

ENTERTAINMENT 14

'The Secrets of Dumbledore' improves on declining franchise

SCHOOL SCOPE 17

Maintenance crew keeps school campus environment clean

SPORTS 21

Badminton team recovers from rough regular season to place second at CCS

THE saratoga falcon

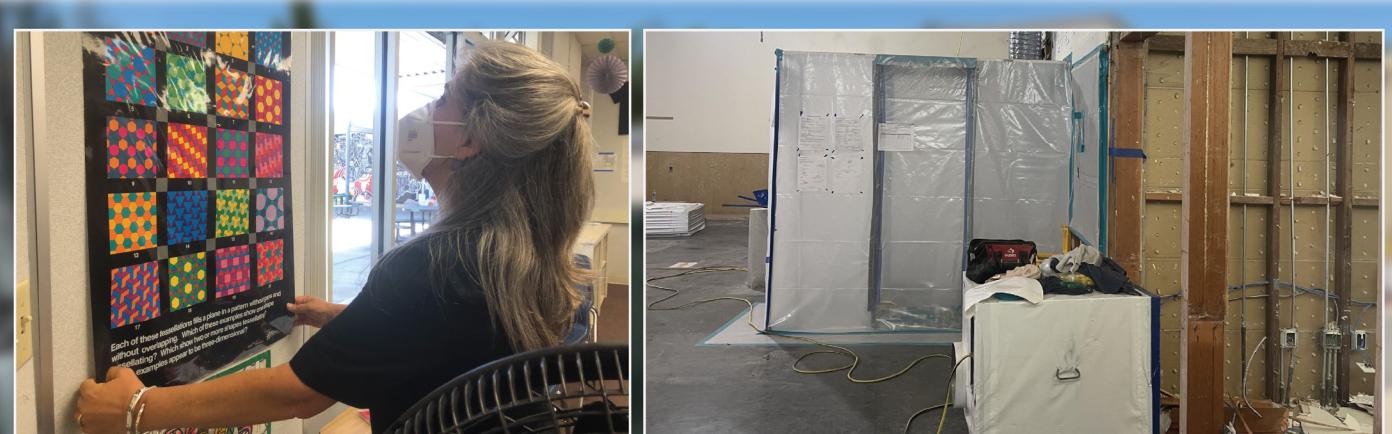
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Campus Renovations

Clockwise: Math teacher Meghan Pickett takes down decorations. Teardown of the old engineering lab continues as construction begins. Math teacher P.J. Yim takes down calculator pockets. Engineering wing bathroom begins remodeling.



FALCON // SELINA CHEN, ATREY DESAI, SANJOLI GUPTA, SHAAN SRIDHAR and MINA YEAP

Summer construction to begin

BY Jonny Luo

As the money from the Measure E bond — \$99 million given to the district for new infrastructure and school resources — runs out for the district, the school plans to conduct renovations over the summer that will impact teachers, sports teams and outside organizations, essentially shutting down most of the campus from early June to mid-August.

The district plans to install new heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems (HVAC) in some wings, replace the baseball field's grass with turf, install new roofs and remodel the covered walkways and the engineering lab. The replacement for the single-paned gym windows will be

done next year and the installment of a new pool shade will take place between next year's water polo and swim seasons.

While most of the campus is off limits to employees and the public, some facilities will remain open amid renovations, including the lower field, which will be open to band camp and athletic programs; the tennis courts, which will be available for summer programs; the music building, which will allow the music program to prepare for its summer Europe tour; and the McAfee Center, which will continue to be rented out.

Additionally, band camp and athletic programs will have to share the lower field and make modifications to their schedules to optimize usage of the limited

facilities.

In total, 24 classrooms will have new HVAC units and roofs installed. Teachers have been directed to move all their items out before the construction date on June 3.

One such classroom is Room 106, occupied by math teacher Kristen Hamilton, who has taught in the class for 14 of the 15 years she's been at the school. For Hamilton, the renovations are an opportunity for her to go through her belongings and discard unnecessary items, though she is worried some of her items may be lost because of the hectic nature of construction.

>> CONSTRUCTION on pg. 3

Bell Schedule undecided after survey results

BY George Huang & Nilay Mishra

During a board meeting at Saratoga High on May 10, members of the Saratoga High and Los Gatos High staff presented the results of a survey sent out to students on May 5, attempting to finalize the 2022-2023 school year bell schedule. However, the five-member board opted to delay guidance due to differing opinions on the bell schedule evaluation process.

Over a period of four days, the survey received over 1,500 responses from student, parent and staff stakeholders. The survey presented three options for a bell schedule: the current schedule, a new "Option 2" and a new "Option 3."

A majority of stakeholder groups at SHS preferred "Option 3," which features alternating 30-minute and 50-minute daily tutorials and ends at 3:45 p.m. on Red Days — the same as the special bell schedules used throughout second semester. The most popular option for LGHS stakeholders was "Option 2," which is nearly identical except for 40-minute tutorials every day at the expense of ending school at 3:55 p.m. on odd days.

According to principal Greg Louie, the results largely reflect a key cultural difference between the two schools: 55 percent of SHS students have 7th period classes as compared to a 7th period enrollment of only 20 percent at LGHS.

As a result, the district proposed having each school run on a different schedule, which sparked some concerns that teachers would not be able to jointly teach at SHS and LGHS. This concern, however, was quelled after the district and District Teachers Association assured the board members that the option would still be available, even with different schedules.

Some board members expressed additional concerns about the process that led to the bell schedule survey. A majority of the board gave guidance to hold an additional study session meeting in order to receive parent feedback on the effectiveness of the rolling block, which they said they had received complaints about.

>> BELL on pg. 6

Music students head to Europe

BY Shannon Ma

Prior to the pandemic, the music department made frequent trips to different U.S. cities for festivals and competitions. For the first time in over 10 years, they had also planned a summer 2020 Europe tour — a once-in-a-lifetime experience for orchestra, band and choir students.

But when the COVID-19 lockdown hit on March 13, 2020, music students saw their hopes deflated. Thankfully, in the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, it was announced that the Europe tour was confirmed for 2022.

As of now, the tour has 438 total travel-

ers, consisting of students, parents, and staff. To cover the trip's expenses, the cost for students was \$4958 and the shadow tour cost summed up to \$5238.

The music tour will cover Austria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Germany from July 8-21. The tour first goes to Vienna, where SSO (Saratoga Symphony Orchestra) will perform at the acclaimed Musikverein, or the "Golden Hall."

"I'm really excited to perform in a place with such a legacy," said sophomore Tejas Tirthapura, who is the principal violist of SSO.

>> MUSIC on pg. 6

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NEWS 1-6

OPINION 7-10

LIFESTYLES 11-13

ENTERTAINMENT 14-15

SCHOOL SCOPE 16-17

IN-DEPTH 18-19

SPORTS 20-23

BACKPAGE 24



newsbriefs

School observes a large influx in COVID-19 cases

The school has seen a rise in COVID-19 cases, with 21 new positives in the first week of May, making up approximately 40% of the total 46 cases following spring break as of May 9, according to an update email sent by assistant principal Brian Thompson.

Close contact numbers have jumped primarily among participants involved in recent group activities such as the robotics trip to nationals in Houston after spring break, though specifics regarding student cases were not released due to privacy reasons. Because of the increase in cases, the school will no longer issue individual emails for close contacts.

While the mask mandate has been lifted, the administration suggests students and staff to wear masks at all times and continue practicing good hygiene.

According to an email sent by the district, "the numbers [of cases] we are seeing currently are well below the highs we saw during the Omicron period in January and appear to be stable rather than rising. We will continue our monitoring of this data, our regular consultation with the Public Health Department, and keep you updated." ♦

— Jonathan Si

Graduation Night to be hosted at school on June 2

Senior Graduation Night will take place following graduation on June 2 at 10:30 p.m. in the small gym, cafeteria, quad and football field. Check-ins will occur between 10 to 10:30 p.m.

Only students wearing Grad Night T-shirts will be allowed to attend the event. To ensure safety, students will need to go through a security check and are not permitted to bring any food or drinks inside. Food trucks will be available starting 10:30 p.m., and other food and drinks will be provided by parent volunteers.

As of now, about 60% of parent volunteer spots are still waiting to be filled, and available parents are encouraged to sign up to avoid canceling some activities.

"Grad Night is a parent-run event and we can't do it without parent volunteers," principal Greg Louie said in his Friday Family Newsletter. "For example, we've rented carnival games and casion tables but need parents to run them during the night."

Grad Night will last until 6 a.m. and students will not be permitted to leave prior to then unless the school has pre-arranged with parents. ♦

— Hannah Lee and Stephanie Sun

Combined prom set for May 29 at Tech Interactive

Despite steep ticket prices, the first combined junior and senior prom at the Tech Interactive in San Jose has completely sold out. The event, which will be attended by a total of 520 students, will be held on May 29 from 7 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. with the theme "Night in the Cosmos," according to an announcement by senior and junior class officers on April 21.

Senior class president Apurva Chakravarthy said she was really excited about the venue.

"When we walked into the Tech Museum, it was almost surreal to see the place that would be our prom venue," Chakravarthy said.

The venue includes a space exhibit with a spaceship, an astronaut exhibit and other interactive displays on all three floors of the museum.

Beginning on April 25, ticket prices start at \$150 for students with ASB and \$175 without ASB, increasing by \$25 on May 3 until May 13, when tickets sales ended. Along with access to the venue, the price covers 10 buses for transportation, a three-course dinner — including a pizookie bar — and a photo booth. ♦

— Avani Kongetira



FALCON // DANIEL WU

School Spirit | After the lip dub hosted by the Rally Commission on Friday, May 20, freshman Saatvik Kommareddi and junior Eli Tsives dress up in falcon costumes and get the crowd hyped up in the quad.

APUSH students compete at the 2022 NHD State championships in Rocklin

BY Shannon Ma
& Jonathan Si

As junior Stephanie Sun walked into the SHS library on March 13, she was all nerves; earlier that day, she and her group participated in the exhibit portion of Santa Clara's National History Day (NHD) county competitions. Though Sun was confident in her group and their project, she was nervous about whether her team would beat the other teams competing in exhibits and qualify to state.

When her team was called on stage for winning an award, she was both shocked and excited to continue her journey as one of the 60 APUSH students whose groups advanced to the NHD State Finals that were held on May 7 at William Jessup University in Rocklin.

This year's theme was Debate and Diplomacy in History, focusing on historical successes, failures and consequences.

At state finals, two SHS groups won awards. Juniors Saahil Chaddha, Noah Marquez, Siddharth Kamannavar, Max Timmons and Zach Zinman won Champions in the senior group performance division with their topic surrounding Armageddon, a 1998 American science fiction disaster film, and will be advancing onto nationals.

Juniors Howard Shu, Keon Nikfar, Kevin Zhao and William Zhao won an Honorable Mention in the senior group podcast division with the topic about the legacy of debates surrounding the Chinese Exclusion Act.



FALCON // ZACHARY ZINMAN

Juniors and regional champions Chaddha, Marquez, Kamannavar and Zinman advance to NHD Nationals.

Ognized judges and interviewees at NHD state who had been judging since she was a high schooler participating in the contest herself.

Juniors Rosalee Kline, Ananya Seth, Stephanie Sun and Lily Zhang went to state finals with their exhibit exploring the life story behind Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, a Chinese immigrant and U.S. suffragist. Although junior Lily Zhang initially did the project only because it was an assignment, over time, she began to look forward to working on her exhibit.

"Despite the difficulties in researching and getting times in all of our schedules to match, I really enjoyed meeting up with my group and constructing the board," she said.

This year's state finals was also the first introduction of the Civic Summit where NHD worked with the California State Seal of Civic Engagement. Though the Civic Summit this year was for the senior division only, Daly said they are hoping to expand it out to other divisions.

Junior Andrew Hong was one of the many students who participated in the event. In the event, he said the students would do multiple presentation activities such as trying to convince the audience why your historical topic was most interesting and unique.

While this year's state finals and Civic Summit was done in person, there were many other states and counties that went through the contest online due to COVID-19.

As for nationals, APUSH teacher Faith Daly believes this year's national competition will be "extra exciting" because the group that made nationals was in the group performance division. When Daly was in high school, she too went to nationals in the group performance category.

"I have sent papers, websites, documentaries and stuff to Nationals, but it's been hard convincing students to do performance," she said. "[In the past], I've had students that have gotten close with runner ups and honorable mentions in performance, so I'm excited to be able to take my students in the same division that I competed in." ♦

"Hopefully next year, we can go back to meeting up in College Park, Maryland, doing all of the DC events and such."

APUSH TEACHER Faith Daly

NHD Nationals this year will be held virtually on June 16. In many previous non-pandemic years, around 3,000 national finalists from all 50 states and international schools in countries such as China and South Korea, would travel to the University of Maryland, College Park for the entire week.

"At this point in time, everyone is hoping this is the last virtual one," APUSH teacher Faith Daly said. "Hopefully next year, we can go back to meeting up in College Park, Maryland, doing all of the DC events."

Daly, who has been judging NHD on and off since 1996, was a judge for the performance and podcast category this year.

According to Daly, NHD is judged by historians, librarians, college professors and many of the teachers who bring students to the competition.

As a past NHD participant, Daly said she even rec-



CONSTRUCTION

continued from pg. 1

hecticness of construction. For example, the desks are the only dual entry desks in the school, so she hopes she gets all 36 of them back.

"There are always issues that come up with construction, and we have a lot of other hands involved. Hopefully [the moving] stays very organized, but I can really just hope for the best," Hamilton said.

Hamilton also said her classroom will likely be "barren" for the first few weeks back from summer as she works on redecorating her classroom; nonetheless, she is looking forward to classroom renovations.

"[The Air Conditioning (AC) system] hasn't worked for a really long time, and it's really hard to concentrate when the temperatures get warmer — I even had two students faint in my classroom once," Hamilton said. "[Everyone] is really happy about the AC renovations."

In Hamilton's classrooms and the 24 teachers whose classrooms will be remodeled with new HVAC and roof units, teachers will likely not be able to access technology besides WiFi, such as projection systems, according to assistant principal Brian Thompson.

"Since no one is allowed in the construction zones, the technology team has a very



Hamilton

narrow window [to rebuild the technology infrastructure]," Thompson said. "They will receive access just before school starts, so there's no time for a fully functioning technology system in those classrooms."

The school's technology team will be working closely with contractors to determine when they can access classrooms, which will have projectors, smart boards, connectors and roof mounts removed to prevent them from being damaged during construction.

Between the end of construction and the first two weeks of summer, the school plans to have a "phase-approach" to reinstall technology in all the 24 affected classrooms.

The administration has also met with the impacted teachers to prepare alternate lesson plans for the first two weeks of school in case the technology is not yet up and running.

The remodeling of the engineering lab is the only renovation that has already started, and all engineering classes have moved to Room 902. The engineering materials were stored across from their new classroom in Room 706, long-term substitute Andrew Dimock's previous English Classroom; as a result, Dimock had to move out of his classroom to room 501 in two days in mid-February.

"I was not fully moved into that room, [but] I had gone to some trouble to decorate the walls with things that had connection to what we were learning," Dimock said. "The

move wasn't that difficult except for that it had to be accomplished quickly, and that caused a little disruption."

The renovations have also impacted organizations that normally rent campus facilities over the summer, such as Maxwell Soccer, Los Gatos-Saratoga Recreation and Verve Lacrosse.

The administration has been working with these renters to relocate to other facilities, such as Los Gatos High, temporarily for this summer.

"There are always issues that come up with construction... But I can really just hope for the best."

MATH TEACHER Kristen Hamilton

Additionally, sports teams that typically operate over the summer will be affected by the renovations, and athletics director Rick Ellis has already started coordinating with the Los Gatos administration to share their facilities.

Despite the impact it has had on the school and its summer programs, Ellis said he is still glad the renovations are happening.

"It's definitely a double-edged sword," Ellis said. "On one hand, we're getting all these amazing renovations done to the cam-

pus. However, shutting down a high school campus isn't practical — students who play sports or participate in summer activities on campus are, so to speak, getting the short end of the stick because they don't have facilities to use."

To ensure that project timetables are not behind, Thompson will be having weekly occupant-architect-construction company (OAC) meetings to discuss the progress of projects, many of which have already started.

During these OAC meetings, Thompson and the site administrator meet with the contractor, architect and project managers, whom the school hired from Greystone Construction Company to facilitate the projects. Meetings have begun for many of the construction projects.

However, because there are "so many variables and so many projects," Thompson said there are no backup plans in case projects fall behind, as that will be determined through a case-by-case basis.

"If there are delays, we will work with our school administration to come up with alternative plans, and then principal Greg Louie or I would communicate that to our staff and students if it impacts them," Thompson said.

In the end, Thompson believes all this effort will pay off for both students and staff.

"[The school] will be fantastic when we return," Thompson said. "We will have upgrades for all of our students and staff: excellent heating and air conditioning, roofs that no longer leak when we have rainstorms and a state of the art engineering facility." ♦

District set to review plan for solar panel farms beginning in mid-June

BY Christina Chang

For years, community members and students such as junior Miranda Yee have argued that since many neighboring schools like Prospect, Wilcox and Monta Vista have installed solar panels, so should the wealthier Los Gatos-Saratoga High School District.

"As a voice representing my fellow students, I want to remind you that [global warming] isn't just an issue that can be pushed aside for another day," Yee said at a Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District board meeting on May 10. "We are fortunate enough to live in the global center for technology, among the wealthiest cities in the nation, and we should take advantage of the opportunities we have. It's time to start talking about solar and time to act."

Installing solar panels was already a long-term objective of the district's 2015 Measure E bond; however, school site councils had prioritized other projects such as constructing new or remodeling and replacing existing worn-out buildings and systems, so the solar project did not rise as a serious topic of discussion until late 2021.

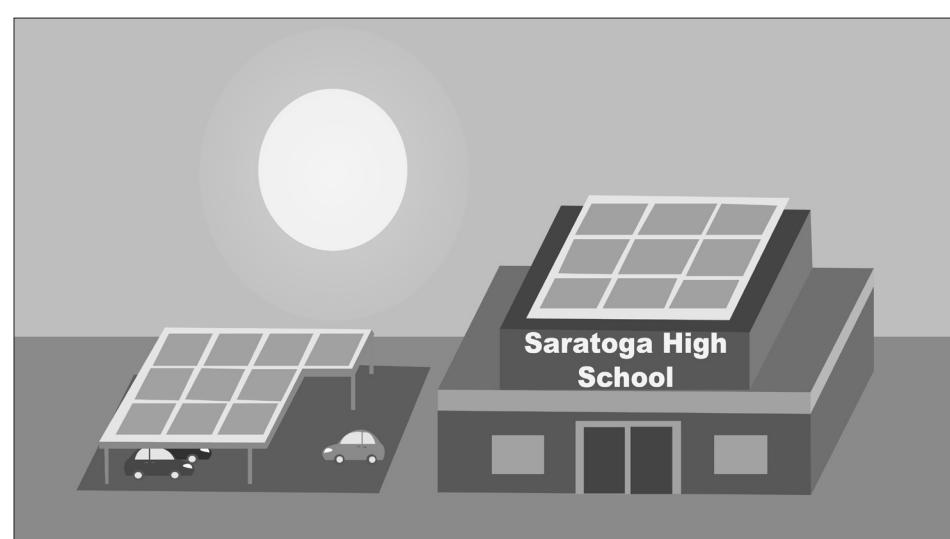
Due to this increased community push, the district plans to discuss a plan in mid-June that could potentially result in construction of solar panel farms at Saratoga High School, Los Gatos High School and possibly the district office before the end of 2022 if approved.

Two members of the board worked with district superintendent Michael Grove on a feasibility study on the installation of solar panels. The study will be presented at a workshop in mid-June which will be scheduled for sometime during the week of June 20, though the exact date has not been confirmed. Direction to move ahead with solar will be given at the workshop if a majority of the board (three of five) are in support of moving forward with it.

Four solar panel installation options considered

The board will consider four options for solar panel installation, all of which have been chosen by some school districts in Northern California.

The first plan is Do It Yourself (DIY), where the district would finance and build



Graphic by ANJALI PAI

solar panel farms with funds from the Measure E bond, or a potential 2025 bond.

The second option is a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) — an arrangement in which a solar company outsources logistics concerning the solar panels in exchange for a party's 15-to-20-year contract to purchase electricity using panels installed on the site from said company — from a Joint Powers Agency (JPA), a more cost-effective route than the DIY.

The third option is to obtain a PPA from a party other than a JPA prided contractor, where the district would contract its own Green PPA provider. Large capacity storage batteries are an additional option to consider for supplying electricity when the sun is not out.

The fourth option is to have green-sourced electricity delivered by PG&E, as Silicon Valley Clean Energy (SVCE) offers pure green-sourced electricity "delivered" on PG&E wires at a lower cost than the fossil-fuel generated electricity offered by PG&E.

The board members who worked on the plan currently favor the third option of having a PPA from a party other than a JPA prided contractor. This option boasted benefits of having all the advantages of installing solar panels on-site along with the lowest cost of electricity. Status updates regarding the process will be delivered at board meetings in the near future.

Students advocate for solar at May 10 board meeting

Yee, who plans to major in environmental science, spent three hours writing and practicing her speech regarding solar panels, which she delivered during the board meeting's public comment section. She said she was "really nervous" to give the speech as she had little experience with public speaking.

"I'm interested in environmental activism," Yee said. "I haven't done stuff like that before; it was a bit outside of my comfort zone, but I'm really glad I did it."

Aside from Yee, sophomores Elena Burgos, Meher Haider and Anna Meier also gave speeches on solar panels at the Board meeting, and others joined the meeting in support. Despite not having coordinated with the other speakers prior to the meeting, Yee said it was "fun that we created a little army and had an audience."

The common thread between all the speakers was that they were all Media Arts Program (MAP) students in history teacher Mike Davey's classes.

Sophomores in his class had done a "Be The Change" project near the end of the year. After a year of learning "miserable things in history" such as genocide, wars and environmental destruction, students were tasked to create documentaries on current issues — whether local to Saratoga or worldwide — to alert people and instigate

change. Davey said one group focused on solar energy, which he thinks explains why a number of sophomores showed up to the board meeting.

Both MAP 10 and 11 also participate in daily current event discussions, so students are informed about the destruction of the environment and what they can do locally along with people in history that have made a difference.

Davey said he was "really proud of [students]" for taking action as opposed to being bystanders.

"It's not easy as a student, a 15 or 16 year old, to go speak to elected officials and tell the officials what they think and tell them they're disappointed," Davey said.

The day after the meeting, Yee sent an email with her speech attached to the board once again urging them to take action through installing solar panels. The board responded with a lengthy, detailed explanation of their plans for solar. Yee said she is "glad the board seems to be making an effort."

Recently, Davey has been "really disappointed with the school board for not putting students, teachers and the environment first" and instead "deciding to increase reserves for some mythical rainy day in the future."

He said even the pandemic "wasn't a rainy day" as the district received more money from the state. He believes the school should be spending money on current issues rather than putting it in reserves.

Following these frustrations, he was encouraged after hearing of the board's plan to install solar panels.

"We've dragged our feet on this for too long, so I was hopeful for a change," Davey said. "The school board is finally doing something in this regard."

Davey said student voices are powerful for enacting change, and encourages students to advocate for what they believe.

"It's their schooling, their education, their future," Davey said. "It's already taking place, but by the time environmental degradation really transforms the country, I'll be dead. But for 15-year-olds, it's their future — their near future and long-term future. So I think it's really important for them to say what they think is important." ♦

Guidance department chair Alinna Satake to leave school

AFTER 15 YEARS AT SARATOGA, SATAKE JOINS FORMER ATHLETICS DIRECTOR TIM LUGO AT THE MVLA DISTRICT

BY Victoria Hu

Guidance department chair Alinna Satake, a Saratoga High alumna, looks back on her high school memories fondly: From playing sports to participating in theater with her friends, she remembers spending some of her happiest moments at the school.

After graduating in 1997, her ties to SHS drew her back. She became a guidance counselor here in 2007.

"I'm the first generation child of Chinese immigrants, with all the challenges of straddling cultures, just like my students face today," Satake said. "It was important for me to come back and not only give back to the community that formed me, but also show students — hey, I was you. You're going to be OK."

"It's bittersweet because I've put my whole heart into this job."

COUNSELOR Alinna Satake

However, after 15 years working at the school as a guidance counselor and spending the last 10 as the department chair, Satake is leaving the school after this year to assume a counseling position in another district. Other sources said she has taken a position in the Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District.

"I've shed a lot of tears about my choice," she said. "It's the right one for me and my family, but it's bittersweet because I've been here a long time and put my whole heart into making this community better."

Satake attributes her departure to a renewed focus on her priorities. Although her first responsibility is caring for the well-being of students, she also manages other time commitments such as organizing meetings

and running committees.

Because her attention is split in many directions at all times, she feels as though she sometimes cannot do her best to support students. Satake said she can sometimes feel frustrated from spending more time interacting with adults than kids — which was not her intention going into education.

"The pandemic really distilled what the most important things are to me," Satake said. "At the end of the day, what I care about the most is being with kids, and pursuing equity for all students, especially vulnerable populations. I needed to make a change for myself where I can focus on those things and only those things."

Since her new district is more socioeconomically diverse and has a larger English Language Development (ELD) population, Satake said she plans to pick up on her Spanish skills to better communicate with students.

Her departure to Mountain View-Los Altos follows in the footsteps of former head football coach and P.E. teacher Tim Lugo, who took a job there earlier this year; MVLA has annual teacher salaries that are sometimes \$40,000 higher than LGSUHSD.

The school is currently in search of a counselor to replace Satake.

"The position has been posted and [principal Greg Louie] and the other counselors are actively invested in finding the right person to bring new energy to the team, and who will care for the T-Z students," she said.

Satake leaves behind a large legacy at Saratoga, according to colleagues.

Though her job description as an academic counselor is primarily to help students stay on track for graduation and post-secondary goals, her role has since expanded to being a general support hub for students.

In addition, as department chair, Satake has served as a long-time liaison between



Courtesy of ALINNA SATAKE

Satake pictured on the left in her class of 1997 senior photo; on the right is her 2022 photo.

her team of counselors and the rest of the school's teachers, admin and community outreach.

Her long list of contributions include doing a large portion of master scheduling, providing support to special education students and Assist program, managing online materials like Canvas course registration and college application information, preparing presentation materials for parents and students, updating guidance information on the school website, proctoring exams, running credit recovery and teaching workshops. Satake is also known for participating on district committees — including both bell schedule committees.

Through her many years here, Satake has also fostered close friendships with colleagues. Fellow guidance counselor Frances Saiki describes Satake as someone who is not afraid to speak her mind when she feels it is the right thing to do, no matter what the response may be.

Saiki recalls that she and Satake were both hired in the fall of 2007.

Since they were coordinating Link Crew, the office staff would often see the two of them together making Costco runs and hauling packs of water together for the freshmen.

"We often joke together that, in working here, I see her more than my own husband," Saiki said. "And so that is why I call her my 'work wife!' There are many memories, but I will miss her companionship, her honesty and loving spirit the most."

Ultimately, Satake wants to remind students to take care of themselves when they're not feeling their best, to know that their voices are valuable in public discourse and to never apologize for speaking their minds. She hopes to keep learning and growing as a counselor in order to continue doing her best for students.

"Thank you for letting me be a part of this community," Satake said. "It's been my privilege to be a Falcon for this stretch of the journey with you." ♦

#1: A Teacher Is Needed!

Job listings are posted on hiring sites like Edjoin, where interested applicants upload their resumes, cover letters, and letters of rec.

#4: Interviews Again!

During the second round of interviews, candidates are often asked to conduct a mock lesson and evaluated thoroughly.

#2: Time to Narrow Down

Applicants need at least a bachelor's degree and a teaching credential. Then administrators narrow down the list.

#5: Offer Made to the One!

A candidate is given an offer and can sign a contract to accept. Temporary & permanent jobs are handled differently.

#3: Interviews

Department chairs take a lead in interviews, asking applicants about questions such as their teaching philosophies.

#6: What's Open?

Vacancies for the 22-23 year at SHS include a media arts & ceramics teacher, music teacher, guidance counselor, & various sports coaches.

Graphic by CAROLYN WANG

Dermont to leave school for San Francisco district

BY Howard Shu

Spanish 2 and 3 teacher Allison Dermont will leave the school after two years to teach at a different school. She has not determined which school she will teach at next, but it will be located closer to where she lives in San Francisco. Dermont said she has enjoyed teaching at the school, especially because of the students and supportive staff, but that the long commute to and from the school is no longer sustainable.

"Leaving Saratoga High was an extremely difficult decision involving a very detailed pro-con list. I thought about it for months," Dermont said. "I realized one of the main reasons I didn't want to leave was that I would feel a lot of guilt leaving the school after only being here for two years. However, I decided that I couldn't let that guilt stop me from making the right decision for myself."

When she started working at the school in 2020, she lived in the South Bay, just a few miles away from the school. But during the 2020-21 remote learning school year, she was able to take a 6-month lease in an apartment in San Francisco.

During that time, she met her now-fiance and they will live in the city because of his

work there.

When school returned to an in-person setting for the 2021-22 school year, she had to make a 2-hour round trip commute to and from the school. Though she loves the school, she said the commute has proven too overwhelming.

"After a year of doing this commute, I have realized that the commute was not sustainable for me in the long term," Dermont said. "I feel stretched thin between work and home and I prefer to look for a job in my own community here in San Francisco."

She enjoyed the school's community because she felt the administration, world language department teachers and especially the students have been supportive.

Some of her favorite memories at Saratoga have been seeing her Spanish 2 students preparing dishes from Spanish speaking countries, holding "fiestas" or parties after months of hard work and recreating artwork from Spanish speaking artists.

"My students are hilarious, fun, goofy, silly, and I love when they speak in Spanish," she said. "I will really miss the students I have gotten to know in the past two years but I will definitely come back for their graduations," she said. ♦



Courtesy of ALLISON DERMONT

Spanish teacher Allison Dermont and her fiance stand by the dance floor at Homecoming.

	Spanish teacher Allison Dermont: leaves after two years of service		Math teacher Meghan Pickett: retiring after 9 years of service		Guidance Counselor Alinna Satake: moves after 15 years of service		Science teacher Jenny Garcia: retires after over 20 years of service
	Art teacher Diana Vanry: retires after 12 years of service		English teacher Suzanne Herzman: 1-year teaching stint in Singapore		SRA and Wellness staff Marina Barnes: leaves		Superintendent Dr. Michael Grove: retires due to health concerns.

Graphic by ANJALI PAI

Garcia fills in for Morelle as long-term substitute

BY Sam Bai & Aiden Ye

Chatter fills room 606 as students discuss who their favorite politicians are. One student shouts out Rishi Kumar, while others say Barack Obama and Kanye West.

Gloria Garcia is now teaching A.P. U.S. Government/Economics and History in Film in place of history teacher Margarita Morelle, who has been on maternity leave as of Feb. 18 and will not return for the remainder of the second semester.

With a background in journal-

ism and entrepreneurship alongside 13 years of teaching experience with students from K-12, Garcia was confident she can prepare her students for the AP tests in May.

Garcia received her undergraduate degree and a bachelor's in journalism from San Francisco State University and a master's degree in specialized education from Santa Clara University.

From 2011-2014, she was a substitute teacher for Mission San Jose High School in Fremont, where she discovered her love for teaching high school students.



Garcia

Additionally, she started her first company The Plastic Free Store three years ago to pursue her passion for environmental safety, which aims to educate and provide consumers with alternatives to single-use plastics for everyday use.

She continues to provide support for her businesses while also balancing her teaching responsibilities.

She also started another business to help her musician friends, who had been hurt badly by limited venue access from the pandemic.

Before her leave, Morelle had already taught a large portion of the material to the students, in-

cluding the Legislative and Judicial branches. For the rest of the year, Garcia has been assigned to teach about the Executive Branch, Bureaucracy and Congress.

Garcia hopes to make debates more interactive and interesting.

Before lectures, Garcia encourages students to talk and share their opinions, hosting discussions about current events and often debating hot topics.

At the start of every class, Garcia also likes to ask her students about what happened in the news that day.

By incorporating her previous experiences as a journalist and even a business owner into the discussions, Garcia hopes to make debates more interactive and interesting, providing students with a different perspective.

"As time goes on, I hope that students become more interested in what is going on in the world," Garcia said. "Maybe they're more interested in politics or going into law or advocacy. I hope they learn that they can start a business for what they are interested in or want to advocate for." ♦

Pickett retires after 20 years of teaching math

BY Nikhil Mathihalli & Aiden Ye

After nine years of teaching at the school, math teacher Meghan Pickett will retire at the end of the school year.

Pickett began her career as a math teacher at Shoreline Middle. After three years of teaching Pre-Algebra to students there, Pickett moved to Santa Cruz High School, where she taught AP Statistics for eight years. Following that, she got a job offer from the SHS math department. After transferring to the school, Pickett immediately fell in love with the school's culture and students.

"I'm hands down going to miss all the great students," she said. "I simply love teaching math, and when I came to SHS, I realized I had found my people."

Having previously taught AP math courses, Pickett was able to transition smoothly into the school, where she has taught both Algebra 2 Honors and AP Calculus AB.

"She really helped me adjust to the rigor of high school math classes."

SOPHOMORE Samik Pattanayak

Sophomore Samik Pattanayak, who had Pickett as high Algebra 2 Honors teacher during his 8th grade year, said that she was one of his favorite teachers because of the way she approaches teaching her students.

"I like [Mrs. Pickett] a lot because she was my first high school math teacher and really helped me adjust to the rigor of high school math classes," Pattanayak said.

Pattanayak credits Pickett's interactive and informative teaching style with helping

him shift from the relaxed structure of middle school classes to the more intensive nature of high school classes.

Similarly, junior Aarav Badani — who is currently enrolled in Pickett's AP Calculus AB class — said that Pickett was a fun teacher who he wishes could be his teacher next year as well.

"I'm bummed that she's leaving because she's one of the nicest teachers on campus and a really good teacher that the campus really benefits from," Badani said. "Her teaching style meshes with anybody and she adapts to her students really well. I'm going to miss her a lot."

Math teacher PJ Yim added that Pickett has had an ability to make all of her students feel welcomed in her classes and always bring enthusiasm and positivity to any class she taught.

Yim recalled when she joined the school's math department.

"When she first joined, she had a wealth of experience by teaching a lot of AP courses at her previous schools, and could teach all classes with an equal degree of enthusiasm and love for her students," Yim said. "I think all her students clearly know and understand that she cares for them. And I think that's very clear when you sit in her classroom, which is why she was an effective teacher."

After retiring, Pickett hopes to spend more time with her family and friends, and create her own plans for the day. Although it was hard to let go of her profession, she looks forward to having more free time on her plate.

Ultimately, Pickett said she will miss the general feeling of teaching and is thankful for her nine years of teaching at the school.

"I love teaching math, but it's a very time consuming profession, and I'm looking forward to having some time that's more about me," Pickett said. "It has been such an honor to teach here, and I'm going to miss all the wonderful students of Saratoga High School." ♦

BELL

continued from pg. 1

Superintendent Mike Grove and associate superintendent Carrie Bosco asserted that such questions had already been addressed in previous surveys and committees, but a couple other members of the board remained insistent on holding an additional study session to discuss the possibility of another alternate schedule with all periods meeting for a shorter duration on Monday.

Because of this, no schedule was officially adopted at the meeting.

In public comment, community and administration members expressed their frustration with the speed of the process and asserted that further changes and meetings on the bell

schedule would be counterproductive.

The final decision of the bell schedule process will be announced soon.

"I remember when there were schedules taped on the wall of the student center back [during my] freshman year," junior Shaan Sridhar said to the board. "Now that we have narrowed it down to just three, those will be our best options and I don't think more meetings would change that."

In addition, teachers

staff criticized the board's guidance to delay the bell schedule decision, which they argued was taking too long and confusing the community.

"As you can imagine, I'm feeling quite frustrated at the idea that just a few other ideas might send us off in a totally different direction," English teacher Amy Keys told the board.

According to Louie, the final decision of the bell schedule process will be announced in the near future through either the superintendent's office or his Friday newsletter email.

"It may take a couple years to get a long-lasting schedule for the next 10 years, but we're getting closer and closer," Louie said. "But, hopefully, we can finalize the current year's bell schedule [soon]." ♦



Sridhar

Speech and debate celebrates senior night

STEVE CLEMMONS IS AMONG 70 CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL SPEECH ASSOCIATION (CHSSA) HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

BY Selina Chen

Donning blazers, shirts and dresses, students and parents filed into the cafeteria on May 17 in formal attire for the speech and debate team's banquet and senior night.

The team celebrated this year's successes, achieved at 35 tournaments with 148 total entries and 34 awards.

At states, freshman orator Timothy Leung placed 7th, and freshman debaters Ashish Goswami and Leo Jia advanced to quarterfinals.

At the Tournament of Champions, Leung advanced to quarterfinals in dramatic interpretation, and junior Arnav Garg advanced to double octofinals in Lincoln-Douglas debate at the Tournament of Champions.

Additionally, Leung qualified for nationals as the second-place seed in the California Central Coast district and will compete in Kentucky in June.



Leung

"I was really nervous, so when I found out that I qualified, it was honestly amazing," Leung said. "As a freshman, this is going to be my first nationals, and I'm really excited it's going to be in-person."

Leung, who will be a speech captain next year, plans to have more peer-to-peer coaching to help others and themselves understand what they need to improve on.

He also plans to help build the team into "one big family that supports each other during tournaments."

The banquet also saw announcements of next year's officers and parent booster club leadership, including junior Anushka Sankaran and parent Shelly Shi as presidents, respectively.

"I feel the sense of urgency and big responsibility to continue supporting and leading the booster team, as I believe speech and debate is a great learning opportunity

for students to reap life-long benefits," Shi said. "I hope the S&D club will provide a unique platform to connect, support and inspire students who are committed to empowering themselves and influencing the people around them through speech and debate."

"I've put my all in these four years and will genuinely miss all the connections I've made."

SENIOR Shravan Potluri

their teammates.

"I feel I've put my all into these four years and I will genuinely miss all the connections I've made here," Potluri said.

However, the banquet was not the only recent celebration: Head coach Steve Clemmons walked into special speech and debate practice on May 3 to the Student Center decked out in colorful balloons, with cakes frosted in his honor — the team was celebrating his induction to the California High School Speech Association (CHSSA) Hall of Fame, the highest honor for California coaches.

Currently, there are about 70 coaches in the CHSSA Hall of Fame. He is one of only two Black coaches to be so honored.

After 12 years coaching at Saratoga, Clemmons attributes his success to the hard work of students.

"This isn't a speech to you, but a speech about you," he said to the club. "None of it would be possible without the hard work of Saratoga students." ♦

'Fiddler on the Roof' production continues despite illnesses

SENIORS VINCENT AVILA AND JACK BULAS STEPPED IN AS UNDERSTUDIES FOR TWO CAST MEMBERS WHO BECAME ILL

BY Lena Aribi & Christopher Chen

This year's school spring musical, "Fiddler on the Roof," ran a total of five performances, with back-to-back shows on April 29 and 30 as well as May 6 and 7. The play follows the milkman Tevye (senior Taylor Zhou) and his three daughters — Tzeitel (junior Anastasia Ramirez), Hodel (senior Peilin Zhang) and Chava (freshman Diya Iyer) — and their marriages, set in Russia that's becoming increasingly hostile against ethnic Jews.

"We had less than 24 hours notice to fill one role [for the production]."

SENIOR Leslie Robinson

character Fyedka learned all his lines and blocking for the part within the span of two days," said senior Leslie Robinson, who plays a bookseller. "He did a great job. It was impressive and a big help to the show."

Avila said stepping up as an understudy and memorizing the lines of Fyedka was a bit difficult but worth it as he "had so much fun."

Additionally, the musical's pit orchestra, which played live music pit below the stage on the first weekend, was unable to perform the second weekend as well due to a cold dubbed the "Fiddler Flu" by students performing at the production.

Drama director Benjamin Brotzman had to quickly adjust by using pre-recorded tracks, entrusting assistant director senior Samantha Weisner with the smooth operation of the show.

"We had less than 24 hours notice to fill one role, in particular. We walked them through blocking before the performance and I trusted Samantha to do so since my responsibility had grown to new levels," he said.

Audience member junior Sunny Huang said she enjoyed the show.

"I came in not exactly knowing what to expect, but I was very pleasantly surprised," she said. "I had no idea so many amazing singers were in drama, and they were very energetic and entertaining through the entire show. If someone hadn't told me there



Fiddler on the Roof cast members all line up following the conclusion of the opening show.

This year's production ran into several hurdles related to illnesses. The actors for Lazar Wolf (junior Eugene Chow) and Fyedka (senior LJ Trueba) caught COVID-19 and their roles were performed by understudies seniors Jack Bulas and Vincent Avila, respectively, who were able to quickly adjust to their new roles.

"The understudy who performed as

were understudies I wouldn't have noticed at all."

According to Avila, they saw the highest turnout for closing night on May 7, although both the cast size and audience size were still smaller than in pre-COVID years, Brotzman said.

Despite unfortunate circumstances, the

cast was able to quickly adjust, and the students were pleased with their final performances.

"I think the acting was really phenomenal as well as the choreography," co-stage manager sophomore Arushi Maheshwar said. "You could really see people enjoying the choreography while dancing." ♦

SARATOGAFALCON

STAFFPOLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published 12 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.

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Nidhi Mathihalli
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opinion

New board members are a necessity

Go to the Saratoga Falcon's website: www.saratogafalcon.org. Type in "school board." Click enter.

As of writing, there is a story about the bell schedule, in which the senior class president laments the board's decision to abandon daily tutorials. The next story: an opinion piece criticizing the board's lack of transparency during reopening after the pandemic. The third story: a news article about angry student reactions at a board meeting.

Does The Falcon editorial board have a grudge against the board? No. Our criticism is warranted: The current school board has repeatedly refused to listen to community feedback and stakeholder preferences, instead opting for arbitrary decisions that invite backlash. We have lost confidence in their leadership.

At the end of the last school year, the district changed its school reopening plan and adopted the Phase 4A schedule, which returned school to a five-day schedule and removed asynchronous Wednesdays for the final few weeks of the school year.

Before the decision was officially adopted, it was met with fierce opposition from teacher and student stakeholder groups. Four hundred and forty-six students, or one-third of the student body, participated in a survey conducted in regards to the reopening plan, which showed that 91% of students were in strong opposition to the plan, while less than 1% were in support or strong support of the plan. A stream of teachers — including science teacher Kathy Nakamatsu and former athletic trainer Liz Alves — also criticized the board's lack of transparency with teachers, who were already

struggling with hybrid learning in four-day weeks.

It was clear that the student and teacher stakeholder groups — both of which were not consulted in the creation of the plan — had a supermajority in opposition to the plan. Despite this, the board moved forward with the 4A schedule, citing concerns from small vocal parent groups, like the Los Gatos Parents for Educational Excellence, which in no way represent the entire parent population.

Most recently, the board has ignored its stakeholders regarding the bell schedule. Despite endless hours of district work and community feedback regarding schedule parameters, the board ignored stakeholders' preferences at the May 10 meeting, opting to explore different possibilities against the will of the community.

A majority of the board blamed the decision on district leaders, who they said had not adequately collected enough input from community stakeholders. The truth is in fact the opposite: The district collected more data and input than could possibly be useful, but the board chose to ignore it.

In 2015, the Schedule Advisory Committee convened. In 2019, the district conducted the Bell Schedule Evaluation — which 2,127 stakeholders participated in — and the Bell Schedule Committee convened. Last fall, the district collected data from 1,825 stakeholders in a community-wide survey and additional data from 1,502 stakeholders in a survey that closed on May 9.

The clear result of the survey was to implement two schedules, one for each school site, supported by a supermajority of stakeholders.

holders at each site. But a majority of the board refused to accept these results.

Instead, the board asked the district to explore options that abandoned the rolling block schedule in favor of a modified block schedule — a decision against 70% of the community who were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the rolling block. The majority of the board backed up their decision with claims that they "received emails from parents and teachers" and heard "comments from parents during our board office hours" that were not in support of rolling block — in other words, the board ignored a supermajority of its stakeholders in support of a vocal minority.

Over the past year and a half, it has become clear that this school board doesn't care about its stakeholders.

There are exceptions, of course. Not all board members supported abandoning the community feedback regarding the bell schedule. Those same members also supported listening to the community regarding curriculum alignment. They deserve commendation for their commitment to the community, but



ANNIE LIU

they are unfortunately not the majority and can not influence the decisions of the board alone.

This article serves no purpose other than to let the board know: Students, parents and staff realize they aren't being heard. So we call on parents, graduating students and community members to take a closer look at the people they elect to our school board.

Board members are supposed to oversee their district, not interfere and manipulate it. Their job is to ensure that district decisions are being made only with informed feedback from stakeholder groups in the community. Their job is to protect the voice of students, parents and teachers.

If anything, this board has done the opposite, so we have lost confidence in their ability to lead our school. In the election this November, three positions could be filled by new community members. Let's hope better candidates step forward and the community votes for change. ♦

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Nidhi Mathihalli
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Reporter

Shaan Sridhar

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 40-0 in favor of the article.

Board needs major reforms to account for student concerns in decision-making process

BY Sarah Zhou

SHS students have been advocating for using bond funds to improve the school's energy usage through various projects such as installing solar panels for over a decade. Though the board is now considering four options to install solar panels, until recently, there was consistently zero sign of action in response to students' pleas.

Instead, the project had been opposed — former principal Paul Robinson and others worried solar panels would impact the "aesthetic" of the school. After spending millions on projects such as a new baseball field, funds were no longer sufficient to build panels.

The only place for students to

attempt to change this and advocate for solar panels is at board meetings, but the majority of students do not have time to attend board meetings because they are busy with their homework, sports and other activities. This inconvenience prevents many student voices from reaching the board.

The board should be focused on making decisions based on student demands. After all, we have to deal with the consequences of their decisions. So, the board voting system should also be modified to allow room for even more student representation. Student surveying (not parents) should dictate decisions such as the bell schedule.

These surveys should be advertised on platforms like social media and through announcements to ensure the majority of the student body is offered a voice.

Furthermore, this semester, there have been frequent instances of a "special" bell schedule consisting of daily tutorials and 85-minute periods that allow for spontaneous rallies and advisories.

These special schedule days prove teaching and learning can happen in 85-minute periods. For most of the year, though, members of the district board ignored stu-

dent and faculty survey input and sought to keep 90-minute periods in a new bell schedule next year. If this thinking had won out, there would be tutorials only on Blue Days next year as well as this year.

This is not a new issue: Students have been advocating for daily tutorials since the beginning of 2020. Despite this, the board has continued to delay making a final decision on the bell schedule for the 2022-2023 school year. In opposing a schedule with shorter class periods, some board members have cited parent concerns that students are not receiving enough instructional time.

A common-sense reform is to tighten eligibility requirements to become a board member, including term limits, to circulate student voice more effectively.

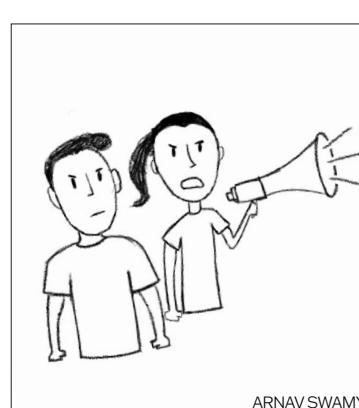
The majority of current board members have had students attend either SHS or LGHS in the past, but most of their children have graduated. Thus, their decisions don't impact them directly and they lack the current knowledge as current parents. Without a student at home providing crucial feedback, many board members lack insight into student opinions.

Board members should have a two-term limit, and voters should be voting for prospective board members who have stronger relevance to SHS or LGHS, such as having a child either currently enrolled or enrolled at either school within the past six years. Having term limits would ensure that board members don't hold onto outdated opinions of how schools should be run based on board members' experiences with the school from many years before.

While having board members with current students on the board may pose an issue of biased decisions and votes, there are ways to mitigate this as, such as encouraging each member to provide a reasoning behind their vote.

This allows the community to better hold board members accountable for their actions, as board members would be discouraged from favoring loud interest groups over the majority opinion to allow a more equal footing.

A lack of communication between the board and students coupled with parents enforcing their thoughts and board members often maintaining outdated information has led LGSUHSD to disregard student opinions on many matters. These ideas might help make the board accountable to its most important constituency. ♦



ARNAV SWAMY

Precalculus Honors classes should not transform curriculum to match new AP Precalculus offering

BY Nilay Mishra
& Arnav Swamy

On May 17, the College Board announced it would be introducing a new AP course and exam called AP Precalculus in order to better prepare students for the succeeding AP Calculus courses. For SHS, the new AP Precalculus curriculum does not align with the incentives of an already rigorous Precalculus Honors course and should not be integrated into its existing offerings.

Precalculus is meant as a transitory course to prepare students to thrive for the fast pace of a college-level calculus course. The course is generally a collection of facts and procedures thrown at the student in a fast-paced manner with little cohesion to it. As a result, it is difficult to decide what to include and what not to include in the course. Though College Board pioneers AP, this does not mean that AP Precalculus is the best of all precalculus courses.

The Precalculus Honors class at the school has a more natural structure that leads directly into calculus. Instead of being composed of four relatively disjoint units of equal weighting, it emphasizes connections between various portions of mathematics.

It even introduces certain ideas that are quite fundamental to calculus, without directly labeling them as such. For example, students are exposed to basic limits, a concept that is useful to learn preceding calculus, without formally defining the idea of limits, which is further explored in calculus.

The intuition gained from such explanations is valuable to calculus instruction, and students taking Precalculus Honors have developed enough mathematical maturity and intuition to learn the language of calculus more fluidly.

Furthermore, the final unit of the class directly introduces some of the ideas of limits and derivatives, such as the power reduction rule, which provides a smoother transition to students taking AP Calculus AB or BC in the following year.

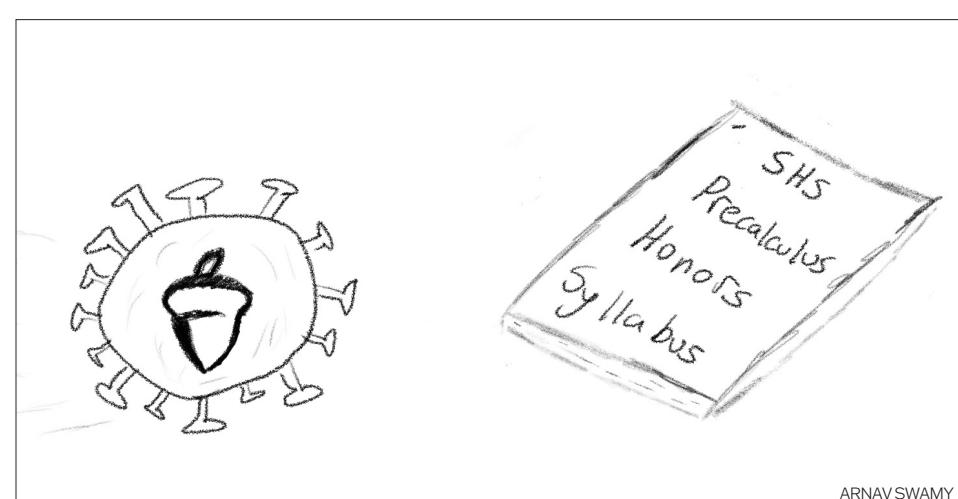
In addition, the current Precalculus Honors class has a strong emphasis on topics that show the power of concepts that students learn in Algebra II Honors, including conic sections and synthetic division. It even introduces the idea of rotated conics, something that is never used in calculus but nevertheless has deep mathematical value. Precalculus Honors also emphasizes vector fundamentals, a concept heavily used not only in the AP Calculus courses, but also in multivariate calculus — a subject that a large fraction of students in Precalculus Honors at the school will eventually take in college.

AP Precalculus does not place enough meaningful emphasis on such topics, relegating conics and vectors to about 2-6% of the total curriculum, making the transition for an AP Precalculus student much more rocky than a student who would take Precalculus Honors instead.

Nationally, about 15 to 20 percent of students taking a course in precalculus do not subsequently take a calculus course. For such students, precalculus is the pinnacle of their mathematics education, so an AP-level course in the topic should demonstrate the beauty, power and potential of mathematics to a certain degree of use to students. The AP Precalculus course fails to accomplish this goal with its lack of emphasis on many fundamental topics utilized in college courses.

On the other hand, the SHS Precalculus Honors course covers topics such as sequences and series, inequalities and coordinate geometry, which show the breadth of math while not compromising on depth anywhere.

Students taking the Precalculus Honors course at Saratoga would be well-prepared for the AP Precalculus exam if they wish to take it without centering the class around the goal of preparing for it. This bears a resemblance to how students taking the course were often recommended to take the SAT Math II exam before it was discontinued.



ARNAV SWAMY

Another concern about the AP Precalculus course is a lack of college credit attributed to it. The vast majority of students here take AP exams for college credit or for a more competitive chance in college admissions, but the implicit assumption for prospective STEM majors is that they will start with calculus or a more difficult course in their freshman year. As a result, several colleges are hesitant to grant college credit for a precalculus AP course, since the fact that precalculus is generally taught in college at all is mostly a result of inadequate high school preparation.

Even worse, the AP Precalculus curriculum focuses on skills that are not actually useful for the AP Calculus curriculum, which hinders its status as a pure prerequisite. For example, the current class plans to teach students how to use a graphing calculator to find critical points of functions and regression equations to model data.

However, finding critical points is a skill typically learned in calculus. Without knowing derivatives, students cannot have a proper understanding of critical points or what makes a point a local and/or global extrema, promoting a superficial learning mindset.

Furthermore, regression equations are a topic in AP Statistics, not AP Calculus. Many students take one but not the other, so AP Precalculus is sidetracked from its actual point. In our school's math curriculum, such things are covered solely in AP Statistics so that those interested in the subject can learn it if they want to as a separate topic.

A good deal of the curriculum in AP Precalculus, such as inverses of functions, polynomials, exponential, and logarithms are covered in Algebra II Honors, and so are quickly glossed over in the first couple units of Precalculus Honors. This helps provide more time to focus on more advanced topics at length, providing better preparation for subsequent calculus courses.

The curriculum for the Precalculus Honors course at the school has been refined and used for decades and has proven to provide the most effective bridge for students interested in pursuing calculus and higher degrees of mathematics in the future.

While students can still take the actual AP Precalculus exam at the end of the year, the focus of Precalculus Honors should not shift to meet the College Board's ideas of what a fundamental precalculus class should look like. ♦

Niche rankings matter as much as Falcon Top 10s

BY Michael Fok

Saratoga High ranks as the best public college prep high school, third best public high school, and 11th best STEM public high school on Niche's leaderboard for California. On many other lists such as US News and Schooldigger, SHS consistently ranks among the top high schools in the state and in the nation.

Sure, it sounds impressive, and as a Saratoga student, I should be proud of our rankings — but I'm not.

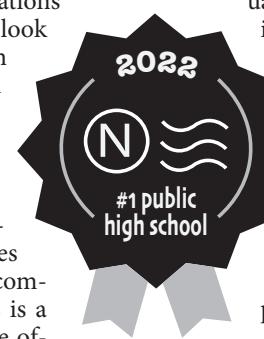
I wholeheartedly resent systems that dictate which schools are good and which are not. I take umbrage with websites that decide it's acceptable to say a school is "inherently" better than another according to methods that have historically favored schools located in a wealthier, more affluent

zip code.

Niche claims to rank schools based on empirical data gathered through surveys both they and federal organizations conduct. However, a deeper look into their grade calculation reveals how flaky their system really is.

More than half of their criteria include "surveys from students and parents." The kinds of students and parents that fill out surveys on sites like Niche likely belong to a community in which WiFi access is a given — communities that are often higher on the income spectrum.

Another significant factor in their evaluation is scores on standardized tests such as



the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), SAT and ACT. Standardized tests have long been under fire for only evaluating one's skill at taking standardized tests, which are more widely available to the more fortunate, since their parents can afford to spend money on training and tutors. Both of these criteria's economic inequalities inherently lead to ranking disparities on these lists.

Furthermore, high school rankings don't lead to anything productive. Colleges look at GPAs and essays — some look at test scores, but the number that do is dwindling. Rankings devalue work that students and teachers put in, as previous lists

have displayed a pattern of ranking schools in wealthier communities higher.

No ranking will ever fully capture a school's situation and fairly rank every factor contributing to a school's atmosphere. Instead of ranking best to worst, websites like Niche should keep the current measurement metrics, but discard the ranking system. Rather, they should reward schools that perform, without creating a list that places other schools at the bottom — in other words, the website should focus more on positive reinforcement.

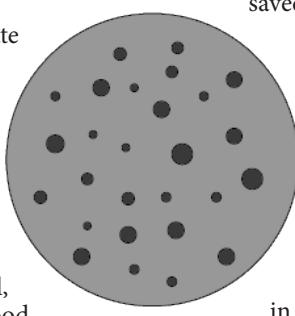
While it's amazing to hear SHS is nationally renowned for its excellence, I don't think it ultimately matters. Until the competitive and toxic ranking system is reworked, priding oneself on a flawed ranking is pointless. ♦

I've now given up on the school cafeteria cookies

BY Jonny Luo

When I bite into a chocolate chip cookie, especially one I paid \$1.75 for, I expect it to have all the qualities that make them great: a chewy, melted chocolate chip interior with a crunchy exterior that synergize into the most legendary of snacks. I expect them to be delicious, delightful, delectable and finger-licking good.

What I typically get from the cafe-



teria, however, leaves me wishing I had saved my \$1.75.

Don't get me wrong. Cafeteria cookies sometimes taste amazing, but quite often they are brittle and taste like cardboard sprinkled with sugar and chocolate. They taste terrible.

If only cafeteria cookies would taste great every time, the cookie connoisseur in me would be happy to fork over \$1.75 every time. ♦

Let's address the geese

BY Aiden Ye

Recently, the school has found itself home to a trio of wild geese prancing about. Recently, they even have had a litter of children, prancing around menacingly. They may look harmless, but this deceiving appearance hides their true motives: to torture loitering students by unashamedly pooping everywhere.

I typically sit near the cafeteria with my friends during lunch, but during the entirety of March, there was a goose squatting right in my usual spot. Around it lay a circle of goose poop, as if it were warning us not to get closer.

I remember slowly edging my way around the goose's ring of defense. After many precise and calculated steps, I finally reached the table without dirtying my shoes.

All this time, that goose just stared at me with its beady, black eyes. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see that its two compatriots left similar poop splotches across campus, forcing other students to also play hopscotch to get to their lunch spots.

After suffering the horror of these geese several times, I decided that enough was enough. Now I have been dining indoors, where the metal doors shield me from any vigilante goose. I'm safe. For now. ♦

If Roe v. Wade is overturned, it will jeopardize more than women's rights to bodily autonomy

BY Hannah Lee

On May 2, the Supreme Court confirmed a draft ruling written by Justice Samuel Alito that would overturn *Roe v. Wade*, potentially severing abortion access in more than a dozen states overnight. The decision is subject to change, as the Supreme Court will publish their final decision in late June or July, when the court releases the majority of decisions for its term. This leaked opinion should be a concern for all, regardless of gender or identity, as it threatens women's fundamental rights, upending decades-long efforts by activists and lawmakers to reshape legislature, from the individual level to the Constitutional.

For context, the leaked draft states that five of the nine justices disagree with the 1973 verdict, believing there should be no constitutional right that protects the right to abortion. This means individual states can choose if and when abortions are accessible.

Before *Roe v. Wade*, some states such as Michigan, West Virginia and Wisconsin had old laws in place, including limited exceptions to abortion. It is currently unclear whether these laws would automatically go into effect if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. However, legislators in 13 states have recently passed "trigger laws" ensuring that abortion bans (on both surgery and pill forms) will go into effect if it is reversed.

Many other states make no exceptions for abortion unless it would save the life of the mother (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi,

Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Tennessee) or unless the pregnancy was the result of incest or rape (Idaho, Kentucky, Wyoming and Utah).

If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, Texas would officially outlaw abortion, following up its S.B. 8 Bill last fall.

The possibility of *Roe* being overturned could initiate trigger laws in more states, resulting in consequences that not only question the civil liberties the Constitution ensures, but also question the progress regarding these liberal rights being made on the state and federal levels.

An article published by Politico states that five of nine judges (two of whom have been accused of sexual misconduct) have voted in favor of overturning *Roe*, giving politicians the power to strip women of their bodily autonomy and right to privacy. This brings light to a larger issue concerning the start of dismantling civil, fundamental rights.

The Supreme Court's actions and arguments over fundamental rights is of concern because we are moving backward in what should be considered an era of advancement and equality in the U.S.

Aside from the predominantly white male majority that voted to overturn *Roe*, white male voices in general have dominated the debate over abortion access. According to data from Axios, the majority of recent social media posts and press releases from Republicans in Congress that had the word "abortion" were all from men except

one, Senator Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee. Men claim to be experts of women and attempt to curb their bodily rights.

Despite the domination and overpowering presence of white, powerful men in the discussion of abortion rights, a poll conducted last week by Washington Post and ABC News found that 54% of Americans want the Supreme Court to uphold *Roe v. Wade*, while only 28% support overturning it. When broken down by party, it showed that 75% of Democrats, 53% of independents and 36% of Republicans want the ruling to remain in place. This means that the lack of extreme push back against the Supreme Court possibly overturning *Roe* can be attributed to the lack of broad and vocal support, stigma and fear.

We are moving backward in what should be considered an era of advancement and equality in the U.S.

And while many say abortion rights are simply a reproductive health issue, *Roe* affects more than just that. The overturning of *Roe* could result in other problems, such as damaging effects on the economy.

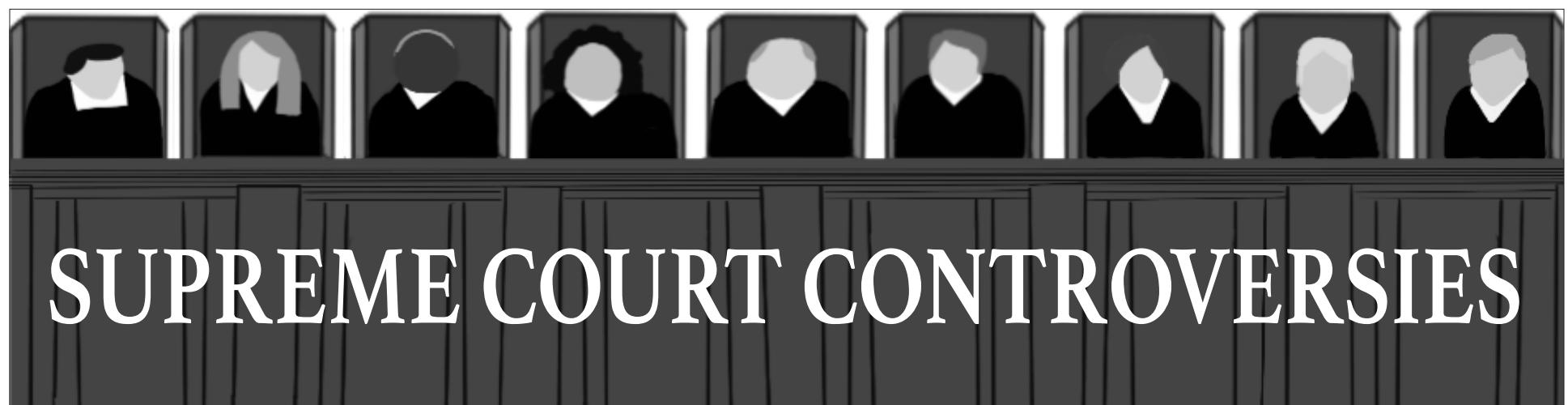
According to Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen, who testified on the Financial Sta-

bility Oversight Council's annual report on systemic risks to the financial sector, *Roe v. Wade* and access to reproductive health care, including abortion, helped lead to increased labor force participation and enabled many women to finish school, increasing their earning potential. This had a favorable impact on the wellbeing and earnings of their children and future generations to come.

Furthermore, this causes concern on a federal level, especially when it comes to abortion pills (mifepristone and misoprostol) that are accessible outside of the formal healthcare system. These organizations, which are typically located outside of the U.S., provide abortion medication that are not subject to the same enforcement, which can cause problems federally.

Concerned citizens can prevent potential consequences if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned by contacting state and federal lawmakers to encourage them to codify *Roe v. Wade* into a constitutional and statutory law. Individuals can also continue to show support for underprivileged people of color who are the most heavily impacted by the court ruling. Furthermore, those who have the ability to vote should vote for leaders who are pro-choice and promise to preserve civil rights.

Meanwhile, anyone who cares for economic and racial justice should voice their opinion against striking down *Roe v. Wade*. It should not be a time to call for "civility" when such a ruling acts against it, especially in an evolving time where bodily autonomy and freedom are in question. ♦



Graphic by AVANI KONGETIRA

SUPREME COURT CONTROVERSIES

Abolishing affirmative action ignores systemic inequalities

BY Tara Natarajan

On Jan. 31, the Supreme Court agreed to consolidate and hear two cases filed by Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) against Harvard University and the University of North Carolina, regarding the lawfulness of race-conscious admissions, widely known as affirmative action. The court's decision on both the Harvard and UNC cases will be crucial in determining the future of affirmative action in college admissions.

Ending race-conscious admissions will have disastrous effects on the acceptance rates of racial minorities — especially Black, Indigenous and Latinx students. Given that inequities in education are complex and deep-rooted, the lack of upward mobility for minority students must be addressed in the short term through race-conscious admissions. Affirmative action is far from perfect, but it is simply meant to be a reactionary measure to reduce the ongoing harm against students of color.

The Supreme Court's 2003 decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* maintained that the use of race as a factor among qualified applicants was constitutional, and was an important step toward racial integration and the compelling need for diversity on a college campus.

It is highly unlikely that the court will maintain this decision. Six of the nine justices are conservative and multiple openly oppose affirmative action: Chief Justice John Roberts has long been a staunch op-

ponent, declaring in a 2006 opinion, "It is a sordid business, this divvying us up by race."

Opponents of race-conscious admissions like billionaire conservative Peter Thiel often argue that the policies erode the purity of a meritocracy — after all, the privilege of admission to the nation's most prestigious institutions should depend on individual achievement as the criterion of merit.

This would be undisputed if we actually lived in a meritocracy where these factors equalized rather than exacerbated the disparities between the privileged and the marginalized.

Unfortunately, we live in a society where marginalized students of color are disproportionately enrolled in schools with poorer curriculum quality, significantly less funding than their majority white counterparts, less skilled teachers, not enough books, computers or laboratory equipment, minimal funding for extracurricular activities and reduced or no access to college preparatory resources.

Combined with the higher rates of poverty, violence and undiagnosed mental and physical health issues marginalized students face outside the classroom, it is impossible to fairly compare the admissions profile of a white suburban student from a well-resourced school with that of an impoverished Black student from an under-resourced school without taking into account their

circumstances. These disparities are almost inextricably linked to race as a result of centuries of deep-rooted racial oppression.

If affirmative action opponents truly cared about ending unfair advantages, they would have already tackled the issue of legacy admissions — the practice of prioritizing applicants with alumni parents or family — rather than disproportionately focusing on programs that help minority students. Compared to Harvard University's acceptance rate of about 6% from 2014 to 2019, applicants with legacy status enjoyed a 33% acceptance rate.

Most legacy students are white and wealthy: For the Harvard class of 2021, 46% of legacy students reported family income upwards of \$500,000, while almost 70% of legacy applicants were white. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research estimated that roughly three quarters of legacy students would have been rejected if their applications had been treated the same as white non-legacies. Despite this disparity, there is silence when it comes to the issue of legacy admissions.

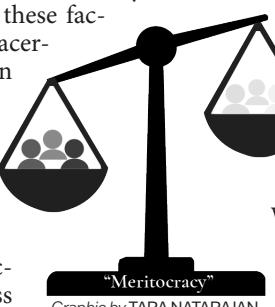
In the past, Students for Fair Admissions has expressed their stance against legacy admissions. However, given their vast resources, their inaction on this front compared to the fervent legal pursuit of race-based affirmative action demonstrates where their priorities truly lie.

It is important to examine the basis of the outrage against affirmative action — when marginalized groups are blamed for "taking the places" of white and Asian students, it conveys an unspoken sense of entitlement, an "us versus them" mentality, as if students who benefit from affirmative action are less deserving of admission.

That's not to say that race-conscious admissions are a perfect process. Although meant for racial minorities, white women have been some of the largest benefactors of affirmative action, especially in the workforce. Additionally, it can sometimes benefit affluent minorities more than working-class or impoverished ones.

The solution to these problems does not lie in abolishing race-conscious admissions. As long as steep racial disparities exist in the U.S., "blind" college admissions will continue to disproportionately favor wealthy and white applicants. Instead, working to reform affirmative action policies to further consider socioeconomic status, first-generation or immigrant status, will ensure that the policies can help those who truly need it.

Affirmative action is a band-aid, temporarily covering the gaping wound caused by long-term socioeconomic and racial inequities in America's education system. The Supreme Court must uphold it to protect minority students who are denied opportunities that wealthy, white students are handed. American society is not, and has never been, a true meritocracy for poor students of color. It is time to acknowledge that. ♦



Graphic by TARA NATARAJAN

School should offer more humanities courses

BY Christina Chang

Home to Apple, Google, Facebook and other successful tech companies, Silicon Valley is known as a leading region for tech innovation and development. Taking this into account, it's no wonder that Saratoga, one of 13 cities within this world-renowned area, houses a vast majority of STEM-focused students — SHS is even ranked as the 11th best high school for STEM in California by Niche.

Yet there remains a small but mighty group of humanities students trying to navigate their way through this STEM-oriented climate. I am one of those students.

While I don't have anything against STEM, I think STEM might have something against me. I've never done especially well in science, technology, engineering or math courses. Instead of staring at pages of incoherent numbers and variables, I'd much rather write a newspaper story for the Falcon.

However, my preferences aren't shared by most of my peers — the vast majority of students here are interested in computer science and engineering.

STEM's growing industry has created what seems like a choice between practicality and passion.

Because SHS course offerings are student-selected, there is a large disproportionality between the number of STEM and humanities courses available.

I'd like to see more humanities courses offered — of course, an equal number of humanities and STEM classes offered would not be feasible due to the skewed interest toward STEM.

But a few more humanities offerings would be beneficial so students of both disciplines could have a more level playing field.

During course selection season, I procrastinated for weeks due to the over-



whelming prominence of STEM courses over humanities courses.

Given 21 days to choose my courses, I ended up deciding only two days before selections were due because of the tough lack of choices.

I had trouble deciding on a math course that wasn't too difficult to handle but still challenged me; I ended up choosing Pre-Calculus, which was an easier math course that helped me to balance out other more rigorous courses like English 11 Honors and APUSH.

As STEM electives see increasing popularity, non-STEM classes face declining numbers: This year, there is only one Drama class for all four levels, and the specialized Journalism 1 course (previously an independent prerequisite for students going into newspaper or yearbook) was merged with yearbook this year and will be again next year.

Some non-STEM programs are at least holding steady. The music program has one of the largest freshman orchestras in years, totaling 52 students.

Still, if electives don't have enough signups, they will die.

According to school registrar Robert Wise, the maximum number of humanities courses a student could take cumulatively in all four years at SHS is 19, whereas the

maximum number of STEM courses is 32. (It is theoretically possible to take all the humanities courses or all the STEM courses and graduate.)

Additionally, at a competitive school like ours where students take the highest level courses offered to demonstrate academic rigor on college applications, humanities-focused students face a disadvantage: With an abundance of STEM-related AP or honors classes, humanities-based students simply don't have the same opportunities as their peers at some other schools.

Where other schools make AP World History, AP Psychology and AP Language and Composition available to juniors, the maximum number of humanities AP/honors courses a student at SHS can take in their four years is eight.

Meanwhile, the maximum number of AP/honors STEM courses is 12. For underclassmen at SHS, the only humanities AP classes available are AP European History and AP Art History.

I've had to seek humanities opportunities elsewhere — summer programs, community college classes and others — to satisfy my desire to learn more about them.

I've had some embarrassing instances where people, believing the stereotype of Silicon Valley kids as geniuses in STEM, mistook me for a STEM whiz. Once, in an

SAT preparation class, the math instructor was reviewing the class's practice tests and asked the class which questions we got wrong and would like to review.

Since only a few raised their hands to ask, I was reluctant to proclaim that I'm not the math genius Silicon Valley students are expected to be.

The teacher commented that he wasn't surprised students only needed to review a couple questions, given that Saratoga students often perform better in math than students from other areas.

Holding my packet with circled math questions to which I guessed at the answers, I thought: Well, this is awkward.

Through my past experiences, what I find most stressful about being a humanities-oriented student here is the external pressure to be adept at STEM subjects.

Seeing my peers and even students in lower grade levels taking higher math courses has made me feel inadequate.

From the social aspect, I've sometimes felt like the odd one out. Seeing my peers intending to go down the STEM pathway, added with parental pressures and STEM's growing industry, has created what seems like a choice between practicality (STEM) and passion (humanities).

Though I haven't decided what field I want to enter for my career, the external pressure to pursue STEM fields won't stop my passion for exploring the humanities.

More humanities course offerings at SHS would be a great first step, but until then, I will search for other means to explore the humanities and discover what specific area piques my interest. ♦

Editor's Note: The statistics mentioned above regarding the maximum number of STEM/humanities courses students can take was generated with the assumptions that said student takes the maximum number of courses every semester (7), passes all classes, doesn't worry about meeting college eligibility minimum requirements (UC/CSU, etc.) and is not enrolled in special education. For the purpose of calculations, humanities courses were defined as world languages, ethnic studies and art history courses. STEM courses include science, technology, engineering and math courses.

Mandates don't stop me from wearing my mask

BY Michael Fok

On March 14, California lifted its mask mandate for indoor public spaces, including schools.

The state said that, due to decreasing infection rates and case numbers in addition to increasing vaccination rates, masks were no longer absolutely necessary.

I thought it was a crazy decision and one I wasn't going to follow.

As soon as wearing masks became the norm in early 2020, I was hooked; every single time I left my house — even to walk my dog in my neighborhood — I had a mask on.

It's not that I'm deathly afraid of COVID — I had it once and beat it, and I'm also fully vaccinated. I simply don't want everyone to see my face.

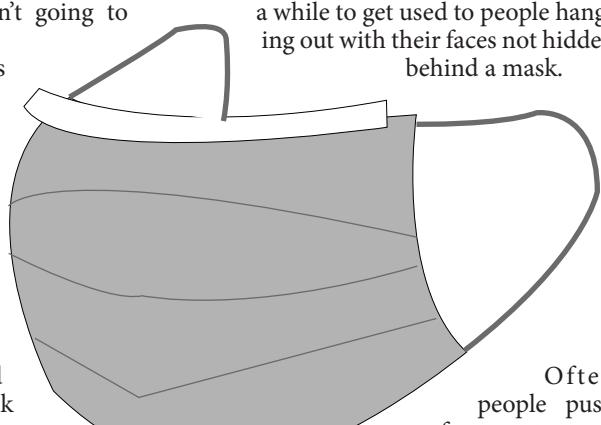
It's not that I don't want to be recognized — my face is hardly my most recognizable feature considering I've worn the same black jacket, plain white shirts and single-color

dark pants for over half a decade.

Rather, masks provide a convenient privacy barrier between me and everyone else.

If I'm talking to someone and not speaking at the moment, they have no idea if I'm dislodging Goldfish crumbs from my teeth or mouthing along to music.

They also just feel normal now. When I'm watching a movie, it takes a while to get used to people hanging out with their faces not hidden behind a mask.



Often people push for a return to "normal," but now it's hard to call pre-pandemic behavior "normal." Seeing someone not wearing a mask is almost as bizarre to me as watching a dog driving a car.

The new normal is wearing a mask every single day, and I have every intention of sticking with it for the foreseeable future. ♦

Both the school and county mask mandates have made zero sense

BY Shaan Sridhar

On March 13, 2020, Santa Clara County issued the nation's first stay-at-home lockdown order. Businesses and schools opened within the ensuing year, and the mask mandate was lifted. But for schools, mask mandates issued during the lockdown were never lifted until now — a full two years later.

What took so long?

Public health officials from the state and county failed residents and students, creating additional mask mandates that failed to follow science and common sense. Let's start with the state: Gov. Gavin Newsom has been hailed for his pandemic policies, but also been criticized — to the point that he faced a recall election.

I'm not here to argue whether masks are effective (because they are) or whether they should be implemented (leave that up to qualified experts).

Yes, nobody likes lockdowns and, yes, there are various parts that I disagree with. But at the same time, California was a nationwide leader in preventing the spread of COVID-19 — our state did a great job.

But what didn't make sense was that the state's guidance al-



lowed at-risk seniors to party at dive bars without masks, while forcing virtually-immune toddlers to mask up in ventilated preschools.

Kids and teens are far less susceptible to COVID-19 than every other group. There was no need to keep school mandates in place longer than the overall mandates. The county was had to adhere to the state's guidance but doubled down on overall masks, keeping the county mandate in place longer than the state.

Yet Santa Clara County boasts a 90.4% vaccination rate among those eligible, 16.2%

higher than the state. The county's booster rate is also high, at 68.9%, also 11.7% higher than the state average. In other words, the county is a far safer place to be in terms of COVID-19 than much of California. There is no reason the county's restrictions should have been longer than the state's.

Alas, these issues in our pandemic policy are no longer relevant as the state moves into its endemic phase. But as we develop frameworks for addressing future health crises, these public health mistakes are important to learn from for the future. ♦

Interpreting the nightmares that plague my sleep

BY Victoria Hu

After reading this story's headline, my classmates might think, "Wow, Victoria, you sleep? Who would've thought?"

Yes, I do.

Based on my perpetually tired-looking appearance, I've been told that I seem like a nocturnal bat who gets as much shut-eye as a junior with a caffeine addiction.

In reality, I'm proud to say I sleep at least an average of 6 hours nightly, a feat for almost any student here. I admit this is setting the bar lower than the kiddie-stepping-stool in my kitchen; but as they say, it's important to appreciate all the little achievements in life. However, sleep has recently become a problem for me — not because of how little of it I'm getting, but rather due to my recurring nightmares.

Usually, my peaceful power naps at 3 a.m. leave me feeling perfectly refreshed, but the occasional bone-chilling visions of being poisoned by the Costco samples lady or having baked potatoes for school lunch leave me sweating and shaking.

Instead of rambling on about this problem to my older sister, who sadly after hearing it for the 405th time has started to ignore my detailed and explicit nightmare explanations, I decided to embark on a personal mission to answer this necessary question:

How can I sleep soundly at night (well, technically morning) knowing that I'll

encounter such horrors in my dreams?

Being the problem-solver that I am, I resolved to find a way to calm down my hyperactive imagination during my sleep.

A quick Google search told me that a few ways I can prevent nightmares are establishing a sleep routine, cutting back on alcohol and recording my dreams in a diary. The first two suggestions were a no-go —

- 1) no one has the time or energy to build healthy habits, the ones who do are lying, and
- 2) I don't know why Quora just assumes that I have a drinking problem — so I figured the third option was worth a try.

Furthermore, I decided to go the extra mile by not just writing, but also interpreting my dreams.

Any English teacher will tell you that analysis is important, and since I care about my sleep more than I care about "The Bean Trees," it's only logical to apply the same

reasoning to my dream diaries.

I concluded that the perfect way to decipher the chaos in my subconscious was to consult a nice, reliable online dream dictionary for my diary entries. What could go wrong?

Nightmare: Being chased down by a psychopathic killer.

Analysis: Ah, classic. The dictionary says being chased means that I may be avoiding my issues, I am a close-minded person and I am running away from myself.

(Wait, is this implying that I'm the psychopathic killer?)

Wow. I'm flattered.

Personally, I wouldn't believe in the three interpretations the dictionary has, since it's blaming me for my nightmares, when

I think school is clearly the one

at fault.

I'd like to propose a different explanation: This dream is saying that schools need to tone it down with putting "The Most Dangerous Game" in the curriculum every year.

If I'm starting to become one with Rainsford in my sleep, they've probably taught it to me too many times.

Who said I'm avoiding my problems?

Nightmare: Crash landing into sub-Saharan Africa, befriending a giraffe after escaping the wreckage and then being forced to eat the giraffe for survival.

Analysis: It turns out that "to dream that a plane crashes suggests that you have set overly high and unrealistic goals for yourself" and that "to dream that you are riding a giraffe represents your desire to stand up amongst the crowd. You want attention, but aren't getting it."

Ouch. Still, the dictionary must have some magical mind-reading powers, because how else would it know about today's Socratic seminar?

I kept trying to direct the conversation back to myself, but it turns out that was too "high and unrealistic" of a goal. I just want some participation points, is that so much to ask for?

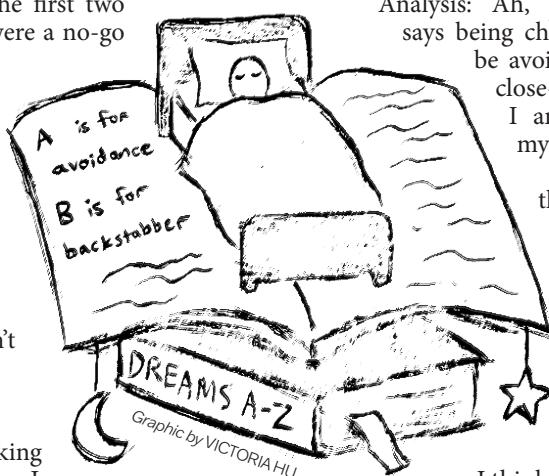
Ultimately, psychoanalyzing myself through nightmare interpretation has allowed me to realize some deeply profound truths:

1. I'm a coward who runs away from my problems. I might also be a killer psychopath.

2. I'm an overreaching attention-seeker who betrays and turns my good giraffe friends into stew.

3. Maybe consulting this dream dictionary isn't the best thing to do if I need some moral support in my life.

Well, it was worth a try. ♦



Elementary school memories: building illegal dams at school

BY Jonny Luo

As students from all grades charge head-first into the emotional roller coaster that is APs and finals season, it's nice for all of us to take a moment and reflect on our childhood and the happy memories they contain and bring us some happiness amidst the hecticness of May.

If you're reading this, stop and take a few moments to take a trip down memory lane and reflect on some happy moments from your childhood. What was your favorite TV show?

What are some cherished memories you had with your friends? Now that you've taken a few minutes to think of your own memories, here's one of mine:

The rain poured outside as my fifth-grade teacher Mrs. Kambish finished her lecture on the American Revolution, but my mind lingered far from mundane descriptions of war generals and analyses of "My Brother Sam Is Dead."

After she dismissed us, my friends and I eagerly rushed down to a patch of dirt next to the basketball courts, where our freshly made dam sat in all its glory.

Little rivulets of water streamed down the tarmac towards the dirt, trickling into a crudely dug canal where the rainfall flowed into our dam. I stood there for a few minutes, soaking wet, grinning proudly at our prized creation before heading to the parking lot with my friends.

When you imagine a dam, you probably picture towering monstrosities of cement and



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

hydroelectric turbines that are vital to America's water supply, but my dam was different. It was crude, could barely hold more than two gallons of water and was basically a hole in the ground.

But it was my hole in the ground.

Our project was hatched when my friends and I decided to build a dam in the dirt at Argonaut

Elementary School. It was a meticulously planned affair — at least to my 9-year-old mind.

Every day during recess, my friends and I would file out of class, some holding freshly filled-up water bottles, and walk to the construction site. When we arrived, those with bottles would dump their water into the hole designated for the

dam, while everyone else would grab sticks, spoons or whatever utensils they could find and start digging.

The water softened the dirt

enough so that it was easy to dig. Toiling day after day, we always made incremental progress. We would return to our classrooms with dirty hands, but we were happy. We'd rinse our hands off and get back to learning. One day, however, we received bad news.

While my friends and I were happily working on our dam, the principal came by and told us to shut down the operation.

The government funding had just run out.

Just kidding — a school employee reported that the dam was a tripping hazard, and we were forced to cover it with dirt, pine cones and a random plank of wood.

I find it kind of funny that the only thing I remember about my elementary school principal is her decision to shut down the dam-digging operation. I don't remember her face or her name, but I do remember that she said "no" to our dam.

Now, the remnant of my dam still sits at Argonaut, though it's little more than an unrecognizable divot in the ground, but to me, that divot will always remind me of some of happiest moments of my life. ♦

Quitting video games didn't change my life

BY Vinay Gollamudi

Tuesday evening.

The next day, my decision to not work on Monday came back to haunt me. Gone with the warm embrace of video games was also my incentive to finish early, so I worked slower than usual.

Instead of going to bed at 9:30, I ended up sleeping an hour later.

Although I was anxious to get back to gaming, I had already resigned myself to the fact that the console wasn't coming back until Friday.

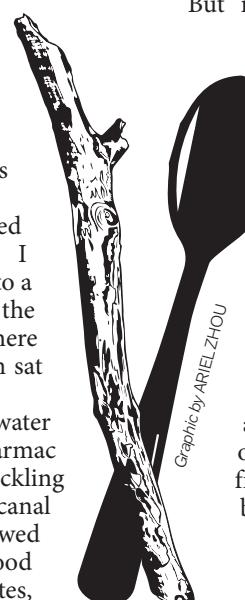
I missed the feeling of freedom that came from driving around in "Watch Dogs" and "Forza Horizon," as well as

the pure joy that came from smoking someone in NBA2K or Madden. Instead of serving as a fuel for me to finish my work, my detox had started to backfire on me since I kept on getting distracted.

Wednesday and Thursday went on similarly.

I still couldn't finish my homework and had to work during tutorial and lunch to complete everything. At this point, I realized that video games were more of a benefit to my life than an actual detriment.. After what seemed like an eternity, Friday finally arrived and I got back to gaming. A feeling of relief washed over me as I indulged in my favorite pastime. My week had been even more unproductive and stressful than usual without the additional source of enjoyment.

The lesson I learned: Not all distractions are bad. Sometimes we need a brainless pastime to keep us going, that's why I won't be quitting video games, no matter how many times people tell me they're an unproductive waste of time. ♦



Graphic by ARNEL ZHOU



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

I realized that video games were more of a benefit to my life than an actual detriment.

I had a relatively light workload on the Monday of my experiment. Normally, I probably would have played video games for a couple hours before getting started on my work due on Wednesday; however, without the allure of video games calling me and encouraging me to work faster, I simply found other ways to waste time: browsing social media and YouTube on my phone. To no one's surprise, I went to sleep unsatisfied with my performance and still anticipating all the unfinished work for

1. What's your favorite lie that you have told?
"I once told a bunch of kindergartners and first graders that July 4th was on September 16th"
- Adeena Kadire (10)

2. What's the last text you sent?
"Why are you a pologizing?"
- Maya Tian (9)

3. What Starbucks drink would you order for the rest of your life?
"Triple shot mocha with almond/oat milk"
- Priyanka Meduri (10)

4. What are you allergic to?
"Kiwis"
- Nikila Bashyam (9)

5. How often do you jaywalk across Saratoga Sunnyvale?
"Every day"
- Matthew Zhang (10)

6. What song would you pick to describe your life?
"It'd be 'Numb Little Bug' by Em Beihold. I even changed one of my passwords to be 'a little bit tired of life' because I felt like that's where I'm at right now."
- Maithili Kulkarni (11)

7. What time do you wake up in the morning?
"8:00"
- Cherilyn Hu (10)

8. If you were an animal cracker what shape would you be?
"Giraffe"
- Lin Jenson (9)

11. What's your go-to thing from the school vending machines?
"Vitamin water"
- Merriam Labban (11)

12. What is your favorite smell?
"Fear"
- Zitong Wang (10)

13. What's has "Not in pocket."
the worst thing a student done in your class?
"A student came with weed stuffed in their It was still burning."
- Megan Laws (English teacher)

14. If you were a required english book what would you be?
"The Bean Trees because no one would read me"
- Esabella Fung (10)

15. If money wasn't in the question, what would you do all day?
"Professional twitter retweeter"
- Neha Natu (9)

16. If you were in a zombie apocalypse, what is the very first thing you would do?
"Find my family and just sit there and cry together"
- Maithili Kulkarni (11)

17. Do you think the quad's resident geese should stay?
"Honk"
- George T. Goose (G)

18. What's your skin care routine?
"I rinse my face with body wash."
- Cary Chen (12)

23. What's your favorite time of day?
"The middle of the night when I'm awake and nobody else is and I'm either contemplating my reality or having a mental breakdown."
- Maithili Kulkarni (11)

24. If you could have dinner with any person, dead or alive, who would that person be?
"Beyonce"
- Ben Li (12)

19. What was your most recent photo in your camera roll?
"A picture of the inside of Mr. Bayona's classroom as it is secretly gaming some dots 2 and streaming it on twitch."
- Priyanka Meduri (10)

20. If you had to read one section of the newspaper for the rest of your life which section would it be?
"Top 10"
- Cary Chen (12)

21. Which staff member here is your role model?
"Torrens! He has a happy positive can-do attitude and helps whenever he can"
- Aneri Shah (9)

22. Do you suffer from any odd phobia?
"Those little balls of hair that look like bugs when you can't tell if they're bugs or not unless you stick your face super close"
- Gracie Sun (10)

25. What is the biggest lie you've ever told?
"Once in fifth grade I got a 53% on a math test and I told my mom I accidentally flushed it down the toilet but in reality, I hid it behind the couch so one day she was cleaning the couch and found it."
- Nicole Lu (12)

26. If you were famous, what would you be famous for?
"Dying. Like a famous serial killer victim"
- Lin Jenson (9)

27. What is something nobody knows about you?
"I'm actually not 4'9"; I'm 5'"
- Melody Lin (11)

28. If you could live in any movie what would it be and which character would you be?
"Mamma Mia! Donna or her daughter"
- Merriam Labban (11)

29. What are you most proud of yourself for?
"Where I am now, after fending for myself without my parents' support in college"
- Megan Laws (English teacher)

30. Would you rather join Newspaper or Yearbook?
"Newspaper"
- Logical Thinkers

31. What would you do with \$100K?
"Donate it to charity, invest the rest in my future business"
- Merriam Labban (11)

32. Where do you want to be in 10 years?
"Cambridge, Massachusetts"
- Matthew Zhang (10)

33. Who would you want with you if you were stranded on a deserted island?
"My mother"
- Luke Stratakos (10)

34. Can you tell me about your favorite memory?

"My senior year of high school, my parents sent me to Costa Rica by myself. The living situation was so different there, and I got to build part of the plumbing system, [...] Right before the pandemic, I took my husband there and we saw how much everything has changed."
- Megan Laws (English teacher)

35. How much money do you think you're worth?
"\$2.50"
- Maya Tian (9)

9. What do you regret?

JUNIOR WISHES SHE HAD EXPLORED MORE HOBBIES WHEN SHE WAS YOUNGER

By Christina Chang

Junior Maithili Kulkarni identified her biggest regret as "not trying more things when [she] was younger." With orchestra, which she joined in fourth grade, being her only extracurricular she's stayed with since childhood — she plays the viola — she wishes she had learned more sports, music or languages.

"Now everybody in high school is so good at things, but they started when they were like 5 years old," Kulkarni said. "When I was 5, I should have tried more things, and maybe if I liked something, I would have kept more hobbies until now."

This is a regret she has felt since elementary school. Kulkarni recalls when her friend asked if she wanted to play soccer

in fifth grade. Even then, because all her friends had started playing the sport when they were in first grade and were skilled, she felt "out of it" and thought it was too late to join the sport.

Although her mindset has now changed and she is willing to explore new hobbies despite a late start, new factors have posed difficulties. For example, she started learning guitar in September 2020, but has not had time to continue taking classes to maintain the hobby.

"I've been so busy that I had to stop the [guitar] lessons," Kulkarni said. "It's sad because it's something you'd like to be doing that you can't really give time to." Still, she sees college as another opportunity. Though grades will still matter, Kulkarni believes there will be more time for pursuing other activities.

"Once I get to college, I'm just going to do whatever I want," Kulkarni said. ♦



Kulkarni

10. What are your pet peeves?

SOMETIMES, MERE QUOTIDIAN HABITS DRIVE STUDENTS THE MOST BANANAS

By Hannah Lee & Nidhi Mathihalli

According to Merriam-Webster, the term "pet peeves" refers to "a frequent subject of complaint." From slow-walkers who crowd the halls to loud and obnoxious open-mouth chewing, many of us have pet peeves — it is indeed an inescapable part of the human condition.

Junior Kexin Yang's pet peeves

include "violent leg and table shaking" along with the intolerable default iPhone alarm ringtone.

"I get that leg-bouncing is an unconscious habit for many people, but it's not so fun when you're trying to take your [AP US History] final and your deskmate is shaking the whole table," Yang said. "I was trying to focus, and suddenly my multiple-choice test was shaking like there was an earthquake, which was a major bother." Yang said another one of her pet

peeves is the iPhone ringtone. Not only is it "anxiety-inducing," but the noise brings Yang unpleasant memories because her parents used the alarm to signify "homework time" after dinner.

"I was trying to focus, and suddenly my MCQ test was shaking like there was an earthquake."

JUNIOR Kexin Yang



The ringtone represents a traumatic experience," Yang said. "Please, please silence your phones." ♦

Additional Reporting by LENAARIBI, MEHER BHATNAGAR, CHRISTINA CHANG, LYNN DAI, VICTORIA HU, HANNAH LEE, JONNY LUO, SHANNON MA, NIHIL MATHIHALLI AND SARAH ZHOU

36. When you were younger, what job did you aspire to have?

By Lynn Dai & Jonny Luo

century fashion designer known for popularizing a sporty, casual chic style for women after World War I. She hopes to attend NYU for business management, take a two year program for fashion design, gain experience through fashion internships and ultimately create her own company.

"I really enjoy the process of designing something and putting it together, and I like making it up as I go," Labban said. "Nothing like fits what I want to do."

As a second grader, junior Merriam Labban remembers showing off the first ever dress she had made to her parents. A short, simple pearly-gold dress studded with rhinestones and a V-Neck that hugged her body, Labban remembers this as the moment that kindled her interest in fashion design.

She would often look at clothing and decide that she wanted to tweak it in different ways to suit her taste. Her mother usually provided fabric, and a family friend generously gave her a sewing machine to use. She had initially tried hand sewing, but the sewing machine helped her tremendously.

Labban's style is "continuously changing," with her current style being "hippie boho" — a style in which natural fabrics, retro patterns, neutrals and warm shades merge with a '70s aesthetic. To make clothing, Labban first sketches designs, then purchases mate-

rials at JOANN Fabrics. Most pieces take her a couple of hours to complete; however, some dresses, like the two she made for the benefit fashion show, take over a week.

For Labban, making dresses and other clothes is therapeutic.

"[Making clothes] keeps my mind busy with something and away from school-work," Labban said.

English teacher Megan Laws has also stuck with her child dream profession: Laws has been interested in becoming a teacher since she was 3, but she also wanted to become an Olympic gymnast for most of her childhood.

Initially inspired by the "Magnificent Seven," U.S. Olympic gymnasts who competed at the 1996 Games in Atlanta, Laws later discovered that becoming one

required a level of work and dedication that few can match.

"I learned that many professional gymnasts don't actually go to school," she said. "That was the turning point for me because I didn't want to miss out on the school experience — I liked having a teacher and seeing my friends."

It wasn't until her first semester of college that Laws decided to fully commit to teaching. She ended up transferring to San Diego State University (SDSU) to study Modern Literature.

Laws later transferred to St. Mary's College after finding the campus of SDSU too rambunctious.

Despite the difficulties she has experienced, Laws said she is glad to be where she is today.

"I had lots of difficulties with my family in high school and they didn't support me going to college, but I'm proud of myself for being able to push through those obstacles and get to where I'm working now in such an amazing area," Laws said. ♦

37. How many togas slips have you received?
"5"
- Nicole Lu (12)

43. If you could have a superpower what would it be?
"unlimited cheese"
- Sameera Kapur (9)

44. What's the most illegal thing you've done?
"I almost poisoned someone by giving them a crepe with borax disguised as powdered sugar"
- Sameera Kapur (9)

45. If you could freeze time for an hour what would you do?
"Rob Canada's maple syrup reserves"
- Sameera Kapur (9)

46. Have you ever had a crush on a teacher?
"Everyone simp for Sean Clark"
- Annabelle Miin (9)

47. What was the biggest turning point in your life?
"Learning I'm a Canadian citizen"
- Sameera Kapur (9)

48. What was the scariest moment of your life?
"Watching Neha simp"
- Maya Tian (10)

49. What do you want to be done with your body after you die?
"I want to be cremated"
- Melody Lin (11)

50. What is your favorite place?
"Beach/Hawaii"
- Merriam Labban (11)

51. Who/what has had the biggest impact on who you are today?
"The experiences I've had teaching and traveling to places have really impacted who I've become. Of course, the people along the way that I've met have also influenced me, but I think having these new perspectives and different learning experiences have impacted me the most."
- Megan Laws (English Teacher)

52. How would you define yourself in three words?
"Interesting, Resilient, Cheerful."
- Maithili Kulkarni (11)

53. What's your favorite word?
"Mar (Sea in Spanish)"
- Merriam Labban (11)

54. If you were to star in a reality TV show, what would it be?
"Friends"
- Matthew Zhang (10)

55. What is your favorite restaurant in Saratoga?
"Bai Tong"
- Maithili Kulkarni (11)

56. Last time you felt really happy?
"Last week, I visited friends I haven't seen in a year"
- Natalie Poon (9)

57. What made you smile today?
"Steven Hse said don't do drugs because it costs too much"
- Annabelle Miin (9)

58. Worst group project of the year?
"The simile project in Sheehy World History"
- Matthew Zhang (10)

59. If you could kill any celebrity, who would it be?
"Skete Davidson"
- Henrik Zhang (12)

60. If you were an animal what would it be?
"A worm."
- Hannah Munson (10)

61. Are you team windows or doors?
"Team Windows"
- Margaret Laver (10)

62. If you were in a zombie apocalypse, what is the very first thing you would do?
"Find my family and just sit there and cry together"
- Maithili Kulkarni (11)

63. If you were to commit a crime and get away with it, what would it be?
"Murder"
- Annabelle Miin (9)

64. What's one piece of advice you would tell your younger self?
"Step out of your comfort zone more"
- Megan Laws (English Teacher)

65. What Euphoria character would you be?
"Lexi"
- Dana Steinke (12)

66. If you were a tree what type of tree would you be?
"A dead tree"
- Melody Lin (11)

67. What's a recent lie you have told?
"That I had a good day"
- Mia Tian (9)

68. What is the biggest mistake you've made?
"Meeting all of you"
- Dana Steinke (12)

69. What's the most entertaining thing you've seen a teacher/classmate do?
"Cochrums uterus dance"
- Neha Natu (9)

70. What's the most trouble you have been in?
"My parents caught me on a date with a boy, after they told me I was not allowed to date yet."
- Megan Laws (English Teacher)

71. What is your most favorite thing about yourself?
"My favorite thing about myself is that I am very creative."
- Megan Laws (English Teacher)

72. What was your favorite TV show as a kid?
"Full House"
- Megan Laws (English Teacher)

73. What would you write to your future self?
"Don't worry so much about the future, just live in the now."
- Megan Laws (English Teacher)

'The Secrets of Dumbledore' contributes positively towards a declining franchise

BY JonnyLuo

My friends and I went to the local AMC 14 theater over Spring Break to watch "The Secrets of Dumbledore" — the third installment of the Fantastic Beasts series, which is set half a century before the events of the Harry Potter series and follows the magical side of WWII.

Though I expected a large turnout for a movie from Warner Bros's biggest franchise, I walked into the theater to find it practically empty, which was reflected in the movie's box office sales: The movie grossed only \$43 million domestically in the first box office weekend, 42% and 30% lower than the first and second movie, respectively.

Given the first two movies' beautiful visuals but mediocre, tangled plotlines and an overabundance of characters, I had low expectations; however, I came out of the movie thoroughly impressed.

The first two movies have a major problem with pacing, likely due to Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling — who was the sole writer of the first two screenplays — being unused to the limited time allotted in movies.

In books, writers have all the time (words) they need for complicated plotlines, but screenplay writers don't have that luxury. Rowling didn't seem to get that, so many of the characters, including Newt Scamander (the magical zoologist protagonist), seem sidelined in their own stories.

For example, the first installment of the series titled "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" disappoints because of its lack of fantastic beasts and unfit protagonist



Courtesy of WWW.RAPPLER.COM

Fantastic Beasts "The Secrets of Dumbledore" flyer broadcasting the three main characters.

character, Newt, who doesn't seem necessary to the story's plot. The second installment of the series titled "The Crimes of Grindelwald" similarly disappoints. I still know little about the actual crimes of Grindelwald, and the movie features multiple irrelevant characters.

However, the third movie turns things around. The first 10 minutes come complete with some of the coolest creatures shown in the Wizarding World, including a blue bird that puffs up into a balloon and turns into the most amazing dinosaur-esque magical bird I've ever seen — to be fair, I've only seen a few. And, the movie adheres to its name; I really did learn about "the secrets of Dumbledore."

Despite my initial anticipation for the plot to center mainly on Albus Dumbledore, it focuses on the family as a whole. The mov-

ie covers Albus and Grindelwald's romance and falling out, Albus's sister's death and most importantly, the origins of Credence, who was involved in the first two movies, as a Dumbledore.

Much of this improvement in the plot of the movies comes from the hiring of screenwriter Steve Koves, who adapted all of the Harry Potter books into movies. Koves knew which unnecessary characters to sideline, such as Newt's love interest and Nagini.

The plot provides an aura of mystery and thrill, with humor injected in all the right places. Due to Grindelwald's clairvoyance, Albus comes up with a complicated plan that confuses even the watchers making me feel like I was a character in the movie actually caught up in the confusion. Unlike many other movies, I was unable to predict what would happen next as the movie exe-

cutes plot twists very well.

Another big improvement in the movie is that Newt is much more pivotal to the story. In short, the plot of the movie centers around a magical creature, and Newt's skills as the only magical zoologist entangles him in Albus's plot to stop Grindelwald.

Additionally, the movie continues a legacy of stellar CGI that characterize past films in the franchise.

For example, the small fight between Albus and Grindelwald has some of the coolest CGI I've seen to date, and I loved seeing up close and personal magic, which is something I've seen in other shows but never in the Harry Potter universe.

However, although the plot has been improved and the CGI remains exemplary, I have one major gripe with the movie and the series as a whole: It tries to tell two different stories at once. The first is Newt's and his fantastic beasts, and the second is Albus and Grindelwald's magical feud. In this movie and the previous two, it felt like there wasn't enough screen time for either of these two stories; as a result, viewers are left dissatisfied. Creating separate series for the two storylines would've solved this issue, allowing viewers to become more invested in both stories.

The final verdict: The movie is a vast improvement on the first two installments, making me look forward to the last two, which are expected to come out in the next four to five years. If you end up having three hours of time during the busy weeks leading up to finals, I strongly suggest you take a break and watch an amazing movie from the Harry Potter universe. ♦

Period drama highlights South Asian traditions

BY SanjoliGupta & KavyaPatel

"Bridgerton," a thrilling romantic Netflix series introduced to the world in the midst of quarantine, has since grown into a stunning international sensation.

Set during the Regency time period, the show follows the influential Bridgerton family as they navigate the hurdles of London high society. Following the recent release of the second season — which follows the family's eldest son, Antony Bridgerton, and his eventual wife, Kate Sharma — Bridgerton has set the bar higher for period dramas.

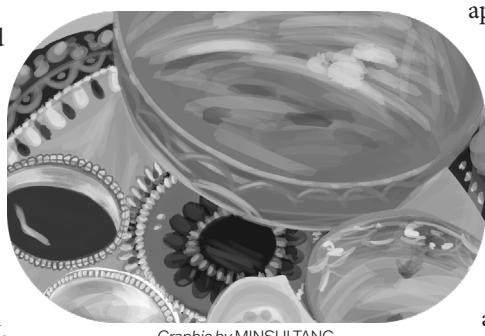
The secret behind the show's stunning success lies in its accurate portrayal of South Asians.

Mainstream productions like "Never Have I Ever," portray degrading stereotypes of South Asians, often depicting them as undesirable, unattractive and nerdy.

Even in Bollywood movies, there is an emphasis on light-skinned actors being cast in main roles and darker-skinned actors being cast as antagonists. Such colorism is detrimental to the representation of different parts of India.

According to the New York Times, colorism originates from the colonial rule of India and Bollywood's casting of primarily light-skinned actors as protagonists. In 2018, the selling of 14 common steroid creams without a prescription was banned, but these creams are still widely used because the desire for light skin continues.

However, Simone Ashley, who is Tamil and has dark skin, is cast as the main ac-



Graphic by MINSUITANG

tress in Season 2 of "Bridgerton," giving South Asians the representation that has been consistently lacking in the film industry.

An important factor that sets the second season apart from other shows is the seamless integration of South Indian culture, without it being pushed forward as a diversity quotient.

One particular scene that stood out was when Kate Sharma was oiling her sister Edwina's hair, a common practice in India used to help soften and increase hair length.

Right before Edwina's wedding, the other two Sharma's were applying haldi to each other.

The show itself states that haldi is believed to help find someone a worthy partner in some Indian cultures.

Additionally, in many Indian households, the younger sibling often refers to their older sister as "Didi" and the season applied this when Edwina (the younger sister) always referred to Kate as Didi.

These subtle connections to Indian culture give viewers a sense of belonging and recognition.

With "Bridgerton," viewers can finally see an accurate portrayal of South Asians, something many Bollywood movies are still lacking.

Hopefully, in the near future, film productions will view "Bridgerton" as a role model for implementing accurate depictions of South Asians and minorities as a whole instead of basing them solely on stereotypes. ♦

Netflix show advocates racial diversity poorly

BY SarahThomas

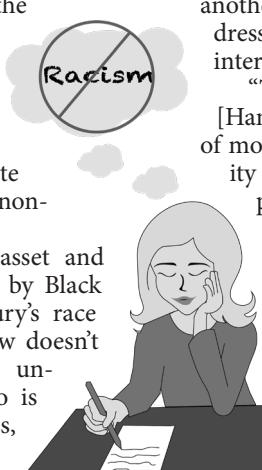
After Season 2 of "Bridgerton" — a Netflix period drama based on a historical fiction book series by Julia Quinn — was released, many South Asian viewers felt their culture was accurately portrayed and respected. Although Season 2 did a great job of exploring race, the first season of "Bridgerton" still contains a problematic take on race relations in the regency era.

One element that sets "Bridgerton" apart from other period dramas was its colorblind casting. For this reason, many white characters were played by non-white actors.

For starters, Simon Basset and Lady Danbury are played by Black actors. Basset and Danbury's race being changed in the show doesn't affect their characters, unlike Queen Charlotte who is played by a Black actress, even though her real-life counterpart was white. Both Charlotte and George III are historical figures, but their portrayals are not historically accurate.

This is where the race problem in "Bridgerton" begins — rewriting history to frame George III as a hero gives viewers an untrue representation, painting him as a savior of minority communities when in reality he was nothing close to it. In the episode "An Affair of Honor," Danbury asserts that "we were two separate societies, divided by color, until a king fell in love with one of us."

This exchange leads viewers to believe that their marriage ended racism in the regency era, allowing people of all races to live in Europe as nobles, romanticizing the



Graphic by ARIEL ZHOU

era and character, while completely ignoring George III's massive impact on the slave trade and his contributions to racism.

The implication that George III's actions bridged the racial divide and ended racism is problematic and a misrepresentation. This phenomenon, known as historical revisionism, absolves historical figures of their misdoings.

Daveed Diggs, a Black cast member of another colorblind piece, "Hamilton," addressed the issue of omitting slavery in an interview with Bustle.

"There's the issue of like, what did [Hamilton's authors], and a whole crew of mostly white producers have the capacity to tell honestly?" Diggs said. "What parts of the story were ones that they could comment on in any sort of real, grounded way?"

Diggs' comment can be applied to "Bridgerton" as well: What can a crew of white writers say about racism in an accurate way?

It is ethically suspect for a white crew to turn a racist king into a champion of equality.

Writers must make a choice between being faithful to the historical characters they choose to represent or creating fictional characters. Neither of these options would have detrimental effects on the plot. If George III and Charlotte became King Linus and Queen Rachel, the show wouldn't lose any substance and it wouldn't rewrite history either.

Historical revisionism is a dangerous trap that writers should try to avoid, especially in time periods where race is a delicate issue. Since period dramas and historical fiction continue to climb in popularity, it's important for writers to keep integrity in mind throughout the writing process. ♦

Senior explores emotions through art

BY Minsui Tang

Trumpet players, ballet dancers and purse makers — these are the kinds of artists in senior Shani Chiu's (they/them) family. Following in their family's footsteps, Chiu began their artistic journey at age 6; over time, they grew to love illustration and wanted to pursue it as a career.

When Chiu entered high school, they had already considered art, specifically illustration or character design, as a career. Thus, many of Chiu's classes are art-focused this year, including AP Drawing.

Growing up, Chiu's brother, Ricky Chiu, served as their main inspiration to pursue art.

"I would watch him draw in his room, and it was pretty mesmerizing because I loved his art style," Chiu said.

At 28, Ricky now works as a freelance concept artist and has been in the field since 2015. Despite their 10 year age difference, Chiu and Ricky have always remained close.

Apart from traditional drawings, Chiu has also experimented with sculpting and printmaking, which are more hands-on and intricate. Compared to pencils and graphite, which are their favorite mediums to use, Chiu found it more difficult to control the medium since "one little detail could ruin the entire piece."

They have also worked with many different mediums, including charcoal, chalk, colored pastel, oil, acrylic, watercolor, ink and markers.

Chiu's mom is very supportive of their passion. When Chiu was 12, their mom took them to Chinese calligraphy lessons so they would gain exposure to more mediums of expression.

"My calligraphy teacher was extremely strict. He told my mom, 'Your daughter is not good at calligraphy, so she can't be good at art,'" Chiu said. "I was bad at it, but I didn't take that remark to heart and just continued to pursue my passion."

Having the patience and motivation to finish a piece is one of the biggest challenges Chiu faces when drawing; nonetheless, art also has become something Chiu can "easily lose [themselves] in." Most days, Chiu estimates they spend around six hours drawing and sketching.

In 2019, Chiu won a Scholastic Art & Writing Silver Key with the observational drawing "Tea Party."



Chiu

Though it remains one of their greatest achievements, they were surprised to hear they had been selected as one of the reward recipients, since they felt that the piece was less reflective of their creative thoughts and more of their technical skill.

They were also a part of a Twitter group in 2020 that gathers artists who draw pop culture idols while incorporating the artists' own culture: For example, inspired by their Japanese heritage, Chiu drew Yeojin from the K-Pop girl group Loona in a kimono, and the drawing was featured in a fan-made magazine that includes a collection of artists like Chiu who make fan art for Loona.

They began commissioning their work to get a taste of being a professional artist in 2020. Thus far, they have sold more than 10 pieces. Currently, head shots cost around \$20; torso and up drawings cost \$40; and full-body drawings cost around \$60.

"My drawings were a lot cheaper when I first started, because I thought my drawings weren't valuable enough," Chiu said. "I do see more value in my drawings now, but probably not to the extent of what other people would think."

However, they soon realized that having others dictate their style and elements in their works can be an arduous task; instead of art being a relaxing hobby, they constantly wondered whether their commission was valid in others' eyes, in addition to the pressure of deadlines set by their customers.

However, Chiu has also found commissions to be helpful when experiencing art block, as the guidelines and requirements provide them with an idea of what to put down on paper. Although there is not a common theme across all of Chiu's works, they enjoy drawing darker concepts to reflect their fears.

In August 2021, for their AP Drawing class, Chiu started a portfolio pertaining to the concept of phobias.

The time to complete drawings range from one hour to a few months. Currently, they have 15 pieces including eight completed drawings and seven sketches, which explore concepts including thalassophobia (fear of the ocean) and automatonophobia (fear of animatronics).

One of Chiu's favorite drawings was inspired by the K-Pop band A.C.E, with members Jun and Chan swimming together in blue and red hanboks, respectively.



Courtesy of SHANI CHIU

In November of 2021, Chiu completed a chalk piece inspired by germaphobia, the pathological fear of germs, aversion to dirt and microorganisms, and obsession with cleanliness.

"[Their art] has a lot of diversity and [Chiu] puts a lot of emotion and uses symbolism in her art, which I find very unique," said junior Shannon Wang, a close friend of Chiu.

Their most recent piece in the series features ophidiophobia, the fear of snakes, which was completed digitally in mid-March. The drawing utilizes back print paper as the background, which makes the snake stand out.

"My emotions flow naturally out of my mind and onto paper. This doesn't happen as often with words."

SENIOR Shani Chiu

and the excessive use of green soon became discouraging, as the amount of color green soon began to distract them from their creative process.

"I was so relieved to move on from this piece," Chiu said. "I felt as if the weight of the world had been lifted off me."

Despite these occasional moments of burnout, drawing for Chiu is comparable to venting in a diary — it is an outlet for them to creatively express their feelings.

For example, they utilize the placement of certain items, posture of subjects, specific techniques of shading and color choices to implicate a deeper meaning in their artworks.

"My emotions flow naturally out of my mind and onto paper," they said. "[This] doesn't happen as often with words."

Chiu will be taking a gap year after high school to work more on their portfolio and experiment with different art styles. After the gap year, Chiu plans on attending De Anza College before transferring to a general university as an illustration major.

"I'm really looking forward to the opportunities that I'll have after I graduate high school so I can experiment and expand my art career," Chiu said. "I hope to become a freelance artist, since working for a specific company feels too restricting for my creative options." ♦

Students break away from STEM, and pursue art and humanities subjects: film and design

BY Anamika Anand & Lena Aribi

Saratoga High is known for its large STEM-oriented population, with a sizable number of the Class of 2022's seniors majoring in computer science, engineering and other technical fields. However, some students are diverting from this trend to pursue their passions in the humanities and communications fields.

Film

Senior Alexander Schroeder is the creator behind a YouTube Channel with over 184,000 subscribers and 80 million views that he said "accidentally went viral." Having loved film since elementary school, Schroeder took advantage of the Media Arts Program throughout his high school career.

"Film is the best version of telling a story," Schroeder said. "The visuals add deeper context than any other medium can."

Schroeder most enjoys the storyboarding aspect of creating a film, since it allows him to think of his script as a visual language of

its own that can be applied into a film.

Confident that he can pursue film as a career, Schroeder will major in film and television at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Even though most of his peers are going into STEM, Schroeder knows film is what he wants to pursue, whether it be directorial films or commercials.

Although he understands the fear many students have of not being able to apply art forms into careers, Schroeder is hopeful for the future.

"There's more appliances to film in a career than people realize," Schroeder said.



Schroeder

Design

Senior Nandini Desai initially thought that traditional art was most ideal for her. She started drawing and painting at age 7 before discovering graphic design at age 15, soon shifting her desired focus to the latter.

"Art is very much creating for yourself and self-expression, whereas design is really thinking about what other people want, knowing your audience and who you're creating for," Desai said.

Desai took ceramics in her freshman year and then AP Art outside of school in her junior year. At first, she focused on visual art — she wanted to work in an art studio where someone could assist her with creating her pieces and help her develop core skills. However, the isolation that came with the pandemic ended up making her pieces more self-driven and independently created.

In the summer of her junior year, Desai participated in a program centered around game design and development, where she realized her deep passion for design.

"I really enjoyed making something that was aesthetically pleasing as well as very usable," Desai said. "Rather than just looking at my pieces, it's something that people can actually interact with."

In addition to AP Art and the summer program, Desai also took classes in graphic design at Mission College during her senior year. In order to get more industry experience and see what type of work a graphic design major would likely have as their career, she worked with a startup called San Jose Strong in her senior year.

Desai helped the website make graphics, logos and app layouts for people to find

opportunities to volunteer for events such as political protests and educational workshops.

"I really enjoyed making something that was aesthetically pleasing as well as very usable."

SENIOR Nandini Desai

Looking forward, Desai wants to use her graphic design skills to go into user interface and experience design, such as making app layouts like she did with San Jose Strong. When applying to college, she focused on schools that combine design interface with cognitive science.

Desai will be attending UC San Diego with a double major in cognitive science and interdisciplinary computing, as well as the arts with an emphasis on design and interaction.

"It's a pretty niche major, but I want this to be my career," Desai said. ♦

Four sophomores and juniors break new ground as non-male Eagle Scouts

AFTER COMPLETING EAGLE SERVICE PROJECTS, THEY HAVE EARNED THE HIGHEST RANK IN THE SCOUTS BSA PROGRAM

BY Sarah Zhou

In February 2019, Boy Scouts of America (Scouts BSA) announced that it would no longer be exclusive to boys. Soon after, junior Lucy Holt's father, Dave Holt, chartered an all-girls troop, Troop 582.

Besides Lucy, sophomores Amaris Charton and Brielle Wong and junior Emily Boselli joined the troop, all eventually achieving Eagle rank during the pandemic.

Eagle rank, which is the highest possible achievement in the Scouts BSA program, is only achieved by roughly 8% of scouts and is a recognition of strong leadership and service to the community.

Holt continues Eagle legacy in their family

For Lucy, coming from a long line of Eagle scouts inspired them to join Scouts BSA: Their father, also an Eagle Scout, served as past Scoutmaster of their older sibling's troop. Lucy currently serves as junior assistant Scoutmaster and has held several leadership positions within the troop.

To become an Eagle Scout, scouts must advance seven ranks, earn 21 merit badges, hold leadership positions, complete an Eagle Service Project and pass rounds of interviews and assessments by a review board.

The fastest timetable for a new scout to earn Eagle rank is within two years — which is exactly what Lucy did, becoming a member of the inaugural class of non-male Eagle Scouts alongside fellow troop member Laura Sun.

"[Becoming an Eagle Scout] is probably one of my proudest moments," Lucy said. "There was a lot of buildup towards the end because I still had a couple of merit badges to do in the last two weeks. It was really stressful, but when I finally did it, it was a huge relief because I know [Eagle rank] is something that is going to help and affect me for the rest of my life."

For Lucy's Eagle Project, they built book displays and bookshelves for Book-GO Round Used Books, a shop in downtown Saratoga whose proceeds go to the public library.



Holt

Though they faced challenges such as wood stains and paint drips while building the book displays — which added extra time to the project — Lucy was still able to complete the Eagle rank significantly faster than most scouts, who often take four to five years.

Along with the adventure opportunities in scouting such as canoeing, sailing, hiking and backpacking, Lucy has found that being a scout has taught them many life skills.

"[BSA] taught me to learn by the Scout Law, which is basically to be a good and kind person and helpful to other people," Lucy said. "It taught me how to stand up for myself and how to be a leader, and has also given me a lot of lasting friendships."

Boselli battles stereotypes and norms

Boselli was a founding member of the group in 2019, having worked with Lucy and their father to recruit members to start their troop after seeing how much fun her older brother was having in Boy Scouts.

"I got very involved in leadership and advancement," Boselli said. "My entire troop is actually very involved in going forward in ranks, so my friends and I just kept progressing and working towards Eagle."

Boselli's Eagle Project involved creating nest boxes for wildlife for an organization in Santa Cruz. Over the course of several days, she led other scouts and friends in volunteer sessions to build a large enclosure.

While completing the tasks required for Eagle rank, Boselli overcame difficulties, including procrastinating on certain requirements.

"I was able to start my Eagle Project a good four months before I actually 'started' it so, though I kind of wasted time, I got it done in the end," Boselli said.

Boselli said that scouting has taught life skills, while simultaneously allowing her to engage in exciting activities — such as attending an adventure camp in West Virginia with her fellow troop members.

"When I became an Eagle Scout I felt really accomplished because [working to become an Eagle] took a good two and a half years of my life where I strived for a goal and I had actually reached it," she said. "I think scouting is such an experience and the skills that you learn from the program are really valuable. They will stay with me for a really long time."

Wong achieves Eagle despite pandemic barriers

Wong decided to join Scouts BSA after following in her sibling's footsteps. She decided to attempt to advance to the Eagle rank after realizing her love for scouting.

"I genuinely enjoy scouting and going on outings, so gradually as I started to advance, I realized I could actually become



Courtesy of SCOUTS BSA Troop 582

Junior Emily Boselli and sophomore Amaris Charton attend their Eagle Ceremony in January.

an Eagle," Wong said. "So I just kept at it, stayed involved in BSA activities and completed my Eagle project."

For her project, Wong built ant-proof tables for beehives at the Our City Forest conservation organization in San Jose.

As Wong was working on her project in 2021, COVID-19 concerns were a large deterrent:

"During my scouting journey, it was like COVID was also living in the background," Wong said.

One of Wong's most memorable activities in scouting was her first scout summer camp, where she was four hours away from home for an entire week.

Although she had no WiFi access and had little contact with home, hanging out with her friends and doing interesting activities was the highlight of her scouting experience, Wong said.

In her three years as a scout, Wong has learned to improve her social skills and has matured in the program.

"You become a leader when you're scouting. You have to know what you're doing and be confident in yourself while being a good example to others," Wong said. "When I became an Eagle, I was still ready to learn more and do more. It really allowed me to see how far I've come since joining the program."

Charton aims to become a mentor to prospective Eagles

While looking for ways to become more involved with the community, Charton and her younger sister decided to join Scouts BSA to strengthen their leadership skills.

"Initially I just joined because my mom wanted me to learn life skills," Charton

said. "But later on, scouts became really fun because I've made a lot of new friends and get to bond with them on outings."

For her Eagle project, Charton decided to build a shed for Animal-Assisted Happiness. The long process involved creating a plan of action, going through an approval process, fundraising with GoFund-Me and recruiting volunteers to help build the shed.

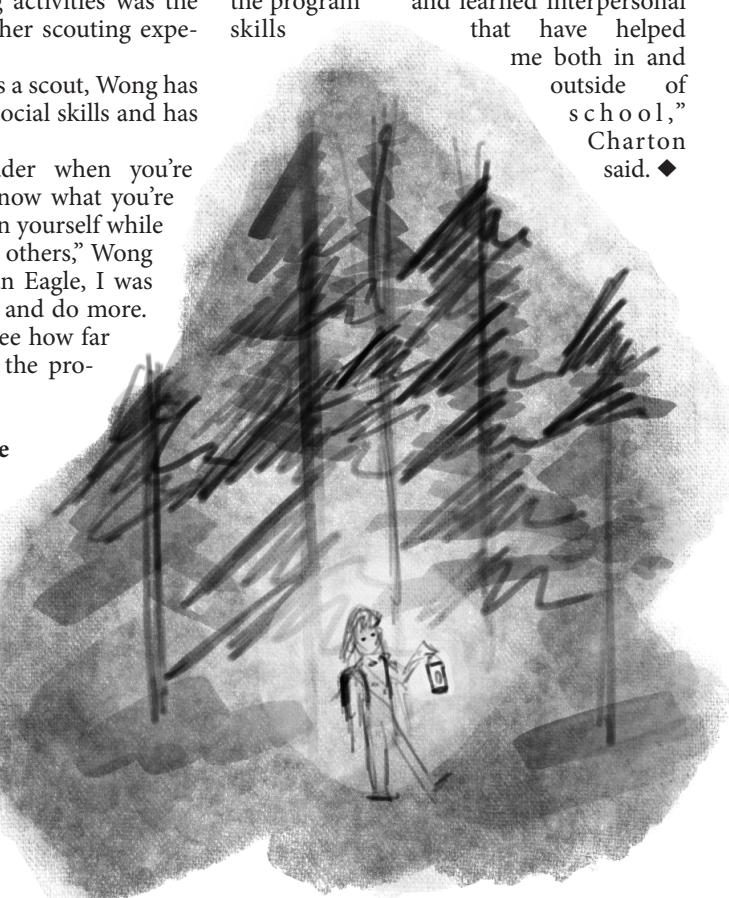
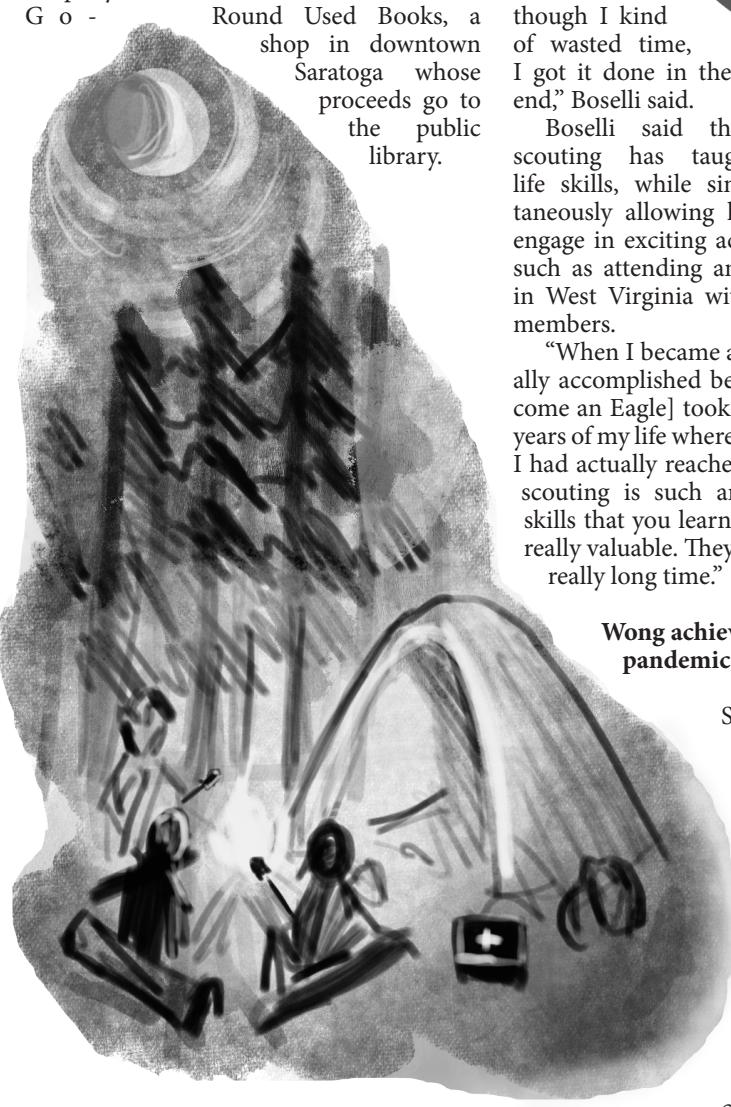
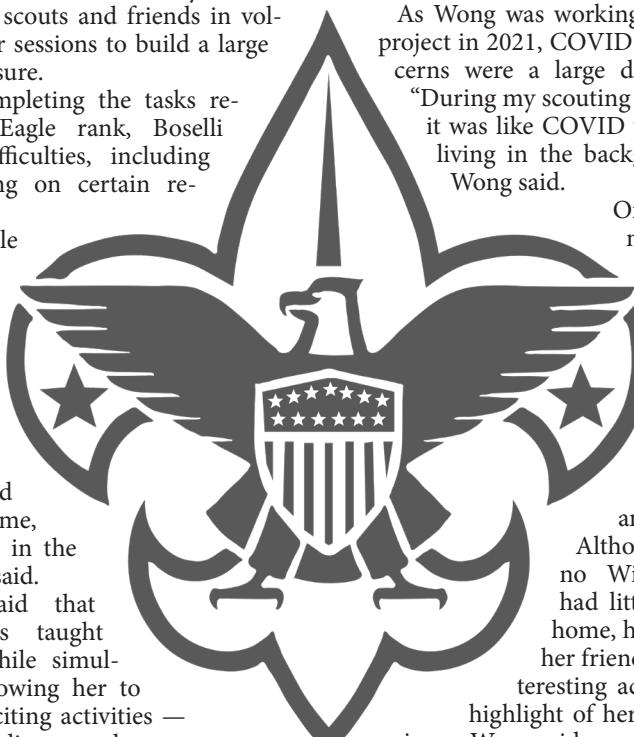
Additionally, Charton needed to earn merit badges in sections such as first aid, aquatics and cooking.

In the last stretch of becoming an Eagle Scout, Charton needed to pass two rounds of interviewing with her Scoutmaster and a Board of Review.

"Initially, it was kind of scary because I'm in front of these people who are judging me," Charton said. "But it wasn't as difficult as I was anticipating because the questions were like 'was it fun when you learned how to sail a boat?' and I said, 'yeah,' and that was it."

This summer, she is planning to become a counselor at scout summer camp, to help other scouts earn merit badges in waterfront activities such as canoeing.

"Joining scouts is one of the best things I've done because I really grew up within the program and learned interpersonal skills that have helped me both in and outside of school," Charton said. ♦



Getting to know the staff who keep campus running

BY JonnyLuo

When students leave campus each day, the school's six night custodians sweep through the school like a magical cleaning spell. They dust the bookshelves, sweep and mop the rooms and secure the campus for the oncoming night. The hard work of countless maintenance employees and custodians both during the day and night keeps classrooms clean, bathrooms functioning and school facilities running smoothly.

The school employs over 12 workers to maintain its 40-acre campus: two grounds-men who take care of the plants and sports fields; two maintenance mechanics who work with the plumbing and electrical systems and fix broken items in different buildings; two custodians who tidy the campus and facilities during the day; and six night custodians who clean over 100 classrooms every day.

Day Custodian Andrew Hickey: a long history of blue-collar work

After the lunch bell rings, day custodian Andrew Hickey picks up trash left behind by students as part of his role managing the cafeteria complex and McAfee Center.

Hickey has been a blue collar worker his entire life. He grew up near Leigh High and went to West Valley College for three years before transferring to Cal Poly Humboldt in Northern California. Hickey originally moved to Humboldt for the nice weather, which never exceeds 80 degrees. There, he liked to fish, hike and mountain climb.

"I spent [most of my college career] goofing off, and I didn't take [my education] seriously," Hickey said. "I ended up being a history major because I didn't know what I wanted to do and thought, 'I might as well learn about the past.'"

After college, Hickey spent 12 years working in restaurants and "goofing off" because living in Humboldt county was cheap. However, he later moved back to Silicon Valley.

"[Humboldt] finally got too isolated for me," Hickey said. "I wanted to go to more Sharks games and go to more concerts instead of having to drive six hours to one."

When he moved back to the Bay Area, Hickey moved into his parents' house — his childhood home — where he currently lives to help take care of them in their old age. In his free time, he watches Netflix, reads science-fiction books and plays video games such as Fallout 3 and Fallout Las Vegas.

After moving, Hickey first worked as a landscaper, then as a substitute custodian for Los Gatos High from 2003 to 2005. Afterwards, he worked at a job where he blew lint from dryers, a job he hated.

After six months working as a substitute custodian at Saratoga High in 2009, Hickey started working as a day

custodian when a previous custodian left and the position opened up.

Each day, Hickey cleans up the kitchen to maintain health standards and prevent insects from coming in. He also removes trash from the quad, keeps the copy room supplied with paper, delivers UPS and FedEx packages to teachers and — more recently — removes goose poop from the quad.

Hickey works from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., starting off each day by looking at the calendar for events at school, before cleaning the kitchen, drama center and McAfee Center depending on whether it will be used.

"People aren't supposed to bring food

"[We] used to work overtime all the time, but now there's money restrictions and [the District office] is trying to penny-pinch."

CUSTODIAN Andrew Hickey

into the [McAfee], but most people don't abide by that," Hickey said. "I have to go through and pick up the garbage that people leave behind."

He said the McAfee Center, built in 2005, has been aging poorly; however, renovations have not been made as it is constantly in use.

"If you go inside the McAfee, you can see that the paint looks shabby and the carpets are stained," Hickey said. "We don't have enough time to clean things, and sometimes, when we do clean them, nothing changes."

Hickey used to take overtime to work weekend shifts, but due to funding cuts and minimal overtime pay — which is taxed higher than normal pay — he does so less frequently.

"[Members in the crew] used to work overtime all the time, but now there's money restrictions and [the district office] is trying to penny-pinch," Hickey said. "They see the bottom line, and they say, 'we don't need that much work.' So in some instances,

we're understaffed for projects."

In efforts to reduce costs, he said the district tried for years to reduce the number of workers, but once they succeeded in removing one custodian, they found out that the work was not getting done, resulting in the hire of another to replace the one who left.

The maintenance and custodial workers at the school are all part of the California School Employees Association (CSEA). According to Hickey, the union serves to negotiate for pay raises and prevent workers from being fired without just cause.

When the pandemic hit, all the maintenance and custodial workers were sent home with paid leave. After six weeks, they were called back to the campus, but the crew was stymied by pandemic-related restrictions. Additionally, infections of crew members seriously affected the team, as there is only one substitute worker.

"No one wants [to be a substitute]," Hickey said. "If there's no long-term benefits or a guarantee they're going to be hired eventually, most people don't want the job."

Despite these pandemic-prompted challenges, Hickey enjoys the privacy his job affords him.

"I'm pretty much left alone because I've done [my job] for so long," Hickey said. "I can choose where I'm going to clean. If it's not super busy, I can take my time working."

Nonetheless, Hickey deals with the constant challenge of working on a high school campus.

"[My son] was the reason I kept working. [I thought], 'He needs clothes? Ok I need to keep working.'"

CUSTODIAN Octavio Escobedo

"Student often leave trash behind after lunch, and I sometimes get mad when there's a trashcan five feet away and students still don't throw their food away," he said. "Over the years, I've accepted it — students have more important things to worry about."

Night Custodian lead Octavio Escobedo: working at SHS for half his life

Night custodian lead Octavio Escobedo

manages a team of five night custodians and, together, they clean all the classrooms, patrol the school to prevent vandals from entering, turn off the lights and lock all the rooms before leaving campus.

Escobedo grew up in Silicon Valley and after graduating from Willow Glen High, worked in construction for two years. He then worked at the school in the evening and construction in the mornings simultaneously for seven years. Afterwards, he left his construction job and has worked full time as night custodian lead for 20 years.

When Escobedo was 19, he had a son, who graduated in 2020 and is attending college as a history major — he hopes to come back and teach at SHS.

"[My son] was the reason I kept working. [I thought], 'He needs clothes? Ok, I need to keep working,'" Escobedo said.

In his free time, Escobedo pursues hobbies such as renovating his 1965 Pontiac Bonneville, refurbishing furniture and building wood items like a wishing well, which he made for one of his friends.

Escobedo works daily from 3 to 11 p.m., and begins the day by meeting with his custodians, each of whom has their own area to clean. The typical classroom takes 10 to 15 minutes to clean, but teachers' needs complicate cleaning.

"Different teachers want different ways of cleaning their classrooms," Escobedo said. "Some want their whiteboards cleaned; some don't. Some want their counters cleaned; some don't."

Escobedo has witnessed attempts to cut down on maintenance staff. As such, he said the union has been extremely helpful.

"We pay [the union] money, and they protect us," Escobedo said. "It's good to have them because they look out for you."

However, Escobedo said teachers — who are a part of a different union — often get larger and more substantial pay raises than those who work in the cleanup sector.

Additionally, with the lack of substitutes, Escobedo struggles to completely clean the school during the night when crew members are missing.

"Sometimes, I might be missing three people, and the next day, [the administration] is asking, 'How come you didn't get everything done?', and they forget that you were short three people," Escobedo said. "The district office looks at the picture, but they don't look at the whole picture."

Escobedo also helps around the school besides cleaning classrooms: "Because of my background, I'm not scared to get my hands dirty. I've dug holes, fixed doors, painted, done plumbing and landscaping.

Everything you can think about at this school, I've done it." ♦



Custodians Richard Fernandes, Octavio Escobedo, and Andrew Hickey pictured left to right work to sweep leaves out of the sidewalk, mop classroom floors and take out the trash.

All graphics by ANNIE LIU and ARIEL ZHOU

FALCON // JONNY LUO



OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM



IN A DEMOCRATIC-DOMINATED AREA WHERE STUDENTS ARE SURROUNDED BY LIBERAL BELIEFS,
TWO STUDENTS DISCUSS THEIR EXPERIENCES BEING VOCAL ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL OPINIONS

Prasad: proudly argues his conservative views

Junior Ishaan Prasad is a Middle College student registered in the Class of 2023 but set to graduate this year. He identifies as an independent conservative but said he would register to vote as a Republican due to right-leaning beliefs. Prasad regularly discusses politics with others on platforms such as Instagram and Twitter.

Q: What are your experiences of expressing unconventional opinions in Saratoga?

Prasad: I grew up a Democrat, like many others, without understanding what that meant. I shifted to conservatism towards the end of my freshman year. Throughout the 2020 presidential election, I supported Joe Biden as a candidate and even went to social media to argue with Trump supporters, until my mom asked me a critical question, "Why do you support Biden?" I was a little stunned. I didn't have an actual answer besides "He's not Trump." The first conservative influencer I ever watched was Candace Owens, and I remember being taken aback by how calm and collected she was. She didn't need to yell or accuse people to convey her argument; she just said it. As I exposed myself to more and more conservative voices, I concluded: on 90% of actual issues, Democrats and Republicans agree on their existence; they only disagree on the best possible solution.

I find that a lot of people try to attack me online for my political views but aren't willing to engage in genuine discussion. I don't have a problem with left-leaning individuals; I have a problem with people who make blanket statements about their political affiliations but are so uninformed that they can't defend their beliefs. When I started being more public about my political views, a lot of people came out of the woodwork and admitted to being conservative or right-leaning as well; they just never mentioned it because of how much attention it would attract.

Q: How do you think living in Saratoga has influenced your political opinions?

Prasad: Because of Saratoga's left-leaning mentality, many people are subjected to "mob psychology," and they are uninformed or not knowledgeable politically but avidly left-leaning to the point where they target people who stray from typical Democrat discourse. I don't necessarily blame them for this, I did it too. I encourage genuine discussions, not senseless and biased pushback. Now, political discussion is often watered-down. You don't even have to be original to make a statement, all you have to do is put a bright and colorful Instagram post on your story and you can call yourself a "social justice warrior."

On the other hand, I find that most people who openly admit to being conservative in Saratoga are equally expressive online or in real life, simply because they are passionate enough to risk criticism and admit their affiliations publicly.

Q: Do you feel judged or silenced by your peers for certain beliefs you may have?

Prasad: Recently a former Saratoga High student messaged me responding to my analysis of changes to the local curriculum and how they would exacerbate racial tensions rather

than resolve them. All they cared to message me was "bro shut up pls and thank you," which is honestly laughable. I'd be lying if I said I hadn't lost friends over my political openness.

Q: How do you think the school's environment helps or hinders your expression of political ideas?

Prasad: It's not a secret that Saratoga schools are far from apolitical. Until recently, I never had an openly right-leaning teacher, and despite district policies that prohibit instructors from discussing politics outside of an academic scope, any student can attest to how little it is obeyed. Socially, left-leaning individuals do not need to fear a negative response for their political voice here, but right-leaning individuals do. Teachers aren't immune to this. Given the economic state of California and the salaries of teachers, it's unsurprising that many are Democrats, but those that aren't are often unwilling to admit it for fear of social or professional consequences. Growing up in Saratoga undoubtedly biases your political views. Left-leaning teachers who are often students' first exposure to politics will shape the course of their discovery.

Q: How do you think Saratoga can improve and become more inclusive of people's opinions?

Prasad: I am a huge proponent of California splitting their electoral votes the way that Maine and Nebraska do. Right now, half of California feels uninformed in politics because they know that their vote will not affect election results. People will become more accepting of conservatives as more conservatives become more resolute in defending their views. I always encourage people on either side of the aisle to engage in real discussions. We do have structural opportunities for change, but mostly, change will come as more people are brave enough to speak out about the opinions that they hold. ♦



Prasad

Fayad: advocating in spite of criticism

Senior Noora Fayad is a senior whose beliefs and interests in public and foreign policy are shaped by her Palestinian, Lebanese, and Muslim heritage. She identifies as an independent abolitionist. Although she used to align herself more with the Democratic party, her views shifted toward abolishing the police over the last year. She participates in groups such as Black Lives Matter and the Anti-Police Terror Project in Oakland.

Q: What are your experiences of expressing unconventional opinions in Saratoga?

Fayad: While Saratoga has relatively more Democrats, there are quite some Republicans as well. I find myself more accepted by Democrats than by Republicans. Democrats tend to see me as more left-leaning than progressives like AOC and Bernie. They sometimes call me "extreme" because of my viewpoints, such as abolishing the police system. For example, right now Democrats control the White House, Congress and Senate, yet nothing is substantially getting done to end systemic problems. I think some disagree but a vast majority of people I know share the same beliefs as their parents.

Q: How do you think living in Saratoga has influenced your political opinions?

Fayad: Living in Saratoga did not influence my views substantially; instead, it was my Palestinian and Lebanese background. I would be that girl in middle school speaking about Eric Garner, and everyone would look at me weirdly and say, "Why are you always talking about the bad stuff?" Saratoga was not all that welcoming to my viewpoints because a lot of residents are rich and upper class, and their

children are raised with privilege — they can't see anything else happening in the world because they are blinded by money privilege. I do not like to pick sides and close myself to being a Democrat or Republican ... I find it difficult to make

the change that is needed to be seen in the world by restricting myself to one group or idea.

Q: Do you ever have trouble finding a space to voice your opinions?

Fayad: Yes! People tend to assume that I am some radical with crazy ideas. For example, people think that it is crazy to change the government and its institutions. The U.S. constitution literally states that you can legally do that: "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles ... as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness." When the government is not working for the people, the people have THE RIGHT to 'abolish it.'

Q: Do you feel judged or silenced by your peers for certain beliefs you may have?

Fayad: Before, I used to align myself more with the Democrat party because I fell into the trap of 'well, they are better than Republicans.' Within the past year and a half, I have realized that I criticize the Democrat party as much as I criticize the Republican party. They are so busy fighting each other that they cannot get anything done. When I speak about and criticize the Democrat party, I face hate and judgment; I still say it anyway, because no matter what, I hope that people think about what I have to say as a woman of color and how that has shaped my beliefs.

Q: How do peers and friends react to your political ideology?

Fayad: They have that negative "oh" effect. I have so many friends who are POC and BIPOC who say that they are Democrats because they are "better than Republicans." And I always tell them, why settle for less than what you deserve? In some ways, my beliefs have impacted my social life. I have lost friends to my beliefs, but I am not bothered by it.



Fayad

Q: How do you think the school's environment helps or hinders your expression of political ideas?

Fayad: The school itself, in my opinion, does not have any space to discuss politics in its raw form. Yes, we have a social justice club but that still does not discuss what needs to be discussed, such as government at its core — when I say government, I mean how our political system is failing the people and how performance activism has taken over our world. I am a huge supporter of teachers expressing their beliefs and not discriminating against students that have different beliefs. I do have teachers that speak to me about politics. Honestly, just knowing that they support POC and our LGBTQ community is so supportive.

Q: How do you think Saratoga can improve and become more inclusive of people's opinions?

Fayad: I think the best way for Saratoga to be inclusive of all opinions is to simply not judge because everyone has different opinions based on where they come from, their personal experiences and how they grew up. Simply put, don't judge people because you do not know anything really about them. You can try to understand why they believe in such ideas and talk to them without passing judgment. ♦

PARENT POWER

IN SARATOGA, PARENT GROUPS ARE A HIDDEN FORCE BEHIND FUNDRAISING AND ADVOCATING FOR POLICY CHANGE

BY Victoria Hu

From the paint-splattered aprons of elementary school art docents to the sizzling hot dogs of high school barbecues, parent involvement is present in every facet of school life. Parent groups volunteer their time for activities ranging from Graduation Night committees to club boosters, and everything in between.

As stakeholders in their children's education, parents often band together to form groups to discuss, fundraise for and impact the school environment. Through their participation, parents are able to create change within the system in the form of booster groups and policy advocacy.

"This is the beauty of the Saratoga community, that parents [truly] care to support school activities," said parent Jessica Liu, mother of senior Christopher Liu. "Being a mom, I watched almost every single basketball game for my two boys in the JV and varsity teams. I want to be their supporter: On the court or as benchwarmers, my boys know I'm always there to watch them and show my love and support."



Prabhu

Parents run funding and booster groups to support enrichment programs

Parent Rita Cao, mother of senior Tiffany Wang, observed that due to public school funding issues, the school's various clubs and activities rely on financial support from parents and the wider community. At the start of every school year, parent-run organizations distribute a folder of donation requests to students at Falcon Fest, the school's annual textbook and schedule pickup event.

"Many extracurriculars in the school cannot be carried out if no parents donate money and do volunteer work," Cao said. "The good of the community comes from the joint efforts of all."

There are eight key parent-run groups working to help fund the school: the SHS Foundation, Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) and six booster groups for music, robotics, speech and debate, drama, the Media Arts Program (MAP) and athletics.

"Many extracurriculars can't function without parents. The good of the community comes from the efforts of all."

PARENT Rita Cao

Parent Anu Minocha, mother of seniors Kaasha and Kaaya Minocha and a member of the Foundation, described it as the high school equivalent of the Saratoga Education Foundation (SEF) in the elementary and middle schools.

The organization helped fund the Wellness Center as well as campus improvements such as \$253,000 for purchasing new desks and quad picnic tables, \$60,000 for rolling bleachers for ASB events and \$75,000 for the Talkspace online therapy program and CASSY counselors.

Similar to the Foundation, the PTSO also raises money for special events such as Teacher Appreciation Week luncheons and Food for Finals.

PTSO president Grace Hu, mother of sophomore George Hu, noted that the Foundation and PTSO often work closely together, especially when teachers or programs need grants or additional funding.

"Some programs not funded by the school send in requests to PTSO and the Foundation," Hu said. "We then see whether that request goes to the Foundation or the PTSO. For any that go to us, the PTSO

board votes to approve or deny the request."

According to principal Greg Louie, the six booster groups obtain money through a combination of fundraising events and donations — such as the music booster's Pancake Breakfast, which occurs annually on May 1 and supports the music program at both Saratoga High and Redwood Middle.

Expenses for the music program are high for trips such as the one it is taking to Europe this summer. Louie, who attends booster group meetings monthly, noted that parents helped take some of the brunt of logistical work off of the school's music department by helping to organize fundraising and paperwork. Some groups have even achieved 501(c)(3) nonprofit status after being officially approved by the IRS as a tax-exempt charitable organization.

From paying the costs of music trips to purchasing robotics equipment and Media Lab computers, parent groups play a crucial role in keeping extracurricular programs afloat, he said. The learning opportunities students have access to here such as MAP's collaborative project-based instruction, are rare in many other public schools.

"It is very common for relatively high achieving, affluent schools," he said. "In a [less privileged] socio-economic environment, those opportunities for students may not necessarily be there."

Louie said it also takes a special level of dedication for the parent community as a whole to keep booster groups and their respective programs running. Although parents who play key roles may graduate from the school alongside their children, the groups they were active in are handed off to someone else and continue to thrive, he said.

"It's become a part of our culture," Louie said. "It's a pretty awesome legacy for whoever originally started these groups. When it comes down to it, the long-term sustainability [of these programs] is all because of the parents."

Parent advocacy groups push proposals through meetings to change school policy and improve culture

Louie said there are many methods for parents to express their opinions on policy to the administration, including by attending board meetings, talking to board members during their office hours and sending emails to Louie to set up meetings.

In addition, parents can address concerns at meetings for parent groups such as the SHS Foundation, PTSO and school site council, which Louie typically attends once a month.

The school site council — a group consisting of representatives of parents, students and staff — drafts and monitors the annual School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and the annual Safety Plan.

Although the council is not directly responsible for school policy, public meetings are yet another platform for parents to make "strong recommendations" that can be taken into further consideration, Louie said.

In addition, Louie and superintendent Michael Grove sometimes hold meetings with the presidents of such boosters and other groups to discuss school affairs and ask for opinions and suggestions. Through these various means of open-

ing dialogues with school and district officials, parents have power to influence policy.

Vandana Prabhu, parent of a seventh grader at Redwood Middle and sophomore Tara Natarajan Prabhu as well as a member of Saratoga High's Culture and Climate Committee, has seen parent-driven changes in school policy — some she has even been a part of.

She realized there are many ways to get policy changes onto the district or board's agenda.

"The sustainability of these programs is all because of the parents."



PRINCIPAL Greg Louie

year's Phase 4A of reopening, observed that numerous students spoke up during board meetings in favor of continuing "Wellness Wednesdays" through the next phase of reopening, citing their mental health benefits.

However, Hulme said that some parents, especially those from Los Gatos, pushed for a full five-day week.

"It was very disappointing to see that the board didn't listen to the students," he said. "The board encourages students by telling them to use their voices and voice their concerns, but in this case, their actions speak louder than words, as it seems like they put parent interests over student interests."

Math teacher Kristen Hamilton also noted that during the pandemic, some parents regularly voiced their opinions to the board. Though the superintendent and board have the final authority on decisions for reopening or aligning schools, they "can be blinded by the loudest or angriest people in the room as that is human nature."

Hamilton said that teachers hope that their voices are also taken into consideration, especially since they are educators with degrees in their subject and years of experience in the classroom.

Parent Rita Cao ultimately finds that the school works to balance the interests of all parties, who share the common goal of raising healthy and responsible adults, she said.

"There is one saying that it takes a village to raise a kid," Cao said. "It is true: The more parents are involved, the more they understand school culture, the more they can cooperate with the school, and in turn the more the school respects parents' perspective." ♦

"It may or may not happen, but you want to at least bring that onto their radar," Prabhu said. "Because most board members don't have kids currently in the district — especially the high school board — there's a disconnect between what they might perceive is good for students, and what the reality is."

In addition, Prabhu has worked to raise awareness for supporting teenagers' mental health issues, especially during the pandemic last May. She was outspoken in favor of schools reopening in order to bring students back into a social environment instead of online isolation, she said.

She also came into contact with a group of other parents that she recognized from the board meetings and exchanged notes with them on what methods they were using to enact policy change. "What I found pretty amazing was there were psychologists in that group, there were lawyers, there were doctors, there were teachers," Prabhu said.

"There were all kinds of parents in that group and they actually had something similar to what we did for dress code. They had done that for school reopening and for mental health."

However, community members also think that parent voices may overpower those of other stakeholders like students and teachers in decision-making.

Parents and students often held clashing opinions when it came to issues such as school reopening, according to senior Johnny Hulme.

Hulme, who attended board meetings during last



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2022 Sports Power Rankings

CONTRIBUTIONS BY ANDREW LIN, NIKHIL MATHIHALLI,
HOWARD SHU AND MARTIN XU



All graphics by ANDREW LIN and MARTIN XU



GIRLS' SOCCER (27 PTS)

Win rate: 14
CCS: 2
Campus presence: 5
Individual achievements: 4
League title: 2
Star player: **Anjali Nuggehalli (12)**



BOYS' TENNIS (23 PTS)

Win rate: 12
CCS: 3
Campus presence: 3
Individual achievements: 5
League title: 0
Star player: **Kosei Ogata (12)**



FIELD HOCKEY (23 PTS*)

Win rate: 14
CCS: 2
Campus presence: 3
Individual achievements: 2
League title: 2
Star player: **Olivia Kinoshita (12)**



Editors' Note: rankings are updated as of May 20, no update available for baseball and softball regarding CCS results. First tie breaker () is based on the CCS point value. Second tie breaker (**) is based on the win rate point value.*

Sport	Win rate (1-15 for lower leagues, 1-20 for upper leagues)	CCS (0-5)	Campus presence (1-5)	League title (0-3)	Individual achievements (1-5)	Star player	Total score
4. Boys' Water Polo	14	0	3	2	2	M. Kuo (12)	21
5. Boys' Basketball	9	1	5	0	2	S. Teymour (12)	17
6. Boys' Golf	11	1	1	0	3	H. Shu (11)	16
7. Boys' Lacrosse	12	0	3	0	1	K. Jarvis (12)	16*
8. Baseball	9	1	5	0	4	L. Dennis (11)	15
9. Softball	11	0	3	0	1	M. Curtis (12)	15*
10. Badminton	2	4	3	0	5	A. Mar (12)	14
11. Boys' Soccer	7	0	4	0	2	Y. Hong (10)	13
12. Track and Field	5	0	3	0	5	H. Dance (12)	13**
13. Girls' Basketball	5	1	4	0	1	T. Ghai (11)	11
14. Girls' Lacrosse	6	0	2	0	2	C. Gilligan (12)	10*
15. Cross Country	5	0	3	0	5	H. Dance (12)	10**
16. Swimming	2	0	3	0	4	Z. Tokuz (11)	9
17. Wrestling	0	2	2	0	4	K. Jarvis (12)	8
18. Girls' Golf	4	0	1	0	3	S. Lim (9)	8*
19. Football	2	0	5	0	1	P. Hashemi (12)	8**
20. Boys' Volleyball	0	0	3	0	5	N. Lim (11)	8**
21. Girls' Volleyball	3	0	2	0	2	L. Fung (11)	7
22. Girls' Water Polo	3	0	2	0	1	R. Kline (11)	6
23. Girls' Tennis	0	0	2	0	1	S. Manea (10)	3

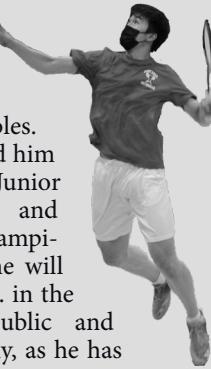
2022 Falcon Sport Awards

By SamBai, VictoriaHu
& AidenYe

All things considered, school sports have seen massive success bouncing back from the pandemic. The Falcon is spotlighting a few of the school's most outstanding athletes along with their achievements earned through the year.

Best male athlete: senior Adrian Mar, badminton ace

Despite being only 17, senior Adrian Mar plays badminton among world class athletes. Apart from placing first in CCS for boys' singles and helping the SHS team place second overall, Mar represented the U.S. in the 2022 Thomas Cup — one of the most prestigious tournaments for badminton players. He also won his last national junior tournament, placing first in boys' singles and mixed doubles. This win qualified him for the Pan Am Junior Championships and World Junior Championships, where he will represent the U.S. in the Dominican Republic and Spain, respectively, as he has in previous years.



Agility and power is Mar's forte on the court: His ability to move around and hit hard shots enabled him to win many of his matches, he said. Looking forward, he hopes to make a name for himself on the international level through competitions. His biggest dream is to play in the Olympics.

Best female athlete: Anjali Nuggehalli, recruited for soccer at dream college

Since starting soccer at age 5, senior Anjali Nuggehalli has seen great success: She qualified for the Elite Clubs National League's (ECNL) highest nationally ranked team, De Anza Force. In addition, she is committing to Pomona College for Division III soccer, a school she has hoped to attend since her freshman year.

Nuggehalli began playing competitive soccer in 4th grade for De Anza Force and joined the school team in her senior year. Her greatest strength in the

sport is her tenacity as an outside defender, she said. For her role, she plays as part of the backline outside, a role that makes her responsible for the wing and helping with attacks. Over years of experience, she has developed strong leadership skills.

"I've been playing for so long, but I'm still learning and there are a lot of areas where I'm looking to improve," Nuggehalli said. "I hope to continue to grow when I play collegiate soccer."

Runner up: senior Harrison Dance, track and field record breaker

Although not nationally famous, senior track and field captain Harrison Dance, who runs 800-meters, 1600-meter and 3200-meter events, broke the school's 1600 meter record previously held by Steven Sum in 2015 of 4:14:61 with a time of 4:12:12 April 3. He attributes his success to coaches and teammates who motivated him to be his best.

Dance committed to joining UCLA's Division I Track and Cross Country program, receiving a full scholarship. He looks forward to continuing his high school success as a college athlete. ♦

TRACK AND FIELD

Senior breaks 1600m record, team ends the season strong

By Viraaj Reddi
& Martin Xu

The track team ended their impressive season on May 15 with some individuals making CCS at Gilroy High School.

Despite the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on some athletes — such as being out of shape and lacking experience in their event — as well as the loss of strong seniors to graduation, the team thrived as many individuals set new personal records.

The season ended for most athletes on April 29 as the Falcons finished with a 2-4 league record. However, for those who qualified for post-season play at SCVAL and CCS — including seniors Giulio Morini Bianzino, co-captain Harrison Dance, Ashna Krishnamurthy and Weilin Sun; juniors Jason Cheng, Isha Goswami, Jalyn Harrigan, Yuvarj Singh, Isaac Loke, co-captain Mika Tippets; and sophomore Annie Liu — the season continued.

Dance, who primarily runs in the mile, 2-mile and 800-meter events, attributed his success to coaches and teammates who motivated him to perform at his best. Their support, he said, helped him achieve a 4:12:12 mile time to break the school's record, previously held by Steven Sum's 2015 4:14.61 time.

Additionally, Dance qualified for CCS fi-



Senior Harrison Dance stands beside the record board listing his new 1600m time record.

nals in the mile and two-mile event with a time of 4:14.87 and 9:36.92, placing 2nd and 8th respectively.

"Every day, they motivated me to go to workouts and were really helpful," he said.

Dance, who committed to UCLA's Division I Track and Cross Country program, looks forward to continuing his high school success as a college athlete.

"I'm going to have fun running with guys who are at the same speed as me," he said. "In fact, we're spending a month at Big Bear over the summer where we're just running and bonding with the team."

Dance stressed how grateful he is for his four years on the track team.

"Just training with a team like this everyday has been a fun process," he said. "I'm fi-

nally taking it all in because it's my last year."

Krishnamurthy participated in the 4x1 relay and the long jump at CCS with a result of 50:11 seconds and 17 feet and 3 inches respectively. She said her performance at SCVAL and CCS exceeded what she expected, noting her improvement in those events since her freshman year.

"Based on all the times where I have kept going, I am in a good spot and I'm happy with all my results," Krishnamurthy said.

Tippets, who also competed both at SCVAL and CCS in the 4kg shot put and 1kg discus events with a distance of 31 and 92 feet respectively, looked forward to improving her personal records and was excited to finally compete after a COVID-19 year with no full season.

"I was extremely satisfied with my SCVAL performance because I made two very big personal records in both events," Tippets said. "Although I was a little disappointed with my CCS performance, I was happy I was able to keep up my consistency."

Like Krishnamurthy, Tippets said one of her favorite parts of the season was interacting with her teammates and friends.

Motivated by her peers, Tippets hopes to continue to improve her performance.

"I want to improve enough so I can break a school record for track and field and have my name displayed at the records board in the lower field," Tippets said. ♦

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

Team ends season with 0-14 record

By Ariel Zhou

After a season of many close matches, the boys' volleyball team ended their injury-ridden season with a record of 0-14. The team started off with a lot of hope for their season, but many injuries and problems that arose resulted in many issues.

The team adjusted to a new coach, Lori Gragnola, who had coached at the school 11 years before. Due to a majority of the players being out, a new lineup had to be made, resulting in many players having to play positions that they didn't normally play.

Sophomore setter Kali Duvvuri was one of the players who was unable to play. His absence was significant, as he was court captain and lead scorer on the team.

In addition, the team also

suffered from many injuries to almost half the team's players. Among the injuries was senior captain Andy Tran, who missed multiple games due to a sprained wrist.

"It was an awkward time since there were people playing positions that they didn't normally play," Tran said.

Though it was undoubtedly a rough season for the boys' volleyball team, the absence of key players opened up the door for many unexpected stars.

Two such players were junior Nathan Lim and sophomore Scotty Rich.

"[Lim and Rich] really stepped in when everyone else was injured and were able to help the



Tran

team out a lot," Tran said.

Freshman middle hitter Ryan Backhus was another valuable part of the team this season. Starting the season off on the bench, he slowly earned his spot on the court through his evident and quick improvement.

"[Backhus] has such good drive, I could definitely see his passion for the sport through his hard work at practices and games," Tran explained.

Though the team faced a tough season, their team bond and morale stayed strong as a result of their endurance.

"Even though we lost all our games, I'm just glad I had a fun senior year getting to play with all my friends," Tran said. ♦

GIRLS' LACROSSE

Mid-season improvements benefit the team

By Lena Aribi & Meher Bhatnagar

As the senior night game kicked off, members of both the girls' and boys' lacrosse teams cheered for seniors Caroline Kesogh, Casey Gilligan and Lauren Vandevort.

The team had a successful 17-0 win against Wilcox High School on April 27 for their senior night and ended their season with a 5-7 league record.

Because of low signups and previous coach Marlo Lile stepping down to coach at a club team in Marin, the team initially faced the possibility of not having a season. However, Alyssa Dunlap, who played Division I lacrosse at Vanderbilt University, was hired as head coach, with Lile continuing to help out at Tuesday practices and some games.

Keogh said Dunlap emphasized conditioning in their training and introduced more intense coaching techniques to the team.

"We ran seven miles on weekends," Keogh said. "We needed to, because if we didn't get our stamina up, we would all be exhausted during games."

"We were down to one substitute against teams that had triple the amount of people."

SENIOR Caroline Keogh

As the season progressed, injuries plagued the team, putting more pressure on each individual.

"We were down to one substi-

tute against teams that had triple the amount of people," Keogh said.

Despite the lack of substitutes, the team still worked together to create a memorable season.

Mid-season, the Falcons began to see their improvements during games, winning three games in a row: 15-0 against Wilcox on March 28, 9-7 against Palo Alto on March 30 and 8-3 against Los Altos on April 1.

Senior midfielder Gilligan played a big role in helping the girls improve through the season. She helped the girls feel "confident and motivated," Keogh said.

"I'm so glad the girls who joined are the girls I got to spend the season with," Keogh said. "I am so proud of how we made little improvements everyday in our practices that resulted in a successful season." ♦

BADMINTON

Despite in-season struggles, team places second at CCS

By Sanjoli Gupta & Jonny Luo

For the first time in school history, the badminton team ranked at CCS, placing second out of 28 teams.

Four players were sent to the tournament, which was held on May 14 at Independence High School. Individually, senior co-captain Adrian Mar placed first in boys' singles and won CCS championships — his success helped boost the team into placing second; sophomore Sannidhi Boppana placed fourth in girls' singles; and junior Evan Oaklander and freshman Samanvi Boppana placed fifth in mixed doubles.

This success at CCS belies the team's struggles this year: they placed sixth out of seven teams in the De Anza league with an overall record of 1-9.

"Our team as a whole underperformed, and we could have played a lot better," Mar said. "But despite that, everyone could still pull through and achieve good results at CCS."

The team played their last game against Milpitas on April 26, losing 27-3. Before that, they lost against Wilcox 16-14 on April 21; lost against Lynbrook 19-11 on April 5; lost against Cupertino 17-13 on March 31; lost against Milpitas 24-6 on March 29; lost against Wilcox 21-9 on March 24; won against Gunn 16-14 on March 17; lost against Lynbrook on March 15; lost against Cupertino 24-6 on March 10; and lost 16-14 against Monta Vista on March 8.

Entering the season, the badminton team was strong and poised to win a majority of their matches. However, many players had minor injuries, and some even faced season-ending ones.



Mar

"We had a chance to win a lot of our matches, but as a few games went by, many injuries led to a lot of top players having to step down," Mar said. "Compared to last year, our team has a lot more potential, but we weren't able to fulfill all of that this year due to injuries."

For example, senior co-captain Enoch Jung fractured his calf a third of the way into the season.

"As a captain, it was devastating and it obviously affected the results of some of our games," Jung said. "In general, we lost a few games because we were missing key players, but we pulled through the season and ended with a firm win on senior night."

The team received an influx of new players this year, and as a result, a lot of focus was put on training these new team members.

Mar, who acts as an assistant coach, said that the steepest learning curve came for the beginners working on their fundamentals.

As they grew more experienced, they became more consistent in their games and began working on better court coverage, making sure a player can return the bird no matter its position on the field.

"The beginning [of the season] was rough and disorganized," sophomore varsity player James Liu said. "We had a lot of new players and it was tough to find which position [suited each player]. We did a lot of training, and things became a lot better."

Despite the improvement in the new players, Liu said that most of the team's success came from its seniors.

"With the seniors leaving, it will be rough, but as long as the freshmen and sophomores continue to train hard, I think we'll become a lot better [next year]," Liu said. ♦

BOYS' GOLF

Team places second in league, ending strong

BY Mitchell Chen
& Nilay Mishra

After losing six strong players to graduation, much work was expected to replicate previous years. But as the season came to a close, the boys golf team exceeded expectations, and continued the success of recent years placing second in the De Anza League.

Out of the seven on the roster last year, junior Howard Shu remains the only veteran on the team as the #1 player. Back then, the team was considered the strongest in the league and went undefeated.

This year, Shu has been supported by junior Sankalp Aswani, a new transfer to Saratoga, Cameron Sy, sophomore Ryan Lin, freshman Aiden Smith, and Oliver Pott, all of whom have greatly contributed to the team's success.

"This year, we are just trying to build back up to that kind of position and retrace our past success," Aswani said. "Even though every now and then we wouldn't play so well, we played pretty well consistently."

The travel team has acted in a tight-knit unified manner on the courses. Aswani, having transferred from Lynbrook to Saratoga this year, said that playing golf with the rest of the team allowed him to build strong friendships with them.

Junior Cameron Sy who is number 5 on the travel team qualified for CCS finals competed on May 17, which took place at Laguna Seca in Monterey.



The team poses for a photo during their end-of-year banquet at Lazy Dog on May 15th.

Lin attributed the success of the team is partially due to the amount of practice they were able to do during the pandemic. With more time to practice, Lin, who is one of the newer players, has been able to make a smoother transition onto the team.

"I was able to practice at home because I had less school work to do, this year my workload increased and I have not been able to practice as much as I would've liked," said Lin.

The top team at league finals and the top seven teams in terms of scoring differentials qualified for CCS. Saratoga came 2nd in league finals, but came 7th in terms of scoring differential, and so qualified for CCS within a hair's breadth.

"At League Finals, we played pretty well," Aswani said. "CCS, on the other hand, wasn't the best day for us."

According to Shu, the vast majority of the team could have played significantly better, individually shooting about 5 better than they actually did.

"None of us really played well except Cameron," Shu said. "It was kind of disappointing, but I'm excited for what's in store next year."

The future outlook of the team looks bright, as none of the current starters are seniors.

"With all the uncertainty coming into the season, we certainly exceeded my wildest expectations," Shu said. "Our players will be more prepared coming into next year, and I think our future potential is unbounded." ♦

SWIMMING

Swimmers take on CCS: some advance to finals



TALISMAN // CARY CHEN

Sophomore Victoria Le and senior Mahi Ravi kickboard next to each other during practice.

BY Avani Kongetira
& Jonathan Si

CCS was held at George F. Haine's International Swim Center in Santa Clara from May 6 to May 7 this year. This year, 14 people qualified for the tournament preliminaries: freshman Corinna Carstens; sophomores Meher Bhatnagar and Jarrett Singh; juniors Channie Hong, Mark Liu and Zeynep Tokuz; and seniors Ethan Chan, Howard Huang, Andrew Hong, Brooke Huynh, Byron Jin, Sherry Lin, Jaime Paine, Ryan Moore, Mahi Ravi and Alexander Yang.

Tokuz also advanced onto finals the next day, placing fifth in B finals — the top eight move to A finals and next eight move to B finals — for the 200 yard individual medley and fourth in the 100 yard breaststroke.

Although many didn't qualify for finals, Tokuz said that the season ended on a good note.

This year was the first year the swim team competed at CCS since 2019 because it was canceled in the past as a result of COVID-19, meaning that it was the first CCS tournament for many of the swimmers. In the practice sessions leading up to CCS, many swimmers started focusing on individual goals to set personal records for themselves.

For example, Tokuz decreased the intensity of her workouts in order to focus more on specifics like dives and turns, which ultimately helped to increase her speed.

"In the 100 yard breaststroke, I had dropped from my all time best so I was overjoyed and relieved," she said.

One challenge the swimmers faced was having to swim at a West Valley college for the rest of the season due to the swimming pool's heater breaking back in Feb. 18.

"Because of the smaller swimming space, it was harder to swim because there would be five or six people per lane," Ravi said.

Despite these challenges, the team still tried to keep moving forward.

Ravi said that the crowded lanes allowed them to bond better and the long times before practices allowed the teammates to socialize more so than in previous years, helping them get to know each other better.

Ravi also noticed that the team improved significantly as a whole from the start of the season.

"I think our team did the best we could with our struggles: We didn't have our pool, and we didn't have enough buses to transport to the meet," Ravi said. "However, I actually think these struggles are what made our team closer." ♦

BOYS' TENNIS

Falcons close season with 4-3 win against Bellarmine at CCS

BY Daniel Wu
& Zachary Zinman

No. 1 singles player sophomore Kosei Ogata jumped across the court in celebration as the boys' tennis team chanted his name. Ogata had just won his tiebreaker match, securing the Falcons' win against Bellarmine for the first time in seven years and bringing the team into the semifinal bracket for CCS.

The 4-3 victory on May 9 came as a surprise considering Bellarmine has historically dominated the high school athletics scene. Yet, the team's win was far from simple luck. It resulted from a culmination of strategy, hard work and consistency.

Despite a rough start to the season, the team made a strong comeback midseason, finishing with a 7-5 league record and placing 2nd in the De Anza League. Advancing into CCS, the team defeated Carlmont 6-1 and Bellarmine 4-3, but ultimately lost to Cupertino 6-1 in the semifinals. Nonetheless, the team felt satisfied with their results, having obtained the 3rd seed.

Across the season, the team encountered a number of challenges including the loss of key doubles players due to graduation along with a relatively young team: underclassmen accounted for 8 of the 14 players.

Co-captains seniors No. 2 singles player

Anthony Zheng and No. 3 singles player Ben Bray said the overall youth of the team contributed to their early losses, as the team was still trying to figure out effective lineups and hone their skills.

"It was really just a matter of unlocking [the underclassmen's] potential because they're extremely talented and we simply had to spend time to gauge their strengths and weaknesses," Zheng said. In the end, the team's decision to dedicate the first half of the season to training paid off as the team avenged their losses during the second half.

Bray noticed that as the team began racking up more and more victories, team morale shot up as well. He noted that near the start of the season many players found themselves in low spirits going into their matches, which handed the opposing teams easy wins.

No. 1 doubles freshman Teddy Oyang added that the season proved to be a new experience for him and the other underclassmen, primarily due to the team environment. "Tennis is usually an individual sport where players register and participate in tournaments by themselves or with a duo, but being on the team really helped introduce me to the concept of teamwork and how if someone wins their respective match, it doesn't directly translate into a team victory," said Oyang. "Cheering your teammates



Courtesy of LUKE STRATAKOS

The team congratulates one another following their surprising victory against Bellarmine.

on and keeping them motivated is crucial to making sure we do our best."

Oyang shared many memorable moments with the team including their big victory against Bellarmine, along with winning his last match against Cupertino during CCS with sophomore Luke Stratakos. That being said, Oyang feels that the most critical takeaway for him this season was being able to bond with the team and simply have fun.

For seniors Bray, Zheng and Vignav Ramesh, this season marks the end of an old journey and a start of a new one as they

head off to college to pursue their academic aspirations while also playing club tennis.

Despite their departure, Bray and Zheng rest assured that the Falcons will only grow stronger thanks to the large pool of underclassmen who are familiar with one another.

"I'll definitely miss the moments I've shared with the team, and I feel quite sad leaving," Zheng said. "However, I do look forward to playing club tennis while attending Northwestern and I'm sure that the coming seasons will be full of victories for Saratoga." ♦

BASEBALL

Dennis leads Falcons' late entrance into CCS

BY HowardShu

The Falcons ended the regular season 9-6 and rose from third to second in the El Camino division standings after a three-game win streak. They won 8-0 at home against Fremont on May 12, won 9-2 against Fremont on May 10 and won 4-0 against Lynbrook on May 5.

In the May 12 win against Fremont and the May 5 win against Lynbrook, junior shortstop and pitcher Lucas Dennis threw consecutive no hitters.

After his first no-hitter, Dennis came in second in the Bay Area News Group athlete of the week voting for May 2-8. Following his second no hitter, Dennis won the vote for May 9-15 by a large margin.

He also won Cal-Hi NorCal Baseball Player of the Week, was first team all-league and was second in MVP voting for the league.

"The no hitter games are definitely one of the best experiences of my baseball career and my life," Dennis said. "I'm just at a loss for words. It's definitely something that I never imagined would happen."

The team was overjoyed with Dennis's achievement and have been becoming more tight-knit through the past few weeks, Dennis said.

"My teammates are all super supportive," Dennis said. "I love my guys. They brought the energy these past couple weeks, and it was really starting to feel like a family."

The team developed great chemistry and trust in each other even with several

new faces on the team, including coaching changes through the season. Jason Bugg was a new head coach for the team at the start of the season, but on May 4, he resigned from the position for personal reasons. Travis Cheney, the assistant coach, then became the new head coach.

"I think the change of head coach was huge for us," Dennis said. "He unlocked a lot of players who were thinking too much kind of about what they were doing."

The team went on the three-game win streak to end the season right after the coaching change, and Dennis attributes some of that success to Cheney encouraging the team to play with all of their skills and trust their instincts.

"Honestly, I don't think the no-hitters that I threw would have been possible without the freedom that [Cheney] has given us," Dennis said.

The two wins against Fremont at the end of the season were crucial for the team making CCS. Before the two games, Saratoga was third in the division with a record of 7-6 and Fremont was second with a record of 8-5.

The top two teams in the division make CCS, so the Falcons' clutch final two wins allowed them to claim second place.

The team's senior night on May 3 resulted in a 6-2 loss to Lynbrook. Despite the loss, Dennis believed it was still a great senior night. They had a ceremony after the game in which an announcer read statements from each of the players and had parents throw pitches to their players.



FALCON // ANDREW LIN

Junior Lucas Dennis throws a pitch during the baseball team's final league game on May 12.

"I thought [senior night] went really well," Dennis said. "The game didn't go how we wanted it to go, but I thought it was a really good night for our seniors."

Dennis said the team's pitchers — who include himself, sophomore Shane Timmons and freshman Doug Bettinger — have been pitching well throughout the season.

Dennis believes Bettinger has significantly stepped up over the course of the season and been a huge addition that many team members did not expect.

Freshmen outfielder and pitcher Aidan Chen and utility player and pitcher Samanyu Ram have also been huge for the

team. Ram was pulled up to varsity for the last two league games and provided a great offensive spark for the team, Dennis said.

He said these changes and additions allowed the team to maximize their potential near the end of the season.

Going into CCS, the team is feeling good and hoping to maintain their momentum. They play Thomas More in the first round of CCS at home on May 21.

"We're hot right now. I don't think any team that we can be matched up against and CCS is going to be comfortable with playing us," Dennis said. "We're super confident right now." ♦

SOFTBALL

Team optimistic for CCS after recent victories

BY LynnDai
& VictoriaHu

Despite a rough start to their season, the softball team qualified for CCS on May 19, with their first quarterfinals game set on May 21 at home against Piedmont Hills.

The team hopes to advance to the CCS finals by winning three games in their division.

"We're really excited because nobody on the team has made it into CCS before," said senior captain Morgan Curtis, who plays pitcher.

Before qualifying for CCS, they placed third in the El Camino League behind Cupertino and Gunn, with a league record of

9-3 and an overall record of 14-6.

While the team worked hard to prepare for their game on May 10 against Cupertino, ranked No. 1 in the division, they lost in a tight 2-1 game.

Captain and junior first base Lily Guzman said one of her biggest highlights of the season was the team's close 5-4 victory against Carlmont on April 9. Being in low spirits and short-staffed with only 10 players, they didn't expect to win. However, junior catcher Irene Frazier and Guzman's home runs helped them win.

In addition to efforts by the captains — Guzman and seniors right field Arya Tay-

muree, Curtis and center field Erin Wu — to exercise positive encouragement, this streak of wins boosted team confidence after several initial losses.

While some players initially lacked confidence to believe in CCS qualification, Guzman held high hopes due to their recent five-game winning streak. The team found out they qualified on May 20.

"We have members who have played travel ball guided by club softball, so we only have one or two unexperienced players," she said.

"Even then, some of the less-experienced players are phenomenal as beginners."

Sophomore shortstop Nancy Lei, who

joined the JV team without any prior experience, has been noted for her skill at hitting the ball far.

When pulled up to varsity, Lei said playing tougher games has helped her gain more experience.

The team also grew closer as a whole over the course of the season, and though they didn't have a lot of team bonding, they became comfortable with each other.

Curtis also said coach Mike Davey incorporated communication strategies into their practices to aid the team in games.

"Overall, I'm really proud of how our team did," Guzman said. "We had an amazing season for having a team with some who have never played softball before." ♦

BOYS' LACROSSE

Season ends in 12-4 league record

BY LenaAribi
& MeherBhatnagar

With their 9-5 win against Priori High School on May 5, the boys' lacrosse team finished with a record of 12-4. They finished second in the El Camino division.

Although only seven of the 21 players on the team were underclassmen, senior captain and midfielder Kendal Jarvis is thankful for the current underclassmen vigor after seeing how much they have improved over the season.

"Having some of the underclassmen step up has been super helpful. Midfielders get super exhausted running back and forth," Jarvis said.

The team faced a key loss when junior midfielder Mason Andrews injured his collarbone in a game against Pioneer High School on April 7. According to Jarvis, this

injury affected the team greatly as Andrews always "brought a lot of intelligence and game IQ."

On March 26 the Falcons won a sweeping victory of 16-3 against Hillsdale to mark their senior night. Seniors had a memorable night with a large turnout of parents and friends who showed up with posters and spirit.

Their first loss of the season was 13-5 against Carlmont High School on March 22, which ended their 5-game winning streak. According to senior midfielder and goalie Parsa Hashemi, the loss against Carlmont motivated the team to start taking practices more seriously.

"The drills we performed had not changed, but the way we went about it did," Hashemi said.

During the beginning of the season, practice quality was low because opposing teams were

viewed to be significantly weaker. Jarvis said the team had to increase their discipline and technique by having stricter practices.

Hashemi added that the team went through periods of uncertainty where they could not win games.

"We have seen that [pattern] in games where we usually start slow. We need to face adversity in the beginning to reach our full potential," Hashemi said.

This experience taught them the need to stay focused both during and between matches.

Both Jarvis and Hashemi expressed pride at what the team accomplished throughout their season.

"It has definitely been our most successful season since we were freshmen," Jarvis said. "I hope the tradition of success continues on when we are gone." ♦

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Crossword: Space operas, myths and misc.

BY ChristopherChen

ACROSS

- 1 Describes the movement of a spaceship around the moon
 10 Opposite of a base
 14 Stand up, but fancy
 15 In between soprano and tenor
 16 Prefix meaning nine
 17 Simplified version of baseball for kids
 18 Performance by two
 19 Cut down
 20 Antagonist in Arthur C. Clarke's "Space Odyssey"
 21 Treat with radiation
 23 Courses for people learning English
 24 Greek version of Cupid, god of desire and love
 26 Acronym meaning soulmate
 27 Plant-gobbling robot in Wall-E
 28 Thor's home
 30 Baseball players at one of the bases
 35 Something you'd call a good deal (What a ____!)
 37 Direction that isn't vertical or horizontal, abbr.
 38 Doubts might ____ your brain
 40 Prefix meaning over long distances
 41 Robots, but massive and with cockpits
 43 Giving a summary of a mission
 45 In your eye
 47 A giant spoon, if the ocean was a soup
 49 Someone who loves fire, abbr.
 50 It all ____ up!
 52 Something a photographer would use, abbr.
 55 Also known as aconite
 58 Nickname for the 16th US president
 59 ElonDoge DAO

60 Good for tinder, found in dryer machines

61 A type of coffee

63 Indigenous people in Hokkaido

64 Portugese professional soccer player ____ António Macedo Lopes

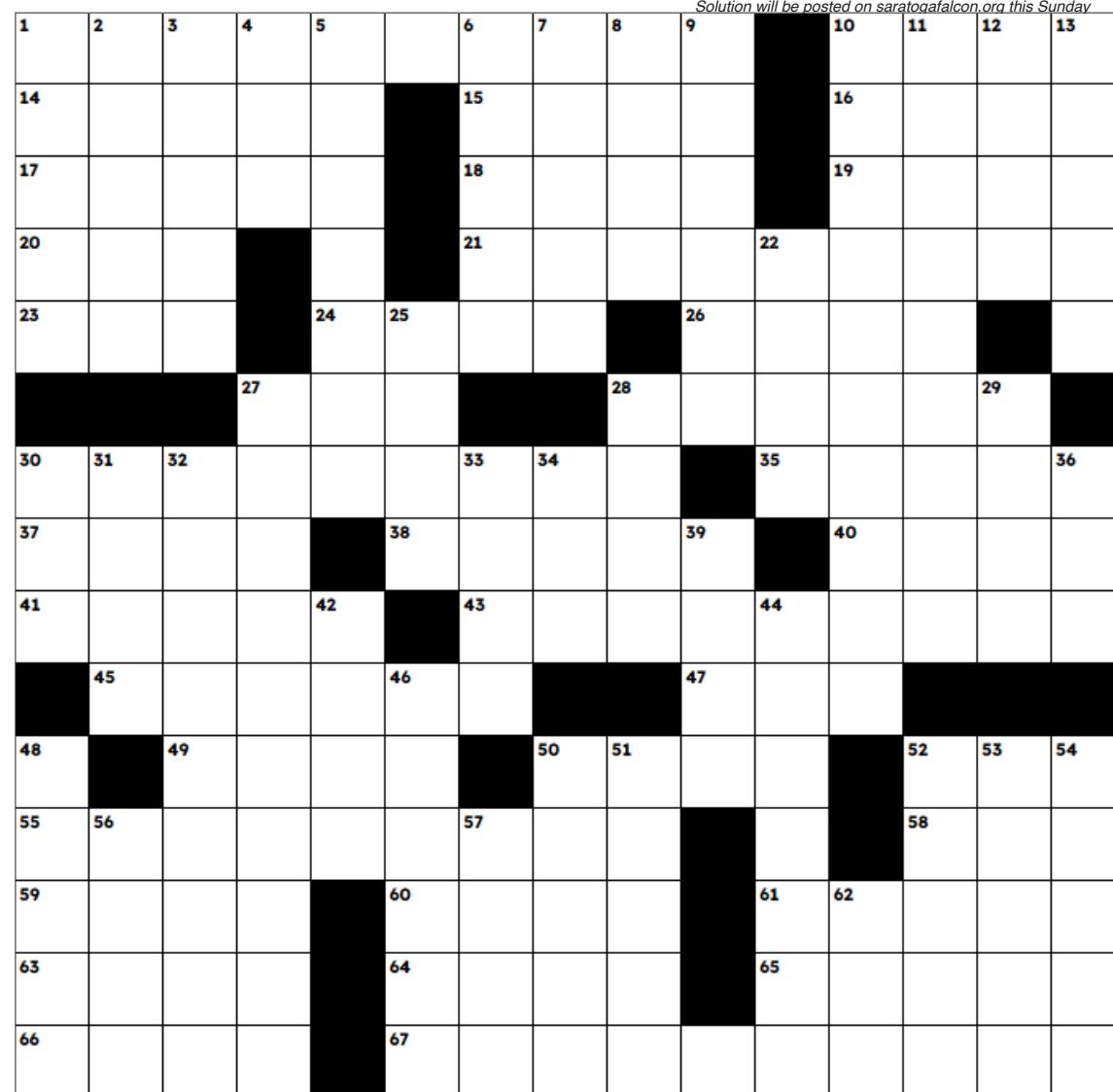
65 Professional WWE wrestler and actor, Randy Keith ____

66 Extremely popular puzzle game, backed by an arrangement of a Russian folk song

67 Where our water is stored

DOWN

- 1 Metalworking machinery
 2 Relating to cities
 3 Horan
 4 American Sign Language
 5 Taking on someone's burden
 6 Something you'd put on in the car if extremely bored
 7 All your eyes will see when tired
 8 A new version, abbr.
 9 Whole number, plural
 10 Matter with the opposite electric charge
 11 Underwater ecosystems consisting of colorful creatures
 12 Tech-y term for starting up
 13 Courtesy title for women, plural
 22 Man's best friend
 25 Rattling sound that can be heard with a stethoscope
 27 Literally George Orwell's 19_____
 28 Ethnic group primarily living in Western Asia and North Africa
 29 Chip and ____
 30 Integrated data management, abbr.
 31 Game published by Square Enix, sequel is titled ____: Automata



- 32 Falling down face first
 33 One famous piece from this avant-garde art movement is a urinal
 34 French for summer
 36 Fairy lights for example
 39 Pressed or crushed into the ground with feet
 42 Putting on ____

- 44 Memoir of Isaac Asimov, science fiction writer
 46 Comparative for being virtuous and honorable
 48 Water cooling but for humans
 50 Auntie ____, a chain store for pretzels
 51 Raison _____, reason for

- 52 Plural for a prickly desert plant
 53 If hate is a strong word, this word is stronger
 54 Not always justified by the ends
 56 Garfield's rival
 57 Assistant
 62 Spanish for gold ♦

danger: texting-related red flags

needs

sarah-tonin

Sarah Zhou

if you have messaged me in the past few months or are on my close friends story, you know that i go through an identity crisis every week: part of it is switching between dark and light mode and — of course — turning auto caps on and off. currently, i'm in my hip, dark-mode, auto caps-off, aesthetic phase but we'll see how it goes. here's an explanation of my habits to quell your worries :)

writing an email without the utmost professionalism and grammatical correctness — even if you add the classic phrase, "i hope your week is going well" — would earn you a disapproving stare from your teacher the next time you walk through the door: "sarah, if you don't take the time to ensure your emails are coherent, why should i spend time reading them?"

but don't worry teachers, this is just a phase. a couple of people on quora whose qualifications include "studying in high school" agree that all edgy teens type in lowercase and i am here to attest to this. correlation doesn't mean causation, but i

have never met a single person with auto caps-off who doesn't also respond with the "face with tears of joy" emoji or "lmaoooo" as an unironic response to their parents' angry texts about their grades.

it is also aesthetically pleasing to send and receive messages which are all in the same grammatically incorrect fashion because, as we all know, "lmao" just hits harder than "Lmao," right?

as an expert who averages three hours a day on messages, i have discovered that people who avoid "lmfao" and use "haha" or "ahaha" (not "bahah," that's reserved for four-year-olds) tend to be more reserved and mature. these sophisticated individuals also choose to avoid acronyms such as "brb" (be right back), "gm" (good morning) and "ily" (i love you), because we all know a truly honorable person takes the time to type out the full eight letters.

on the other hand, if a person uses emojis unironically, it's time to run. the occasional 😊 or 😈 is to be expected, but using any of the facial expressions is a huge red flag.

lastly, the ghosters. i

highly doubt any of them will be offended by this paragraph since, if they apparently do not have the time to send a one-word response to a text (cough, senior nicole lu), they also won't have time to read through the entire 400 words of the article. too bad sparknotes only does summaries on books that nobody reads.

Anyways, I hope this article succeeded in lowering some of your texting-related self-esteem 😊♦



don't worry,
i'm not
depressed.
i'm just going
through an
identity crisis

Graphic by JEANETTE ZHOU

topten**DEATHBED REGRETS**

- 10 Deciding to bunk together at science camp.** We both got extremely whiny when it came to choosing who got the top and bottom bunks. It was not a fun four nights.

- 9 Forgetting to take an entire quiz in Precalculus Honors.** We both forgot to take the same quiz last year and never made it up. It's not our fault that we were ONLY given a six-hour window to complete it.

- 8 Standing in front of a tetherball pole while someone swings the ball.** Thankfully we don't go outside anymore. Elementary school had enough recesses for a lifetime.

- 7 Signing up for P.E. instead of doing cross country.** Instead of being given two hours to run one mile, we're given 1.5 hours to run a mile, pretend to lift weights and contemplate life decisions.

- 6 Using the school library's required reading books.** Every time we open "All Quiet on the Western Front," our noses shrivel up from getting a whiff of eau de Cheeto dust, boogers and body odor from 2005.

- 5 Buying the baked potato from the school cafeteria.** Mmm... nothing does more for your appetite than seeing a crusty, bald little lump with "all the fixings!"

- 4 Leaving bananas in our backpacks.** Did we just discover a new form of mold? Where is our Nobel Science Prize?

- 3 Giving our Chinese New Year's red envelopes to our parents for "safekeeping."** Never saw the money again. Every time a withdrawal is brought up (adjusted for inflation, of course), our parents suddenly remember our chemistry grades.

- 2 Being too shy to confront the 8th graders who copied our entire final project in 6th grade.** They say time heals all wounds, but — four years later — we still glare at them in the halls sometimes.

- 1 Having access to the internet during elementary school.** We wasted perfectly good storage space to send chain mail to pester our friends. Anyways 😊😊😊, make sure 🎁🎁🎁 to send ❤️❤️❤️ this top 10 ❤️❤️❤️ to the top 10 people 🌹🌹🌹 in your life ❤️❤️❤️ — don't break the chain 🔒🔒🔒!

>> Victoria Hu and Sarah Zhou