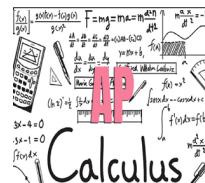


OPINION 7

Cheating incident raises concerns about school policies

LIFESTYLES 12-13

February break travel guide: How to spend 48 hours in Carmel

SCHOOL SCOPE 17

How to navigate through two of the hardest SHS classes

THE saratoga falcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION



Friday, February 17, 2023

Saratoga High School

Saratoga, CA

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Affirmative action draws alumni support

BY William Norwood
& Sarah Thomas

A crowd in front of the Supreme Court was covered in bright blue, holding up signs proclaiming "WE WON'T GO BACK" and "Merecemos Estar Aquí."

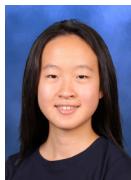
Forty-one college students, members of a group called Defend Diversity, gathered in front of the Supreme Court to protest in defense of "race-conscious admissions" on Nov. 28. Among them was Class of '22 alumna Cici Xu.

Affirmative action is the concept of favoring certain underrepresented groups in college admissions — in the U.S., colleges are allowed to use race as a factor in the admission process, but are not required to.

On the Supreme Court docket this year is the case of SFFA vs. UNC and SFFA vs. Harvard.

If the conservative majority rules as expected, the landscape of affirmative action will be greatly altered and perhaps eliminated altogether.

Communities like Saratoga, which is



Xu

made up of mainly wealthy racial minorities, have been used as examples of why race-conscious admissions can be problematic or unfair.

Detractors of affirmative action often use the rhetoric of the model minority myth to argue that race-conscious admissions ignore other factors like wealth.

Despite this possible disadvantage, students like Xu, a member of Asian Americans for Affirmative Action at Yale, and Class of '21 alumna Kaitlyn Tsai (a student at Harvard) have been vocal about protecting affirmative action policies.

Xu's college admission experience was different from many other students, especially since she had moved to the U.S. in eighth grade from China and was generally unfamiliar with the American application system.

Xu stressed that affirmative action has been proven to help minorities and raise their chances of underrepresented groups getting into college.

>> AFFIRMATIVE ACTION on pg. 3

Drama program selected for theater festival in Scotland

BY Anika Kapasi

In January, drama teacher Benjamin Brotzman got news he had been hoping to receive: an acceptance email letting him know the program had been accepted into the Festival Fringe for 2024. Held in Edinburgh, Scotland, Fringe is one of the most respected theatrical festivals in the world, with events ranging from high school student-run plays to professional theater company performances.

"It was always a dream that one day I would be able to just go and watch shows at the festival, but being invited to perform was such an amazing opportunity," Brotzman said. "Theater groups from all over the country and the world participate in the festival so it's really exciting that we're

able to be part of it."

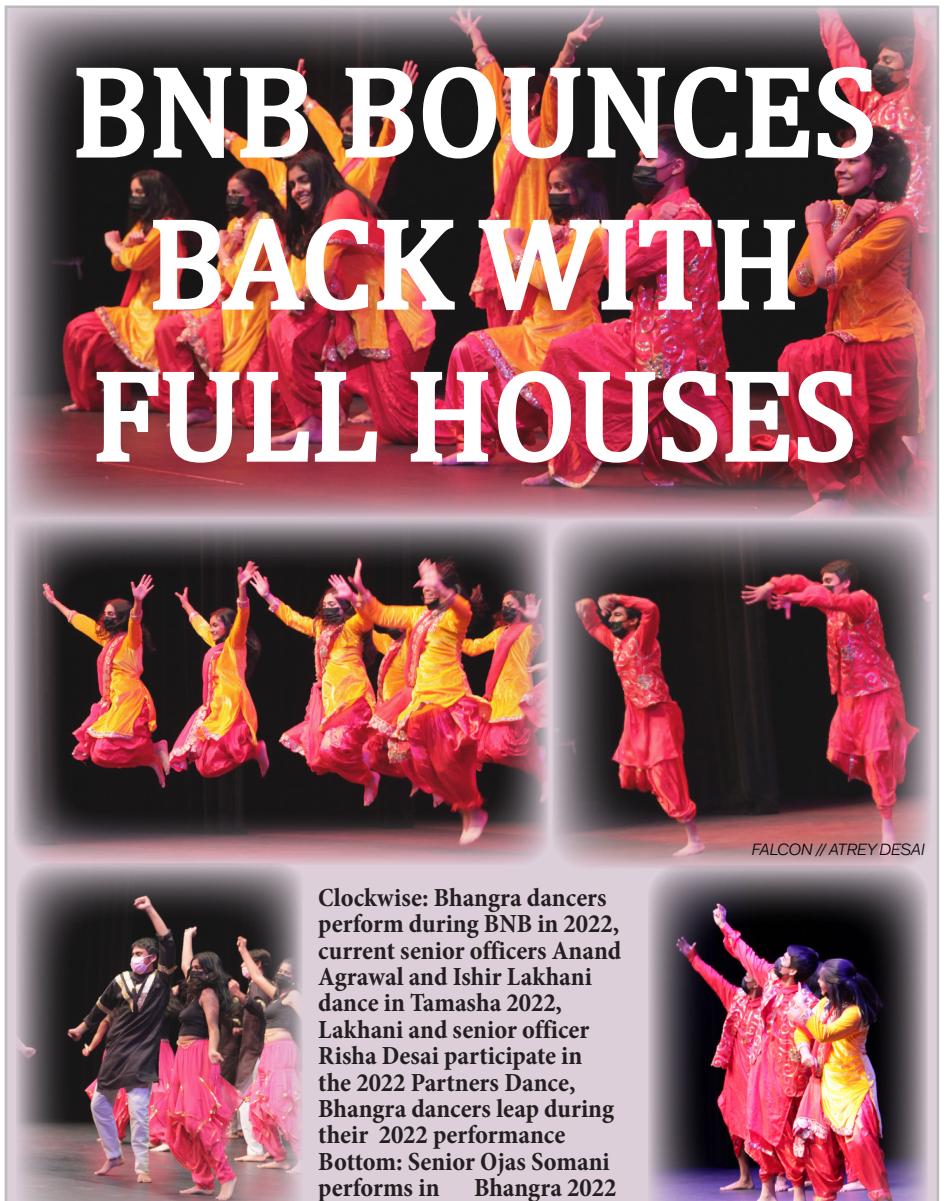
The school was accepted by the The American High School Theatre Festival, which runs in conjunction with the Fringe Festival, and will be traveling under World-Strides, an educational travel abroad company, for the duration of the trip.

The drama program was nominated for the festival by an unknown educator in the theatrical world, and received the application in an email to apply to the internationally renowned festival by Dec. 22 before being finally accepted in January.

"For about two weeks, I worked on almost nothing but the festival application, showcasing our department, our past productions, the type of shows we do and how"

>> DRAMA on pg. 3

BNB BOUNCES BACK WITH FULL HOUSES



FALCON // ATREY DESAI

Clockwise: Bhangra dancers perform during BNB in 2022, current senior officers Anand Agrawal and Ishir Lakhani dance in Tamasha 2022, Lakhani and senior officer Risha Desai participate in the 2022 Partners Dance, Bhangra dancers leap during their 2022 performance Bottom: Senior Ojas Soman performs in Bhangra 2022



couple of years was pre-recorded to comply with COVID-19 protocols. This year, the act will have all the singers on stage singing a blend of Western and classical music live. The officers this year are seniors Anand Agarwal, Risha Desai, Avani Gupta, Annika Muju, Isha Jagadish, Varun Shah and Ojas Soman.

AMD and AGD are specifically reserved for seniors that have participated in three years of BnB. Normally, four years of participation are required, but because the 2020 show was recorded during the pandemic, the participation requirement was cut down to three.

For AMD, the participation requirement is only for the dance's video, while the rest of the dance is open to participation from any seniors.

The show tickets for both days are \$20. All the tickets for both shows sold out a couple days after they were released.

>> BNB on pg. 3

Graphic by STEPHANIE SUN

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newsbriefs

Rare Saratoga shooting occurs at The Inn in downtown

An out-of-state visitor opened fire in The Inn at Saratoga on 4th Street and Big Basin Way in Saratoga downtown on Feb. 2, after being unsatisfied with accommodations at the hotel and demanding a refund, according to a WeChat message sent out by council member Yan Zhao on the same day.

The suspect, a currently unidentified male — as the investigation is ongoing — was captured along Saratoga Avenue and Dagmar Drive in a black Ford Mustang.

No one was harmed in the shooting.

According to Sergeant Russell Davis, who acts as the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office public information officer, deputies responded fast to the incident after being alerted.

"We would like to let the community know that this is a very uncommon circumstance that occurs in the city of Saratoga," Davis said in an interview with The Falcon. "Saratoga is a very safe community, and we want to ensure that we will continue to provide the highest level of law enforcement services to the city of Saratoga."

The shooter is currently booked into the County of Santa Clara Main Jail, and the shooting is pending investigation at the District Attorney's Office for prosecution. ♦

— Kathy Wang and Jonny Luo

Benefit Fashion Show performance set for April 22

The annual Benefit Fashion Show will take place on April 22 at 7 p.m. under the theme "Happily Ever After." The Benefit Commission released model sign-ups on Jan. 17.

"We're still in the early stages of planning, but it's coming along well," co-head commissioner Haley Marks said.

The commission has chosen to donate all of this year's proceeds to Planned Parenthood, a national nonprofit supporting sexual and reproductive healthcare and education.

"With the repeal of Roe v. Wade over the summer, we thought it was especially important to highlight safe options for women to get the healthcare they need," Marks said.

The established themes — Fun in the Sun, Vintage, Country Club, Streetwear, Cultural, Design Your Own, Bromance, Girls Night Out, Music Festival and Prom — will be joined by two new themes, Y2K and Sleepwear. The ticket prices have also increased from previous years: \$25 for regular and \$40 for VIP privileges. Marks attributes the cost change to lackluster sales last year that landed the commission "in the red."

Despite financial challenges, Marks is optimistic that the show will be a success this year. ♦

— Avani Kongetira

Senior wins 2022 New York Times narrative contest

Each year, the New York Times hosts a 100-word personal narrative contest for high school students across the world to tell a miniature memoir about a meaningful moment in their lives. Out of the 12,000 entries, senior Adam Xu's personal narrative was one of the 13 pieces selected as winners.

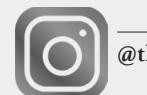
Xu wrote a humorous narrative of how their broken wrist, bound by a colorful cast, gave them celebrity-like recognition in first grade.

"The challenge of it was that it had to be written in fewer than 100 words," Xu said. "I had to cut it down and make sure that it made sense. I also wanted to make sure every word was perfect."

Despite the effort dedicated to the piece, Xu wasn't expecting any substantial recognition due to the vast amount of submissions. Thus, they were pleasantly surprised when the results came out and they were selected as a winner.

"Overall I'm just super excited about the work and it's really awesome for it to be published in the New York Times," Xu said. "In the future I want to write more works, especially in cross-genres like prose and poetry and submit them to various literary journals and publications." ♦

— Mitchell Chen and Skyler Mao



Did you get your ticket to Senior Grad Night? 144 seniors already got their tickets to the party of the year. Don't miss out!



FALCON // SAACHI JAIN

Following an intense fall marching season, the Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE) and Freshman Band (FBSB) rehearse for numerous concerts and performances during the second semester.

Band transitions from marching to concert season in second semester

By Saachi Jain
& Shannon Ma

SB. While the two levels of ensembles play together in marching band, they now play different repertoire as two separate ensembles in their respective class periods.

As a result, the freshmen and upperclassmen see one another less frequently and no longer "function as one," senior drum major Petr Tuptsyn said.

However, even across separate ensembles, band members of all grades continue to support and help one another.

"Being together for a semester set us up for a strong connection with underclassmen," said senior and principal clarinetist Dyne Lee.

Now, instead of marching on the field 3-4 times a week after school in preparation for competitions, band practices take place solely during school periods.

During class periods, SWE practices two to three pieces at once to prepare for annual concerts and events that occur in the spring, such as the March music concert and the CMEA (California Music Educators Association) Festival. Some pieces they are currently rehearsing include "The White Rose" by John Philip Sousa and the "Flute Concerto in D Major" by Carl Reinecke, which will be soloed by junior Eric Miao.

After school, select band students commit to SSO rehearsals. SSO, the school's symphony orchestra and highest level music ensemble, consists of 16 sections of instruments and nearly 100 students total. Students play ad-



Lee

vanced repertoires and perform at major school events including the early-May Pancake Breakfast for the community and late-January Electives Night for 8th graders.

They also perform at the music department's annual concerts. Rehearsals are up to two hours long and occur once or twice per week, on Monday and Wednesday.

For band students, the biggest challenge is not the rehearsal commitment, but rather adjusting to playing with string musicians.

For example, at some points in symphonic pieces, strings, wind and brass will trade off phrases instead of playing together at all times. During these breaks in the piece musicians must keep track of counts very precisely so they can enter on time.

"We are normally playing outside on a field, and constantly moving to stay together," Tuptsyn said. "In a symphony, there are many moments where band musicians don't play but must stay very alert."

Band members are excited to make music with one another again, even in a completely new setting and style. During this upcoming concert season, audiences will get to see a different side of band as they perform lively classical music repertoire.

"Marching season is always enjoyable, but I like that we get a balance between marching together and playing as a stationary ensemble," Tuptsyn said. "That's what makes band unique." ♦

"Being together for a semester set us up for a strong connection with underclassmen."

SENIOR Dyne Lee

Select band members play with string players in the Saratoga Symphony Orchestra (SSO), consisting of Saratoga Strings and String Orchestra ensembles.

During concert season, a large contrast for band members is the distinction between SWE and FB/

continued from pg. 1

Other than the changes to AMD and AGD, the seniors have created a streamlined system to learn the dance effectively and quickly.

For example, according to senior participant Ela Machiroutu, AGD has taken a different approach to teaching the dance.

"On the first day, they taught all three songs at once," she said. "At the second practice, which took place a week after we learned the songs, we had to review all the dances because a couple people weren't there."

For all the practices following the first, the participants have continued to review all the dances and begin working on the positions.

Choreographers provide videos so that participants can also practice at home.

"This practice is effective because it means that some people can go ahead if they have mastered the first dance," Machiroutu said.

Unlike the seniors, who have had three years of practice to get the formula down, the underclassmen are struggling this year due to a few different reasons.

"Being able to perform on an international stage and see theater from all over the world is something that just nobody gets to do," Brotzman said. "Seeing what people do in smaller venues, rather than broadway or flashing musicals, students will get a grand scale of what theater can be from this trip."

Brotzman said he has not yet decided what show the program will perform during the festival, as the choice is dependent on the number of actors and technicians that are interested in traveling. He expects around 50 students to take part in the trip.

Current seniors are ineligible to travel with the group, but the Class of '24 is encouraged to participate post-graduation.

Junior Ashly Henry, who plans to take part in the trip, said she is most excited to be able to perform with her drama family one last time before she heads off to college.

Hoping to minor or potentially double major in acting, Henry believes going to the festival will give her a new perspective on what theater is all about and make her a stronger actress through the performing experience she will gain.

"I love that they make everything a venue," Henry said. "It could be a literal coffee shop, on the streets or in a huge theater [where actors perform their shows and talents]. Being able to perform our show and show it to all the [attendees] is just an amazing opportunity." ♦

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

continued from pg. 1

"We also always have at least one choreographer who has a free tutorial to teach people that want help."

SOPHOMORE Shaan Janardhan

"It's also about people not showing up," junior girls choreographer Ameya Saund said. "Some people can only come to practices on Sundays, others can't come at all, so we have to resort to practicing during lunch and tutorial."

Many Asian Americans believe that affirmative action negatively affects them, Xu, however, disagrees.

"I definitely feel like I have benefited more positively from affirmative action, even though the white population has benefited [from legacy affirmative action]," Xu said. "So when we think about affirmative action we usually just have a very limited misunderstanding about what the concept is."

As a student at Harvard, Tsai feels that affirmative action becomes more necessary in older institutions.

"Harvard was never made for people like me, people who now constitute a large part of the population," Tsai said. "Harvard was made for wealthy white men."

To solve the practice timing problem, junior choreographers sent out polls into their respective messenger chats, as well as film videos of participants and choreos dancing, so members who weren't there for practices can refer back to them.

In order to maximize time, especially nearing BnB, choreographers are also using tutorials to clean up their dances.

All of the hard work leads to an important focus, though. Aside from the show's popular dances, ICAC raises and donates money to give to charity in India.

Profits from the show this year go to "Koshish" and "One School at a Time," two organizations in India involving educating unprivileged children.

"A lot of the activism that I've been a part of here at Harvard has been leveraging the word diversity as a campaign motto," Tsai said.

She highlighted the fact that diversity is often qualified as an opportunity to provide an educational benefit of diverse experiences to white Americans.

"I think that sort of frames [affirmative

FESTIVAL FRINGE

Dates

Fri, Aug 4, 2023 – Mon, Aug 28, 2023, Edinburgh

Facts

Numbers

There will be more than 60,000 performances and around 4000 different shows

How does it work

Anyone who has a story to tell and a venue to perform in can put on a show here

Most fringe shows take place in pop-up or non-traditional spaces, and are repurposed in August to showcase theatre, music, comedy, cabaret and everything in between.

action being struck down by SCOTUS do not necessarily believe they will change the decision of the court but are protesting to have a voice and be heard by others.

"DC was an extremely empowering experience," Xu said. "We know perfectly well that our protest at DC will not change the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action, but we feel proud for taking a stance on what we believe in and fighting on a quotidian basis in our educational institution." ♦



Courtesy of YALE DAILY NEWS

Leadership students attend Disney conference

COMBINING FUN WITH WORKSHOPS, THE WEEKEND WAS AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE FOR THE 35 ATTENDEES

BY TaraNatarajan
& AllisonTan

Seniors Sydney Backhus, Arshi Chawla, Ela Machirotou and Kayla Steele waited with anticipation in the Guardians of the Galaxy: Mission Breakout line at Disney's California Adventure theme park on Feb. 3. Given the opportunity to go to Disneyland with some of their closest friends in leadership, students buzzed with excitement.

This year's leadership class attended "Disney Leadership — the Disney Way," a high school conference at Anaheim Disneyland Park on Saturday, Feb. 3. According to leadership teacher Kristen Cunningham,

the conference taught students how Disney approaches leadership and gave students the opportunity to "sharpen some of their leadership skills."

After the pandemic interrupted previous years' trips, 35 leadership students and three chaperones attended the trip.

Their three-night stay in Anaheim included one full day of exploring the parks with a group scavenger hunt set up by the four administrative chaperones: principal Greg Louie, guidance counselor Monique Young, activities director Anna Ybarra and Cunningham.

"Disney has a great reputation for executive leadership skills, and so I'm hoping that

"I had a lot more fun at the conference



Cunningham

we're going to learn a lot about what they feel is important when it comes to being a leader," Cunningham said.

On the second day of their stay, the students were split into three groups, each guided by their assigned Disney educator. The conference was a three-hour interactive workshop within the California Adventure park. Students took part in various team working exercises to learn Disney's five steps to a high-functioning team: trust, coming to a consensus, class," junior class president Emily Ta said.

"I was excited to spend a few days with just the leadership class," junior class president Emily Ta said. "It was a really great team bonding experience for us." ♦

Engineering bridge project teaches key concepts

PRINCIPLES OF ENGINEERING TEACHER MATTHEW WELANDER HAS REFINED BRIDGE PROJECT PROCESS FOR YEARS

BY BeverlyXu

At the start of second semester, sophomore Vera Fung was among the 31 students in Matt Welander's class of Principles of Engineering who heard how they would be spending the next several weeks: designing and building mini bridges out of laser-cut fibrowood.

The project is well-planned and targeted toward developing software skills with a special emphasis on basic Newtonian forces in engineering.

"My favorite part has been drawing the beams on CorelDRAW, which we haven't had any troubles with because [engineering teacher Matt Welander] gave us exact instructions," Fung said.

For their first engineering project of the second semester, Principles of Engineering (POE) students are building bridges to demonstrate their knowledge of tension and compression forces acting on truss bridge beams.

The project, derived from the engineer-



Fung

ing course Project Lead the Way (PLTW), has gone through multiple iterations by Welander, who has redesigned the project to focus more on the design process, take into account the acting forces and learn about using the laser cutter, a necessary skill for future robotics-focused projects.

"This project is more of a design creativity project where we're less worried about how strong the bridge is going to be and more just about creating a bridge that they think is good," Welander said.

In the beginning, students used CorelDRAW, a line-drawing software necessary to use the engineering room's laser cutter, to design their initial designs of the bridge trusses.

They learn to perform simple force calculations by hand and delegate more complex calculations to MDSolids, an educational platform for learning the mechanics of materials.

Using MDSolids, they also learn to simulate a truck crossing the bridge. The software

reports the compression and tension forces acting on each beam so they can work on redesigning it to be more robust.

"I show students how to create bridges with straight lines, but some students have enough knowledge of 3D software or CorelDRAW software that they can create bridges with curved beams," Welander said. "Some people create basic bridges that you might actually see in the real world and some people create bridges that are a little more modern."

As a colleague and collaborator of Welander, Warmuth has seen him make his vision of the bridge project a reality.

Through the years, he was able to observe and take feedback from students to reflect on the project and modify it so that students walk away with a more solid understanding of the forces demonstrated in the project.

"Obviously it's really the mark of a teacher when you have a project in mind, and you know what you want to do," Warmuth said. "You keep trying different versions until you can finally really hone in on a project that really comes back to the students — it meets the goals and expectations that you have for them, and is just really accessible." ♦

In previous iterations of the project, students used soldered metal wire, 3D printing, balsa wood and even toothpicks to build their bridges. But after five to six years of trial and error and deliberations with Engineering department chair Audrey Warmuth, Welander finally settled on using laser-cut MDF to allow students to focus more on

software designing and testing skills.

"The whole class is constantly getting re-imagined and we're always looking at ways to improve things or do things differently," Welander said. "At this point, I'm pretty happy with how it works, and I think students will be more proud than they were with previous projects."

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Junior spreads drug awareness in Red Ribbon photo contest

BY AnamikaAnand

Junior Ryan Lin first visited Operation Dawn, a drug rehab center in San Francisco, when he was in fourth grade. It was there where he first interacted with individuals who were fighting the battle of drug abuse, igniting in him a cause to spread their stories in any way he could.

Lin has immersed himself in this cause by participating in multiple organizations and even starting his own that is based around interacting with the residents of Operation Dawn. He focuses on spreading information about the consequences of drug addiction and talking to people who have had their own experiences with it to reduce stigma and educate his peers.

Apart from fundraising, the students simply listen to the residents' stories, such as people who lost a bet, took drugs and became addicted or teens who ignored their parents, hung out with the wrong people and fell into a cycle of addiction.

Lin has observed a stigma around getting help for substance abuse, and he thinks that giving people a chance to talk about their stories and their journeys is the best way to reduce that stigma. He explained that getting involved with local communities helps their recovery.

"I listened to some of their stories and realized we're all one step away from going down the same path," Lin said. "Many of them really want to stop using drugs, but their bodies and their brains don't cooperate. By being supportive, they will be less hesitant to see a doctor to get better."

The photo portrays Bai, Lin and Kau holding up the red ribbon poster that says "Celebrate Life, Live Drug Free," lit up by candles in the foreground that form the red ribbon logo. Red ribbons are also tied behind where the three stand.

"We used the candles because it was supposed to represent a candlelight vigil to remember those who lost their battle with addiction," Lin said.

The Red Ribbon photo is just one of many ways Lin has become involved in the drug awareness movement. In January 2022, he founded Outreach Initiatives iCare, a stu-

dent group that frequently visits Operation Dawn. The students talk to the residents to learn about their stories, conduct service projects and fundraise for the organization.

At Operation Dawn, students have installed solar string lights around the roof of the patio, planted roses, cleaned the goat barns and spent time with the residents. According to Lin, the residents need to exercise regularly, so students organize tournaments and play sports with them.

Lin highlighted an annual Movie Under the Stars event, where the students watch a movie of the residents' choice with the residents. There have also been two fundraising events for their solar electrical system, for which Lin's initiative has donated around \$4,400 to Operation Dawn to support.

Recently, Lin — alongside juniors Sam Bai and Samuel Kau — participated in the National Red Ribbon Week photo contest of 2022 and won the Region 4 sector prize of \$1,000, which has been donated to the school in support of drug-free prevention education. Lin said he is grateful for the recognition and sees it as a great way to spread drug awareness.

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"I listened to some of their stories and realized we're all one step away from going down the same path," Lin said. "Many of them really want to stop using drugs, but their bodies and their brains don't cooperate. By being supportive, they will be less hesitant to see a doctor to get better."

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"We used the candles because it was supposed to represent a candlelight vigil to remember those who lost their battle with addiction," Lin said.

The Red Ribbon photo is just one of many ways Lin has become involved in the drug awareness movement. In January 2022, he founded Outreach Initiatives iCare, a stu-

dent group that frequently visits Operation Dawn. The students talk to the residents to learn about their stories, conduct service projects and fundraise for the organization.

At Operation Dawn, students have installed solar string lights around the roof of the patio, planted roses, cleaned the goat barns and spent time with the residents. According to Lin, the residents need to exercise regularly, so students organize tournaments and play sports with them.

Lin highlighted an annual Movie Under the Stars event, where the students watch a movie of the residents' choice with the residents. There have also been two fundraising events for their solar electrical system, for which Lin's initiative has donated around \$4,400 to Operation Dawn to support.

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Lin highlighted

Prospective students get a glimpse into campus life through shadowing program

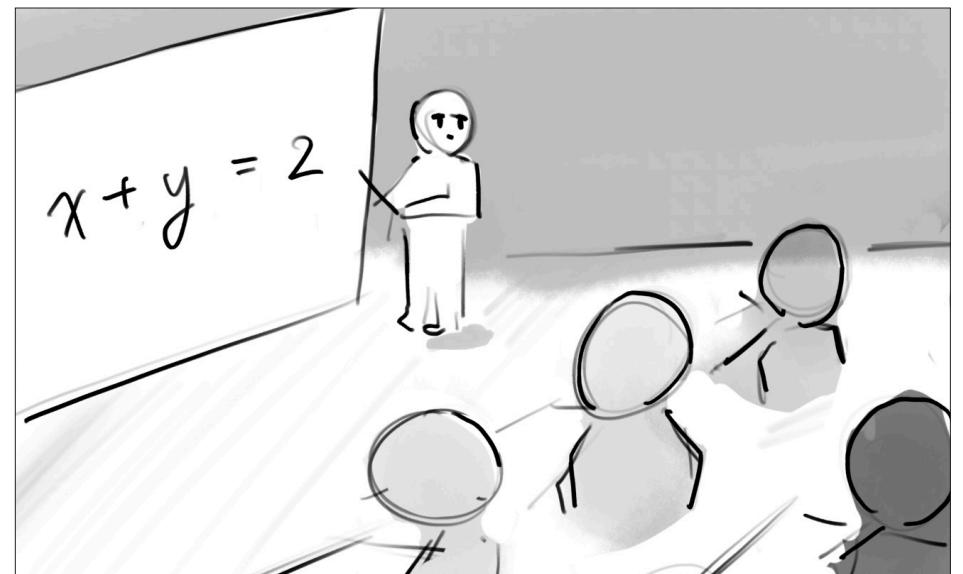
by Victoria Hu & Sarah Zhou

As enrollment deadlines for local private schools approach in mid-January to early February, more than 20 prospective students have signed up to participate in the Saratoga High student shadowing program — an opportunity for them to follow a current student around campus for half of a school day to better understand the school and the typical experience here.

Guidance secretary Sharon Fong, who manages the shadowing program, matches students who sign up to shadow with 18 student volunteers based on their responses to an interest form. While volunteers come from all grade levels, shadows are usually paired with underclassmen.

"It's like a puzzle," Fong said. "You want everyone to be matched in terms of grade and interest. If they like music, we try to find a student in orchestra, but this can be difficult since [shadowing] is only half a day."

In general, students who sign up to shadow live in the district and tend to be from private middle schools such as St. Andrews or Sacred Heart. Shadowing is scheduled on an individual basis after winter break, due to students being busy before finals week. Fong aims to allow all prospective students to visit the school around January before applications for private schools such as Mitty and Valley Christian are due so that families can make an informed decision. Applications for intra-district registration, which allows transfers between Los Gatos High and Saratoga High, also close around that time (Feb. 10).



Prospective students can come to SHS to shadow a current student and learn about classes.

feels that the number of students who have signed up to shadow is a manageable number for the office to facilitate.

"We have new students coming to us from overseas and from towns next door. We want to make sure that we're welcoming them and making them feel at home here," Evanoff said. "That's why I think a shadowing day is really important opportunity to show that. It's nice to not assume everybody grew up right down the street and has knowledge of our schools."

According to assistant principal Abra Evanoff, public schools sometimes choose not to run shadowing programs because prospective students live nearby and are already familiar with the school — or because of the potential logistical mayhem of huge numbers of students coming on campus.

Evanoff said she is "excited" that the school offers shadowing opportunities, and

showcase the school's strengths, they cannot replace the experience of seeing the campus firsthand: As both an administrator and a mother, she believes that shadowing is an invaluable opportunity for students to get a feel for a school's atmosphere.

"My own two students shadowed at a private high school before I ultimately chose to put them in public," she said. "But they both loved that day. And in fact, one of them still has a good friend she met from that school. Shadowing is just a neat opportunity for students to get a peek into a different kind of school, especially for our kids that are coming from small private schools." ♦

Recent student driving accidents raise safety concerns for many

by Mitchell Chen & Derek Liang



On Jan. 31, a Tesla was totaled after crashing into a front yard on Herriman Avenue.

Roughly 230,000 teens in the U.S. ages 13 to 19 were injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2020, with the most at-risk group being teen drivers aged 16 to 19.

The issue of driving safety has received attention recently as the result of an increase in student-involved accidents and reports of excessive speeding. One such accident was a crash on Jan. 31 that occurred during lunch involving a junior boy and his friends. (The Falcon chose not to identify him because of his age.)

The junior said he lost control of his Tesla when he went too fast around the bend on Herriman Avenue and crashed into a nearby home's yard, narrowly avoiding a house's frame.

"I was rushing to get back to school and, with pressure from other passengers in the car, I decided to floor it," the student told The Falcon.

His car ran into a pine tree and uprooted a fire hydrant, but none of the passengers in the car were harmed.

Assistant principal Brian Thompson sent an email to students recently about unsafe driving and cautioned them to change their behavior. "I see a lot of students driving fast and making turns that aren't safe," he said. "I'm out there watching students leave campus and I see a lot of unsafe driving very often."

With these accidents happening among teen drivers, there are concerns among adults about safe driving. However, sophomore Dylan Wilson has a different perspective on the concerns toward student drivers at the school.

"Number one, always wear a seatbelt and just pay more attention when you're driving on the road," Thompson said. "I just wanted to take a moment to remind our student body to be safe for themselves and for other students as well as our community members because driving is a huge responsibility." ♦

Board continues deliberation for solar panels on campus

by William Norwood & Divya Vadlakonda

of solar panels and their conceptual design. Mike Borger, a representative for NV5, suggested that it would be beneficial to update the equipment before the addition of solar panels to ensure maximum electrical efficiency.

Discussions regarding the locations of the solar panels are now underway, with the plan being to install the panels over the front parking lot of the SHS campus in the form of carport canopies.

The motion to prepare and request the RFP — a request for proposal that the board will post to formally bid for potential vendors — was approved at the Jan. 17 board meeting.

Superintendent Bill Sanderson stated that NV5 will assist with its preparation as well as the evaluation of potential vendors, contracting support and technical construction support for the process.

Once bids are received, the board will make a decision on which company to proceed at a later meeting, taking into account the best net present value, skill set, background and experience of each contractor. The RFP is projected to be issued at the end of February, with the vendor selection taking place by March.

An energy audit was previously approved by the board and is currently underway.

This audit will assess how the current electrical systems can be improved.

As of January, the audit has already concluded that the overhead lights on both LGHS and SHS campuses are outdated, which is increasing energy costs. The results of the audit will reveal the possibility

However, a potential problem that Borger noted is that solar panels on that parcel may impede traffic. When a company is selected, construction will begin as soon as it is feasible. The panels are projected to take up to 3 to 6 months and start construction in December 2024.

For many in the district, the approval of the RFP signifies a big step in the right direction. Carolyn Pyun, Green Committee chairwoman, was among the many students — most from the Green Committee — who pushed to put solar panels on the board's agenda and was happy with progress being made.

"This step did fuel some hope in me as being a start of something our committee believes is necessary and important," Pyun said. "I'm aware of its long-term nature so I'm glad they decided to take steps toward it." ♦

FOURTH PERIOD
STAFF POLICY

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Saratoga Falcon welcomes all signed letters of opinion, which are subject to editing for length, accuracy and grammar. Please send them to avani.kongetira@saratogafalcon.org and nilay.mishra@saratogafalcon.org. For ad information, email @anikapasa@saratogafalcon.org.

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Cheating policies need updating, clarifying

According to the Educational Testing Service, statistics show that between 75% and 95% reported cheating in high school in recent years, a stark difference to the 1940s, when only 20% of high school students admitted to cheating. In a 2022 survey conducted by the International Center for Academic Integrity, 95% of students confessed to having cheated in some form.

The school is no exception to the drastic rise of cheating — in fact, as a school that places a deep emphasis on academics, it's a cesspool for these occurrences.

Most recently, 26 students were found participating in a group chat in which students shared chemistry homework. When the group chat was exposed, the students were referred and let go — without a mark on their record. Out of the entire group chat, only two or three students caught cheating actually received disciplinary action.

This came from a lack of evidence of who actually cheated:

Those who sent work in the group chat were caught, but there was not enough substantial evidence for anyone else to get in trouble. It begs the question of what can be classified as cheating and what cannot.

This issue is exacerbated by inconsistent classroom policies on academic integrity.

The current school handbook says that "copying work assigned to be done independently or letting others copy one's work or another's work" is considered cheating.

It also lists the consequences of violating academic integrity: The first offense is a zero on the assignment and a referral, the second offense results in an "infraction noted on secondary school report" and the third drops the student from their class with an "F" grade and the student receives suspension and a possible referral to an alternative education placement.

Despite rules like this, many

student group chats circulate within the student body, some with the sole purpose of sharing notes and homework. While some teachers encourage students to work with their peers by sharing notes and study guides to better understand the content and reduce stress, others would consider this a violation of academic integrity, since sharing

work can inhibit students' understanding of material.

In addition, academic policies regarding when to report cheating vary from class to class, blurring the lines in the process — for example, some English and history teachers condemn the usage of Wikipedia as a source, while others will not give it a second thought.

In some instances, teachers will not call the use of SparkNotes explicit cheating, even if it is clearly a violation of its definition.

Such inconsistencies and nuances often serve to confuse students. It is unfathomable for staff to simply expect students to

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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Divya Vadlakonda

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 24-7 in favor of this article.

Spring leadership events need to be revived

by Allison Tan



grades, as students participate in a series of flag football games and cheer stand-offs.

I'm not trying to say that second semester is devoid of fun events: There are several noteworthy events that take place in the second semester.

The main one is Bombay in the Bay (BnB), which is admittedly an equally massive production, but mostly made up of a specific demographic and often only attended by family members of performers — in other words, not a school-wide event like Homecoming.

Leadership should also create excitement leading up to Spring Fling with a spirit week that mirrors Homecoming Week, when everybody dresses up in their class colors and merch.

Dances and in-school activities give students something to look forward to: dressing up, dancing, planning skits and having fun with friends outside of school.

Additionally, holding a large spring dance again would establish a tradition that can be carried

raise money for worthy organizations and causes.

In a similar vein, Dance Commission's Quadsideland, mirroring beloved music festival Outsideland, highlights student musical talent.

One of the reasons these events don't gain enough participation is that teachers and students often feel burned out from the rigor of first semester.

As a result, they don't see the appeal or make time to attend such events.

Staff can significantly raise interest in school events by attending events and offering extra credit to students who also show up.

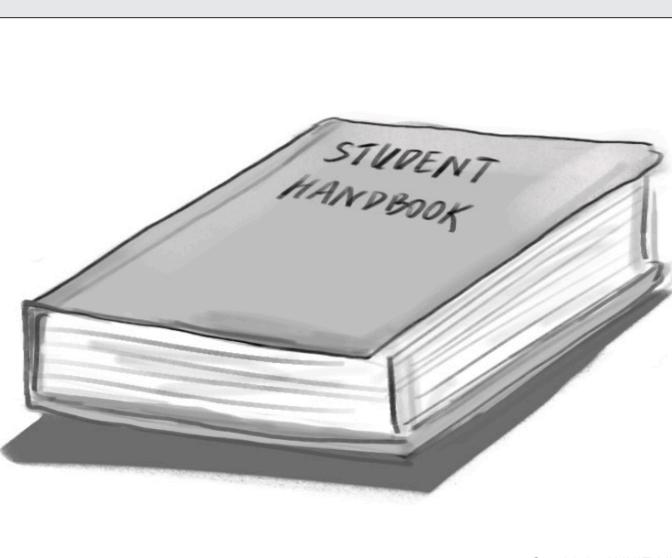
With frequent announcements on leadership events from teachers even just in classrooms, we can raise spring spirit to match first semester.

It is important not to undermine events such as these and to consistently show spirit throughout the whole year.

This not only benefits and uplifts the whole school, but it impacts students' overall mood and attitude. Given that the school is highly academic, better school spirit can improve mental health.

While the leadership class can organize events, the rest of us need to show up and enjoy them.

From organizing Falconpuff cheers to buying Spring Fling tickets, students can help foster a vibrant spirit that continues throughout second semester. ♦



Graphic by ANNIE LIU



Microcosm of Russia's human rights violations: Ukraine conductor dead after refusing to cooperate

by Nicole Lee & Isabelle Wang

Response to Russia's use of music as a military tactic to create peaceful facade

As word of Kerpatenko's death spread, Ukrainians responded with outrage. Many conductors and musicians condemned the Russian government on Twitter.

Among them was Dalia Stasevska, a Ukrainian-Finnish conductor who expressed her condolences.

"No words. Hearing your colleague being killed," Stasevska said in her tweet. "Russia imposing a 'comply or die' policy against artists is nothing new. It has a history which spans for hundreds of years. Let our fight for human rights, against dictatorships and free Ukraine be even stronger."

The Russian government has threatened musicians as an intimidation tactic since the Soviet days in the 20th century. Other musicians such as Evgeni Mikeladze, conductor of the Georgia Philharmonic Orchestra, have suffered similar fates as Kerpatenko: Mikeladze was killed by Soviet forces in 1937 due to his involvement in the Russia and Georgia revolutionary movement. In honor of his death, the National Symphony Orchestra adopted Mikeladze's name for their programs.

Historically, Russian authorities have used music to portray the facade of "improvement in life" there. In reality, musicians like Kerpatenko and Mikeladze are killed for refusing to become propaganda tools. Russia uses both military force and cultural activities such as International Music Day to manipulate other countries into believing they have everything under control.

Ukraine, citing excuses ranging from national security threats to the pandemic's restrictions on public activities. They have prevented lawyers from representing peaceful protesters and human rights defenders. Websites featuring human rights projects have been blocked and police have detained and physically assaulted journalists covering the protests.

Human rights abuse exacerbated by war

Russia's continuation of human rights abuses seem to get worse by the day.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine again last February, both sides have faced high death tolls, even among civilians. Over 70,000 to 80,000 Russians and 40,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed or wounded. Thirty million more Ukrainians were displaced from their homes.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and other human rights groups have condemned Russia for its use of explosive weapons in populated areas and attacks on fleeing civilians. The commission has also documented executions, unlawful confinement, ill-treatment, torture, rape and other acts of sexual violence. In some instances, children have been forced to witness their relatives being raped by Russian troops.

Russian authorities have also silenced and harassed human rights defenders in Ukraine, citing excuses ranging from national security threats to the pandemic's restrictions on public activities. They have prevented lawyers from representing peaceful protesters and human rights defenders. Websites featuring human rights projects have been blocked and police have detained and physically assaulted journalists covering the protests.



LEYNA CHAN

>> resources

Donate To Ukraine

Organizations such as Rescue can help provide essential supplies to Ukrainian refugees. For more information on ways to help Ukraine, please scan the QR code for a list of organizations asking for assistance:



District correct to overhaul school's outdated website

by George Hu

When students open the school's website, they are presented with a slideshow that includes a series of pictures of various recent school events along with a large picture of the front of the school's football stadium. As they scroll down the page, they begin to see upcoming events, as well as links to over a dozen essential websites that the school uses.

It requires a team effort from school and district staff to keep the information current and relevant.

But while a quick glance may seem like the school's website is perfectly satisfactory, there are many glaring flaws that should be fixed — and the district is right to prioritize.

Among the easy-to-fix flaws, the website lacks relevant, updated information. If students go to the Academics section and click on Tutoring, they will see that there is no

content because it is currently "under construction." Like many parts of the website, potentially helpful information is missing; just filling in these blanks would go a long way toward improving the site.

Another outdated feature is the subsection called Job Opportunities in the Student Life section. If you click on it, it clearly states at the top that it was last updated on May 6, 2021. Like many other parts of the website, the information is out of date.

This isn't an impossible task. For comparison, Los Gatos High provides much more updated information on its website. In the Guidance section, for instance, there is a video that teaches students how to use Canvas.

In Athletics, you are redirected to LGHS's athletics website, which does a good job on highlighting how well every sports team is doing.

Although SHS also has its own athletic website, there is very little information regarding updated news about our athletics team.

The district's recent hiring of Public Information and Engagement Officer Tanya De La Cruz — who is spearheading an effort to revamp the district's website, including

Courtesy of SARATOGA HIGH

Superscoring exacerbates inequity in SAT

by TaraNatarajan

When I took my first ever SAT in November, I went in with the expectation that it would take no more than twice. After all, I could always go the test-optimal route if the retake didn't work out.

Unlike a lot of my friends, I was quite a novice at standardized testing: I had only taken one PSAT and had never set foot into a paid prep class or tutoring session, instead self-studying using the College Board's Khan Academy SAT prep resource and a secondhand prep book.

My score was much better than I expected and I was overjoyed. But when I spoke with a friend about it, she advised me to take it again to increase my math score. I was confused: I didn't want to risk a lower reading (and perhaps, overall) score on my retake just for the sake of doing better on another section.

That's when I learned about superscoring.

With superscoring, students can take the SAT more than once, with their highest score over all sittings from each section added together to gain their best score. This incentivizes students to retake the test over and over until they have maximized their score for each section.

While it may come as a boon to some who may perform better on any one section than the other, encouraging retakes to fine-tune scores is a harmful practice that undermines the entire point of a standardized test.

By design, the SAT is an aptitude test designed to measure knowledge without significant preparation — scoring in the 50th

percentile indicates meeting 8th grade level reading and math benchmarks. For students that need help with content, the SAT's free Khan Academy prep resource provides all students with the necessary skills and content for SAT proficiency. Past that, the SAT is simply a test of your test-taking skills.

Because of this, a student's socioeconomic background is a strong predictor of their performance on standardized testing.

The monumental growth of the test-prep industry, which rakes in hundreds of million dollars a year from prep books and private tutoring services, is a testament to the financial lengths affluent families will go to in order to game the test.

When superscores are added to the mix, the entire point of the SAT as a standard of aptitude is undermined further. If a student takes the test over and over with incremental increases each time, how well does their superscore actually reflect their abilities?

Hint: It doesn't.

Time, resources for preparation and access to testing centers put affluent students at a further advantage when it comes to retake opportunities. Affluent students can also afford the \$75 registration fee more than twice — while the College Board offers fee waivers, they apply for only two registrations (one test and up to one retake).

This means that only students who can afford to pay the fee can afford to retake the test more than once. These are the students who inevitably benefit the most from the superscoring policy.

Encouraging multiple retakes also places an emphasis on spending increasing time and money on a test with diminishing relevance.

As more colleges go test-blind or test-optimal, there is always the option to apply to colleges without submitting the scores.

So why are we still encouraging students to take and retake an exam for which the median score benchmark is eighth-grade reading and math?

Standardized testing is supposed to be an equalizer in college admissions. The entire point of the SAT is that regardless of differences in rigor of individual schools or the extracurricular opportunities available to each student, basic aptitude in reading and mathematics can be captured through a standardized exam with a quantitative score that can be easily evaluated by colleges. Superscoring goes against every one of these principles.

When superscores are added to the mix, the entire point of the SAT as a standard of aptitude is undermined.

A possible solution to the current superscoring dilemma could involve taking the average of all attempts on a section to compose a final score rather than taking the raw score — this means that retaking would not make sense unless there is significant improvement guaranteed, disincentivizing students from simply taking it repeatedly. The College Board should also place a cap on the number of retakes allowed for all students, not just poor ones.

When it comes to the relevance of the SAT itself, there are plenty of good arguments on both sides of the debate.

But with superscoring, there isn't any good argument to support it — and it needs to go. ♦

Why Commit Day shouldn't be official

by Allison Tan

The use of banned weapons and artillery attacks have also killed hundreds of civilians in Kyiv, destroying at least eight civilian buildings and leaving cars and streets in wreckage. Russia's withdrawal from areas of the Kyiv region revealed many dead bodies from the destruction caused by cluster munitions over a wide area.

It has been almost a year since Russia invaded Ukraine, with no sign of Russia's human violations to end. Children have been killed, wounded, displaced and traumatized.

Hospitals, schools and buildings have been destroyed. These sites have also housed the alleged forced transfers of people and unintended adoptions of children by the graves.

How can we help Ukrainians?

The best actions individuals can do is donating to organizations, volunteering or helping professionally and sending humanitarian supplies. And praying that Putin will finally come to his senses and stop waging this disastrous war against an innocent, sovereign nation. ♦

Another instance of Russia's exploitation of Ukrainian citizens includes the attacks on civilian infrastructure. In November, Russian airstrikes hit Kyiv, Ukraine, killing six civilians and injuring 30. As a precautionary measure in response to Russia's attacks, Ukraine disconnected three nuclear power plants from the national electricity grid.

These attacks caused harm to many innocent people, leaving hundreds of thousands of civilians in cold buildings without any heat, electricity or water system to survive.

This problem is exacerbated by Ukraine's

silence, leading to negative consequences on their mental health. A student constantly thinking about their approaching mid-term deadlines and late-night workload is bound to experience a lot of stress.

Another consequence of the due date policy is loss of sleep. A student with a midnight or early morning due date is more likely to stay up late than those with deadlines the next day.

Ideally, students should have the opportunity to complete homework during tutorials, lunch and free periods before later classes. Although this change may seem small, even an extra hour of sleep can bring many benefits to students.

In addition, making assignments due before the class period also ensures that all students have the same amount of time to complete their work, creating a more equitable academic environment.

Forcing these students to turn in assignments earlier than class starting times creates a situation where they rush through their assignments, ruining the educational purpose of homework.

These later periods can also miss out on tutorial time that is available to students of earlier periods — first- and second-periods have two tutorials compared to one tutorial for other classes.

This increases students' existing stress and anxiety over the

assignment, leading to negative consequences on their mental health. A student constantly thinking about their approaching mid-term deadlines and late-night workload is bound to experience a lot of stress.

Clearly, deadlines are important for students' time management skills. But many teachers set Canvas deadlines at 11:59 p.m. on the night before class. Some even have their deadlines due at more unconventional times, such as 9 p.m. the night before class.

Although these teachers are sure to have reasons for their due dates, they should return to a beneficial aspect of pre-pandemic education and set their due dates at the beginning of class to alleviate stress and increase sleep for students.

All seniors should be proud of where they're going in this next chapter in our lives, but advertising Commit Day as an official event for seniors is something I do not intend on doing.

Naturally, seniors will wear their college merch on May 1 regardless if the school advertises it or not, but it is important that we make efforts to dismantle toxic academic culture.

While seniors are still more welcome to wear their merchandise, I feel it is my duty as senior class president to prioritize the mental health and well-being of my peers. ♦

Most seniors are coping with ongoing rejection from schools they have worked toward attending their whole high school career, with many receiving the most rejection they've ever faced in a short period of time.

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Most seniors are coping with ongoing rejection from schools

BBLs: the damaging effects of the trend cycle

BY TaraNatarajan

Blinding neon spandex, animal-print velvet and flimsy knitwear that lasts a single wash cycle; precarious cutouts and laddered holes; curve-hugging, cleavage-baring, waist-cinching dresses on curvy models who look like real-life versions of Jessica Rabbit: These are the holy tenets upon which stands the 21st century phenomenon colloquially known as BBL, or Brazilian butt lift, fashion.

BBL fashion caters to a very specific body type — large breasts, small waists with flat stomachs and large, augmented buttocks — achieved almost exclusively through cosmetic surgery. It has infiltrated social media marketing, popular culture and seasonal trends.

But not only is BBL fashion impractical and oftentimes grotesque, it epitomizes the intersection of everything that is wrong with the fashion industry today: the pressures of cosmetic surgery, the trend cycle of women's body types and the rise of harmful, unsustainable fast fashion.

The BBL is a cosmetic surgery procedure where abdominal fat is removed through liposuction and reinjected into the buttocks to achieve an extreme hourglass shape. It has the highest mortality rate out of any cosmetic surgery at 1 in 3000 deaths.

The procedure is also pricey: Depending on the surgeon, a BBL can set you back up to \$30,000. This can result in women seeking cheaper surgery at shady "chop shops," causing the mortality rate to rise even further because of unaccredited providers administering lethal fat injections.

Yet, the surgery remains one of the most popular, with over 61,000 buttock augmentations performed in 2021 alone.

BBL fashion serves as marketing for this

procedure. Styles made for artificially enhanced body types have found their way into the mainstream.

Then, the 2010s gave rise to the BBL. The procedure gained traction quickly, with the number of BBLs increasing by 90% since 2015. This sudden increase in popularity is often attributed to celebrities like the Kardashians, who seemingly ushered in a new era of women's bodies which 2014 Vogue dubbed "The Era of the Big Booty."

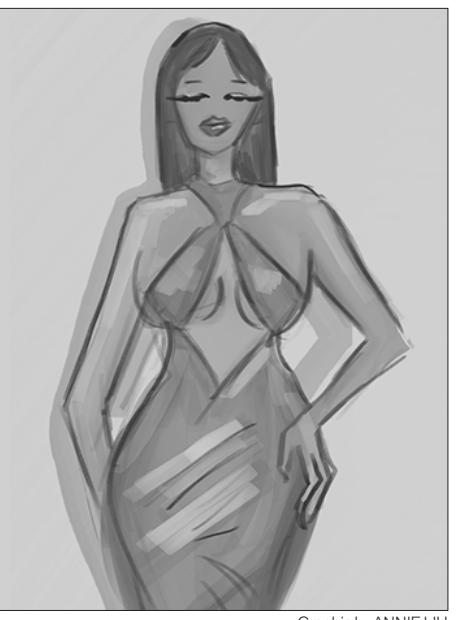
It is important to note that throughout the eras of fashion that glorified thinness, Black women and other women of color were often derided for naturally curvy bodies. But now, even they are under increasing pressure to receive BBLs because the aesthetic of a curvy body has been appropriated by the white-dominated cosmetic surgery and fashion industries and repackaged into an unattainable ideal — one that is often based in genetics.

BBL fashion feeds off the commodification of women's bodies at the expense of all women, especially women of color. Turning women's bodies into trends is misogynistic and pits women against each other.

The surgery, often pushed by the industry as an empowering choice for women, pushes racist, anti-feminist beauty standards and treats women's body types like commodities to be arbitrarily bought and sold.

All this comes at the expense of women of color, whose ethnic features like bumpy or large noses, wide hips and monolids are often shunned in favor of rhinoplasty, liposuction and eyelid surgery to adhere to white beauty standards. The BBL takes this premise to the next level by co-opting a body type common for Black women and contorting it into a standard largely unattainable without surgery.

While the rise of the BBL has certainly brought unprecedented attention to body types previously considered too large for the



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

A typical BBL dress can be found on websites like PrettyLittleThing and Fashion Nova.

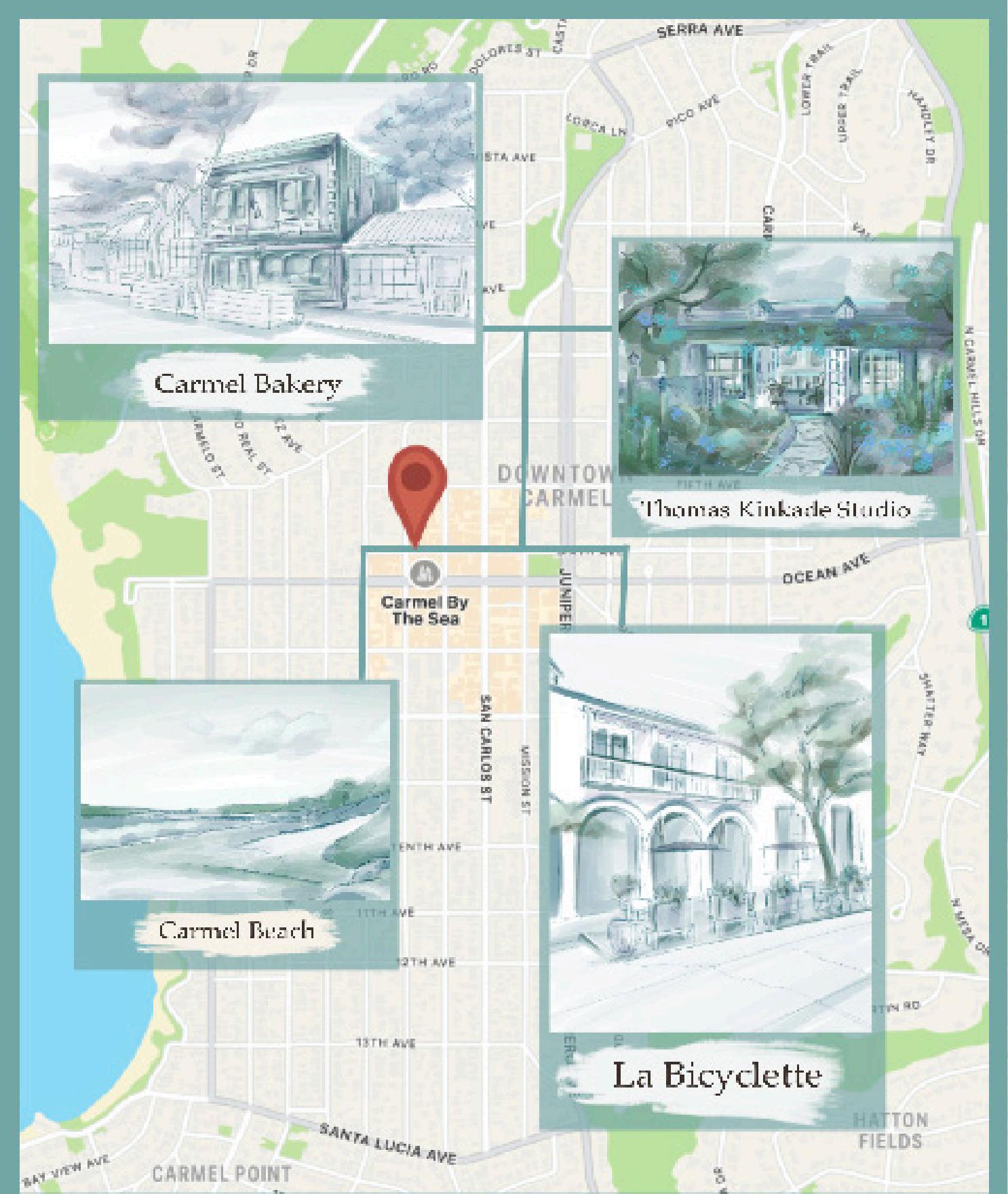
industry, it has come at the expense of simply repackaging the harmful ideals of fashion into a new form.

The message seems to be you can be curvy, as long as the fat is deposited in all the "right places." Cellulite and stretch marks must be hidden. Small breasts are a big no-no.

And just like that, we fall into yet another destructive cycle of unsustainability — whether it is in unsustainable beauty standards or unsustainable garments.

BBL fashion needs to go — and consumers need to take a stand against the blatant exploitation of women's bodies by the fashion and cosmetic surgery industries. ♦

48 HOURS in CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA



togatalks

What is your favorite getaway spot in CA if you had 48 hours?

"I would go to Lake Tahoe because I ski a lot. But otherwise, I also like to eat hot pot with my family in a cabin."



senior Sihan Ma

"I like the northern stretch of Highway One because there are a lot of Redwood trees there. It's really pretty and has nice vibes."



junior Jarrett Singh

"The local library is an easily accessible getaway spot that welcomes everyone and anyone, with or without a card."



junior Carine Chan

By Nikhil Mathihalli
& Neal Malhotra

Carmel-by-the-Sea, a quaint little town of just over 3,000 people, just south of Monterey with beautiful views and calming beaches, is the perfect place to spend your February ski week or Spring Break. You can find delectable food and a bustling downtown less than 90 minutes away — it's the perfect way to spend two days (or more) with your family.

Say you have 48 hours in Carmel — and don't know what to do? Here is a game plan that is sure to result in unforgettable memories:

Upon arrival, we recommend staying at a beach-side rental — looking at a few locations on Airbnb or VRBO can give a good idea of high-quality and relatively affordable locations.

9 a.m.: Carmel Bakery

Carmel is known for its pastry shops. Once you smell the sweet aroma of cinnamon just outside the door, you know you're at the Carmel Bakery — one of the town's best bakeries. This bakery has been serving sweet treats for over 30 years and is a must-visit for anyone with a sweet tooth.

It offers a wide variety of unique and delicious treats, from pistachio cannolis to cinnamon flat crisps. Made with high-quality ingredients, the pastries are truly unforgettable.

To complement the euphoric taste of its pastries, the bakery has seating inside, and we highly recommend you utilize it. You can enjoy your treats while relaxing in the charming streets of Carmel.

10 a.m.: Kinkade Studio

After a big breakfast and a brisk walk, visit the beautiful Thomas Kinkade Gallery for a visual feast. The late painter, also known as the "Painter of Light," has amazing pieces that are displayed all over the gallery.

Kinkade specialized in popular realistic, pastoral and idyllic subjects, such as quaint cottages nestled in lush landscapes and tranquil countryside scenes. His paintings are known for their warmth and inviting tones.

In addition to the paintings on display, the studio also sells specialized gifts, from sculptures to nightlights. For those who want to take a piece of Kinkade's art home with them, these gifts are the way to go.

12 p.m.: La Bicyclette

La Bicyclette is a charming, cozy French bistro located in the heart of Carmel. Their menu features a variety of classic French dishes, with an emphasis on fresh, locally-sourced ingredients, such as freshly caught fish.

One of the must-try dishes at La Bicyclette is the champignons provencale, an appetizer with five individual mushroom caps, drenched in a hazelnut-garlic butter sauce with a medley of small herbs and spices.

La Bicyclette is a great choice for a authentic French lunch. With its delicious food and friendly staff, it's sure to be a trip highlight.

5 p.m.: Visit to Monterey Bay Aquarium

Heading up north before dinner is a nice way to finish up the activities for the first day. The famous Monterey Bay Aquarium is a must-go if you are in the area — it's only a 15-minute drive from Carmel. The Aquarium features many unique marine animals, for example, multiple playful sea otters, flashy fishes, mesmerizing jellies, and swirling sardines. Many of the animals are residents of Monterey Bay.

One of the newest exhibits, the "Into

the Deep" exhibit, puts a spotlight on lesser-known marine life. It focuses on the animals living in the deep sea. In addition, there are multiple other exhibits like the Sea Otters exhibit, the Splash Zone and Penguins exhibit, the Giant Pacific Octopus exhibit, and many more.

Visitors could spend a whole day here, but if you just want to check out 2-3 exhibits, a couple of hours are fine before you head out for dinner.

8 p.m.: Dinner at Montrio Bistro

With just a short 10-minute car ride from Carmel, you can visit the just as charming town of Monterey. A highly frequented spot, it has some great cuisine including the Montrio Bistro.

The Montrio Bistro features New American cuisine at a high price point: It is certainly fine dining, but also a great way to conclude an eventful day. With a homely yet beautiful brick architecture, the place feels cozy and upscale at the same time.

If you hadn't had enough of the seafood

from lunch, this place offers even more sustainable seafood. Everything is green-certified: They want you to "feel good about what you eat!"

Everything there is delicious and for the truly adventurous, they also offer certified Angus and wagyu cuts. After all that food, you won't want to miss out on the homemade Creme Brulee or Bread Pudding.

Then you can take a stroll downtown afterward. It's a quick way to burn off some calories you consumed.

12 p.m.: Lunch at Pangea Grill

Pangea Grill is an exciting restaurant with its own flair. The restaurant's interesting name has its own unique story that is very in tune with the restaurant's philosophy — it wants to act as a place to bring people together with its wonderful cuisine. Its name alludes to the fact that we should all come together as one again.

The restaurant has comfortable seating options and beautiful paintings on the walls, with beautiful star lamps hanging down to illuminate the delicious food and nice ambiance.

They have a large variety of food options ranging from dumpling soup to a wonderful Eggplant Napoleon. There are also many specialty meats like beef or pork. But the seafood is where the place shines. Being right by the beach, the seafood is delivered daily, fresh from the Pacific Ocean.

2 p.m.: Visit to Carmel Mission

Carmel Mission, also known as the Royal Presidio Chapel, is a must-visit historic landmark: It was founded by Spanish friar Junipero Serra in 1770 and has served as a center of worship for over 250 years.

The mission is a prime example of Spanish colonial architecture and a currently active Catholic church. Visitors can take a guided tour of the mission, and learn about its rich history and its role in the early development of California. The tour includes the main sanctuary, the museum and the cemetery. The interior of the mission is adorned

with intricate tile work, frescoes and sculptures that are sure to impress.

The Royal Presidio Chapel is also home to many religious artworks and artifacts from the mission's early days. The most famous piece of the collection is the "San Carlos Borromeo," a painting of the patron saint of the mission attributed to the artist Esteban Munras.

Visiting the mission is a contemplative experience, surrounded by the natural beauty of the area. The mission also offers an elegant garden where you can sit and meditate.

5 p.m.: Go Horseback Riding

End your two-day vacation on a high note with a horseback ride that showcases the stunning views of the area. There are several companies that offer this activity, but for a truly memorable experience, we recommend Pebble Beach. They will lead you on a tour through the prestigious Pebble Beach golf club and along the stunning Pebble Beach.

As you make your way through this breathtaking landscape, you will be surrounded by a myriad of flowers that add to the already stunning scenery. To make the

most of this experience, we suggest scheduling your ride for around sunset.

Horseback riding is not just a breathtaking way to see the sights, but it also offers an unparalleled perspective of the local area. Explore the diverse landscapes of Carmel, from lush forests to sandy dunes, picturesque golf courses, and the stunning beach, all from the back of a horse or a pony. This intimate activity is the perfect way to create lasting memories and leave a lasting impression before your vacation comes to an end.

As you end your visit, you're sure to find that Carmel-by-the-Sea is a one-of-a-kind experience.

As frequent visitors of the cozy town, we highly recommend indulging in the historic

cultural parts of the town. The beautiful views alone are astonishing. The feeling of letting your dogs out in the sand is one of the best feelings in the world.

Trust us — it's worth it. ♦



Behind the scenes: How the BnB videos recognize long-time senior participants

by NikhilMathihalli

Each year, the Indian Cultural Awareness Club (ICAC) organizes Bombay in the Bay (BNB), a Bollywood-themed fundraising event where students around the school sing and dance to well-known Bollywood songs.

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

Of the many seniors who perform during the show, a handful of them also participate in the All-Girls Dance (AGD) or the All-Males Dance (AMD).

Those in AGD and AMD practice a 9-12 minute dance that they will perform at the end of the show. Right before their performance, a 5- to 10-minute video that introduces each member of the two dances is played to the audience as a tribute to the graduating seniors who performed in BnB for all four of their high school years (due to the pandemic, only three years are required this year).

According to senior ICAC club officer Avani Gupta, the video for the AGD members was recorded over the weekend of Feb. 4, after the majority of the girls learned the dance. Unlike in previous years, where the video centered around themes like "The Bachelorette" or "The Avengers," the female

ICAC officers decided to not have a theme for the video.

Each senior has a 10- to 15-second feature with a name attached to it that encapsulates a certain personality trait that relates to the general theme. In previous years, the videos ended with a sign-off on the "iconic McAfee step scene," a key tradition where the video closes with all the girls climbing up the steps of the McAfee Center and turning around to face the camera.

"I think that the videos are a great way to get the performers to show a little bit of their personality."

SENIOR Ishir Lakhani



Lakhani

However, Gupta and the other officers wanted to shift away from that scene. Instead of typically wearing all-black to close the scene, the officers decided on wearing lehengas, a traditional Indian dress. She and the other ICAC officers have arranged for senior Darren Guo, an avid filmmaker, to edit the video.

Additionally, Gupta said that the girls have decided to include some form of trib-

ute to "thank the parents" of those in AGD for their support over the last four years. In the AGD dance, each member's costume will include small pins representing their parents in some way.

The video aside, Gupta said that she is mainly focused on teaching the dance to members of AGD than editing the video.

"We have a total of 15 songs and the act is almost nine minutes long," Gupta said. "Since it's so long, we finished the choreography over the summer so that we would have more time to teach the dance."

Although AGD does not have a theme this year, the AMD dance and video will revolve around the TV show "Phineas and Ferb." The officers started making the AMD mix last July with hand-picked quotes from "Phineas and Ferb" episodes, senior officer Anand Agrawal said.

However, AMD also decided to implement major changes of their own — unlike before, the AMD dance is open to anyone who is willing to join and learn the 11-minute-long dance.

The video, however, is only open to those who have participated in BNB for the last three years — those who haven't will have a significantly smaller role in the video.

"We see no point in limiting the dance to a set of people in order to promote inclu-

siveness within the show," Agrawal said.

Another significant change Agrawal and the other male officers implemented is the use of props within the AGD dance — in addition to their video, they are incorporating a mini-skirt within the AMD dance and according to Agrawal, "[they] will end up presenting an incredible show."

While the process can be hard, especially for the organizers and dance choreographers with inconsistent attendance, tight deadlines, and logistical concerns, Agrawal said that the officers hope for a smooth show.

"We honestly just want to present a funny, entertaining show to bring the community together and showcase what BNB is really about," he said.

Senior Ishir Lakhani called this year's video theme "nostalgic," a perfect closing chapter to years of leading and choreographing BNB.

"I think that the videos are a great way to get the performers to show a little bit of their personality and help the audience connect with some of the people that they're going to see dancing," Lakhani said. "It's a good way for the performers to enjoy themselves and really get together before they head off to college and go their separate ways. I think it's a beautiful thing."

It's super cute and can be widely understood," Venkataratnam said.

Because New Works features students in a more casual and avant-garde way, the showcase allows for enjoyment for anyone who attends.

"[Writing a play] was the funniest, coolest thing ever, so the New Works Festival has always been the best memory for me," Gupta said. ♦

all grade levels, allowing underclassmen like freshman Nila Venkataratnam to highlight their work.

"We just started, but I'm really excited because it's my first time directing and, when I read the play, I was thrilled to see all that could be done with it because

it's super cute and can be widely understood," Venkataratnam said.

Because New Works features students in a more casual and avant-garde way, the showcase allows for enjoyment for anyone who attends.

"[Writing a play] was the funniest, coolest thing ever, so the New Works Festival has always been the best memory for me," Gupta said. ♦



Graphic by Ishir Lakhani

New Works Festival spotlights student talent

by AllisonTan

Senior Drama Club officers Ananya Gupta and Amrita Gupta remember standing proudly as they watched the play they had written, "Lost in Translation," come to life at last year's New Works Festival. Gupta said the show always brings her excitement, especially since it's the Drama Club's last show of the year where students display unique and different skills.

New Works is a festival of students' written, directed and acted plays that are held in the Thermond Drama Center every year; this year it is on March 17 and 18. Organized by Drama Club, the event is open to anyone interested in participating, regardless if they have



Gupta

experience or are in the drama class.

Students have already begun to prepare for New Works by writing their own pieces or preparing for auditions happening on Jan. 31 from 3 to 5:30 p.m. in the Thermond Drama Center.

Acts were selected by the Drama Club officers after submission earlier in the year, leaving a handful of finalists. There are usually 40 participants from a range of student writers, directors and actors as well as lighting and sound technicians. The festival features eight performances, some of which include original absurdist plays, realist plays and comedies.

According to Gupta, the informal nature encourages students to try new things and become "so much more comfortable fulfilling different needs in drama."

"It allows us to do shows that are chosen and written by us, while giving us this inde-

pendence to tell the stories that we think are important to be told and explore so many different genres," Gupta said.

New Works enables students to experiment in different fields within the scope of theater that they don't normally turn to.

Students interested in multiple jobs, such as senior Dragon Neal, can code work on the light board for their own directed shows.

According to Gupta, the informal nature encourages students to try new things and become "so much more comfortable fulfilling different needs in drama."

The New Works Festival is also open to

'It Ends With Us' popularizes glamorization of abuse

by NidhiMathihalli

After relenting to peer pressure, I finally downloaded Instagram last summer. This decision opened the floodgates and soon VSCO, TikTok and more resided on my phone. Of course, my short attention span prevented me from keeping the social media downloaded for more than two weeks. But even during these two weeks, one specific TikTok genre soon earned my wrath: BookTok, which focuses on book reviews on fan-favorite books.

And as an avid reader, I saw BookTok promoting excruciatingly bad writing styles. Worse yet, the platform seems to normalize the romanticization of domestic abusers, bullies and more.



Courtesy of SIMON AND SCHUSTER

Bloom, who struggles with her past involving domestic abuse. As she navigates Boston, she falls in love with neurosurgeon Ryle Kincaid. While their initial reactions are innocent and point to a beautiful ending, things take a dark turn when Kincaid begins to abuse Bloom. Although the book itself may not romanticize abusers per se, its social media presence has become increasingly alarming. While some readers understand that these topics should not be glamorized, many viewers advertise the book as a "dark romance." This increased viewership led to Hoover creating a coloring book on "It Ends With Us," further glorifying the trauma and romanticizing domestic abuse in the book. As Twitter user HastiReads says, "Colleen

Hoover creating a coloring book for a novel that's supposedly about [domestic violence] and [sexual assault] is just profiting off of the subjects."

Bowing to this pressure, Hoover eventually stopped the development of the coloring book, which had already been written but not yet published. However, the precedent of romanticizing abuse in fiction is

hardly novel or OK.

In 2019, singer and songwriter Madison Beer said in an Instagram Live Q&A session that her favorite book was Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel "Lolita." The book is written from the point of view of a middle-aged literature professor who in the book goes by Humbert Humbert, who is obsessed with Dolores Haze, a 12-year-old girl. Humbert becomes Haze's stepfather, following which he kidnaps and sexually abuses her. The book follows Humbert's journey from place to place, with the book critically acclaimed for its literature and style choices.

The platform has normalized the romanticization of domestic abusers, murders, bullies and more.

Beer went on to state how she "definitely romanticized" the novel. But while it led to lots of backlash, Beer herself did not face consequence for promoting the book, in-

stead growing her social media presence since then.

This idea of romanticizing abuse and pedophilic tropes is horrible, and with the veil that social media presents, it is having a stronger online presence than ever. This great presence exemplifies the even greater need for authors to stop writing such books and for social media users to stop romanticizing them. While "Lolita," can and should be considered as a standard for true literature, its praise should start and end at Nabokov's writing style. Romanticizing the book, as Beer did, is far from the book's purpose, both contributing to the cycle of the "domestic abuse" trope while devaluing Nabokov's true purpose.

Domestic abuse is not love — it should never be mistaken for love and should not be a source of profit for authors and celebrities with an online platform. And even more importantly, we as readers should not encourage this behavior.

So please — if you have an iota of respect for the victims of sexual assault or domestic abuse, don't read books like "It Ends With Us" and contribute to their financial success.

Romance is fine to glamorize; abuse is not. ♦

The book follows the main character Lily

I just cannot finish 'The Big Bang Theory'

by SarahZhuh

Editor's note: This article contains spoilers for Seasons 1 through 6 of "The Big Bang Theory."

I haven't finished watching all 12 seasons of "The Big Bang Theory." After stopping at the middle of Season 7, I can confidently say I will never make it to the end of the CBS series that debuted in 2007.

This contradicts my usual habit of finishing every show series I start, and I'm usually fine with anything from beheadings to Phil Dunphy's jokes.

When I first started watching the "Big Bang Theory" last semester, it was because one of my teachers referenced the show to illustrate concepts learned in chemistry.

At first, I enjoyed the show's flat, sarcastic and unintentional humor.

The plot circles around four original main characters.

Sheldon Cooper (Jim Parsons), Leonard Hofstadter (Johnny Galecki), Howard Wolowitz (Simon Helberg) and Rajesh Koothrappali (Kunal Nayyar) — who try to find love while feeding their passions for video games and science.

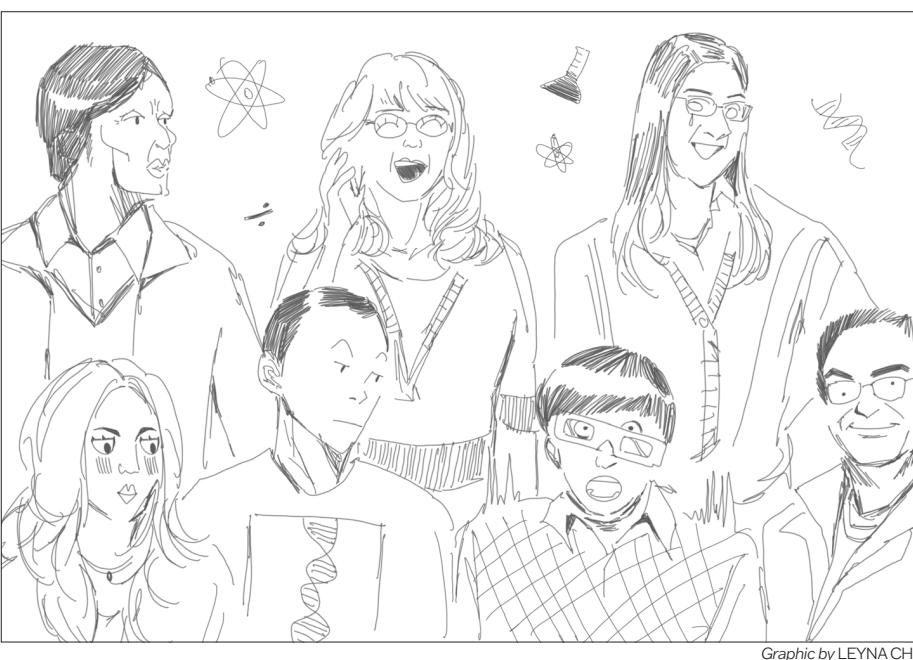
From the very beginning, Sheldon has Asperger's-like characteristics.

Jokes about Sheldon aren't the only discriminative commentary the show makes about disabilities.

Raj's selective autism around women is also the subject of many cruel jokes from other characters, while his anxiety about it is constantly written off.

Additionally, the show routinely mocks various conditions such as depression, speech impediments, attachment disorders and obesity, adding in laugh tracks every time a joke about one is made.

At first, Sheldon is able to laugh off others' biting comments about him, but even



Graphic by LEYNA CHAN

tually, he becomes evidently tired of explaining to his friends that they need to stop calling him crazy and making fun of things about him he cannot control.

Females are depicted as either not as deserving of their achievements or as dumb blondes who need to learn more about STEM and Star Trek.

Bernadette, Howard's girlfriend and later wife, is stereotyped as an over-controlling, overbearing brat who hinders her husband from reaching his potential.

Penny, stereotyped as a dumb-blondie, is shamed for having a long list of men whom she has slept with.

Howard is admired for bragging about being a creep and spending the night with dozens of prostitutes — showcasing an obvious double standard.

Furthermore, the "Big Bang Theory" also depicts male feminism in a negative light.

While producers glorify Sheldon, Howard and Leonard's toxic masculinity, Raj's self-expression is constantly responded to with disparaging comments about men "acting like girls."

At times, Raj, the only main character who is a person of color, seems only to serve as a way for others to make racist jokes.

Several characters indulge in making fun of Raj's "exotic" Indian accent, Indian culture, Indian religion and ways of life.

There is an episode where 10 minutes out of 20 is spent mocking Raj's pronunciation of words.

In addition, the majority of the jokes Howard, who is Jewish, makes are self-deprecating and centered around negative stereotypes of Jewish masculinity and family dynamics.

That's it. The show is mediocre at best.

Originally, the show's jokes about science were worth sticking around for, but even those become sparse in the later seasons.

In recent seasons the only character arc is that: either they don't change for a decade or their bad habits get worse.

The show's focus shifts more toward relationships and only occasionally throws in a scientific achievement for one of the guys. Overall, the writers' determination to incorporate offensive jokes into seemingly every second of the show made watching it unbearable for me, and a hard no for anyone who asks if I recommend it. ♦

Love is in the air — but not in dating shows

by BeverlyXu

Excited singles, a not so deserted island, a reward for coupling up and — the best part — drama, drama, DRAMA. This compelling plot was the gist of "Single's Inferno," my favorite reality dating show produced by Netflix.

But despite all the participants who went in with hopes of finding a long-lasting relationship, the show left almost all of them sorely disappointed. In the first season, all the participants feel ridiculously fake.

No conversation is truly honest, such as when Jin-taek tells So-yeon, "you're the only woman for me," but then turns around to flirt aggressively with Ji-yeon, another female contestant.

It feels like everyone is leading each other on and pursuing people who don't return their feelings — and part of that blame should be placed on the structure of the show itself. Both seasons of "Single's Inferno," I still enjoyed the drama, sparse genuine moments and comedic awkwardness of the participants trying to find their partner. When my favorite couple, Seo-eun and Yoong-jae, stayed up all night to have an honest conversation on their last day on the show, I could feel some semblance of a strong relationship growing.

But for the majority of the show, that was not the case, and same goes for other Netflix reality dating shows — you can really only enjoy them if you can find something other than solid relationships to root for. As the saying goes: Come for the hopeful singles, stay for the juicy inferno. ♦

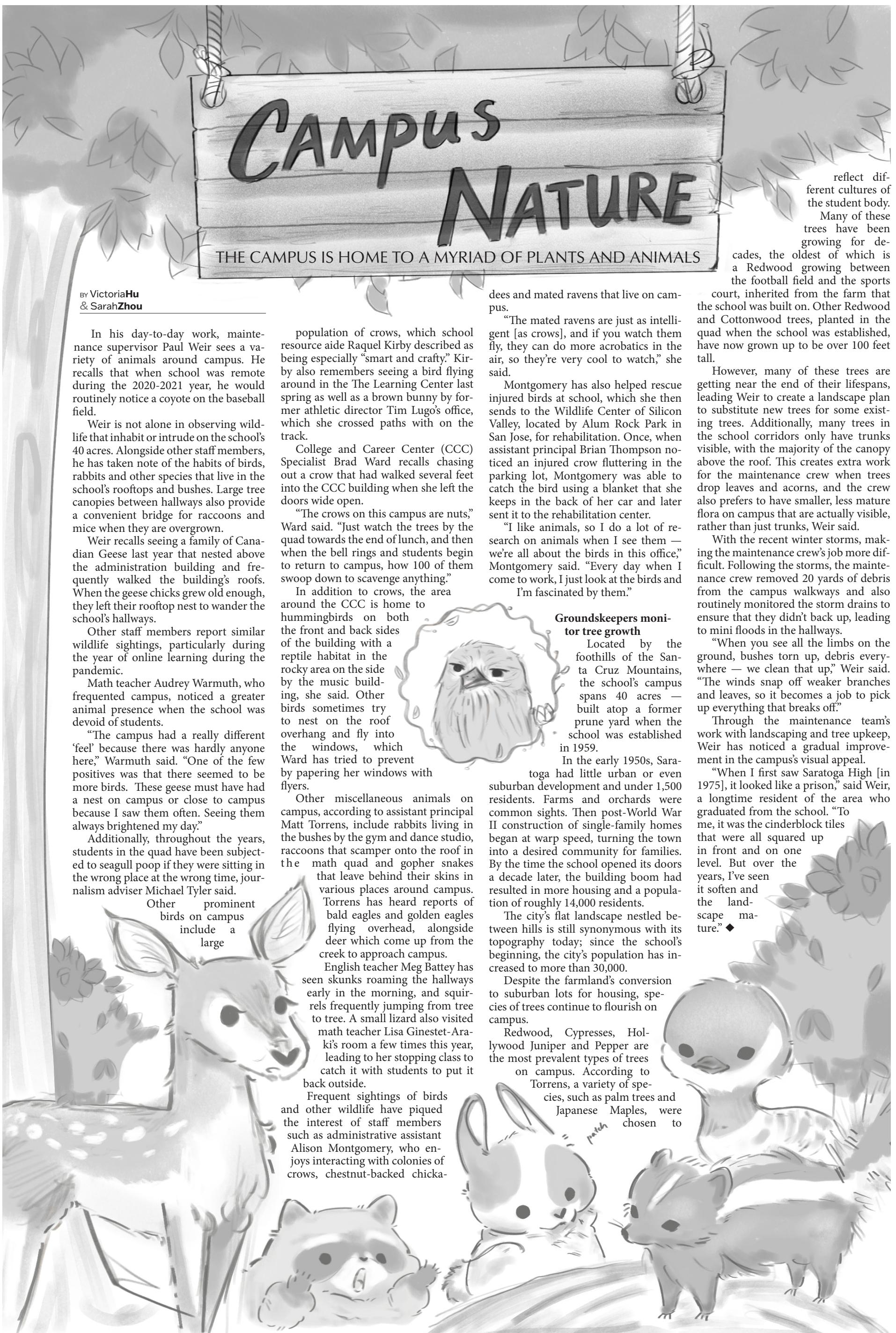
Andie literally tries anything to push Benjamin away, from talking to his mother behind his back, making him get a soda in the most crucial moment of a Knicks basketball game, to even getting him a dog who pees all over his apartment.

Hudson perfectly portrays

her character: a perky, endearing journalist, who doesn't back down from a challenge. All of her embarrassing and cringe-worthy actions, the ones that would make any sane person insane, never fail to make me laugh and make her an unforgettable actress, especially when she sings "You're So Vain" off-pitch and crazily in front of her colleagues.

When Benjamin comforts Kate at her parent's house, it marks the moment they really fell in love with each other and it is hands down one of the best heartfelt and genuine scenes in the movie.

"How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days" and "10 Things I Hate About You."



by Victoria Hu & Sarah Zhou

In his day-to-day work, maintenance supervisor Paul Weir sees a variety of animals around campus. He recalls that when school was remote during the 2020-2021 year, he would routinely notice a coyote on the baseball field.

Weir is not alone in observing wildlife that inhabit or intrude on the school's 40 acres. Alongside other staff members, he has taken note of the habits of birds, rabbits and other species that live in the school's rooftops and bushes. Large tree canopies between hallways also provide a convenient bridge for raccoons and mice when they are overgrown.

Weir recalls seeing a family of Canadian Geese last year that nested above the administration building and frequently walked the building's roofs. When the geese chicks grew old enough, they left their rooftop nest to wander the school's hallways.

Other staff members report similar wildlife sightings, particularly during the year of online learning during the pandemic.

Math teacher Audrey Warmuth, who frequented campus, noticed a greater animal presence when the school was devoid of students.

"The campus had a really different 'feel' because there was hardly anyone here," Warmuth said. "One of the few positives was that there seemed to be more birds. These geese must have had a nest on campus or close to campus because I saw them often. Seeing them always brightened my day."

Additionally, throughout the years, students in the quad have been subjected to seagull poop if they were sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time, journalism adviser Michael Tyler said.

Other prominent birds on campus include a large

population of crows, which school resource aide Raquel Kirby described as being especially "smart and crafty." Kirby also remembers seeing a bird flying around in the Learning Center last spring as well as a brown bunny by former athletic director Tim Lugo's office, which she crossed paths with on the track.

College and Career Center (CCC) Specialist Brad Ward recalls chasing out a crow that had walked several feet into the CCC building when she left the doors wide open.

"The crows on this campus are nuts," Ward said. "Just watch the trees by the quad towards the end of lunch, and then when the bell rings and students begin to return to campus, how 100 of them swoop down to scavenge anything."

In addition to crows, the area around the CCC is home to hummingbirds on both the front and back sides of the building with a reptile habitat in the music building, she said. Other birds sometimes try to nest on the roof overhang and fly into the windows, which Ward has tried to prevent by papering her windows with flyers.

Other miscellaneous animals on campus, according to assistant principal Matt Torrens, include rabbits living in the bushes by the gym and dance studio, raccoons that scamper onto the roof in the math quad and gopher snakes that leave behind their skins in various places around campus. Torrens has heard reports of bald eagles and golden eagles flying overhead, alongside deer which come up from the creek to approach campus.

English teacher Meg Battey has seen skunks roaming the hallways early in the morning, and squirrels frequently jumping from tree to tree. A small lizard also visited math teacher Lisa Ginestet-Araki's room a few times this year, leading to her stopping class to catch it with students to put it back outside.

Frequent sightings of birds and other wildlife have piqued the interest of staff members such as administrative assistant Alison Montgomery, who enjoys interacting with colonies of crows, chestnut-backed chick-

adees and mated ravens that live on campus.

"The mated ravens are just as intelligent [as crows], and if you watch them fly, they can do more acrobatics in the air, so they're very cool to watch," she said.

Montgomery has also helped rescue injured birds at school, which she then sends to the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley, located by Alum Rock Park in San Jose, for rehabilitation. Once, when assistant principal Brian Thompson noticed an injured crow fluttering in the parking lot, Montgomery was able to catch the bird using a blanket that she keeps in the back of her car and later sent it to the rehabilitation center.

"I like animals, so I do a lot of research on animals when I see them — we're all about the birds in this office," Montgomery said. "Every day when I come to work, I just look at the birds and I'm fascinated by them."

Groundkeepers monitor tree growth

Located by the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the school's campus spans 40 acres — built atop a former prune yard when the school was established in 1959.

In the early 1950s, Saratoga had little urban or even suburban development and under 1,500 residents. Farms and orchards were common sights. Then post-World War II construction of single-family homes began at warp speed, turning the town into a desired community for families. By the time the school opened its doors a decade later, the building boom had resulted in more housing and a population of roughly 14,000 residents.

The city's flat landscape nestled between hills is still synonymous with its topography today; since the school's beginning, the city's population has increased to more than 30,000.

Despite the farmland's conversion to suburban lots for housing, species of trees continue to flourish on campus.

Redwood, Cypress, Holmwood Juniper and Pepper are the most prevalent types of trees on campus. According to Torrens, a variety of species, such as palm trees and Japanese Maples, were chosen to

reflect different cultures of the student body. Many of these trees have been growing for decades, the oldest of which is a Redwood growing between the football field and the sports

court, inherited from the farm that the school was built on. Other Redwood and Cottonwood trees, planted in the quad when the school was established, have now grown up to be over 100 feet tall.

However, many of these trees are getting near the end of their lifespans, leading Weir to create a landscape plan to substitute new trees for some existing trees. Additionally, many trees in the school corridors only have trunks visible, with the majority of the canopy above the roof. This creates extra work for the maintenance crew when trees drop leaves and acorns, and the crew also prefers to have smaller, less mature flora on campus that are actually visible, rather than just trunks, Weir said.

With the recent winter storms, making the maintenance crew's job more difficult. Following the storms, the maintenance crew removed 20 yards of debris from the campus walkways and also routinely monitored the storm drains to ensure that they didn't back up, leading to mini floods in the hallways.

"When you see all the limbs on the ground, bushes torn up, debris everywhere — we clean that up," Weir said. "The winds snap off weaker branches and leaves, so it becomes a job to pick up everything that breaks off."

Through the maintenance team's work with landscaping and tree upkeep, Weir has noticed a gradual improvement in the campus's visual appeal.

"When I first saw Saratoga High [in 1975], it looked like a prison," said Weir, a longtime resident of the area who graduated from the school. "To me, it was the cinderblock tiles that were all squared up in front and on one level. But over the years, I've seen it soften and the landscape mature."

◆

by Sarah Zhou

How students conquer tough classes

lowest average GPA of all AP courses — AP Environmental Science following suit — though the course with the lowest average varies immensely year to year, and in general, STEM AP courses held a lower average GPA than AP courses in the humanities.

On average, juniors take 6.5 classes while seniors enroll in 6, registrar Robert Wise said. He said the average junior takes 3.5 AP courses, with the average GPA and the number of As being "right on par" with what the math department would expect to see for the course.

"I am very happy with the performance of the [Calculus] AB students this year," Ginestet-Araki said. "I know that the 'norm' at Saratoga High is that most students expect a majority of the class to receive A's, but I don't think that's a realistic expectation for an AP level math class. That's why I always try to focus on how much students are learning and improving."

Ginestet-Araki found that Calculus AB being the first math AP or Honors course for many students makes transitioning from regular Pre-Calculus difficult.

Additionally, because calculus requires an accumulation of skills and concepts learned in foundational math courses since middle school — especially requiring a strong algebra foundation — if a student lacks knowledge about key concepts, they will likely struggle with certain aspects of calculus such as working with trigonometric identities and difficult, heavily Algebra-based derivation and integration questions.

Junior Nancy Lei has found that the grade earned in a course is not necessarily reflective of the course's difficulty, but rather a myriad of factors, such as how well individual students are able to adjust to the jump in workload between CP, Honors and AP courses, a student's natural affinity for a subject and how much time and effort they are able to put into a class.

In terms of difficulty, Lei, who is also taking two AP science classes — AP Physics 1/2 and AP Chemistry — said that Calculus AB is one of the "mid-tier" classes she is taking. Even though the class does move at a slower pace than other AP classes she is enrolled in, the concepts introduced in the course are "completely new" and more challenging from what has been taught in her previous math classes.

"It's like every other math class I've ever taken was in 2D, but now Calculus is 3D — it's a whole different side of math," Lei said. "But [Ginestet-Araki] explains everything really well, so if the concepts are ever a mystery to you, don't hesitate to ask for help."

Though Lei believes the workload for Calc AB is similar to that of Pre-Calculus Honors, the looming threat of the AP test means she spends around half an hour more per day studying and ensuring she fully understands all of the material.

Lei noted that paying active attention during class for AP Calculus AB is crucial to succeeding, saying that, because of how cumulative the content in Calculus is, it's extremely difficult for students to catch up once they fall behind.

AP Physics 1 and 2

In a survey conducted by the Falcon, 69 of 144 student voters said AP Physics 1 and 2 was the most challenging course that they had taken during their time at the school. The course, which combines two year-long AP courses into one year, is often difficult both because physics is a heavily conceptual subject, and because the class runs at an extremely fast pace, said AP Physics 1 and 2 and AP Physics C teacher Matthew Welander.

"I'm not surprised students find the course challenging," Welander said. "The only surprise for me is that there are students who didn't expect AP Physics 1 and 2 to be challenging. Any time I meet someone and tell them I teach physics, I always get a weird look or a gasp. I think a lot of adults would rank physics as the hardest subject in high school."

Additionally, many students, particularly juniors, who enroll don't have a prior background in physics; instead, they have chosen to skip CP Physics to have the opportunity to take AP Physics C senior year. This is unlike other AP science courses, such as AP Chemistry and AP Biology, where students almost always have prior knowledge due to the school's requirement to take one year of Biology and one year of either CP Chemistry or Chemistry Honors.

For junior Bryan Li, who taught himself AP Physics C from a textbook and enrolled in Tang Academy Physics, a popular preparatory school among Bay Area students to prepare for physics competitions such as F=ma and USAPhO, being familiar with physics concepts before enrolling in AP Physics 1 and 2 has greatly helped him to succeed in the class.

"It doesn't really feel time-consuming to study, because I think physics is fun," Li said. "But the class really does require students to spend some time self-studying, to go in during tutorial to ask questions and to do lots of practice problems."

He also noted the importance of students needing to be able to learn quickly to keep up with the pace of the class.

"The topics [in physics] are not exceptionally hard because Welander is a great teacher and explains them well," Li said. "However, Saratoga teaches each AP class in one semester, requiring him to go super fast through the material, so he only gives one or two example problems for each topic."

Senior Miranda Yee, who dropped AP Physics 1 and 2 after the first semester, had a different experience with the course. Initially, Yee had wanted to enroll in CP Physics, but due to schedule conflicts, could only take AP Physics 1 and 2. After the first six weeks, Yee — who went into the class with no prior knowledge — considered dropping the course but decided to stay for the first semester in order to gain a basic understanding of the subject.

However, Yee chose to drop the course second semester both because of time constraints and because she was too busy with other senior projects such as the Media Art Program Capstone proj-

ect, helping to plan the MAP's SMASH event and working on her Engineering Final.

Yee found that the pace of the class was the aspect that she struggled with the most, recalling that the class would "do a complete 180" every few weeks and switch to a completely new topic with a whole new set of formulas to know.

"Everything moves so fast that I just felt like I was not learning the material thoroughly — the concepts are interesting, but

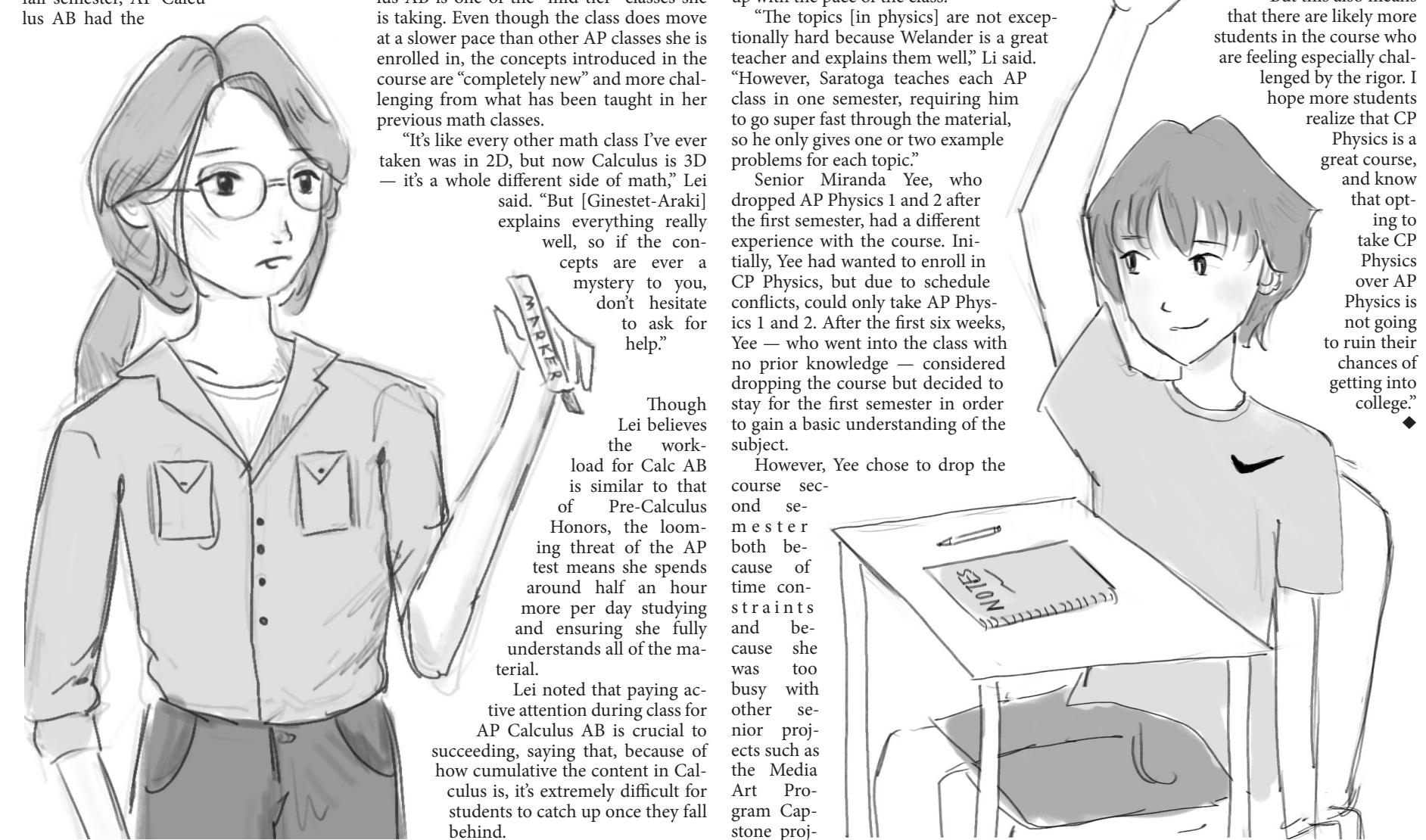
I just didn't like the style of the class because of the pace," Yee said. "I would say physics was one of the most frustrating classes that I've taken at Saratoga High, but I think the difficulty depends on the person and how much time they are willing to commit."

For his part, Welander highlighted the importance of fully understanding every concept.

"There are a lot of concepts to learn, and the test questions are not going to match problems students have already seen," he said. "It is expected that students understand the concepts well enough that they can apply their knowledge to new situations. I hope students learn how to better monitor their own understanding, and take immediate action if they find themselves not understanding a certain topic."

Welander, who has taught AP Physics for 16 years — 10 years at SHS, and the first 6 years of his career at a high school in San Diego — also noticed a difference in enrollment in the class over the past few years. During the 2018 school year, there were three sections of AP Physics 1 and 2 (around 95 students) while this year, there are five sections of the course (around 145 students) despite a significant decrease in the school's student body enrollment.

"On one hand, it may be a good that more students are challenging themselves," Welander said. "But this also means that there are likely more students in the course who are feeling especially challenged by the rigor. I hope more students realize that CP Physics is a great course, and know that opting to take CP Physics over AP Physics is not going to ruin their chances of getting into college."



All graphics by ANNIE LIU



POST-COVID INCREASE IN CRIME IN SARATOGA LEADS TO IMPLEMENTATION OF CAMERA SYSTEM ACROSS THE CITY

BY Saachi Jain

On the night of Nov. 8, 2022, two burglars kicked down the front door of Saratoga resident Paul Corsbie's house when he was out of town. The burglars quickly ransacked his bedroom and hauled away a 300-pound safe — effectively evading security precautions he had installed such as alarms and cameras.

Though the police responded quickly, the suspects were gone by the time they arrived and were never caught.

This break-in was part of a post-pandemic increase in residential burglaries in the area — one that many residents say needs to be curtailed through the use of security cameras that capture license plates numbers and other identifying information about potential suspects.

During the pandemic, residents stayed home for prolonged periods, drastically reducing the number of home burglaries.

However, following looser pandemic restrictions and more residents returning to their workplaces in the past year, crime rates in Saratoga have risen again. Residential burglaries continue to be the most common form of crime in the area, mainly occurring between 5 p.m. and midnight on Fridays and Saturdays — periods when many people aren't typically home. Crime also increases during the summer months, when residents tend to go on vacation.

Neighborhood Watch: preventing crime

After crime rates reached an all-time high in 2016, the Sheriff's Department collaborated with the City Council to raise awareness regarding Neighborhood Watch programs, nearly 60 of which have been established around the city. Many Neighborhood Watch programs emphasize a tightly knit community of neighbors who look out for each other and work with local law enforcement to report suspicious activity. Though they rarely include the implementation of cameras or security measures across a neighborhood, signs posted on roads often deter potential criminals from acting in an area.

In addition to these watch programs, many homes in Saratoga are protected by security systems from companies like Ring and Google that equip houses with basic alarms, motion detectors and glass-break sensors.

But in cases like Corsbie's, those measures aren't always enough.

"My home is equipped with home alarms and multiple cameras, and we were all working when this burglary took place," Corsbie said. "The system was unable to deter the thieves or catch them afterward."

While Corsbie did not receive much benefit from these safety precautions, many Sheriff's deputies have seen their effective use. Ricardo Urena, Commander Captain of the West Valley Patrol, said, "A lot of folks who have an alarm system also have a video camera system around the exterior of their home. These cameras have motion-activated lights, and if someone is coming to your front door, we've seen crooks run away because they think someone is inside."

Many burglars look for houses that appear vacant. Hence, some homeowners utilize timers when they are out of town for prolonged periods to make their homes appear occupied.

These timers cycle lights on and off in various portions of the house throughout the day, and the television automatically switches on for an hour or two in the evening. Urena has seen cases in which the opposite occurs as well.

"Homes have been breached because they appeared unoccupied, but there were in fact people inside who then confronted the burglar," he said.

"We cannot continue to let criminals invade our safe places, especially our homes."

RESIDENT Paul Corsbie



Following a spike in burglaries around Highway 9 in the Quito neighborhood in 2022, the Sheriff's department increased the number of patrol cars in the area and caught two suspects using new license plate detection technology, cameras that instantly capture and process pictures of license plates. Though there is no commission in the City Council concerning home safety, the council has collaborated with both the Sheriff's department and Neighborhood Watch Programs to promote safety precautions in neighborhoods.

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR)
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Privacy concerns from residents
The city has also implemented other systems to ensure the privacy of citizens. Though maintenance for the cameras is sub-contracted to the Flock company, which complies with the FBI's Criminal Justice Services, only select deputies can access recorded content.

Furthermore, all data is stored in a Department of Defense-approved cloud system and wiped after 30 days unless it is being used in an investigation. That means a car that passed by a camera two months prior would be forgotten.

Data is also prohibited from being downloaded, printed or transferred unless it has been flagged as in use during an active investigation, a marking which also requires approval by deputies within the Sheriff's De-

"A lot of crimes are committed with the assistance of a vehicle," council member Mary-Lynne Bernald said.

"License plates give the sheriff's office actionable and objective leads that they can act on."

The city council proposed a \$20,000 one-year pilot program in which seven ALPR rental cameras from automation company Flock Safety would be installed in streets around the city.

The program was enacted last February and completed in August. Following the one-year plan, the City Council plans to assess the cameras next fall or winter. To capture high-traffic roads, the ALPRs were placed at busy intersections that lead into the city like Saratoga Avenue, Highway 85, Fruitvale Avenue and Highway 9.

While citizens in other counties such as Fairfield and Sacramento have criticized the accuracy of their ALPR data, proponents say the ALPR system has often succeeded in capturing suspects.

For example, a suspect in Fairfield who impersonated a police officer and a perpetrator of a hit-and-run involving a bike were both caught using ALPR cameras.

Urena described several such incidents in Saratoga as well. A few months ago, a lady in Southern California suffering from the early stages of dementia boarded a flight from Los Angeles to Cupertino.

Together with the woman's daughter, the department found her driving in Saratoga with her license plate number, he said. Sim-

ilar success stories have led Urena to conclude that the program's benefits outweigh any of its downsides.

"Occasionally, lighting conditions or the angle of a photo have produced inaccurate results compared to when we look at the license plate ourselves," Urena said.

"However, there have also been countless incidents where a dire situation was resolved with the cameras, so the main hurdle of the system — efficacy — has already been overcome."

Criminals Mindset
According to a study by the University of North Carolina, 83% of burglars checked for an alarm system before breaking in.

In consideration of these worries, Flock Safety ensures that residents' systems aren't used for purposes such as immigrant identification, traffic enforcement and anything besides an active investigation. Even so, many residents have voiced concerns regarding personal safety and privacy.

"There are going to be concerns about privacy," Urena said.

"All the ALPR does, though, is take a picture of the license plate, without any drivers or passengers visible."

No information is provided about the photos unless we explicitly use them in an investigation, and in those cases, all access and its purpose are recorded."

Though the program has only been active for five months, it has already proved helpful in capturing suspects and decreasing residential crime rates.

For example, a car that was driving through Saratoga at 3 a.m. one day in the fall matched the description of a wanted suspect, and the driver was arrested for vehicle theft and drug-related charges, according to Urena.

For residents like Corsbie who have experienced burglaries, programs like the ALPR appear to be a tool worth using.

"Burglaries in Saratoga are on the rise, and we cannot continue to let criminals invade our safe places, especially our homes," Corsbie said.

"This program will be beneficial to everyone living in Saratoga, and I have no issues with the use of this technology." ♦

partment.

As dictated by

the ALPR policy,

the cameras will also be used to locate stolen and wanted vehicles.

Additionally, they can locate individuals with arrest warrants, aid in rescue efforts such as AMBER and Silver Alerts or locate victims and witnesses of a law enforcement investigation.

Though the technology allows for a quicker response to many developing crimes, the ALPR system does not negate such protocols in place following the identification of a suspect regardless of search or arrest warrants.

Another concern for many residents is the use of residential cameras with the city-approved ALPR system. The program allows for data to be gathered from a different model of a Flock camera and processed in the same manner as the ALPR.

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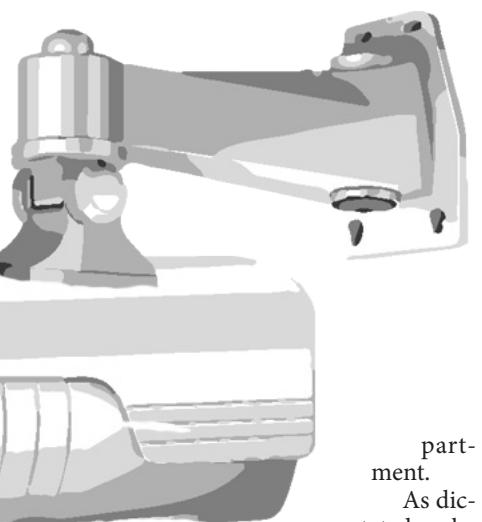
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All graphics by SARAH THOMAS

Under Kagoshima's leadership, Hakone has been working on several projects and making plans for future refurbishments.

With funding from Santa Clara County, Hakone is currently repairing and restoring the upper garden pathways that have yet to be renovated in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). But due to the large-scale garden construction, the paths will be fixed under these guidelines, allowing the garden to be accessible to a wider range of visitors. According to Tsunematsu Shintani.

After its construction, Hakone was used as Isabel and her husband Oliver Stine's vacation home, where Isabel would go on to host cultural events, operas and even her wedding to Francis W. Leis after her husband's passing. In 1966, after being passed through many hands, Hakone opened to the public as an official Saratoga city park.

Under the Master Plan — so far, \$1.1 million out of a necessary \$3 million has been raised to provide greater protection for the koi from predators and heat. Already, a new pump house has been installed to increase oxygen levels in the pond and make all areas hospitable for the fish, while running a remarkable \$300,000 below budget.

"The pond is an original feature of the gardens and is over 100 years old. It now leaks water due to severe cracks in the lining," the Hakone Foundation stated in an FAQ about the pond renovations. "We are losing over 15,000 gallons of water on a weekly basis. Even if we weren't in a drought situation, this is a terrible waste."

While the educated estimate for the first phase of renovations was about \$4 million, Hakone was able to plan adequate renovations within a \$3 million budget. The money will also be directed at preventing loss of a considerable amount of water, recontouring the surrounding hillside and renovating the pathways that run alongside the ponds to meet ADA requirements. The reconstruction is set to begin in fall of 2024, and finish by the summer of 2025.

"The gardens provide visitors the opportunity to experience a little bit of Japan, without having to actually go to Japan," Kagoshima said.

Once the renovations in progress are completed, the garden is working toward implementing the Hakone Master Plan. In 2022, the garden attracted 62,000 visitors, and now aims to renovate the once-private, one-family garden to be able to accommodate the large number of visitors.

The plan is split into four phases:

- Renovating and restoring the Koi fish ponds and the surrounding area.

- Renovating existing buildings and structures.

- Constructing a new visitor entrance and improving customer services.

- Renovating the Cultural Exchange Center

In total, the project is estimated to cost \$27.3 million, although the price tag will likely be lower: Since Saratoga is a public entity, it makes more sense to set a high estimate to account for unforeseen circumstances.

Phase One, the Koi fish ponds, is third in line for renovations after other renovations not part of

the Hakone Master Plan.

"Offering events such as the Lunar New Year Festival is an opportunity to present different types of Asian cultural activities," Kagoshima said.

Junior Minh Do, an inter-district board member of LEO, organized a few activities for the New Year Festival at Hakone: picking up jelly

beans with chopsticks and giving away hóng bāo (Chinese red envelopes typically holding cash) filled with chocolate coins and candy. Later on, the school's LEO club also plans to teach an art class at Hakone focusing on Japanese arts and crafts.

Since he was a child, Do recalls enjoying the Koi fish ponds, walking through the beautiful bamboo forest, attending Hakone's springtime Cherry Blossom Festival and savoring the Chinese New Year dim sum.

"Hakone is really a staple; it's like a landmark of Saratoga," Do said. "And we find it's really important to spread more awareness, not only about Japanese culture, but about Asian culture as well with this Lunar New Year festival."

These continued traditions are juxtaposed with recent renovations, representing Hakone's move towards modernization while maintaining traditional aesthetics and values. While preserving its natural beauty and its role as a much-needed respite from today's fast-moving society, Hakone and its staff are working to ensure that visitors can discover Hakone in all its magnificence and historical value.

"Hakone Estate and Gardens is the crown jewel of Saratoga's parks. It is a historical asset that has been a part of the city for over 100 years," Kagoshima said. "The Foundation's goal is to ensure the gardens are here for at least another 100 years not only for the residents of Saratoga, but also visitors from around the world to enjoy."



AMID RENOVATIONS, THE LOCAL LANDMARK REMAINS IMPORTANT IN PRESERVING JAPANESE CULTURE AND NATURE

BY Beverly Xu

Hakone Gardens, located on Big Basin Way off of Highway 9, was founded by Isabel Stine, a San Francisco philanthropist who was inspired to build Hakone after being captivated by the Japanese Pavilion at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. Hakone was originally landscaped by master gardener Naoharu Aihara, and built by architect Tsunematsu Shintani.

After its construction, Hakone was used as Isabel and her husband Oliver Stine's vacation home, where Isabel would go on to host cultural events, operas and even her wedding to Francis W. Leis after her husband's passing. In 1966, after being passed through many hands, Hakone opened to the public as an official Saratoga city park.

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"The gardens provide visitors the opportunity to experience a little bit of Japan, without having to actually go to Japan," Kagoshima said

BRINGING THE SPRING SCOOP

Graphic by HOWARD SHU

SOFTBALL LOOKS TO RETURN TO CCS

Head Coach: Mike Davey
Last year's record: 14-7
Recap: The team finished third in the El Camino league and moved onto CCS, where they lost in the first round.
Key Matchups: Cupertino and Gunn
Star Players: Seniors first baseman Lily Guzman and catcher Irene Fraizer, juniors third baseman Vivienne Brooks and pitcher Saira Ramakrishnan
Key losses to graduation: Pitcher Morgan Curtis, centerfielder Erin Wu and right fielder Aya Raymuree
League: El Camino
Prognosis:

Following a CCS qualification last year, the softball team features many returning players and a similar roster, especially after seeing lower freshmen participation during tryouts on Jan. 30.

With some of their athletes occupied with winter sports, the team currently only has 17 available players attending practices. Additionally, because head coach Mike Davey also coaches boys' basketball, softball practices are currently run by assistant coach Barry Mills.

Senior co-captain Lily Guzman said that there currently aren't enough play-

ers to fill both a varsity and JV team, and they are trying to get at least 22 players for that purpose: 11 for each team.

Despite a lack of newcomers, Guzman is still confident in the team's performance, especially due to many of the returning, experienced players.

Currently, the team practices mainly consist of drills and conditioning. To get back into the sport, the athletes will be practicing fundamentals such as hitting, base running and fielding. The team will play their first game on March 7 against Leigh.

After making it to CCS last year, senior co-captain Irene Fraizer said one of their goals is to repeat that this year, though she "has no doubt in [her] mind that they will." Throughout the season, she aims to build a strong team bond and sisterhood environment for the newer and returning players.

"It's high school and the main goal I want for these girls is to have fun and fall in love with the game like I did," she said. "If the girls enjoy the game, they will naturally want to get better." ♦

— Jonathan Si



Junior Caitlin Weber prepares to bat during a scrimmage in a team practice on Feb. 9.

SWIM TEAM BOASTS TALENTED ROSTER DESPITE LOWER PARTICIPATION

Head Coaches: Christian Bonner, Mike Allegretti and Kristen Thomson
Last year's record: 0-7
Recap: The team finished sixth in the De Anza league and sent 14 swimmers to CCS, with one entering the CCS finals.
Key Matchups: Los Gatos, Monta Vista and Los Altos
Star Athletes: Seniors Zeynep Tokuz, Mark Liu and Channie Hong and freshman Kelsey Zhang
Key losses to graduation: Ethan Chan, Brooke Huynh, Byron Jin, Sherry Lin, James Paine, Ryan Moore, Mahi Ravi and Alex Yang

League: De Anza
Prognosis:

The swim team began practices on Jan. 31 with 50 swimmers on the roster. They are currently focusing on sharpening techniques such as underwater kicks pushing off the wall.

After losing 10 seniors to graduation, the team faces lower numbers and is mainly composed of freshman and senior newcomers — many juniors and sophomores have also opted out this year, according to senior breaststroke Zeynep Tokuz.

"The turnout is definitely interesting," Tokuz said. "We have fewer members this

year on the girls' team than we've had in a while."

While fewer Falcons may be in the pool overall this year, many newcomers have significant experience and should be competitive.

"It's going to be the same as last year for the guys' team," senior freestyler Mark Liu said. "We have a new talent coming, so I'm not particularly worried about [numbers]."

The first non-league meet happened on Feb. 14 against Prospect, and the team's first official meet will be March

3 against Gunn. Their main hopes are to continue working toward maximum CCS qualifications and for each swimmer to meet his or her personal goals throughout the season.

"Our goal is for a good amount of people to go to CCS this year because I think we have a strong team," Tokuz said. "I definitely also want to create some more team bonding events and get to know our teammates better." ♦

— Stephanie Sun



Tokuz

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL REVIVES HOPE FOR SUCCESS IN LOWER LEAGUE WITH HEALTHY PLAYERS

Head Coach: Lori Gragnola
Last year's record: 0-14
Recap: Suffering injuries and missing key players like Class of '22 alumnus Andy Tran as well as current juniors Eric Norris and Kali Duvvuri, the 2022 team ended winless.
Key Matchups: Los Gatos and Los Altos
Star Players: Senior libero Nathan Lim, junior setter Kali Duvvuri and junior opposite hitter Eric Norris
Key losses to graduation: Outside hitter Andy Tran
League: El Camino
Prognosis:

Following a winless season in 2022, the Falcons look forward to a better 2023 sea-

son with all their players healthy.

Junior setter Kali Duvvuri, the team's primary star player, missed the majority of last season and believes the team will have better outcomes with his play this year.

"This year we dropped down to the lower El Camino league, so we will have an easier time than last year, especially now that we have better players," Duvvuri said.

Duvvuri said that strong freshman coming in will provide a boost for the team, allowing head coach Lori Gragnola to formulate more game plans and strategies which have players rely on each other's strengths. Specifically, he believes freshman Brennan Pak and Jeremy Si will be major contributors.

Players like junior setter Sam Kau said that, despite the league drop, the team's mentality needs to improve.

"We need to go into games with more confidence and trust in ourselves."

JUNIOR Sam Kau

"We need to go into games with more confidence and trust in ourselves and our teammates," he said. "We need to work to-

gether and encourage each other to be the best versions of ourselves so that we are stronger collectively."

Kau said that a majority of the losses last season were self-inflicted — opposing teams were not necessarily better, but their lack of chemistry left them struggling to compete. Regardless, Kau is hopeful that these issues will be fixed come the end of the season.

"I'm very excited for the new season to start," Kau said. "I can't wait to see the progress that players have made since last season, as well as the new blood we're going to get." ♦

— Andy Zhu

BASEBALL SET FOR SUCCESS WITH NEW FIELD

Head Coach: Vincent Augustine
Last year's record: 9-6
Recap: With growing team chemistry, the Falcons made it to the second round of CCS before losing 5-2 to Gunn.

Key Matchups: Gunn, Fremont, Los Gatos and Lynbrook

Star Players: Seniors shortstop and pitcher Lucas Dennis, outfielder and catcher Max Timmons; junior pitcher Shane Timmons

Key losses to graduation: Anthony Sherman, Derek Hsu and Sam Teymour

League: El Camino
Prognosis:

Silver Creek, to be lively with a main focus on improving the underclassmen's game. He said the team especially strives to improve its infield defense.

"We are also really trying to encourage consistency during training within the team, especially since we are all to stay fit and exercise regularly in preparation for the season that is underway," Dennis said.

"We should make it to CCS and have a productive season."

SENIOR Lucas Dennis

Due to delays in the renovations on the batting cage and baseball fields, the baseball team is temporarily hitting and practicing at night time on the Los Gatos High field. However, the team hopes to start the season strong, playing on a new field with turf, a flat surface and no divots after the renovation.

Senior shortstop and pitcher Lucas Dennis said the old field had a few problems and safety issues with many rocks in the dirt and an "excessive amount of divots in the grass."

The new field will be more reliable for

practices, as the previous field had dran-

ges issues that barred the team from

practicing on rainy days.

According to Dennis, turf allows the ball to move faster and bounce higher — although he was initially concerned that this would affect the team's play, many players on the team already have experience playing on turf fields. He said that "there won't be much adjusting to do."

Hoping to have the Falcons reach CCS once again, Dennis expects practices, once the team officially begins their season with their Feb. 23 game against

— Lena Aribi

TRACK BEGINS WITH LIGHTER TRAINING SCHEDULE

Head Coach: Archie Ljepava and Ian Tipperets

Last year's record: 2-4 (varsity boys), 4-2 (varsity girls)

Recap: Even though the team sometimes struggled to stay competitive and didn't fill every slot in dual meets, almost every athlete was able to set a personal record in their events.

Key Matchups: Wilcox, Mountain View

Star Players: Seniors Yuvraj Singh (100m and 200m), Mike Tippets (Discus and Shot Put), Isha Goswami (200m and 400m) and Jason Cheng (200m and 400m)

Key losses to graduation: Harrison Dance (1600m and 3200m) and Giulio Morini Bianzino (High Jump and Long Jump)

League: El Camino

Prognosis:

The track coaches kicked off their season with lighter training this year, placing a larger emphasis on avoiding peaking too early. Archie Ljepava and Ian Tipperets want the athletes to hit their season's best time in late April in the El Camino

League finals, with the goal of moving on to SCVAL finals and CCS.

The team starts each practice with a two-lap warmup before splitting up into three groups: distance runners, sprinters and throwers.

Currently, the distance runners' training regime consists of aerobic (easy pace) runs every day along with strength training twice a week that targets the hips, core, hamstrings and quadriceps.

The sprinters are similarly doing strength training exercises that target the same body parts three times a week, along with daily short interval repeat sessions.

Meanwhile, the throwers have been exercising upper body and focusing on throwing technique to establish good habits. During practices, each athlete attempts to focus on a weakness that is holding them back from setting better marks.

"During training sessions, I focus on my starts as that's my biggest weakness," senior sprinter Yuvraj Singh said. "My top speed is good and during the races, I am



FALCON // ATREY DESAI

Sprinters perform warm-up drills such as high knees to kick off their practice on Feb. 3.

making the experience more enjoyable for each other.

"Doing track has helped me make many friends, including kids who are much older and younger than me," senior thrower Mike Tippets said. "I feel like in track everyone is working on their own goal but they all want you to do well." ♦

— George Hu

BADMINTON RELOADS WITH NEW COACH AFTER LARGE LOSSES TO GRADUATION

Head Coach: Thomas Ching

Last year's record: 1-9

Recap: The Falcons finished second in CCS led by senior star player Adrian Mar, who also placed first in boys' singles individually.

Key Matchups: Palo Alto and Wilcox

Star Players: Seniors Jason Liu, Evan Oaklander and Tony Guo; junior Sannidhi Boppana; and sophomore Samanvi Boppana

Key losses to graduation: Adrian Mar and Enoch Jung

League: El Camino

Prognosis:

After head coach John Li didn't return the team, the Falcons are adjusting to new

coach Thomas Ching, who also coached girls' volleyball earlier this year.

As Ching is unfamiliar with the state of the team, he is currently assessing players as they compete in drills and practice matches that they would like to play during the season.

Additionally, Ching wants to have set positions, something that Li did not have in previous years.

After major losses to graduation, many returning players are unsure what they will be playing or who they will be playing with, especially with a larger influx of freshmen this year.

The team mostly consists of novice-level players who have been only playing for

a year, though there are a few individual standouts. They hope that their top-end talent can lead them to CCS again this year.

Their first match against Wilcox on March 7 will provide a clearer picture of their abilities with their many newcomers.

"The team has seen some rising talent and hopefully as we keep players continuing in the same event throughout the season, it will lead to more success," Samanvi said. "Between losing key players, and maintaining a strong novice presence, I think we will encounter many setbacks but CCS is not out of reach." ♦

— Nikhil Mathihalli and William Norwood

NEWCOMERS BOLSTER BOYS' TENNIS ROSTER

Head Coach: Florin Marica

Last year's record: 6-4

Recap: A solid regular season with a relatively young roster advanced the team to CCS, where they ultimately suffered a tough loss in the semi-finals to Cupertino.

Key Matchups: Cupertino and Monta Vista

Star Players: Kosei Ogata

Key losses to graduation: Ben Bray and Anthony Zhang

League: De Anza

Prognosis:

The boys' tennis team is excited for their revamped roster despite the loss of seniors Ben Bray and Anthony Zhang to graduation. Most spring sports held tryouts the week of Jan. 30, but head coach Florin Marica postponed tryouts one week to grant players an extra week of preparation.

The team hopes for the return of previous No. 1 singles player junior Kosei Ogata. Although he left the school for online homeschooling before the fall semester, he and Marica requested for special permissions to return and play for the team.

"I'm very excited for the new season to start," Kau said. "I can't wait to see the progress that players have made since last season, as well as the new blood we're going to get." ♦

We are very optimistic," junior doubles player Samik Pattanayak said. "He will add a significant amount of fire-

power to the roster."

In addition to the possibility of Kosei returning, his younger brother, freshman Somei Ogata, is set to join the roster.

"We have a pretty deep roster this year," Pattanayak said. "The Ogata duo could be great and even apart from them, the back half of the roster has also improved due to practicing in the off-season."

In addition to the younger Ogata, freshman Nikhil Srivatsa is another strong newcomer to the team. Both freshmen regularly compete in tournaments all over the Bay Area.

Senior captain Julian Berkowitz-Sklar, who is playing basketball in the winter season, looks forward to seeing the influx of younger players and hopes to serve as

Falcon Bingo: predicting your SAT Score

BY Sarah Zhou

Instructions:

- 1) Get a pen
- 2) Mark all squares that include traits that are applicable to you.
- 3) Count the number of squares that you have crossed out and find the number that corresponds to your predicted SAT score.

4) Come back in two months and try to super score, if you aren't already at 1600.

Predicted SAT Scores:

0-5 squares: 1050
(Sorry, you're below average).

6-10 squares: 1120
(you made the California average, which is nothing to proud of at our school, unfortunately).

11-15 squares: 1440

(you achieved the school average, but this is still a WeChat failure).

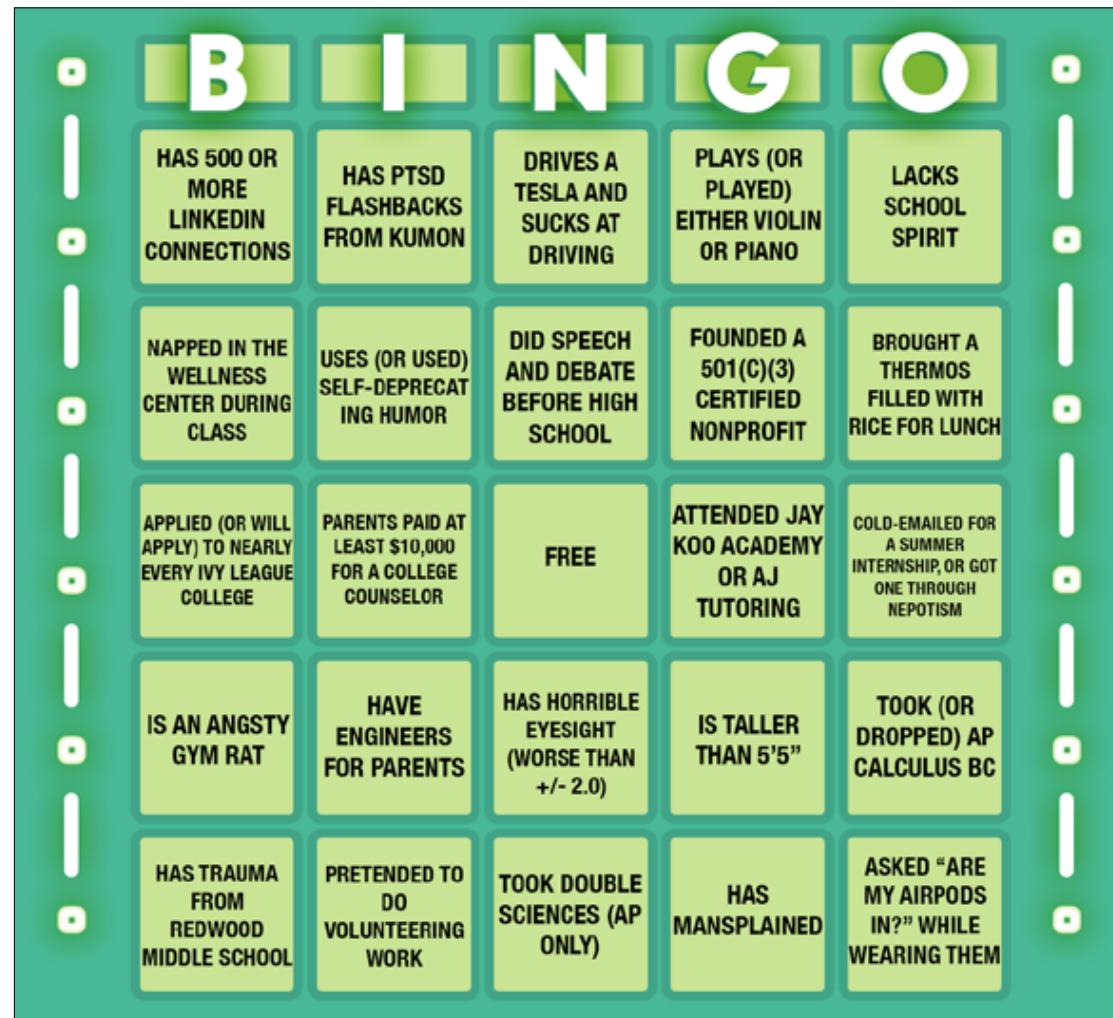
16-20 squares: 1550

(you're almost there ... just take this four more times for the perfect super score).

20-25 squares: 1600

(looks like your \$1,500 Jay Koo class paid off!).

The Saratoga Falcon is not liable for SAT scores. ♦



Graphic by SHREYA RALLABANDI

Senior class president addresses Class of '23 hoodie controversy

Ally is definitely not an ally

Allison Tan

Every school year has brought the same dilemma for my class: Will we have a hoodie? The answer to that, I cannot tell you. However, I can complain about the trials and tribulations that need to be taken into account when pushing a class hoodie from design to purchasable merchandise while serving as a class officer.

It began freshman year, when I came to the unfortunate realization that it is impossible to please 300 classmates. Sprung on to design a class Homecoming T-shirt in less than a few hours by assistant principal Matt Torrens, I scraped together a subpar design that I still hear complaints about to this day.

I was pestered with the never-ending ... "Ally, why did it have to be forest green, why couldn't it have been a darker shade?" Girl, I don't know, ask Custom Ink why they have zero options: I'm balling on a budget.

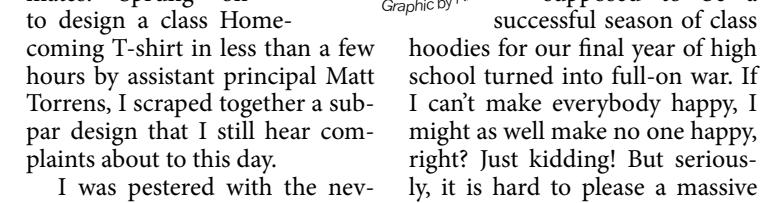
Tainted by that experience, I was determined to make every-

one miserable and not have a class hoodie. Then sophomore year came around, and we had online school: I used the classic "unprecedented times" as an excuse for not doing one. During our junior year, I was too busy racking up prom funds from Ten Ren boba fundraisers to give it a thought.

Class hoodies seem great in theory, but designs are overwhelmingly hard to get approved. I was shocked to open the Google form design contest to a striking 12 options. With 126 responses from seniors stating they would purchase one of the hoodies, class officers noticed teams of people banding together to advocate for a specific design.

What was supposed to be a successful season of class hoodies for our final year of high school turned into full-on war. If I can't make everybody happy, I might as well make no one happy, right? Just kidding! But seriously, it is hard to please a massive group. If senior class officers are to move forward with the class hoodie contest, seniors must accept that the majority vote is the ultimate design. The bottom line: Your senior class officers cannot accommodate everyone's differing opinions. ♦

Graphic by ALLISON TAN



I have a problem with losing my phone

I LOST MY PHONE THREE TIMES. I SHOULD NOT BE TRUSTED WITH EXPENSIVE TECHNOLOGY.

We love Mathihalli



Nidhi Mathihalli

I lose my phone a lot. It's an actual problem. But I can't seem to stop losing it. Every time I tell myself to pay attention to my phone, I just can't. As I write this, I don't even know where my phone is right now.

The first time I really lost my phone was the first month of 6th grade. It was the first time I had gotten a phone, and I was super excited. Little did I know, I was also extremely — extremely — careless.

After finishing my core class, I accidentally left my phone behind. With no real emotional connection to my phone (yet), I carried on throughout the rest of the day and even went home that afternoon, carefree.

It was only when I got home and my father asked me if I had seen the text he had sent regarding how I would get "immense luck" if I sent the text to 10 other people (aka, chainmail) that I realized my phone was nowhere to be seen. I went through everything I did but was still unable to remember where I left it. However, Apple's amazing technology was able to find my iPhone in Ms. Dovala's core classroom. After being scolded by my parents for my "carelessness," I got a good-night's sleep, knowing that my phone was safe and sound.

This was just the beginning. About a month later, I went to Kevin Moran Park with a friend. There, I forgot my phone. Again. That night, before going to bed, I searched for my phone everywhere: the car, dining table, sofa and my dog's corner where she keeps

valuables she finds around the house and guards them with her life. It was nowhere to be found.

So at exactly 11 p.m., my mom drove me to the park and both of us checked again and again for my phone. I checked trees, under branches, the playground and more. Just as we were about to give up, we sat down on a bench and lo-and-behold: There was a phone that looked exactly like mine with a Post-It attached to it saying, "To whoever lost their phone, here it is."

Yet again, fate intervened and I was saved. But my luck wouldn't last forever.

For the entirety of 6th and 7th grade, I was enrolled in middle school track and field, a consequence of my father saying that I should "be more active" under the incorrect impression that walking from my desk to the refrigerator to get food wasn't enough physi-

cal activity for a day. It wasn't my fault — my laziness prevented me from doing anything more than what was required to keep me alive.

So, I took part in the least-intensive activities as part of the sport. When participating in one meet, I left my phone unguarded for around 30 minutes. Sadly, this time, it was gone forever. I searched for hours. I searched the stands, my backpack, others' backpacks and the car, but I was unable to find my phone.

By this point, I was pretty attached to my phone, so when my parents told me that I would not be getting a new one, I was quite sad, but at the same time, I understood that it was a consequence of my carelessness.

Finally, in 8th grade, I got a new phone after my parents upgraded their phones, giving my brother and me their old ones. Perhaps surprisingly given my history, I have never lost my phone again.

That being said, I should probably go look for my phone now. ♦



Graphic by NIDHI MATHIHALLI

topten

VALENTINE'S DAY SONGS

- 10 "Romeo and Juliet" by Dire Straits. Maybe all high school relationships are destined to end.
- 9 "All Girls Are The Same" by Juice WRLD. My editor wanted this here because he sings this song while crying in the shower.
- 8 "ARE WE STILL FRIENDS?" by Tyler, The Creator. Yes!! Spend your Valentine's questioning that Situationship!
- 7 "this way!" by shakes and Reesh. It may not be about love, but it's definitely made with love <3.
- 6 "Love You Like A Love Song" by Selena Gomez & The Scene. If you watched this music video on Disney Channel, you'll understand why this song made this list.
- 5 "Cotton Eye Joe - Line Dance Remix" by Rednex. The melody, bass and dance in accompaniment is where the love of the track lies.
- 4 "White Girl" by Shy Glizzy. I know half of y'all relate to this one.
- 3 "Kiss Me Thru The Phone" by Soulja Boy and Sammie. To all the long distance couples, this song is for you.
- 2 "Country Girl (Shake It For Me)" by Luke Brian. Face it: Nothing spells out love like a little bit of honky tonk.
- 1 "Green Eyes" by Coldplay. Take a steaming hot bath in the not-so-steamy words of Chris Martin and wallow in your misery.

>> Shreya Rallabandi