont on Oct. 20, the football team is 0-5 in the Peninsula Lake league. However, the Falcons had one of their best games of the season, keeping the lead for the majority of the game.

"We played really well for the cards that we were dealt with injuries and all, but it was unfortunate that we couldn't finish the game holding onto the lead," senior offensive and defensive lineman Aarav Badani said.

Junior quarterback Shane Timmons had a remarkable throwing game with senior wide receiver Seth Hulme running an impressive 97-yard touchdown in the second quarter.

However, when senior right

tackle Justin Schroeder dislocated his knee in the third quarter, Badani said it threw the team off but they pushed through, keeping the lead until the end of the fourth quarter.

The team has been struggling with injuries after a 49-28 loss to South San Francisco on Oct. 6, when the team limped off the field with only 15 healthy players from the original 25.

"Because we have a small team and athletes [who play both offense and defense], the players have to play a lot and it's taking a toll on their bodies," Badani said.

Head coach Steve Matos made the tough decision to forfeit the following varsity game against El Camino on Oct. 14 to give time for the players to recover, willing to risk one game instead

of the remaining three they had left against Fremont on Oct. 20, Woodside on Oct. 28 and Lynbrook on Nov. 4.

"Forfeiting has probably been the hardest decision for me, especially since we're trying to change the football culture [at the school]," Matos said.

Low participation has also been a large issue for the team, posing a major problem in finding success.

"It comes down to [the number of players]," Matos said. "I don't think we'll have a problem with this in future years, but it's something that we're [struggling with] right now."

The team hopes they will be healthy enough to win their remaining games, especially on senior night against Lynbrook. ◆

GIRLS' TENNIS

Win streak boosts hopes of returning to De Anza League

By VictoriaHu

After piling up wins in recent matches, the girls' varsity tennis team now stands in third place in the El Camino league with a 7-2 record as of Oct. 19.

After winning a home match against Milpitas on Oct. 4, an away match against Fremont on Oct. 6 and another home match against Santa Clara on Oct. 11, the team is peaking at the right time. All three victories were by 7-0 margins.

In addition, the team won 4-3 in a rematch against Lynbrook on Oct. 13 — de-

feating a rival they had previously lost to on Sept. 22. Junior Sabrina Manea, the team's No. 1 singles player, attributes this win to an overall improvement in team skill.

"These wins are simply because we've gotten better," Manea said. "They also helped instill confidence in a lot of people."

The team's main goal for the season is to continue their momentum and move back up to the De Anza league next year — from which they dropped this year — by win-



Manea

FIELD HOCKEY

Injuries hurt team's performance

By LenaAribi & SarahThomas

Earlier this year, low numbers forced head coach Jatin Sharma to merge the JV and varsity squads. In the weeks after, the Falcons increased their practice rigor in preparation for tough opponents.

On Oct. 18, the team played Homestead for their senior night and left the field tied with a score of 0-0 after a seven-player, seven-minute overtime.

Key junior center back Zineenah Ahmed was out this game, which worsened the team's already weak defense.

Senior captain Kayla Steele said the team sometimes struggled after moving up to the more competitive De Anza division.

As of Oct. 20, the team had a 2-8-1 record. They lost 3-0 on Oct. 13 to Saint Francis, 7-1 on Oct. 11 against St. Ignatius, 5-0 on Oct. 6 to Mitty and 11-0 on

Oct. 4 to Los Gatos. Their last win was 3-0 against Palo Alto on Sept. 29.

"We had two wins over teams that we thought were going to be tougher matchups," senior captain and center midfielder Georgia Adams said. "But we really stuck together and pushed through them."

Adams emphasized that the heavy practice rigor helped underclassmen who were formerly on the JV team steadily improve their skills. With the merging of both the teams, Adams said it was necessary to boost morale.

But staying healthy was difficult for players like Ahmed, who injured her thumb, and senior half back Lucy Campbell, who suffered shin stress fractures.

Regardless of these injuries, the team remained confident they would finish the season with their head high.

"The younger players will really have to step up," Adams said. "A lot of these underclassmen can really be great." ◆



Adams

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Falcons improve significantly from their previous season, finish 10-10

By DivyaVadlakonda & MaggieZeng

Showing a strong improvement from the previous season, the girls' volleyball team, under the direction of head coach Thomas Ching, concluded with a 10-10 record, a major bounce back from their disappointing 4-12 record last year.

Players told the Falcon they were happy with the improvement, but felt they didn't reach their potential.

"I think our energy wasn't good and we weren't actively trying to win or hyping each other up, so there wasn't a team effort," sophomore middle blocker Shreya Raghuvanshi said.

Unlike other years, the team had four captains — seniors Maahena Khericha, Lisa Fung, Noor Khan and Anika Koganti — as opposed to the usual two due to the influx of seniors nominating themselves for the position.

By GeorgeHu & KevinYang

With the season coming to a close, the varsity cross country team has just two races left: SCVAL league finals on Nov. 1 and CCS on Nov. 12.

Few of the team's runners are likely to qualify for the state meet, but boys' team senior co-captain Wasil Khan probably has the best shot.

To train for the postseason, the Falcons, led by coach Ian Tipperts and his wife Kathy, have adjusted their practice regime to incorporate harder aerobic runs and workouts, such as hill repeats and interval repeats, which vastly differ from the early season training.

With this increase in difficulty — called "tapering" in cross country — the team's weekly mileage is much less than that of their midseason training.

Even before the team started to taper, most runners saw noticeable improvement — not only in their times, but also in strategically planning runs.

"Since most of our varsity runners are around the same speed, we stay together in a group for most of the races," ju-

nior Steven Sun said. "Doing this helped us push each other during the race and thus, as the season progressed, our individual and team race placements have steadily gotten higher."

An example of this occurred in the 2022 Artichoke Invitational on Oct. 1, where the boys' team placed 15th out of 30 teams and the girls' team placed 7th out of 18 teams, despite the boys missing their two best runners — Sun and Khan — and the girls missing their top runner — senior co-captain Elizabeth Stoiber. These top runners were resting for an SCVAL league race that occurred three days later at the hilly Crystal Springs Park course. In that race, the boys team placed 10th out of 13 teams and the girls team placed 9th out of 13 teams.

If every athlete executes their desired race strategy well at SCVAL league finals, Khan said he feels that the team will place higher in the competitive league finals meet than in their early season races.

"Our team is in Division 3, while all of the other teams in our SCVAL league are either in Division 1 or 2," Khan said. "So, if our team places in the top six at league finals, I'll be extremely happy." ◆

Graphic by NIKHIL MATHIHALLI and HOWARD SHU

BOYS' WATER POLO

Late-season turnaround demonstrates unrealized talent

By MitchellChen & AnthonyWang

Though the Falcons were unable to repeat last year's success in placing first in the El Camino league, they saw tremendous improvement over the season, overcoming their early losses with victories near the end of the league season.

After adjusting to their new coach, class of '22 alumna Kendal Jarvis, they ended their season with a 12-11 home loss against Monta Vista on Oct. 20 and a win against Cupertino on Oct. 18, resulting in a 5-9 record. They placed 6th in the league.

After a strong senior-led team graduated last spring, this year's team is composed of mainly sophomores and juniors lacking in experience. Specifically, their ball awareness and game sense were not as developed as many of the other teams in the league. Even so, senior captain and lead scorer Keon Nikfar thinks there were many games they should have won.

However, with steady progression, the boys were able to win three of the last four games they played.

"I am confident we will be in a winning position for next season."



SENIOR Keon Nikfar

"After our first win against Cupertino, we realized what we were able to achieve by coming together as a team," Nikfar said.

For now, the Falcons look forward to their league tournament from Oct. 24 to Oct. 26. Team parent Greg Bunker is set to replace Jarvis after he leaves for Navy Boot Camp on Oct. 24.

While the team had its ups and downs throughout the season, Nikfar feels the team was always there for each other, bringing each other together and keeping their morale optimistic.

"We had a really rough season, but I am optimistic about the team," Nikfar said. "After I graduate, I am confident the team can be in a winning position for next season." ◆



Junior wing Amaris Charton looks to pass to a releasing player down the pool.

GIRLS' WATER POLO

Falcons end season on favorable note

By StephanieSun & SarahZhou

On their Oct. 20 senior night, the girls' water polo team won 9-5 against Monta Vista. Two days earlier they captured a 5-2 win against Cupertino. The pair of wins gave them a 5-9 record in the El Camino division. The team was scheduled to play three more times in a league tournament on Oct. 24, Oct. 25 and Oct. 27.

During the season, the Falcons adjusted to various challenges, including the absences of key players senior goalie Rosie Kline and junior hole set Ryder Gangemi

and chemistry really helps them," Coghlan said.

One key victory was their game against Santa Clara on Sept. 22, when the team won

in several games due to injuries and prior commitments. The effects of the absences were exacerbated by the team numbers, with only 10 players in total making up the varsity team. As a result, many younger players found themselves gaining more experience and playing harder — including sophomore flat Cassidy Coghlan.

"We've had some major skill improvements throughout the season, especially with new players getting more confident as the season has gone on — the great team chemistry really helps them," Coghlan said.

Despite all the challenges, Le said their camaraderie and morale remained fairly consistent under the leadership of coach Mike Allegretti.

"We have a lot of hopes for the rest of the season and for next year," Le said. "I feel like our future is in good hands." ◆

GIRLS' GOLF

Freshman No. 2 player focuses on tournament improvements

By AnamikaAnand

Freshman Millie Wang first tried her hand at golf when she was 10 years old — while she originally did not find the sport interesting, she continued playing due to her parents urging her to give the sport a chance. As she gained more experience, she fell in love with the sport and started practicing at the Pruneridge Golf Club in Santa Clara.

While Wang played recreationally during middle school, she began dedicating more time to the sport and started practicing at the Pruneridge Golf Club in Santa Clara. One tournament that she said she will always be proud of is the American Junior Golf Association tournament at Stanford Golf Course this past August. She was pleasantly surprised to qualify for it after she won the one-day qualifier event with a 2-under 69.

Despite Wang's success, she takes videos of herself to analyze and alter her swing as needed, keeping previous tournaments in mind in terms of what exactly to focus on for each practice session.

On weekends, she plays tournaments to continue gaining experience.

"Tournaments are really time-consuming because the sport is really slow, but I'm sure it'll be worth it," Wang said.



Wang

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Golf is a game where one hole may go really badly, but you must continue playing," Wang said. "It helps you train your mindset to stay calm and just accept what's going on." ◆

snapshots



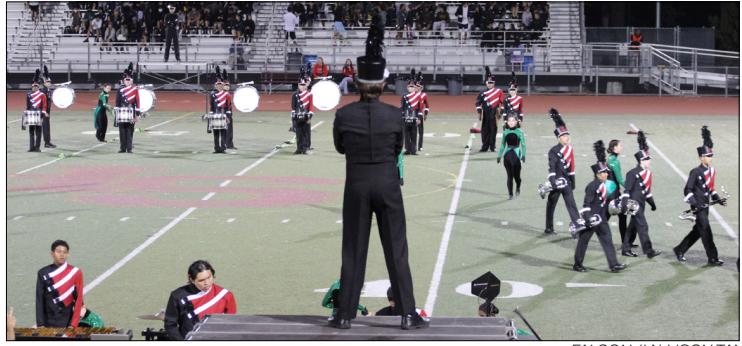
FALCON // KAVYA PATEL



FALCON // ALLISON TAN



FALCON // ALLISON TAN



FALCON // ALLISON TAN



Courtesy of SANDEEP MUJU

The cheer team energizes the crowd during the football team's 42-36 loss against Fremont High on Oct. 20.

Injured seniors Aarav Badani and Connor Call, junior Asad Khan and sophomore Keion Ashjaee-Marshall watch their teammates at the football game on Oct. 20.

The senior girls' water polo team huddles together for their underclassmen friends' speeches on Oct. 20.

ICAC officer senior Ojas Somani leads the dance flash mob at the school's first-ever Garba event on Oct. 8.

Drum major senior Petr Tupitsyn watches as the band prepares for their senior night performance on Oct. 14.

Adam Levine cheating scandal reveals society's immorality

Saratoga Falcons



(Sarah) Thomas and Zhou

On Sept. 19, Instagram model Summer Stroh posted a video on TikTok accusing Maroon 5's lead singer Adam Levine of having a year-long affair with her. Stroh shared screenshots of Levine's Instagram messages with her, mostly consisting of Levine "complimenting" her body in an inappropriate manner. Since then, multiple other women have also come forward with similar allegations.

In one of the messages — mere days after Levine and his wife Behati Prinsloo announced they were expecting — Levine asked Stroh for permission to name his unborn child after her: "Ok serious question. I'm having another baby and if it's a boy I really wanna name it Sumner. Are you ok with that? DEAD serious." Three minutes

later, he added a man-shrugging emoji to the chain of messages, 🤩.

Though disloyalty and infidelity are as old as marriage itself, Levine's disrespectful messages are just a glimpse into the depravity and immorality that have plagued society ever since social media became ingrained into our daily lives.

Three minutes later, he added a man-shrugging emoji to the chain of messages, 🤩.

In his message to Stroh, Levine included an emoji depicting a man shrugging. The offhanded nature and blatant indifference conveyed through the emoji prove how far Levine has strayed from his marriage and morals, providing imagery of Levine's possible actions at the moment he sent the message, a wicked grin spread across his overly whitened teeth.

Ok serious question. I'm having another baby and if it's a boy I really wanna name him Summer. Are you okay with that? Dead serious.

Additionally, Levine's use of the pronoun "I" rather than "we" highlights how he excludes his wife from his life, and the anonymity social media affords him aids in his deception.

Levine also uses the phrase "serious" twice, depicting the crippling effects of social media on his attention span, causing him to repeat himself in one message.

Furthermore, his use of auto-capitalization on the word "DEAD" emphasizes the word "serious," hinting he believes Stroh

may have difficulty comprehending his message, which could be due to the fact that he believes women are stupid — or because Stroh has a history of not comprehending common concepts, such as staying away from married men.

His extremely subtle allusion to pop culture, coupled with his shortened memory span, concisely conveys the negative effects of social media on those who use it.

Levine's affair gives a warning to the reader: Avoid over-bleaching your hair, getting ugly tattoos and being active on social media well into your 40s. Then, and only then, can one actually maintain a healthy marriage. ♦

Grievances from a candy bowl on Halloween

Ama-Zeng Autumn



Maggie Zeng

It was hard to tell how much time had passed: The days blended into weeks, the weeks had blended into months and I — an ignored Halloween candy bowl — was growing tired from disuse. My orange paint was peeling, and the toothy black smile painted on me could not be more superficial.

Oh, to feel the delightful fulfillment of the night breeze, a feeling I've craved for countless days now.

Oh, to feel the delightful fulfillment of the night breeze, a feeling I've craved for countless days now. The pantry's top shelf got chilly — teasing me with a hint of what could be — but the air was suffocatingly windless, and dust continued to fill the void that was me. I laid there in gnawing

anticipation, boring holes into the door as I waited for that crack of hopeful lights.

But finally — a soft click jolts me out of my tearful reminiscence. Warm hands grasp me and bring me towards the light. I am Plato, dragged out of his cave into golden, genial enlightenment. Finally, I sit on my rightful throne in the patio, towering over the stone steps. I close my eyes — this is bliss.

Just as I let myself get comfortable, I suddenly feel pudgy fingers roughly dig into the candy depths of my soul. I scream at them to stop, but they continue to relentlessly rip out two, three, even four

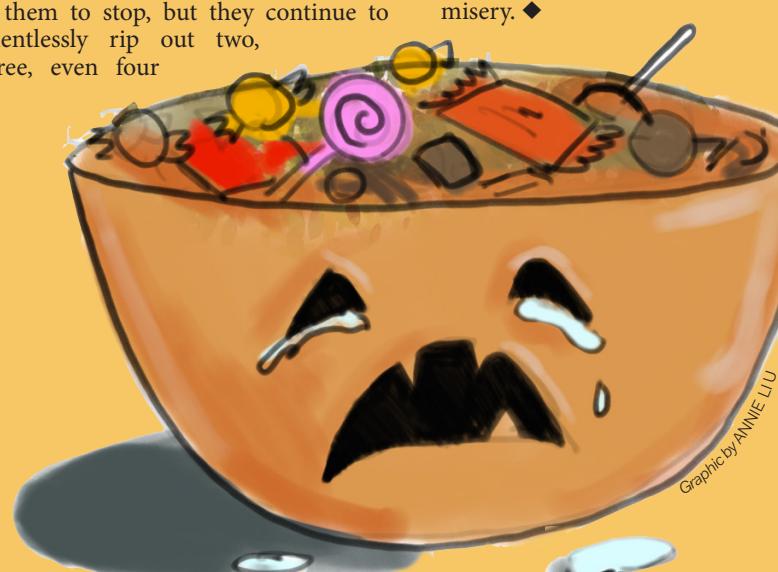
sweet organs at a time.

I cannot believe my eyes.

They pick me up and hang me over an endlessly dark pit, savagely shaking me over and over again until my insides are emptied out. As they turn around and run, they start eating the parts of me they hold in their hands!

After many long grueling hours of vicious attack, I lay there bloody, broken and bruised, devoid of my previous glory.

If there is a God in this world, please know that I was wrong — please end this misery. ♦



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

topten

SCARIEST THINGS

- 10** The cafeteria line. The horde of starving underclassmen is the reason all upperclassmen rush off campus.
- 9** The parking lot. It's survival of the fittest, but with Teslas and Mazdas.
- 8** Yearbook kids pulling you out of class. Let's be real: You want to be covered by the Falcon, not yearbook.
- 7** Waking up at 8:19 a.m. Sorry, Mr. Abe. We will not, in fact, be on-time.
- 6** Being the 76th person in the library. Only the first 75 can be socially, emotionally focused.
- 5** Finding that your best friend stayed home from school. Currently on FaceTime with her because she cannot survive without my presence.
- 4** ASB cutting your club. How will you get into college now? Just kidding, we all know you're still going to list it on your activities list.
- 3** The "Euphoria" effect. The senior class is going rogue — but thankfully we have Red Ribbon Day to combat alcoholism and drug abuse.
- 2** Math teacher Seema Patel. Imagine showing up to your AP Statistics class two minutes late with the wrong binder and no graphing calculator. Do Better.
- 1** An A-. We live in Saratoga. This is our reality.

>> Avani Kongetira