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THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

Friday, April 8, 2022

Saratoga High School | Saratoga, CA

Vol. 62, No. 9

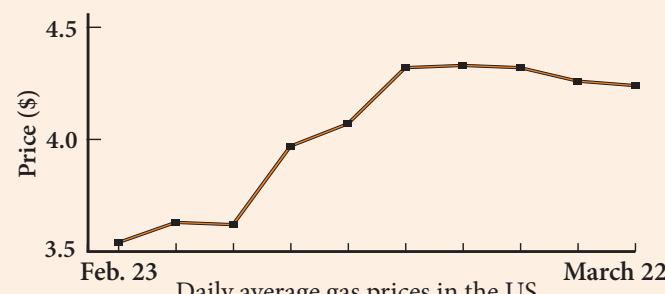
**U.S. SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA IMPACT COMMUNITY TO VARIOUS DEGREES**

BY Arnav Swamy

Like many Americans, senior Raina Hirekatur has seen her pocketbook hit hard in recent weeks at the gas pump as prices have spiked due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

"I've definitely had to be more conservative in how much gas I consume and ensure every trip is as efficient as possible," Hirekatur said.

Gasoline prices in the U.S. have seen a dramatic increase



in conjunction with the invasion, topping \$6 a gallon at some local stations. That is up

from an average of \$3.36 a gallon nationally in January, according to the American Au-

tomobile Association (AAA).

Russia, the third-largest oil exporter after the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, accounts for over 10% of oil production in the world and supplies around one-third of Europe's oil. In response to the invasion, European countries cut back their purchases of Russian oil in protest. The U.S. also banned imported Russian oil in an effort to "target the main artery of Russia's economy."

>> **INFLATION** on pg. 3**Free lunches to be offered in 2022-2023**

BY LynnDai

Beginning next fall, California's Universal Meals Program will require all public school districts and charter schools to provide free meals for all students. The program mandates a nutritiously adequate breakfast and lunch for all students each school day — and includes schools like Saratoga that have traditionally offered very few free lunches.

In addition, cafeteria meals will be slightly adjusted to fit federal nutrition standards, which require a minimum of one cup each of milk, fruit and vegetables and two cups each of grains and meats or meat alternates. To pay for the lunches, the cafeteria will also start receiving reimbursement for all free meals from the state and federal government.

Impact on students and staff

Unlike in the past, students will automatically get free meals, regardless of whether they qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Non-program foods, like à la cartes and snacks from vending machines, must still be purchased.

California's Universal Meals Program mandates a nutritiously adequate breakfast and lunch for all.

The Los Gatos Saratoga Union School District (LGSUHSD) cafeteria head Pam Carlino estimates that more students will begin getting lunches. She predicts food service lines will be longer.

While Carlino said she isn't sure what the cafeteria will do to address this issue, the CDE provided suggestions to ensure that students have adequate sitting time, some of which include adding a grab-and-go section.

Changes to the cafeteria

The school will continue its partnership with the Country House Kitchen Company, a lunch program that allows

>> **LUNCH** on pg. 3**Both robotics teams make world championships**

BY Nikhil Mathihalli

The 38 students on the school's FRC team, MSET Fish, will be heading to Houston in April for the World Division Tournament.

After the school's 14-member FTC team MSET Cuttlefish made Worlds on March 13, MSET Fish also qualified on

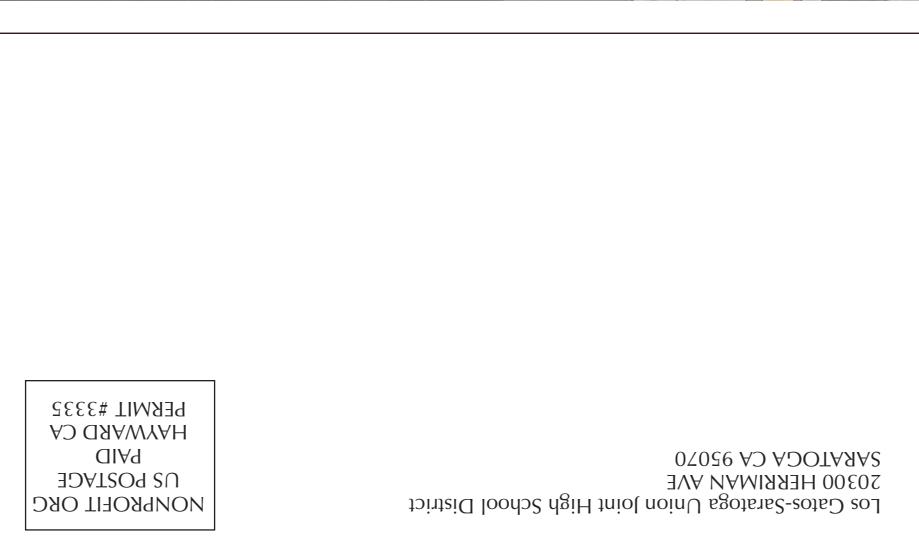
March 28 at Saint Ignatius High School.

For the first time, MSET Fish qualified by winning the Chairman's Award, given to the team that best carries out the organizers' mission of service. Senior team lead Arya Vasani attributed the team's success to its extensive community outreach programs.

While seniors are excited to return to

Worlds after two years of cancellations during the pandemic, underclassmen look forward to meeting "national powerhouses to hopefully learn a thing or two," Vasani said.

"It feels great to finally be recognized for all the hard work we've been putting in for this season and the last couple of years," he said. ♦



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Falcons shine in respective fields

All graphics by SELINA CHEN



newsbriefs

Class of 2022 valedictorian, salutatorian announced

The school recently announced seniors Marcus Kuo and Andrew Cheng as the Class of 2022 valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively. They received these honors because they have the highest GPAs in the senior class.

Kuo, holding a 4.60 GPA, has taken a total of eight honors courses and 10 AP classes at the school. Kuo is also the captain of the school's varsity water polo team and is a violin player in the Saratoga Strings and the Saratoga Symphony Orchestra.

Cheng has a 4.54 GPA and has taken a total of 14 honors and AP courses. He plays piano competitively and plays the violin in the Saratoga Music Program alongside Kuo.

Both said that they were surprised when principal Greg Louie called their parents with the announcement of valedictorian and salutatorian, but felt happy nonetheless.

"The best part was telling my family members from Taiwan, especially my grandma," Kuo said. "Because a big part of school in Asia has to do with your ranking, they were super excited to hear the news." ♦

— Avani Kongetira and Harshini Velchamy

Graduation ceremony to use pre-pandemic setting

If current COVID-19 trends continue, the Class of 2022's graduation ceremony will take place on June 2 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the football field — and be normal for the first time since 2019.

There will be no limit on the number of attendees graduates can invite; the administration expects a spike in guest attendance compared to the restricted 2021 graduation ceremony, assistant principal Matthew Torrens said.

A major change from previous graduations is that students now have the choice between white or navy blue gowns regardless of their gender identity. According to Torrens, the change aimed to alleviate pressures to associate gender with specific colors and allow students to choose what's best for them.

Through a recently released survey, the senior class office gauged the class's preference for orientation — facing the home side of the football field and tennis courts as per tradition, or facing the scoreboard and Herriman Avenue — and grouping — alphabetically or among friends as Class of 2021 graduates did. The organizers are potentially including a livestream for international family members that cannot attend.

Students won't need to wear masks or stay 6 feet apart outdoors, but administrators pointed out there is no certainty of the public health conditions and plans could change. ♦

— Avani Kongetira and Derek Hsu

Plants swap bonded community beyond academics

The Community Plants Swap on April 3 from 10:00-12:00 p.m. in the quad strengthened community connections between Saratoga High, feeder schools and plant lovers outside of Saratoga.

According to guidance counselor Alinna Satake, the main organizer of this event, she and the Parent Book Club, a network Satake created to connect parents and community members through reading, had been talking about how to connect as a community over something beyond academics. Inspired by the discussions, Satake decided to initiate an event that celebrates gardening and sustainability.

The Plant Swap featured a plethora of activities and stations for all age groups, such as seed plotting and face painting for kids, educational booths on pollution prevention for teens and tables to exchange professional gardening tips for adults.

"Gardening has been my personal wellness thing, but sustainability and cross-cultural community connection, seed saving and just being together has a huge part of my heart as well," Satake said. ♦

— Cici Xu

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picturethis



School Spirit | Senior Casey Gilligan sprints towards the end zone during the Falconpuff game between the seniors and the juniors during lunch on March 31. The seniors won with a score of 14-0.

The Saratoga Falcon

April 8, 2022

The Saratoga Falcon

April 8, 2022

INFLATION

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according to President Joe Biden in his March 8 speech announcing the U.S. ban on imports of Russian oil, liquefied natural gas and coal. These stipulations make oil supplies scarcer across the globe.

Europe is now scrambling to find oil from alternative producers like America and Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a cartel of 23 major oil producing countries. This polarizes worldwide demand and spikes gas prices internationally. California's stringent laws on emissions as well as gasoline taxing result in its prices reaching unprecedented heights with an average \$5.91 per gallon of regular gasoline as of March 30, according to the AAA.

Though she does not pay for her own gas, Hirekatur's family has placed strict rules on their collective consumption in response to such high prices, especially as gas prices surpass \$6. She said that while she aims to drive only for necessities, there are situations in which driving cannot be compromised.

"Many activities every day as a high schooler require some sort of transportation," Hirekatur said. "I can't compromise driving even with the gas prices. We just have to try our best to be as resourceful as possible."

Since the invasion, Tarbox has been hearing discussions that the situation is a result of political manipulations and feels that the theory is unwarranted and provoking.

Other students, such as junior Alexander Lee, feel relatively unaffected by these extreme prices, which he attributes to how infrequently he drives his Acura TL.

"I typically only drive to commute to school. Since I drive so little, one tank goes a very long way," Lee said.

Lee noted that such high prices are less harmful in wealthy cities like Saratoga compared to less affluent communities, where gasoline is a requirement for employment such as truck driving and ridesharing.

Like many others, Tarbox sees increased gas costs as a small price to pay for curbing Russian aggression.

"I definitely don't like current gas prices and how uncomfortable they are," Tarbox said. "But for what it's worth, I would rather see these prices than support what the Russian government is doing to Ukraine." ♦

Lee understands the concern behind raising gas prices, especially for those who are more financially restricted in other areas.

Prior to receiving his admissions letter, Zhang was stressed because he hadn't gotten into any of his top schools; on the day decisions were released, Zhang spent the afternoon at his friends' house "chilling" until the results came out.

"I was waitlisted for UC San Diego and somehow got into UCLA, so my friends and I just started running around the house because nobody really expected it," Zhang said.

For Li, she finished a chocolate cinnamon ice cream combo in celebration and got down to business: reaching out to her past college friends.

"I mainly asked about what the rules are in college, what freshmen can do on campus and their thoughts on majors," Li said. "I've also reached out to future

classmates to get to know them a bit."

In anticipation of taking a pre-med path, Li joined a Discord Server at Emory University Class of 2026 students,

which had channels designated

specifically for students attending the different university campuses. She also plans to visit the university during the summer.

Unlike Li, who found out about her future college during the Early Decisions cycle, many students received their decisions during the Regular Decisions cycle during March and April; not all releases were smooth-sailing, however.

While Pham plans to visit the school during spring break, she has already consulted current and former UCLA students — including

her cousin — about the school's environment and daily life in Los Angeles.

The most important factors in her decision to apply to UCLA include having extended family in southern California and picking a place where she knows she will thrive, according to Pham. With the wait finally over, she said she is looking forward to the new chapter in her life.

"I am just grateful for the opportunities that Saratoga High School gave me and all the extracurriculars that helped me get into UCLA," Pham said. ♦

Tamasha highlights Bollywood culture at the school

by LynnDai
& NikhilMathihalli



FALCON // ATREY DESAI



Tamasha performed on Feb. 20 at Bombay in the Bay.

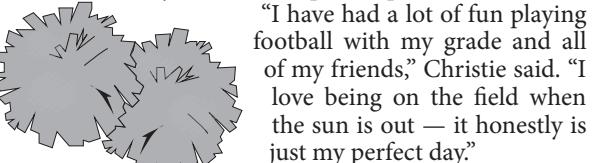
BY ChristinaChang

"We changed the name from Powderpuff to Falconpuff because the old name emphasized gender norms and we wanted to make it more inclusive to everyone," senior Rally Commissioner Rima Christie said. "This year and years moving forward, we really want to emphasize that anyone can participate in these two activities, not just people who only identify as he/him or she/her."

The re-branding of Powderpuff to Falconpuff followed Spirit Commission's piloting of the school's first gender neutral Homecoming court earlier this year.

Falconpuff began on Tuesday where the juniors reigned victorious over the freshmen. The seniors beat the sophomores on Wednesday, defeated the juniors on Thursday for the championship round.

The Rally Commission's rebranded gender inclusive Falconpuff to take part in the flag football and cheerleading aspects of the event. This modified the former Powderpuff, an annual school tradition that dated back to the '90s and featured female flag football players and male cheerleaders.



"I have had a lot of fun playing football with my grade and all of my friends," Christie said. "I love being on the field when the sun is out — it honestly is just my perfect day."

LUNCH

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for nutritious food to be made from scratch on a tight budget.

Senior Derek Hsu, the ASB president, said he was "pleasantly surprised" with the menu options when he joined the administration and the board for a tasting.

"The food tasting is significantly better [than the food I bought in freshman and sophomore year], and if the district does provide those options next year students should be happy," he said.

Carlino, who has been working at the district since 2002, said the menu choices will likely decrease.

"Everybody's going to work differently because we're going to be preparing a lot more, but the quality and nutrition of the food will remain about the same because we're still making everything from scratch," she said.

According to Carlino, principal Greg Louie found through his experience working as the principal of Santa Teresa High that students often throw away the vegetable option.

He suggested a system to diminish food waste: While students will be presented with both options of a fruit and vegetable, they will have the option of solely choosing fruit.

"The food tasting was significantly better, and if the district does provide those options next year, students should be happy."

SENIOR Derek Hsu

the 2002-2003 school year, according to Carlino. Both are designed to fight hunger and obesity by ensuring that school meals meet federal nutrition standards and free or reduced-price meals will be offered to students who are eligible: Families with incomes between 130% and 185% or at or below 130% of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price and free meals, respectively.

On the week of April 4, a new member of Country House, Colleen Malone, will help cafeteria staff fill out necessary paperwork for the NSLP and SBP program applications.

The school will still need to collect free and reduced-price meal applications next year.

Very few LGSUHSD students qualify for free and reduced-price meals — one of the reasons the school had pulled out of the two programs in 2002.

Carlino estimates that five students at SHS and 40 students at Los Gatos High currently qualify for the program. In contrast, an average of 80% to 90% of the school population in the San Jose Unified School District qualify for the program, according to Carlino.

Although she is unsure what the reimbursement rate for the 2022-2023 school year will be, the average federal reimbursement rate in the last four years was \$0.33 per paid meal served by student eligibility type and an additional average state meal reimbursement of \$3.15 per paid meal, provided by the universal lunch program.

Adjustment of free lunch policies from Fall 2021

Near the beginning of the pandemic, Saratoga High's feeder school Redwood Middle and other elementary schools in the Saratoga Union School District started providing free meals for all students because of their continual enrollment in NSLP and SBP.

In September 2021, principal Greg Louie sent an email to all SHS students and staff addressing why SHS was not mandated to provide a free meal for all students; at the time, sufficient state funding allocations for the universal free meals initiative had not been confirmed, so the district did not need to reapply for NSLP and SBP to seek reimbursement.

However, on March 10, the California Department of Education stated that sufficient funding to provide additional state meal reimbursement to cover the cost of the Universal Meals Program had been established. As a result of this announcement, the school district has decided to reapply for NSLP and SBP to receive reimbursement benefits.

Even so, the district has always been committed to ensuring that students who need breakfast and lunch can get them "without any obstacles," Louie wrote in the email. ♦

compared to outdoor, and we really wanted people to enjoy our rallies and cheer on their friends as they participated in games and dances," Christie said.

The Spring Fling dance hosted by Dance Commission was scheduled for Saturday, April 2, but was canceled due to low ticket sales: Only 90 of the required 160 tickets were sold.

Senior Spirit Commissioner Johnny Hulme speculated that the low sales were due to a combination of factors: Since the dance was going to be more casual, upperclassmen were more focused on the upcoming prom and underclassmen weren't as familiar with indoor dances. Still, the seniors were happy to re-experience the fun they had in their freshman year.

"Our students work incredibly hard in their academics, and we have these events so they can take a break and hang out with their friends and do fun activities," Christie said. ♦

All Graphics by LIHI SHOSHANI

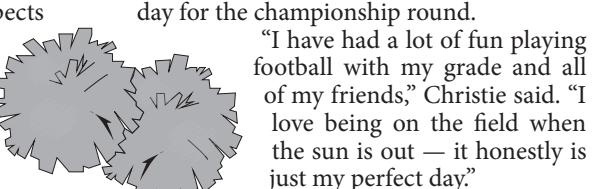
Leadership hosts first Spring Fling since 2019; Saturday's dance canceled due to low ticket sales

BY ChristinaChang

Saratoga High School's annual Spring Fling spirit week, put together by the Rally and Spirit Commissions, kicked off on March 28, with Jersey Day and the final match of March Madness on Monday; Falconpuff on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; and Inflatable Day and the Night Rally on Friday.

This year's Spring Fling featured a number of notable changes from past years, including changing the name from the name from Powderpuff to Falconpuff and adding a night rally.

The Rally Commission's rebranded gender inclusive Falconpuff to take part in the flag football and cheerleading aspects of the event. This modified the former Powderpuff, an annual school tradition that dated back to the '90s and featured female flag football players and male cheerleaders.



"We changed the name from Powderpuff to Falconpuff because the old name emphasized gender norms and we wanted to make it more inclusive to everyone," senior Rally Commissioner Rima Christie said. "This year and years moving forward, we really want to emphasize that anyone can participate in these two activities, not just people who only identify as he/him or she/her."

The re-branding of Powderpuff to Falconpuff followed Spirit Commission's piloting of the school's first gender neutral Homecoming court earlier this year.

Falconpuff began on Tuesday where the juniors reigned victorious over the freshmen. The seniors beat the sophomores on Wednesday, defeated the juniors on Thursday for the championship round.

The event was also the first indoor rally of the year, meaning all of leadership worked on creating decorations, preparing for the tailgate and posting on social media to hype up the event.

"We hoped having this indoor rally would boost some school spirit because there is a completely different vibe indoor

New clubs arise around campus

Animal Science Club
Members of the Animal Science Club plan to teach students about common animal diseases and how to take care of a variety of animals through meetings every other week in biology teacher Lisa Cochrum's room. Club members' love of animals comes from their own personal experiences, according to sophomore secretary Riley Alves.

"Living on a farm, my love for animals comes from taking care of my many pets, including two horses, two dogs, five cats and twenty chickens," Alves said.

In the future, the club is hoping to do some volunteering work including donating homemade blankets to an animal shelter.

"We are all animal enthusiasts, and we hope we can inspire other students to develop a passion for animals as well," Alves said.

Psychology club
To improve students' mental health, sophomore president Minh Do, along with juniors Mahati Kotamraju, Mai-thili Kulkarni and Kasie Yang, founded the Psychology Club.

"I became interested in psychology after realizing there were many correlations between psychology and business marketing," Do said. "It really helped me understand more aspects of marketing — the field I want to go into."

Members of the Psychology Club meet in Spanish teacher Gina Rodriguez's room every Blue Day Wednesday. With a different focus every month, students are able to learn about a broad range of issues, including the current topic of stress for which members were asked to keep a stress log to better their understanding.

On top of biweekly meetings every other week, they also hope to host two fundraisers per semester to donate to a nonprofit that will benefit student mental health.

Paradox Club
Paradoxes describe a scenario in which contradicting statements are true. Classically, examples of this are the Grandfather Paradox — what happens if an individual goes back in time and kills their grandfather — and The-eseus's Ship — if over a sustained period of time each component of a ship is replaced until eventually the entire ship was replaced, is the ship still The-eseus's Ship?

In addition to these paradoxes, the club covers mathematical paradoxes such as Monty Hall's problem, which uses probability to guess which of three doors contains a prize.

The club starts meetings with a brain warmup, such as, "How many windows are in Manhattan," or "Are there more doors or wheels in the world?"

Junior Ojas Somani and Uma Phalke founded this club after Phalke attended a summer program at John Hopkins University that tackled such problems.

"We want to foster better situational logical understanding or common sense amongst all Saratoga students," Somani said, "skills that can be applicable in any class." ♦

— Mitchell Chen

Students, staff share concerns on vaccination proposal bill in CA

by Victoria Hu

The school hosted a COVID-19 Vaccination and Booster Clinic on Jan. 22; as teenagers waited in line, they were escorted by parents who signed papers of consent, as the vaccination process for teenagers ages 12-17 requires legal approval from parents or guardians.

Davey also cited the wide range of ages included in the law as another factor to take into account. According to the Associated Press, different regions of the country have varying vaccine minimum consenting ages, the lowest of which is Alabama allowing 14-year-olds to consent, followed by Oregon at age 15. If passed, the bill would cover any FDA approved vaccines that meet CDC immunization recommendations — notably, the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as shots for flu, measles and chickenpox. It would go into effect on Jan. 1, 2023.

In areas such as Santa Clara County, the bill may not have a drastic impact. COVID-19 teen vaccination rates in the county are significantly higher than statewide statistics: As of March 29, among eligible 12-17 year olds, 80.2% are fully vaccinated, compared with California's 65.8%. These stats lag behind adult vaccination rates with 95.1% of adults in the county ages 18-49 fully vaccinated and 77.3% in the same age group in California. According to Wiener, the new bill would empower teenagers to make their own health decisions and improve vaccination rates overall.

Local opinions on Senate Bill 866 are split. While some praised the bill for giving teenagers the ability to protect themselves against disease, others brought up concerns about the bill blocking parent involvement and responsibility in their children's medical decisions.

History teacher Mike Davey has mixed feelings about the bill. On one hand, he strongly believes in the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine and respects lawmakers' efforts in getting more teenagers vaccinated. However, he is hesitant over letting children as young as 12

make medical decisions on their own. "It's certainly a gray area," Davey said.

"I would generally say that I would support anything to encourage people to get vaccinated. But this might not be [something I can support] because it takes it out of the parents' hands."

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On the other hand, freshman Will Norwood said he thinks Senate Bill 866 is worth supporting because increasing vaccination rates will help stop the spread of the virus. He believes that "it's important to allow kids to make the right choice about vaccines." Additionally, he feels it is important to discuss the repercussions from parents at home if a child gets vaccinated without their consent, he said.

"I'm very grateful that I have parents who agree with me, align with my political views and agree that vaccines are safe and scientifically proven," he said. "But I sympathize with people who want to get a vaccine but can't get ac-

cess to it if their parents don't necessarily agree with them."

The prospects for the bill to pass into law remain remote, observers say, due to vocal opposition. Norwood thinks this is because politically active anti-vax parent groups push back the bill. Although they comprise only a small percentage of the general population, they are overrepresented in California's legislature, he said. Nevertheless, Norwood and Davey are hopeful that COVID-19 vaccinations will be required for anyone attending schools in person next fall. They believe that it should be the standard, given that California already has vaccine mandates for diseases — such as polio, tetanus, measles, mumps and rubella.

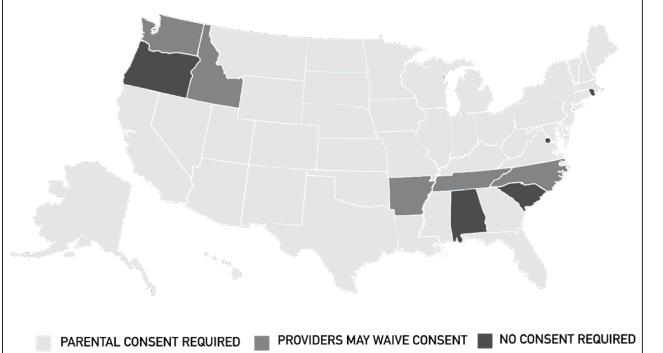
Although Newsom already approved a vaccine mandate for both public and private in-person schools upon the FDA's full approval of the vaccine for respective age groups, Senate Bill 871 would only allow exceptions for medical reasons.

Both bills have yet to pass through the California Senate. As of March 29, Senate Bill 866 is pending approval from the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"I think it will be interesting to see how it plays out," Norwood said. "I'm excited to see what will actually change if this bill passes, and even if it doesn't, it will still affect the way we perceive vaccines for minors." ♦

Graphic by SINA SALEHI

VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR MINORS



Local businesses find mixed success after removal of state mask mandate

by Sara Bright & Carolyn Wang

Angelica Duarte, owner of the Plumed Horse Chocolaterie in Saratoga village, stood maskless behind the glass pane of her chocolate shop as she greeted two young girls pointing at rows of colorful, hand-crafted chocolates. Outside the store, people milled around Saratoga downtown, some wearing masks and some not.

"I feel pretty blessed because people come from all over just to support me."

OWNER Angelica Duarte

Down the street, Hong's Gourmet has made masks optional for customers, according to restaurant owner Victor Hong, and with the increasing rate of vaccination, he is personally comfortable if customers don't wear face shields.

His restaurant's experience with masking was more turbulent when the pandemic first began, however. The restrictive mandate back in 2020 brought occasional conflict between employees and customers who were unaccustomed to the restrictions. Masks were also initially hard for his restaurant staff to get used to, particularly waiters who became out of breath as they ran around collecting orders.

"Most people come in with masks on though. People have been pretty good about wearing masks in general," Duarte

said. Her business, meanwhile, has continued to thrive despite the restrictions of the past two years. Duarte attributes this to the continued support of local customers and the relatively rare number of shops that sell hand-crafted chocolates.

While restaurants might see a slight influx in customers after the lifting of the mandate, other sectors like dry cleaning have continued to endure economic hardships.

Sean Lee, owner of Saratoga Dry Cleaners for over three decades, personally prefers customers to wear face shields even though his business makes them optional.

"My immune system is compromised,

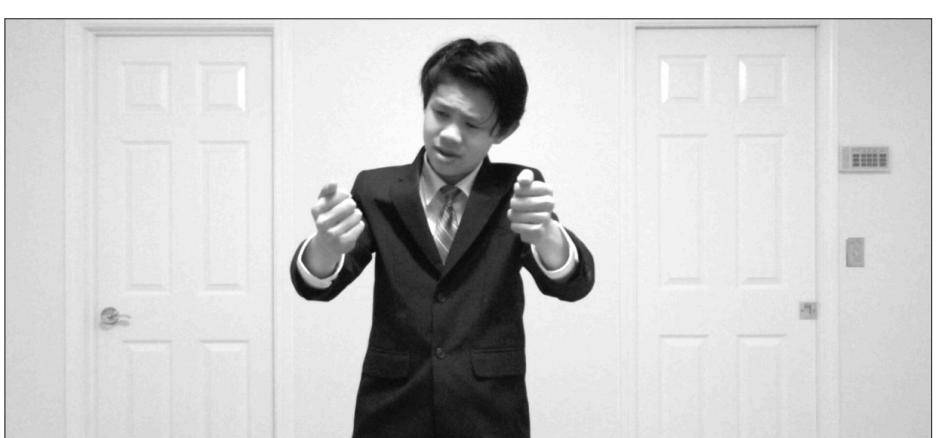
so I'm not taking any chances," he said.

"I'll be wearing a mask for a couple of months."

According to Lee, about 35% of the dry cleaning business has gone under, and he doesn't see any sign of his business picking up. Lee and his wife are currently the only two people working in his shop — a state he calls "survival mode." After laying off his employees, the hardest challenge for the business is keeping up the rent. While he sees a sliver of hope with the lifting of the mask mandate, he acknowledges that it'll be a difficult road going forward.

"I've gone through 9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis, but I've never experienced anything like this," he said. "I'm still amazed that I'm here, but it's been really, really hard." ♦

Fortunately, his employees have adapt-



Courtesy of TIMOTHY LEUNG

Timothy Leung acts out the short story "The Paper Menagerie" while using hand gestures.

DI standout qualifies for in-person Nationals

by Serena Li & Daniel Wu

It's become routine for freshman Timothy Leung to stroll into speech practice after a weekend of stunning success, humbly reviewing judges' comments and making adjustments accordingly.

Leung's journey to speech success emerged out of a love for acting; during middle school, he often acted in school plays.

Seeking to explore a new type of acting, Leung made the decision to try Dramatic Interpretation (DI) — where speakers re-enact works of literature — and the Original Oratory (OO) format — where competitors compose and perform their own speeches.

Last year, Leung concluded his middle school journey with a double victory in both DI and OO of the Middle School Tournament of Champions, titles often dubbed the crown jewels of competitive speech and debate. Now in the competitive speech varsity circuit, Leung has continued his success in DI, placing first in Stanford's prestigious Palm Classic on Feb. 14. On March 13, he qualified to the California states competition in DI as the Coast Forensics League's top seed and on March for National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) Nationals in DI as the California Central Coast District's second seed. Leung attributes his success primarily to his practice routine.

"Prior to competitions, I run through my speeches multiple times, perfecting every element from hand gestures to enunciation, in order to enable myself to perform as flawlessly as possible," Leung said.

"It's been a fun journey. Given the awesome support the SHS speech and debate community has provided, I look forward to winning with the team," Leung said. ♦

Additionally, he emphasized the impor-

Senior helps develop aviation technology

by Serena Li & Daniel Wu

analyzing mechanical systems including propulsion and aerodynamics. Currently, Whisper Aero is developing a quiet propulsion system aimed at tackling the ever-present issue of noise pollution generated by aircraft.

Because Whisper Aero is based in Crossville, Tenn., Shah works mostly from a remote setting and dedicates roughly a week out of every month to fly there for hands-on work with the hardware team, including analyzing propulsion systems and improving efficiency, along with business aspects such as fundraising.

"I've really been enjoying the experience of traveling to the headquarters. Everyone is super driven and some even live on campus. It almost feels like a family in a way," Shah said.



Given the time commitment necessary for his job, Shah has decided to take a gap year following graduation, a choice in line with his belief that at this point, he can learn more in a real job than in the classroom.

Aside from working for Whisper Aero, Sajiv hopes to pursue personal interests, including earning a private pilot's license and working on side projects such as drones and mobile robots in his year away from college.

"Right now, it's a bit early to say what I think I'll be doing in the future, but I think my passion for electric aviation serves as a stepping stone," Shah said. ♦



for her.

"Over time, as we're getting closer to Tech Week [the last week of rehearsals], I feel like I've grown to love the cast and love the musical and love what I'm doing," Kapoor said. "I look forward to rehearsals all the time."

The show's progress will culminate on April 29 and 30 and May 6 and 7 when the play runs in the McAfee Center. Tickets can be purchased at <https://lgsuhsd.vbotickets.com/events> for \$20 to \$50 depending on seating position. ♦

Breaking tradition: stage manager roles held by two underclassmen

by Michael Fok & Avani Kongsetra

Since 2018, the drama department has had three seniors and one junior fill the role of the stage manager — the director's right-hand person and one of the most important positions for the production. This year the role is being held by an unusual combination: freshman Diya Kapoor and sophomore Arushi Maheshwar.

Diya and Arushi are both stage managers running shows for years, but she had not been in direct leadership roles herself as she pursued her desire to be on stage instead.

Her passion led to her rapidly developing an affinity for acting,

starring as the wife in the short film "Prohibition" during her freshman year for a Media Arts Program film festival.

Alongside acting, her career in stage-directing began in her freshman year. Fortunately, his employees have adapt-

when the former drama teacher, Bryan Ringsted, was in need of a stage manager; she soon realized her passion for the role.

"I realized there was something about stage management that appealed to me," she said. "People would come to you for help, and they would ask you questions when they were confused."

Alongside acting, Maheshwar's career in stage-directing began in her freshman year.

Senior Taylor Zhou, who stars as Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof" first saw Maheshwar acting for the 2020 Connections film festival organized by the school's Drama Club.

"She surprised me," he said.

"She undertook one of the most difficult tasks in theater — stage managing — and is overall one of the most talented people I know."

Maheshwar said that, as an underclassman, she sometimes has difficulty in balancing being assertive and not being mean or intrusive, but feels that she has been improving as the show progresses.

Maheshwar also serves as a mentor to Kapoor, who is taking on the position of co-stage manager for the first time this year.

Kapoor enjoyed the musical chosen for the spring production, and after looking up to the tech duties and managers from previous productions for so long, she decided to become one herself.

"[Maheshwar] is such an amazing role model and I've learned so much from her about how to do things, how to handle people and how to take on that leadership role," Kapoor said. "I feel like I'm going to use the skills she's taught me for more than stage managing."

Kapoor believes that being an underclassman in a leadership position can be challenging because her voice is not always heard during rehearsals. However, she says that getting to know the cast better has mitigated these issues

Performance dates
"Fiddler on the Roof" on:
April 29: 7:30 p.m.
April 30: 7:30 p.m.
May 6: 7:30 p.m.
May 7: 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Where
McAfee Theater
Tickets at the door or online
Cost
Ticket Prices
\$20 to \$50 (depending on location)

>> Springmusical



Restrict course enrollment and put students' health first

By NidhiMathihali

By all measures, students here are stressed out, overworked and tired, especially as juniors and seniors, and the cause is obvious to everyone: They're taking too many AP and Honors classes at the same time and not handling the load well.

The desire to load schedules with AP and Honors classes comes with other downsides. Since 2019, teachers and guidance counselors have observed unusually large numbers of students attempting to drop from AP and Honors courses, especially STEM classes, in the fall semester, making it difficult to allocate certain numbers of sections of each course.

This year, for instance, a huge proportion of students in AP U.S. History, more than in previous years, wished to drop to college prep U.S. History.

Typically, students feel pressured to take these high-level courses by external factors — peers, parents and college counselors — who believe that GPA maximization is key to securing an acceptance at a prestigious university. These issues all have a simple solution: Remove the open enrollment policy for high-achievement courses.

The primary concern with the current system is that students are, in general, unprepared for their courses. Anecdotally, according to teachers, this is true for courses across all disciplines.

When comparing this year's English 11 Honors performance to that of previous years, English teacher Amy Keys said that her students have generally found it harder to adjust to the curriculum this year.

Although some of the more difficult transition can be attributed to the decrease in sophomore English proficiency due to a year in online learning, she added, several students may have taken the class for the GPA boost rather than a genuine interest.

In general, unpreparedness for a course stems from a lack of a strong foundation in its prerequisites. This explains why stu-

dents tend to drop courses within the first few weeks of school. The problems this year were exacerbated by distance learning, in which open-note tests and online labs were commonplace and work ethic depreciated.

The pandemic has made keeping up with fast-paced high-achievement courses much more difficult for underprepared students.

AP Physics teacher Matthew Welander said that this issue applies equally to AP Physics 1 and 2, which have Chemistry and English 10 as prerequisites.

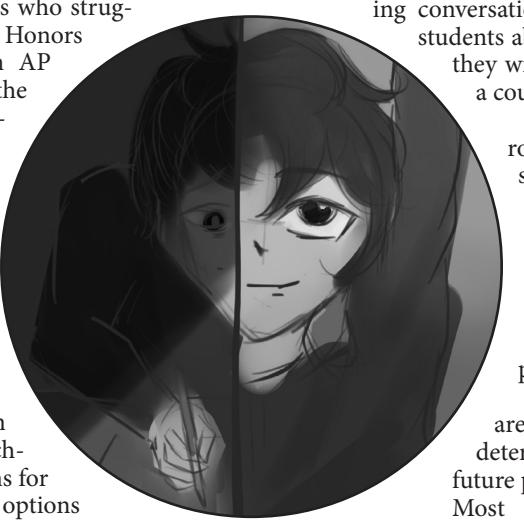
Although students who struggled in Chemistry Honors can still do well in AP Physics, he said, the majority of these students have to spend many additional hours studying to keep up with the course material.

To meet student and teacher needs, the school should implement a stronger teacher recommendation system, in which teachers' recommendations for students' best course options are directly considered as part of counselors' schedule selection processes.

Since teachers can most directly gauge how well their students will perform in a subsequent related course, the addition would help limit student stress and avoid logistical issues each fall.

Allowing students to take hard courses they are not necessarily prepared for induces unnecessary stress — an issue that has spiraled out of control for both students and the administration.

For the sake of students' health, the school should rework its open enrollment policy and implement stronger restrictions on course selection. ♦



Open course enrollment gives academic freedom

By NilayMishra

Under the school's current course selection policy, students can pick any courses that they would like and take them the following year as long as they have sufficiently high grades in certain prerequisite courses — "B or higher in Biology, Chemistry and Algebra 2," as the recommendation for AP Environmental Science, for instance.

If it is purely due to pressure from peers, parents or colleges, teachers can reassure students that the association between taking certain classes and college admissions is overrated.

If a student goes against the teacher's wishes after such a discussion, they are taking an informed risk and should bear the consequences themselves if they struggle to keep pace with their peers.

While this open enrollment policy grants students academic flexibility and ensures that no student is struggling in a class unfit for them, it should emphasize grades in prerequisite classes.

Prerequisite grades are often insufficient in determining students' future potential. Most notably, because same-subject classes are often taught by different teachers, a weaker grade may be caused by differences in grading policy and expectations.

Teachers may adapt the rigor of the courses, and some may give take-home tests while others may not.

Furthermore, some of the material in a particular course is never actually used in future courses that require it as a prerequisite.

As long as teachers make the challenges and risks of taking a course clear and place their class in a broader academic context, there is no need to change the current open enrollment system. ♦

and ecology AP Biology and AP Environmental Science — the only courses on campus teaching these topics.

Instead, teachers should facilitate discussions with their students — regardless of their current performance in a class — on the students' interests and future goals. These discussions should focus on the reasons students truly want to take a class.

If it is purely due to pressure from peers, parents or colleges, teachers can reassure students that the association between taking certain classes and college admissions is overrated.

If a student goes against the teacher's wishes after such a discussion, they are taking an informed risk and should bear the consequences themselves if they struggle to keep pace with their peers.

For some, the knowledge gained from such a course may be valuable in its own right and unattainable otherwise. For example, students wishing to learn art history at the school can only take AP Art History, an AP-level course that has 10 exams scattered across the year.

For others, the decision to continue with a difficult class may stem from a desire to academically challenge themselves and take intellectual risks in order to progress.

This is a superior alternative to having students take courses outside of school in order to achieve sufficiently high grades in a course that they skipped at school.

This is expensive and a luxury that not all can afford.

It is also often a waste of time as the curriculum of the two courses may critically differ.

All in all, open course enrollment policies provide greater flexibility to most parents and students, enabling motivated students to excel in a niche environment without limitations.

As long as teachers make the challenges and risks of taking a course clear and place their class in a broader academic context, there is no need to change the current open enrollment system. ♦

Digitizing the SAT is a desperate attempt to stay relevant

By NilayMishra

During online AP testing season — online timers running out without warning, software crashes and poor internet — will transfer over to the SAT.

Furthermore, shortening reading passages diminishes the value of the section. Instead of gauging how well students can parse large amounts of intricate information, the shorter SAT reading section tests speed reading. Making reading passages more "diverse" is a commendable effort, but is vaguely stated with no elaboration and is hardly one that will actually solve the exam's existing racial and socioeconomic problems.

These are all signs of desperation. The SAT is growing increasingly irrelevant; Several colleges have gone test-optimal for the indefinite future as educators recognize that standardized testing is a poor way to measure students' capabilities. Not to mention, wealthy students have access to tutoring services, which boost their scores, creating an uneven playing field.

Making passages more "diverse" is important, but won't solve the exam's existing racial problems.

Digitizing the SAT not only exacerbates this inequality, but seems like a desperate attempt for the College Board's vision of standardized testing to remain in place for the future.

These exams would be harder to use tutoring services for because of their relatively non-standardized format.

Making the test fully online only accentuates socioeconomic gaps. Testing centers in less affluent neighborhoods have more limited bandwidth and online access. Many of the issues that affected the College Board



an exam that is related to what they plan on studying in the future, rather than deciphering history reading passages when their goal is to become a geophysicist.

Such changes would discourage students from applying to a less selective major that they are not truly interested in, only to later change this upon matriculation to the college. If a student claims that their childhood dream is to study East Asian history, it is more important that they understand Vietnam's culture than how to solve quadratic equations.

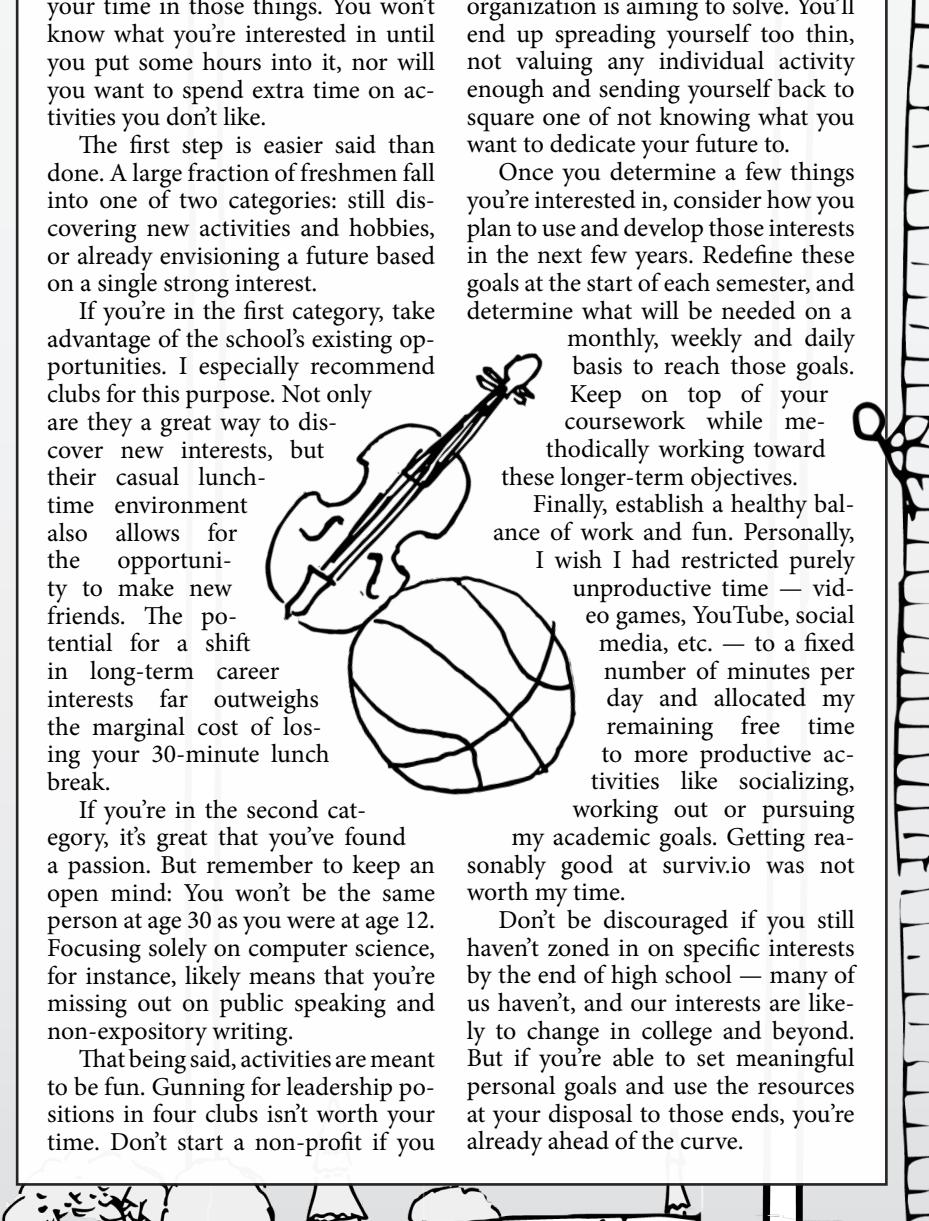
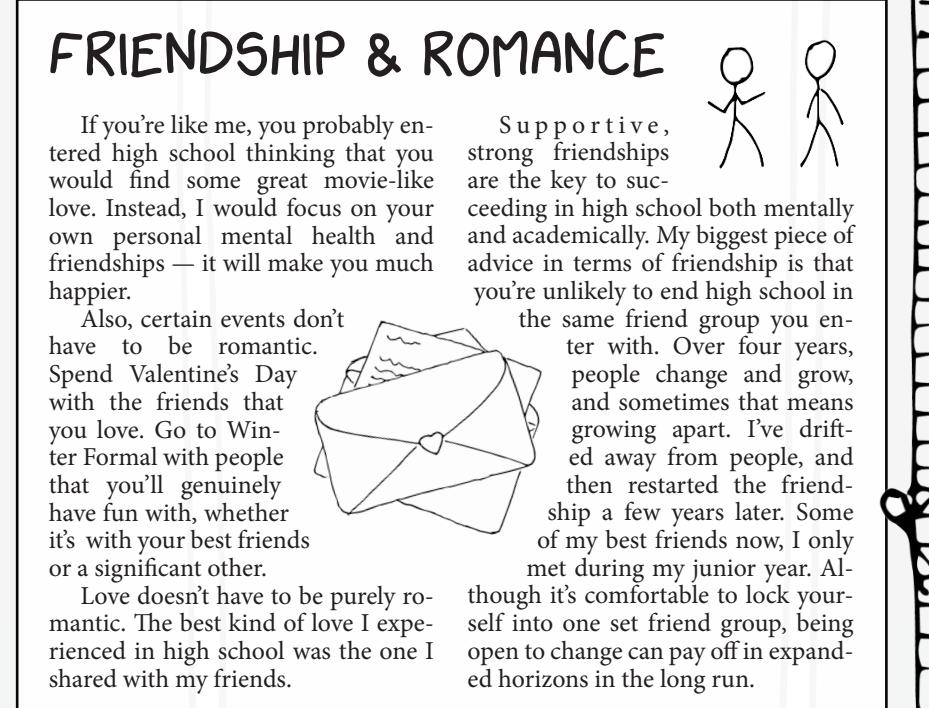
This would be completely different from the current AP testing system, which implicitly encourages "AP stacking" where students hope that collecting APs will guarantee them a top college acceptance. ♦

The relatively unstructured format of these tests would ensure that they truly measure aptitude — like the SAT was supposed to do — rather than the amount of time spent preparing for a specific type of question or number of trained tutors and courses used to study.

Digitizing the SAT simply puts a band-aid over the fundamental problems of standardized testing itself.

The constant changes to the SAT are a reflection of a society that is increasingly willing to cast away standardized testing as something archaic. Instead, adapting testing to reflect future potential rather than just current knowledge would diminish the inequality that underlies the current testing system. ♦

All graphics by MINSUI TANG



COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

College applications: widely regarded as the most stressful and tedious part of most students' four years of high school. They're intimidating at first glance — and they're the unfortunate dictator of many of our school's students' extracurricular pursuits and course selection.

In reality, I've found college apps are not as evil as they seem.

I once heard that applicants need to write around 80 essays in total, but this is false. A Facebook poll showed that most Saratoga students apply to 10-20 schools, and in applying for 20 colleges, I wrote 61 essays — but 25 could be reused or reworded for other schools' prompts. In other words, once you lay the groundwork, the rest of your essays become much easier.

Still, writing 36 unique essays is no joke. The key is to have a strict schedule. Here are my recommendations:

Before summer: Visit a college or attend an online informational session

This is beneficial for two main reasons. Logistically, it helps with the "Why this school" supplemental essay: A qualitative account of why you enjoyed visiting a school is superior to — but does not exempt you from — scraping facts off a college's website. More importantly, it helps you determine how well you fit on campus.

June: Figure out the baseline

I compiled a spreadsheet of all of

COURSE SELECTION

My best advice for course selection would be to not listen to what people call easy or hard classes.

Instead, when signing up for your classes, ask upperclassmen who have taken the course about the curriculum: How many tests are there per semester? Are there a lot of group projects? Are classes interactive? How much homework do you get per night?

From there, you can decide if you would learn and benefit from that class.

If you were to take one AP/Honors class in high school, however, take English 11 Honors. I firmly believe that no other class can make its students think as deeply as this course did. I still vividly remember everything we learned last year, from single story narratives, watching "12 Years a Slave," reading "Beloved," learning about America's wealth gap with "The Great Gatsby."

It might seem enticing to take huge amounts of AP and Honors classes like your peers, but at the end of the day taking a hard class that you're not interested in will only hurt you. Choose wisely! ♦



All graphics by ALLEN LUO and PRESTON FU



Sue's has best coffee vibe

BY Zachary Zinman

Some of the most unique, delicious and pleasant places are nestled in street corners, providing the best atmosphere for productivity and relaxation.

So it is with Sue's Gallery Cafe, located right at the end of Big Basin Way. With modern architecture and a tranquil indoor and outdoor dining area, Sue's provides customers with a great space to work and enjoy delicious beverages such as a pomegranate detox tea and a matcha latte.

My favorite drink's got to be the mocha, usually topped with a tree or heart foam design. With the open view of the brewing process, it is always satisfying to watch the skilled baristas.

Picking up the beverage off the counter and taking the first sip is always the best part. The coffee isn't too strong or too sweet — it's just right.

When speaking to my friends about Sue's, they always say the same thing:



It's too expensive. Sue's may not sell the cheapest food and drinks, but that's because of its high quality. Like most other products, you get what you pay for.

In addition to food and drinks, Sue's also sells beautiful pottery. From cups to vases, Sue herself has been molding clay for over 30 years. In fact, the cafe uses the pottery that they sell.

Sue and her husband JJ started the cafe-gallery fusion shop out of their desire to put a new spin on the cafe experience. On top of being big believers in practical use of ceramics, Sue and JJ wanted to start a shop in which customers could buy the art pieces their coffee was served in. In fact, Sue actually encourages customers to hold and interact with her pieces, despite their fragility.

The restaurant is co-owned by junior Panisa Kachinthorn's parents.

Their menu never disappoints. My favorite dishes to order are the Tom Kha soup — a coconut milk broth with tofu — and the Pad See-Ew — wide rice noodles in soy bean sauce. ♦

Bai Tong Bistro is life itself

BY Sarah Thomas

Bai Tong Thai Bistro has been around ever since I moved to Saratoga in 2013, and I've cherished it for the past five years. Through constantly changing friendships, classes and interests, my love for Bai Tong has persisted.

I went to Bai Tong for the first time in fifth grade with my family. My sister and I both got Thai iced teas (which were delicious) and took handfuls of tamarind candy before leaving.

Even my picky brother enjoyed the fried rice and panang curry.

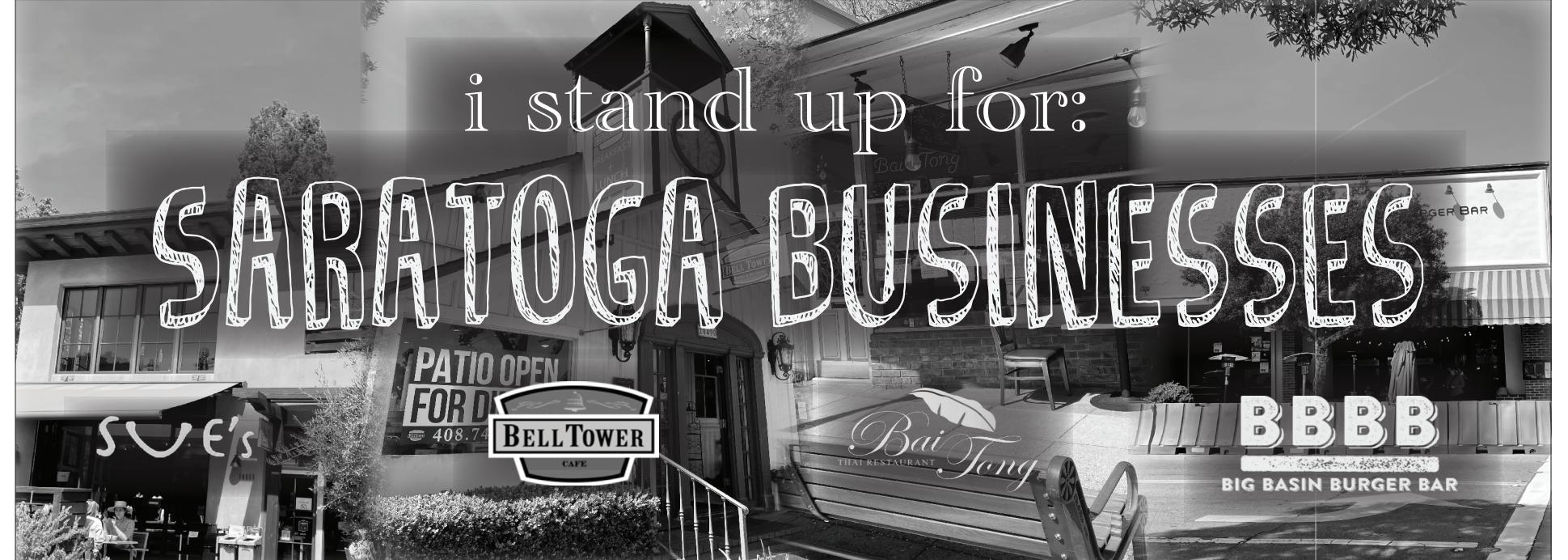
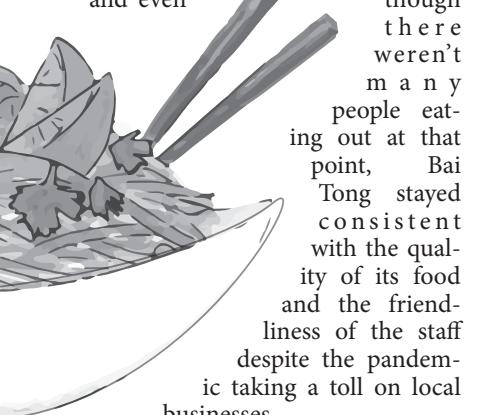
The restaurant is co-owned by junior Panisa Kachinthorn's parents.

Their menu never disappoints. My favorite dishes to order are the Tom Kha soup — whether it's from out of state, a friend from Los Gatos or just my younger siblings — my first choice will always be Bai Tong. It's a business well worth supporting in good times and bad. ♦

The best thing about Bai Tong is the huge portion sizes compared to the relatively low prices. For example, you can get a whole platter of noodles for \$15, and I swear that one entree can last you a whole week.

Over quarantine, I took my friend to lunch at Bai Tong though there weren't many people eating out at that point. Bai Tong stayed consistent with the quality of its food and the friendliness of the staff despite the pandemic taking a toll on local businesses.

If I ever have to take someone to lunch in Saratoga downtown — whether it's from out of state, a friend from Los Gatos or just my younger siblings — my first choice will always be Bai Tong. It's a business well worth supporting in good times and bad. ♦



Big Basin provides comfort

BY Selina Chen

Jet-lagged and still struggling to digest the idea of immigration, 11-year-old me wandered aimlessly through my unfurnished apartment, desperately in need of food.

After an exhausting 12-hour flight from China, my family was famished. We finally arrived at the city we now call home, but home was still unknown.

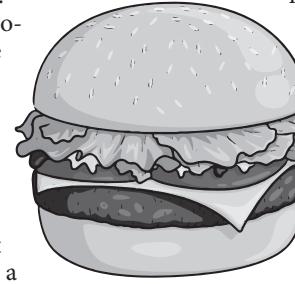
My family consulted Google Maps and pointed to the closest eatery possible: Big Basin Burger Bar. After all, ordering a burger is supposedly among the easiest things on the planet. What could go wrong?

We entered the dimly-lit bar, followed the host to a table and gazed down at our menus...

Um. With classroom-learned English, we had no chance of understanding what in the world "French Moo," "Wild Thing" or "BLT Gobble" meant.

As the most fluent English speaker, my father stepped up and figured out a combination of dishes, which he then relayed to a waiter in a conversation I had no chance of comprehending.

Soon, peculiar burgers — very much different from the fast food I was accustomed to — appeared on the table. What was more peculiar was the flavor. Our taste buds, unused to the explosion of foreign flavors



we could not name, protested hesitantly, half-disapproving and half-confused.

Recollections and emotions work in strange, unpredictable ways. Although I absolutely did not enjoy dining at Big Basin that night, somehow it stayed in the creases of my memory with a fond tint.

Fast forward five years: It was my first week of the fabled junior year and my first time reporting for The Falcon as a junior beginning reporter with no journalism I experience. A single-byline news story on local businesses did not sound encouraging — with trepidation, I embarked on my trip to Saratoga downtown.

I trudged up to a waiter and asked whether I could speak with the manager, and to my surprise, owner Janice Albright readily agreed. She spoke of loans, confusing COVID-19 mandates and the reality that a drop in sales had forced her to cut employees and supplies, explaining in detail any concepts I didn't fully understand. Her warm approachable personality allowed me to relax into the interview and ultimately write a story I was proud of.

The pair of first-time experiences have established a sentimental place for Big Basin in my heart.

Today, I've become used to the rich flavors that comprise Big Basin's burgers, frequenting the establishment for delicious meals — and to reminisce about the journeys I began there. ♦

Bell tower: a go-to destination

BY Apurva Chakravarthy

week.

In the past few months, my overly sentimental self has been pondering what it will be like at the end of this year to leave the town I've lived in for almost my life. One of the questions I've asked myself — and all my senior friends — is what Saratoga places we would show our new college friends if they ever came to visit.

Beyond the school and the Argonaut Shopping Center, I am convinced that one of the first places I would take them would be Bell Tower.

Bell Tower, established for more than a decade, is perfectly nestled between Oak Street and Big Basin Way. It's owned by Michael Shadman and his wife Manhz Khazen, parents of 2012 alumna Nicole Shadman. The couple is committed to being a crucial part of Saratoga culture. The location makes it feel like it's part of downtown Saratoga, but it's just far enough out that it is its own little haven.

I first started frequenting Bell Tower the summer before my junior year since my friends and I either couldn't drive or were deathly scared of driving far distances. Bell Tower remained open in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, and my friends and I would go each

week.

Bell Tower quickly became my favorite restaurant — good food, good company and decently priced. As soon as you walk in, you're hit with top-tier ambience. There's nice music playing in the background, and the customer service is great with restaurant staff who are always laughing and seem to have a good time.

Over the summer, the staff would start recognizing us and our orders, which was a major ego boost. It just goes to show how careful and attentive they are — no matter how many customers they get, they go out of their way to make them feel comfortable and appreciated.

The layout of the restaurant makes it so that you can sit inside at a table or a booth or outside at their covered patio. It's perfect for both a nice summer day or a cold winter morning, when they bring out outdoor heaters.

Bell Tower is arguably one of the best places downtown simply because of its ideal location and versatile food options. Craving sweets? Get some short stack pancakes. Craving savory? Get yourself a nice chicken sandwich.

Sure, there may be other brunch places. But there's only one Bell Tower. Do yourself a favor and go to Bell Tower before you leave Saratoga. You won't regret it. ♦



The Saratoga Falcon

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The Saratoga Falcon

April 8, 2022

lifestyles

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I paid people to beat me up at an MMA gym

BY Jonathan Li

For several years, I had a heavy bag and gloves at home and even achieved a yellow belt in kung fu. So going into my first class, I was looking to rock the competition.

Boy, was I wrong. Mike Tyson once said that anyone looks good on pads, but I looked like trash.

The combinations are ridiculously difficult to memorize.

AKA is a relatively unimposing building in San Jose with worn down facilities and tiny halls.

In a few minutes, I was dripping in sweat and my legs were shaking from kicks.

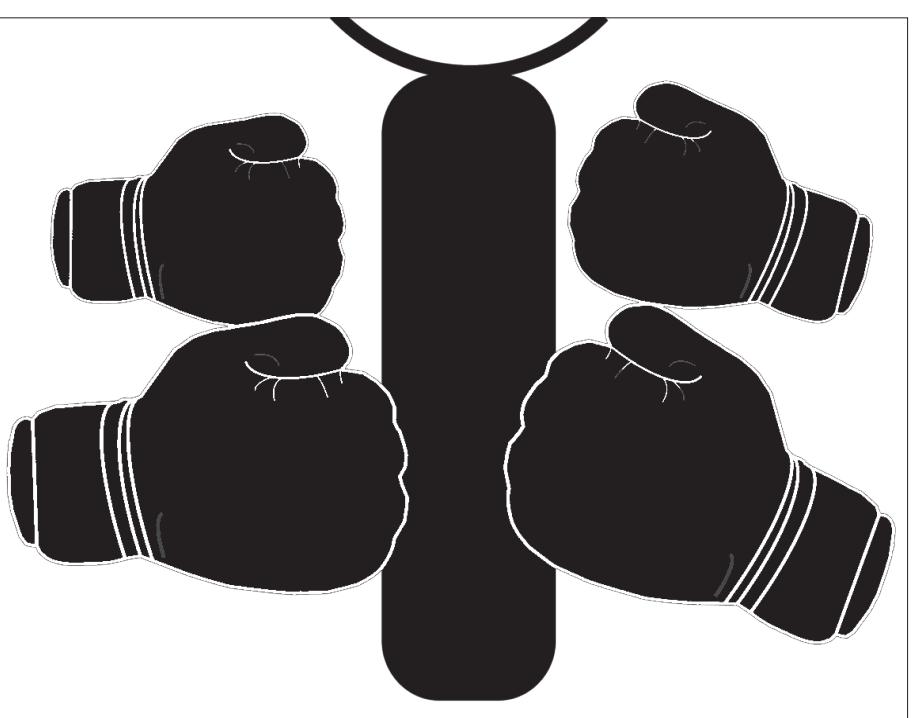
I hadn't come prepared with shin guards and one of my kicks had landed on my opponent's elbow, so my foot was throbbing too.

Coupled with a world-class Muay Thai athlete walking around and checking our form, it was a daunting experience.

Classes have left me intimidated, and yet I keep going back.

It was physically battering, but the community was amazing.

Besides, I'm learning how to beat up other people, and that can come in handy if I'm ever attacked or threatened. ♦



Graphic by VINAY GOLLAMUDI

Letter to my future self

Graphic by VINAY GOLLAMUDI

Hopefully you're succeeding

Zach to the future



Zach Zinman

Dear 27-year-old Zach, let me start off by saying that I hope you're having a great day.

I'm sitting at the wooden kitchen table in your old house, trying to picture what you look like at 27.

How tall are you? (I'd like to think I got taller, at least a bit) What does your face look like?

Can you finally grow non-patchy, non-horrible-looking facial hair?

What does your hair look like, or maybe you don't have any thanks to early-onset baldness? Who knows?

You could be ripped! A six-pack even! Maybe that's a stretch, but I hope you're at least working out regularly.

You may have even started running, which is something you know you wanted to get better at in high school.

I assume you've graduated from college. If so, do you have a job? Do you have a significant other? The reason I'm asking is because I don't want you to be a complete loser. Just kidding! It's totally fine if you're unemployed and single (but hopefully not still living at home).

In case you've forgotten, here is what life was like for you a decade ago.

For once, I am going to be serious, so listen up.

At 17, I try to live

every day to the fullest, even if it's just an average day.

I go out of my way to appreciate the small things that make seemingly boring days great.

I think to myself: Were my scrambled eggs especially delicious this morning? Was there a funny-looking cloud that resembled an animal? Did I wave hello to someone new on the way to class? I hope you have retained this ability to appreciate life.

I think to myself: Is that you will probably surround yourself with great people. It's a great habit that you have.

I'm confident that you have a great group of friends in college that you truly care for, just like the ones I have now in high school.

Please say you've stayed in touch with my current friends though, because they're pretty cool people. If you've been zoning out through this entire letter, like I know I would have, remember one thing — I have so much hope for you right now.

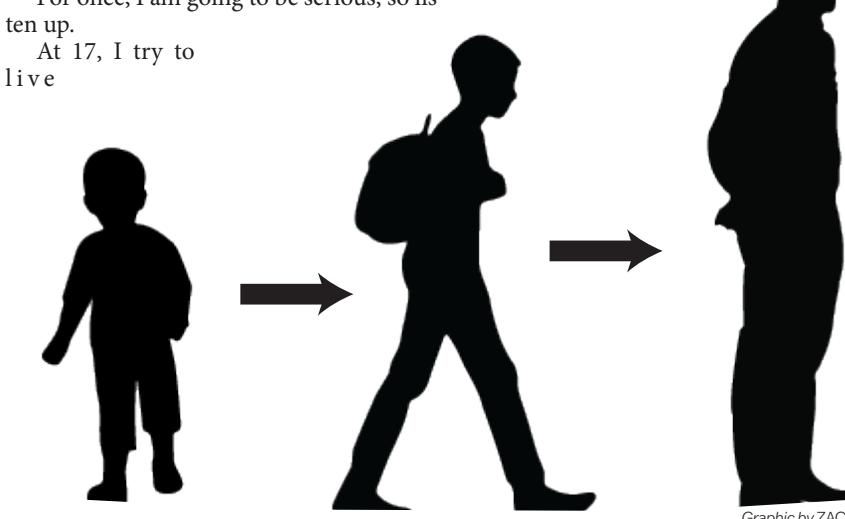
If it seems like it's just you against the world, remember that you are your number one supporter and advocate. Continue "popping off" as 17-year-old me would say.

Could you write me back and give me some heads up about some things I should know?

Could you write who wins the 2024 Super Bowl, so I can place a rather large bet on the winner?

Sincerely,

Your 17-year-old self ♦



Am I tripping for no reason?

Shaan See-far



Shaan Sridhar

Hey, future me. It's my junior year and I'm sitting in the journalism room contemplating what I've done in my life. To be honest, I don't really know what to think of what I've done; it's hard to say what's truly impacted me deeply.

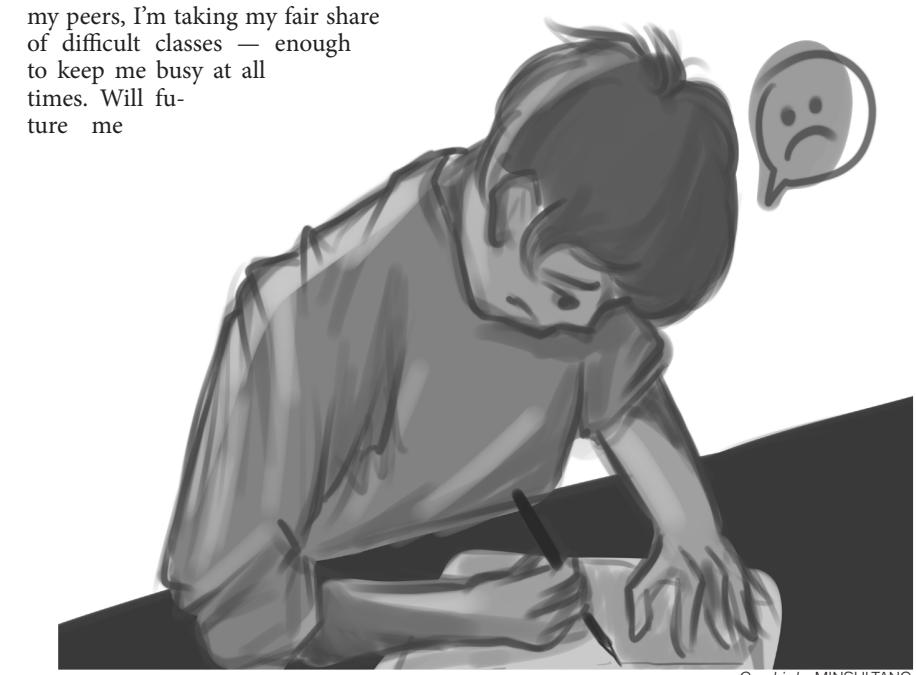
And lastly, I want to know about my friends and family — they're the most important, after all. I hope I'm still close to my family. But what about my friends? Will I still stay in touch with them? Or did everyone drop off the grid?

These are a lot of questions, I know. But all of these thoughts circle my mind every day. In fact, it basically sums up my time as a student: A never-ending desperation to understand the "real world."

I have no idea what the future holds. I have no idea what it means to be an adult.

But everyone around me is so focused on college that it feels like we can never take a break and evaluate what we're doing in the first place.

So, tell me, future me: Was it worth it? Everything I do right now — spending time with friends, activities, school, etc. — Did any of it make a difference in the long run? ♦



Graphic by MINSUIT TANG

With classroom-learned English, we had no chance of understanding what in the world "French Moo," "Wild Thing" or "BLT Gobble" meant.

As the most fluent English speaker, my father stepped up and figured out a combination of dishes, which he then relayed to a waiter in a conversation I had no chance of comprehending.

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All graphics by APURVA CHAKRAVARTHY and SHAAN SRIDHAR

Dealing with a shopping addiction

Sara-nade me



Sara Bright

As I scrolled through my Instagram Explore Page recently, my thumb paused on a small business's advertisement. The post displayed baby pink lip glosses with little strawberry charms in them. I knew I didn't need more makeup, but they were also irresistibly cute. After a short back-and-forth in my head, the lip glosses were in my cart, ready to be ordered with the last of the money I had struggled for weeks to save up.

Soon, the words "Thank you for your order Saral" greeted me, and I realized I had made yet another useless purchase. Over the course of a few months, purchases like these began to add up and quickly became an addiction.

My shopping habits started a few years ago when I got my first debit card. I no longer had to commute to a store to purchase items, meaning I also didn't have to take the time to stand in line and consider whether my purchase was worth it. I could now shop while I laid in bed, which made buying unnecessary

things much easier.

I became obsessed with a wide variety of products, from perfumes to plushies. My first shopping obsession was Ariana Grande merch — I began to spend hundreds of dollars on every single perfume and album she released.

Of course, having every one of her perfumes clearly wasn't enough for me, which led me to spend over a thousand dollars on her merch. I know such an amount is completely unnecessary, but I have no regrets. As crazy as it sounds, staring at the collection of different perfumes, CDs and vinyls brought joy into my life.

After a couple of months, my obsession with Ariana Grande merch subsided. I



The moral of the story: I'm learning to be smarter with my money and save it instead of spending it.

Despite the short-term happiness that shopping brings, it can make a serious dent in your wallet and harm the environment.

Am I cured of my addiction? Not yet, but I'm on the path to recovery. ♦



2048: the game that won my heart

Li-eave me alone

Serena Li

There are two tabs open on a split screen as I'm writing this: my Google Doc on the left side of my monitor, and on the right, a game that took the world by storm eight years ago: 2048, a single-player sliding block game with an ultimate goal to reach 2048 by combining the tiles that are powers of two.

I know what you're thinking: Serena, it's literally 2022, and "2048" is so 2014. But last semester, this game somehow found its way back into my life.

It started with a flash of curiosity in October. I had been feeling particularly nostalgic while listening to old Cantonese songs and rewatching soap operas of the '90s.

Then, after seeing my mom sitting at the dinner table joyfully playing 2048 with a joyous expression, I wanted to play it too.

The younger version of myself disliked this game, mainly because the highest tile I could reach was 1,024, and I felt no sense of accomplishment. Now, as an almost-high-school graduate well-equipped with the brains to play the game to its full potential, I love it.

The rush of dopamine that comes with each scroll, which, according to Bustle, is due to the game's predictability and ease, and the sense of achievement after hitting a milestone tile, makes the game extremely addictive.

Now, I have two versions of this game downloaded on my phone — one with an undo button and one without — and three versions bookmarked on my computer — a 4x4 grid, 5x5 grid and 6x6 grid for when I feel like a challenge. Whether I'm in the car, watching a movie or even Facetiming my sister, I'm always swiping across my

phone.

My goal is to reach 131,072, the highest tile possible in the game. As I write this, I'm on a 3-day streak, with my score at 1.4 million and my highest tile being 65,536. I should probably write a longer story, but I have a 2048 game to finish now. ♦

The sandwich you can't stop eating

Mitch-American

Mitchell Chen

the joy I felt after each bite, I was unable to stop myself from wanting more.

My battle with this addiction has been a roller coaster: Uncrustables used to define my life, and my health reflected that. On a typical day, I would munch on up to five of them.

With nine grams of sugar per sandwich, my daily sugar intake would often exceed 50 grams, almost twice the recommended amount for children.

Few treats are more delectable or addictive than Uncrustables.

My own addiction started in preschool.

After quickly finishing my first sandwich, I craved for seconds, then thirds. With

able to pry myself away from the Uncrustables in Costco's frozen aisle.

Each bite of the carrot provided a satisfying crunch, keeping my mind off the jelly sandwich. Through baby carrots, I was not only able to stop myself from eating Uncrustables, but developed healthier eating habits.

Carrots are now my favorite food, and whenever I crave for an Uncrustable, I unzip another bag of carrots and begin munching away.

I still miss the delicious pocket filled with gooey jam and creamy peanut butter, and occasionally I find myself munching on one or two. ♦



togatalks

What are your minor addictions?

"I've been addicted to boba since eighth grade. 80% of my bank is for boba."

junior Jacquelyn Ryu

"I love looking at my camera roll because it takes me back to fun times."

junior Noah Marquez

Discovering Reggae: a Bam Bam

Sina Bam Bam

Sina Salehi

just Marley's music, but for reggae in general.

Reggae's history arguably revolves around Marley, a Rastafarian reggae artist who gained fame for his revolutionary, jagged and avant-garde music. Jamaica became the cultural home of reggae and Rastafarianism, with the climate and culture becoming the embodiment of Rastafari culture.

The islands would subsequently become a safeguard for Rastafarian tradition and diet, and would be a catalyst for the emergence of reggae, which held deep roots in Rastafari culture.

However, on a morning bagel drive, my friend started playing an unfamiliar sound on his speaker system. Looking down at the screen, Bob Marley, a name I had heard once or twice before, displayed as "Could You Be Loved" began to play.

The most jagged, twisty song I'd ever heard engulfed the car. It felt like I was listening to rock, jazz, hip-hop, soul and R&B at the same time.

After immediately liking the song on Spotify, a whole new genre of music entered my life, and I discovered my passion for not

making a reggae playlist, and I found myself listening to songs of this genre whenever I could. Before I knew it, friends of mine had similarly incorporated reggae into their lifestyles, as the genre has songs for nearly every situation or mood imaginable.

Need to feel hyped? "Could You Be Loved" by Bob Marley.

Need to focus? "Jamming," also by Bob Marley.

Need to feel laid back? "Legalize It," from Peter Tosh.

Other unorthodox songs with deep reggae roots such as "Bam Bam" by Sister Nancy soon crept into my radar. While it was hard for me to understand anything Sister Nancy sings in the song, its laid-back, simplistic nature offered a different style of reggae. Do other genres lie ahead for me? Probably so.

But whatever genre I delve into next, there's no guarantee that I'll be able to appreciate it as much as I have with "Roots, Rock and Reggae." ♦



minor addictions

'Genshin Impact': an addictive Gacha masterpiece

BY GeorgeHuang

After Chinese video game developer MiHoYo, now known as Hoyoverse, released "Genshin Impact" on Sept. 19, 2020, the role-playing game (RPG) made an estimated \$1.9 billion in revenue on the app alone. During the 2021 Game Awards, the game beat other massive brands like League of Legends and Pokemon for "Mobile Game of the Year."

The premise of "Genshin" is genius: a free, high-quality and open world game that comes with not only an immersive story but also appealing characters.

In "Genshin Impact," players control a party of four characters and can either choose to complete quests or explore the virtual world for hidden secrets. Characters can climb walls and cliffs, swim through rivers, glide from mountains and travel freely across the map, finding exciting new enemies along the way. The freedom of action

and movement, combined with stunning graphics and beautiful soundtracks, makes the game both additive and multi-dimensional.

While "Genshin" seems like a free game at first glance, it emerges to be one of the most profitable in history. One major reason is how characters are unlocked. As of this spring, there are 49 different playable characters, increasing with each update.

Each character has a unique personality, voice, design

and playstyle, appealing to a wide range of players with different interests. The characters are unlocked through "wishes," which highlights the true nature of "Genshin" — a gacha game.

Gacha is much like gambling. Players either spend time or money to wish for a desired character; however, whether they get it or not completely depends on pure luck.

The most popular characters in "Genshin" are 5-star characters, and each has a 0.7% drop rate, meaning a 5-star character will receive a 5

stars in only 1 in 150 pulls, and it isn't even guaranteed the 5 star is the one the player wants.

Unless the player gets extremely lucky, it is highly unlikely for a player to receive the character they want without spending additional money. Hoyoverse recognized this and implemented a pity system that guarantees one 5-star character every 90 wishes and the correct character the player wants every 180 wishes, which translates to over \$400 USD.

While many question why video game players would spend so much money on new skin or character, people who don't play simply don't understand. To an addicted player, a few bucks or even a few hundred are worth it for the happiness they receive in return. While "Genshin Impact" has made billions, they have also in turn brought happiness to millions, which in my opinion is a fair trade. ♦



Study hard
NAME SHAMED

Top mobile games to play during Blue Day tutorial

BY AlexanderKan
& DanielWu

The 40-minute tutorials every Blue Day grant students valuable time to catch up on schoolwork and meet with teachers. Yet more often than not, students are unproductive, walking aimlessly through

the hallways and scrolling away on their phones.

So, to the students who prefer to do everything but study, here's a list of the best mobile games to play with your friends in lieu of finishing your English essay that's due next period or cramming for your math test.

First up on our list is "Brawl Stars," a fun fast-paced multiplayer third-person shooter. Offering intensity-packed gameplay and a multitude of champs to choose from, it's no question why "Brawl Stars" is often seen as the success to "Clash Royale."

In "Brawl Stars," players are given the option to choose from a variety of characters known as "Brawlers" which each include distinctive attacking abilities and a "super," a special attack that a player can access by dealing damage to opponents.

"Brawl Stars" reinforces multiplayer gameplay by featuring multiple game modes centered around 3v3 team battles, such as gem grab, where two teams fight it out to be the first to collect 10 gems. Other modes include Showdown, where 10 players are pitted against each other and fight each other to be the last one standing within a shrinking arena.

Additionally, players can unlock various awards including new brawlers by gaining trophies, obtainable by winning matches. The game also features an in-game shop, where players can purchase various things including skins, coins, to-



one of the best mobile games of all time. By combining fantastic gameplay within a diverse game structure, "Brawl Stars" is perfect for new players while also providing new, unique content for veterans thanks to the frequent updates of Super-cell.

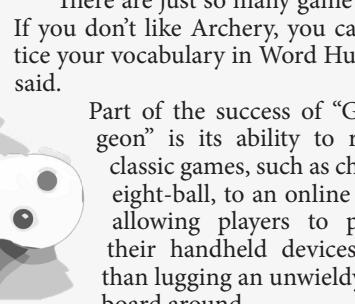
"Anyone can play, it's super easy to learn. The fast-paced gameplay along with the fact that it's on mobile means you can play whenever you want with whoever you want," Jung said.



Another popular addition to our list is "GamePigeon," an arcade of games that can be added as an extension on iMessage; popular game modes include "Word Hunt," "Golf," "Darts and Archery."

Unlike traditional mobile games, "GamePigeon" functions on a text message model where players can send game invites to friends over instant messaging.

Sophomore Christopher You, a hearty "GamePigeon" enthusiast with a 300-win record to his name, enjoys the wide variety of game modes that suit every mobile gamer.



"There are just so many game modes. If you don't like Archery, you can practice your vocabulary in Word Hunt." You said.

Part of the success of "GamePigeon" is its ability to reinvent classic games, such as chess and eight-ball, to an online format, allowing players to play on their handheld devices rather than lugging an unwieldy chessboard around.

Additionally, because "GamePigeon" is an extension to iMessage, rather than an actual app, it effectively provides a loophole for students with parental restrictions on games.



Next up on the list is "Clash Royale" a free-to-play, multiplayer strategy game released in 2016. Despite being an older game, "Clash Royale" remains immensely popular because of frequent updates and open-ended strategy.

To put it simply, the primary objective of "Clash Royale" is to destroy the opponent's King Tower for an instantaneous victory.

In order to do so, players utilize a wide variety of cards including mobile attack units such as Hog Rider, while placing stationary tower defenses like the Inferno Tower.

By winning matches, players gain trophies, which move them further up the "trophy road" to collect milestone rewards including cards of higher rarity and gold, the in-game currency.

Because of the game's multiplayer design along with the short 5-minute matches, "Clash Royale" is the perfect game to play with a partner, and definitely deserves a spot on your phone's home screen. ♦



clan trophies. Sophomore Marco Wang began his "Clash Royale" journey starting in September 2021 and has since achieved a ranking of Challenger II in Arena 15, one of the highest possible levels in the game.

"I immediately became hooked because of the rush of adrenaline that the game provides. Matches are short, capped only at five minutes long, so it's very fast-paced and exciting," Wang said.

Wang also mentioned the endless variety of tactics available, where players can draw from a pool of 103 different cards to formulate their own unique strategies.

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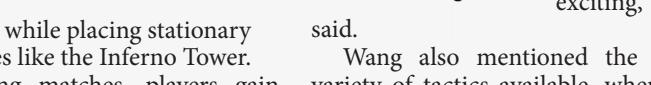
ken doublers and brawlers.

Senior Enoch Jung said that one great aspect of "Brawl Stars" is the group-centric model, which encourages players to team up with friends.

"Playing 'Brawl Stars' with people you know really brings the game to a whole new level because you can utilize the advantage of communication while forming bonds with friends at the same time," Jung said.

Jung added that "Brawl Stars" utilizes skill-based matchmaking, where players are pitted against opponents with the same number of trophies, allowing the game to be fair and balanced for all players.

"Brawl Stars" surely is one for the books, being



one of the best mobile games of all time.

By combining fantastic gameplay within a diverse game structure, "Brawl Stars" is perfect for new players while also providing new, unique content for veterans thanks to the frequent updates of Super-cell.

"Anyone can play, it's super easy to learn. The fast-paced gameplay along with the fact that it's on mobile means you can play whenever you want with whoever you want," Jung said.

All graphics by SERENALU

Unmasking the traditional art of changing faces

Se-lian Change
Selina Chen

"Game of Thrones" creeps me out.

Among its many questionable plot points, the one thing that's unquestionably creepy is Arya Stark's changing faces. Seriously, this girl learned to carve off someone else's skin, wear their face as a mask, and peal it off within seconds.

Now, what if I told you that changing faces is not just cinematic science fiction, but a reality, and there is a traditional Chinese art form that allows actors to do just that? This art form is called Bian Lian, or face-changing.

The patriarchal taboo was broken in 1998, but many masters still refuse to teach girls.

Before you get any expectations that I'm a world-class face-changing master, sorry, I don't know any ancient secrets — because I've been unable to find a mentor.

In order to understand why, let's delve into some history.

Face-changing developed during the 1700s in the Sichuan region of China. Its exact origin remains unclear, but one legend says that face-changing was inspired by a hero similar to Robin Hood, who evaded authorities' capture by changing his appearances in the blink of an eye.

Since its conception, there has been a tradition for masters

to only pass down the secret of face-changing to male descendants, fearing women would marry out of the family and leak its secrets.

The patriarchal taboo was broken in 1998, but many masters still refuse to teach girls.

Similar gender exclusions were seen in the rising period of Chinese opera, the Qing Dynasty, a time when imperial decree forbade women from performing in theaters. As a result, troupes cast men to play female roles. These actors, known as nandan, sang with specialized falsetto techniques and moved in what's considered a feminine manner.

Having men act as women is hardly unique to China. As early as the 500s BC, the Greeks decided it was too "dangerous" to allow women on stage and instead cast men in roles.

In Elizabethan Europe, too, female characters such as Shakespeare's Juliet and Ophelia were played by trained young men. The practice continued until the 1660s, when King Charles II allowed women to act, but even then, actresses were fetishized rather than performed.

The most renowned face-changing master, Dengguai Peng, was once offered a deal by an international merchant to trade his props and the secret of the art for one hundred million in Malaysian ringgits, or approximately \$200,000 at the time. Peng refused without hesitation, stating that "it is a matter of Chinese dignity."

Indeed, Reuters found that as of 2009 there are only 200 people in China who have truly mastered the art of face-changing, its innermost workings a mystery.

Knowing this, I have no right to disclose even the surface of how face-changing works. I will, however, highlight the face-changing tradition that's always touched me the most: As the performance comes to an end, the master will lift the final mask to reveal their true face. This the moment the audience erupts in applause — even if the face revealed is that of a woman.

Despite the rooted patriarchy, female masters are stepping into the spotlight.

A tourist reports that even when he adjusted his camera shutter to two-hundredths of a second, he still could not discover the technique of the face-changing performance he recorded.

I've independently studied face-changing and can now do a few rudimentary tricks, but mastery of the art is a closely guarded mystery rumored to be China's Second-level National Secret. Although this claim has been denied by government agencies, it is true that keeping the secret of face-changing is an obligation of every performer.

The most renowned face-changing master doesn't actually cut human skin off of corpses. Instead, vibrant masks are painted on fabric, each representing a distinct character, such as a flushed face for the renowned military general Guan Yu.

These masks are donned inside a full set of garments especially designed for the trick and are changed at speeds imperceptible to the human eye, sometimes aid-

ed by distractions such as a folding fan or a billowing cape, while the master glides about the stage in fluid movements that resemble martial arts or traditional dance.

Search up "Bian Lian" and let yourself be awed by some video recordings, or if you get the chance to visit China, sit down for live performance that can only be more stunning. The art of face-changing, as I understand it, allows us to choose faces at our own discretion instead of others'. It is a reclaiming of agency.

"The world doesn't just let girls decide what they're going to be," Arya Stark had once said. Yet, after a pause, she continued, "but I can now, with the faces I can choose." ♦



Courtesy of YONG XINGE

Spreading sacred music: Student pianist builds community

BY KavitaSundaram

play what works best for the singer without overpowering them."

Aside from improving her piano skills, Lin said she values being able to foster friendships through her job.

"I talk to [the cantors] about everything, like college apps and their kids' experiences, and it's nice having older friends who can guide me," Lin said.

The cantors, many of whom are professional opera singers and high school choir teachers, have attended some of Lin's choir concerts, and she has attended their opera live streams.

Lin has played for the church every Sunday since her sophomore year as a piano accompanist. During the pandemic, she continued playing through a livestream; what began as a volunteering opportunity suggested by Lin's piano teacher evolved into a paid job and a lasting passion.

In addition to her usual five-piece repertoire, Lin receives six new pieces every Monday to sight read and master by the end of the week. Each mass lasts for an hour and includes 11 songs. Because of her 6-year background playing classical music, she said learning the new pieces has been manageable, but is a notably different experience from learning classical pieces.

"Stepping out of my comfort zone to improvise was a big change," said Lin. "I learned to stop looking at the music sheet, and build my own chord progressions to



Sherry Lin (left) and cantor Katya Lohngoen (right) performed during mass on Jan. 23.

Courtesy of SHERRY LIN

ties to learn new music and collaborate with other musicians.

"I've created strong relationships with everyone in the community," said Lin. "They've been a part of my life and taught me a lot, not just music-wise." ♦

togatalks
What did you learn from your job?

"If I made a mistake at work, I have to take responsibility. There's a real cost to every action."
senior Jocelyn Yang
who works at Pho Hoa + Jazen Tea

"Recognizing the diversity of food I serve, I'm able to better connect with my culture."
senior Andrew Hong
who works at Hong's Gourmet

"Teaching music is very enriching. I learned to work with kids and master organizations."
junior Mahati Kotamraju
who tutors classical music

'Blue Devil': Junior drum major joins top-flight band

BY SanjoliGupta

For his sixth birthday, junior Petr Tupitsyn got the gift of a recorder from his great-grandmother. That gift was the start of a lifelong passion for music that has continued at the school.

From there, he took recorder lessons. He also later learned how to play the flute and piccolo.

This year, he was one of the marching band's four drum majors. He says this experience helped him build useful leadership skills and increased an already strong work ethic.

His first experience in a school band was in seventh grade, when he played the flute and was encouraged to also play the piccolo by his band director. Tupitsyn attended Rolling Hills until eighth grade, when he transferred to Redwood and continued in the advanced symphonic band.

Before transferring to Redwood, he participated in band because he had an empty elective spot and knew how to play the flute, but in eighth grade he realized that he wanted to take music and band seriously.

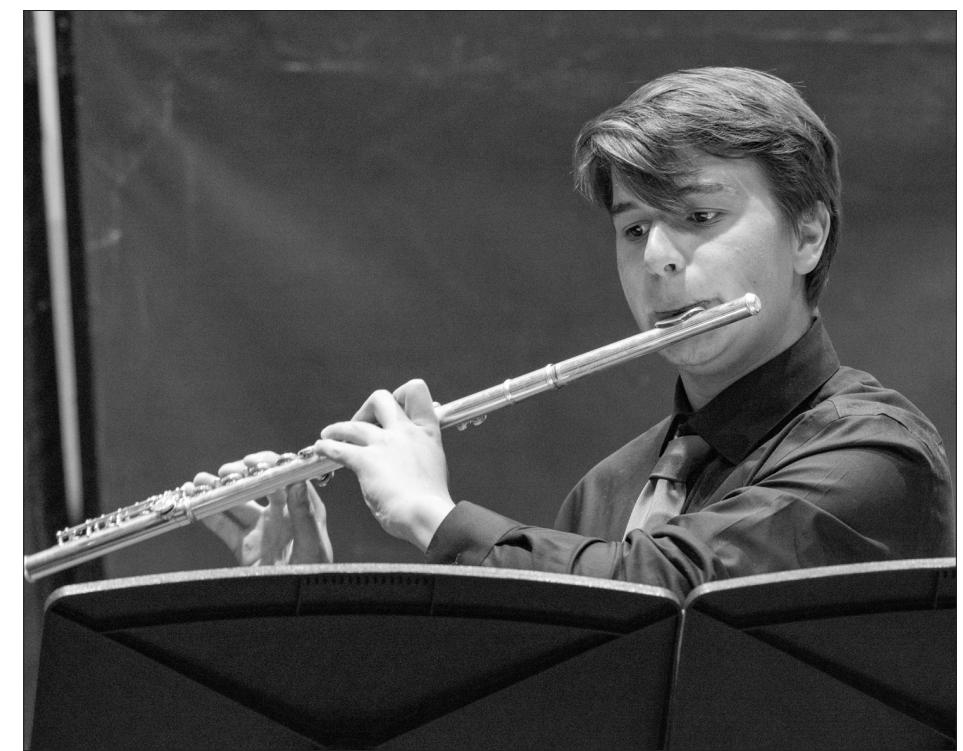
As a middle schooler, the most transformative piece that factored into his decision to continue playing in high school was the "Sonata Latina" by Mike Mauer on the flute. Tupitsyn played the piece at many competitions, and for the first time in his life, he didn't feel like he was being forced to practice or play; instead, he said he felt excited and passionate about his music.

By eighth grade, Tupitsyn had the basics, such as scales, down and could move onto more advanced professional pieces, which also helped him feel more connected to music.

Tupitsyn vividly remembers one competition where he had a chance to perform in a student-led concert after earning first place in the Middle School Individual Category. Although his parents had watched his past recitals, the crowd was full of people Tupitsyn knew, and had never been that massive.

"I got to play my piece in front of all the parents and all the kids at the concert, which was super excited about. Somewhere, I still have like the grainy video of me standing on stage and playing," Tupitsyn said. "I still remember that there was such a big crowd, and it was great. I think that was the year that I decided I wanted to do school band."

When Tupitsyn joined the marching band freshman year, his initial plan was to leave after one year.



Courtesy of PETR TUPITSYN

Junior Petr Tupitsyn performs a solo in an ensemble during the benefit concert on March 5.

cepted into.

He is the field assistant, which is a drum major minus parts of the tour during the summer.

Tupitsyn decided to audition for the Blue Devils because of the performance aspect of the marching band, which he said is his favorite part of music.

He said showmanship is a large part of being a drum major since they stand on podiums in front of the audience while conducting and wear a uniform while performing salutes.

"The way an acid and a base interact is the same way that the subdominant and the dominant interact in a chord progression," he said. "That's how it started to make sense for me, these things because it's like through music, I can understand the world better."

He added that he feels he has matured and developed his leadership skills as a result of all his extracurriculars and responsibilities.

Whether Tupitsyn pursues music as a major or not in college, he knows that it will always be a major part of his life.

"I think the team leading skills I've gathered are really what I would cherish the most in the long run," he said. "I love music because it brings people together. I've made so many friends through my passion for music."

Tupitsyn is taking a multitude of difficult AP classes on top of his music pursuits, including both winter percussion and jazz band and Blue Devils practice.

He thinks he has been able to juggle all his commitments because of the strong academic foundation he built when he was an underclassman. ♦

Seniors explore new hobbies in last semester of high school

**NEWLY FOUND FREE TIME
CREATES OPPORTUNITIES
FOR EXPERIMENTATION**

BY SanjoliGupta

Senior Wesley Chen enjoys art in the form of photography. When Chen became a second semester senior, he found more free time to pursue his interest in taking photos. Besides planning trips to San Francisco to sightsee and snap pictures of the sunset, Chen tries to go to the beach at least once a week and hikes twice a week.

"I don't want to burn out from doing [photography] too much, so some days I'll just relax at home," Chen said. "I have friends who want to [photograph with me] so I make an effort to plan outings."

During the first semester, Chen found himself drowning in work, and committed weekends to writing college application essays. After that intense work, he said he is trying to take a break and enjoy his last semester of high school.

Since the course load of a senior is still

time consuming, Chen tries to maximize his work efficiency during tutorial and other small breaks.

"I've been going up to the skyline, looking at the sunset and taking pictures because it's one of my hobbies and I'm trying to tap into that," Chen said.

Increased free time has enabled senior Ashley Ko to start her own foodie Instagram account, a hobby that currently takes three hours every week.

The idea first came up in her Anatomy and Physiology class. Her teacher wanted her to pursue a project she was passionate about, and she realized one thing on her bucket list was creating an Instagram foodie account.

Ko usually drives around the Bay Area and local shops in Saratoga to rate their food and support small businesses.

To pick a restaurant, Ko either references what's popular or seeks friends for input. She tries to rate food that both appeals to

her audience and also appeals to her own taste.

"Even if I can't understand every single culture, having a way of understanding why they use certain types of ingredients or why they eat something is really fascinating," Ko said. "It's not only because places are different agriculturally from one another. It's that everyone has their own culture."

At first Ko was apprehensive about creating an account, but growing up with parents who encouraged her to try new foods, she said she believes food brings people together. She said her newfound free time motivated her to start the account.

"Not only is it important to me to maintain my account, but it's also a great way of hanging out with friends," she said. "I think my free time is being used productively instead of [wasting time] looking at my phone."

Senior Noora Fayad's first semester was

crammed with college applications and a variety of other commitments, including teaching at her local Sunday school, working as a wellness center helper, participating in the Anti-Racism Task Force and working at Sources of Strength.

She had little time to pursue hobbies such as knitting and crocheting, but when the spring semester began, Fayad resumed these activities.

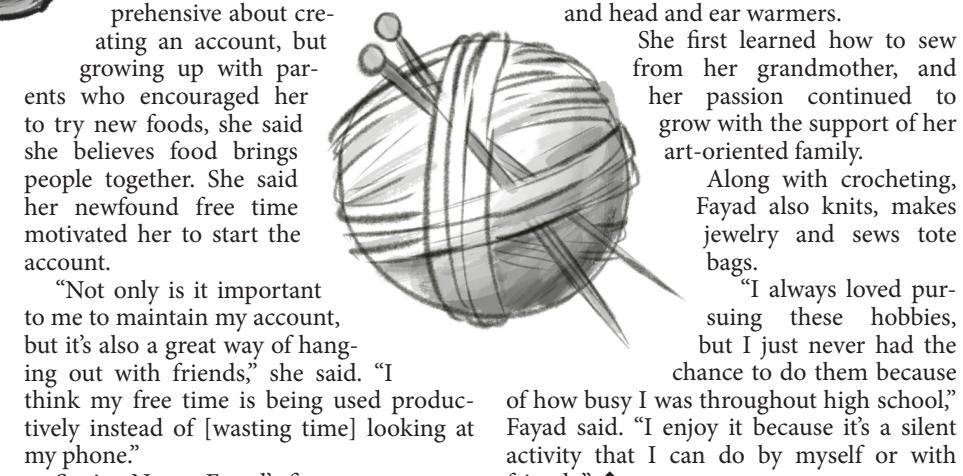
Like Fayad, many seniors are pursuing hobbies that were put on hold because of the hectic nature of their first semester.

Fayad currently spends about eight to 10 hours a week crocheting scarves, coasters and head and ear warmers.

She first learned how to sew from her grandmother, and her passion continued to grow with the support of her art-oriented family.

Along with crocheting, Fayad also knits, makes jewelry and sews tote bags.

"I always loved pursuing these hobbies, but I just never had the chance to do them because of how busy I was throughout high school," Fayad said. "I enjoy it because it's a silent activity that I can do by myself or with friends."



All graphics by MINSUITANG

GET TO KNOW YOUR LIBRARY!

Every day, the library bustles with student activity. The tables scattered atop the carpeted floor are crowded with students working on homework, chatting with friends or entertaining themselves on their devices. Yet, most of these students are oblivious to their surroundings; to them, the library is simply a convenient place to meet. However, getting to know the library better can prove to be beneficial in many ways.

The reference section includes books ranging from atlases to American history. The most notable feature is the massive spinning globe students can view.

Shelved in the back is a collection of CDs and DVDs. Students can borrow these for two weeks by checking in with library technician Lee Tapley.

The linguistics section spans a wide variety of topics, from dictionaries on word origins to books about fashion, maritime history, and multicultural folklore.

The library has a collection of all yearbooks the yearbook staff have published, going back as far as 1962, the first issue of the Talisman after the school was founded.

— Sarah Thomas

Graphic by CHRISTINA CHANG, MINSUITANG and CAROLYN WANG

New design club hopes to support school programs

BY SarahThomas

Sophomore Angela Zhao has always been interested in art and design, from making her own installations at her design studio with materials from around campus to joining the Media Arts Program to learn more about visual art. When she noticed large sheets of hastily assembled advertising posters around campus, she was disappointed.

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SOPHOMORE Nishka Shah

The club has had two meetings so far; the second meeting on March 10 introduced a collaboration with Astronomy Club to produce the club's annual Astro magazine.

Design Club members are responsible for helping the design aspect of the magazine.

"I've learned so much, and it's helped me in other classes like Media Arts. I'm

involved in the university's SWE club, Hsieh looked for ways to integrate SWE at the school, and founded SWENext.

SWENext is a way for students of all genders to become a part of the engineering community before college. "SWENexters" have access to programs, mentors and resources designed to develop leadership skills and self-confidence.

These skills are aimed to help women succeed in engineering and technology careers, through events such as speaker series.

The club has been meeting through Zoom twice a month. During this time, the club hopes to explore many aspects of engineering through career opportunities, speaker series with college students and competitions.

Hsieh added that one of the club's primary goals is to expose both high school and middle school students to STEM and engineering through various outreach events.

"We want to empower students to be advocates for peers, and younger girls and students of all genders," Hsieh said. "In our club, we demonstrate the value of diversity, equity and inclusion. Most importantly, we want to create an inclusive environment where all, regardless of knowledge or background skill, can build both soft and technical skills."

Hsieh

MSET's FTC robotics team creates SWENext program

BY NidhiMathihalli

As sophomore Naomi Hsieh left the robotics room on a late Tuesday night, she said bye to all of her team members. However, looking back at the members, she realized that all of the team members in the room were male.

Although the club's numbers have increased over the years, most are still boys. Hsieh pointed out that only 31.31% of the 99 MSET members, according to the signup forms conducted by the MSET mentors at the beginning of the robotics season. Instead of ignoring the problem, Hsieh created the MSET Cuttlefish SWENext Club in order to bolster involvement for women in STEM in fall 2022.

"We want to create an inclusive environment where [everyone], regardless of knowledge, background and skill, can build both soft and technical skills to prepare girls and students of all genders for future tech related careers," Hsieh said.

The club is a branch of the SWE, an international organization that focuses on advocating for increased women involvement in engineering and technology.

Design Club members are responsible for helping the design aspect of the magazine.

"I've learned so much, and it's helped me in other classes like Media Arts. I'm

However, after talking with 2021 alumni Riya Jain, a freshman at UC Berkeley who is

THE COURAGE TO SPEAK OUT

Increased education inspired sophomore to re-open sexual assault case in India



Sophomore Tara Natarajan speaks about reopening her sexual assault case at the Culture of Consent (COC) rally on Nov. 7 in the quad.

by ChristinaChang

Trigger warning: sexual assault

"You had shattered my faith in adults, in goodness, in all the things I thought protected me from this world," sophomore Tara Natarajan said at the Culture of Consent (COC) Rally held in the quad on Nov. 7. She told audience members about being sexually assaulted at age 7 by a man who worked as a peon at her former school in India.

Natarajan also spoke about moving to the U.S. eight years later and discovering the same prevalence of sexual assault in America, of uncovering the "insidiously hidden fibers woven into the fabric of this society."

"My faith in the system shattered with the realization that nothing has changed," Natarajan said. "Living as a young woman in America, as a survivor of sexual assault and grooming and witness to a system that is complicit with rape culture, I am in awe with how a first-world country like ours was able to turn a blind eye to sexual violence for so long."

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 81 percent of women and 43 percent of men nationwide have reported experiencing sexual harassment or assault in their lifetime. Additionally, an American is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds, according to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network.

In an interview with The Falcon, she noted that the Culture of Consent rally was her first time speaking about her past traumas in public. She called it a cathartic experience that helped her fully process her emotions.

"It was nerve-racking, but at the end, I felt much better," Natarajan said. "Even if I may not have gotten it across the way I wanted in terms of how I spoke, I think the actual speech itself was pretty impactful, and I'm very proud of myself."

Natarajan said she was also proud of others who spoke and grateful for the opportunity to share her story and those who showed up to offer support. Along with gaining closure by speaking up, under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POSCO) Act passed in India in 2012, Natarajan was also able to reopen her sexual assault case last June.

Natarajan said that education regard-



Natarajan

ing sexual assault in the U.S. school system along with social media posts raising awareness for sexual assault issues played a large component in her wanting to reopen her case. It made her realize that what had happened to her was not wrong.

"This was always something that was at the back of my mind, but before I never really framed it as sexual assault," she said. "When you're a kid and something traumatic happens to you, you forget about it, and sometimes just don't think about it. Sometimes you don't realize it was wrong — it just didn't click for me until now."

Once she decided she wanted the case reopened, her mother contacted Natarajan's former school to inform officials about the perpetrator's behaviors and ask why the school had failed to take action. She notified the school that her daughter wanted to press charges.

Following this, the school sent Natarajan a series of photos to identify the offender and asked for any details she remembered about him, such as his name. Due to the school's legal obligations, the photos went to both their own and the police's records. Following a positive identification of the man, the school fired him.

From then on, the process mainly involved Natarajan, her mother and the police department. Her first interaction with the police was to give her statement over Zoom with a judge present, in which she described in detail what had happened along with the context surrounding it.

"I didn't realize until then just how much trauma I had been living with — this incident, sure. But the life I have lived, of being harassed and catcalled since I was no more than five years old, the grotesque possibilities I'm forced to think about whenever I even take a walk on my own — they take a toll on you," Natarajan said.

After taking her statement, the police arrested the offender.

She confirmed her statement via a second Zoom call with both the judge along with the perpetrator, which Natarajan said was very difficult.

"When I saw the man who hurt me, I felt so hollow inside. I could still feel the way he made me feel when I was seven: repulsive and tainted," she said. "The interview was business as usual, but I had to describe the things he did to me and the way he made

Resources and links for student victims of sexual assault

The following resources were compiled for any students seeking help with sexual assault:

WeTip Hotline

WeTip is a national hotline available to students in partnership with the district. Students can anonymously file a report by visiting wetip.com/submit-a-crime-tip/.



WeTip provides toll free hotlines 24 hours-a-day, 365 days a year. Once a report is filed, WeTip's Student Services Department works with administrators, counselors and school staff to address the situation with adult supervision, counseling support and/or disciplinary action as appropriate.

The anonymity of the person reporting is maintained throughout the process.

The district and school still encourage all students to directly report to staff if they feel comfortable.

National Sexual Assault Hotline

The National Sexual Assault Hotline is a confidential service that never stores your information or cell phone number, but is sometimes compelled by law to report cases involving minors. Call +1 (800) 656-4673 to access the hotline.



Callers are almost always connected directly to a staff member or volunteer at a local sexual assault service provider, but callers may be sent to an answering service during daytime hours.

Calling the hotline gives victims access to support from trained staff, help finding a local care facility, someone to talk to and information about laws and medical concerns.

National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)

NSVRC is a national resource hub for victims of sexual assault, and is a leader of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. You can visit their website at nsvrc.org.



NSVRC's website, in its top navigation bar, allows survivors and others to find resources to find help and learn about potential post-assault steps to take. NSVRC refers requests for direct victims' services to the appropriate state coalition and/or a local program conveniently located to the caller.

— Shaan Sridhar

All graphics by SHAAN SRIDHAR



MORMONISM IN THE MODERN WORLD

Local adherents say myths don't match realities

BY SelinaChen

Taking pride and battling misconceptions

Tucked into the plastic sleeve outside senior Leslie Robinson's AP Government binder is a detailed family tree featuring her ancestors going back six generations. One name in the topmost layer, John Lowe Butler, is hidden among the 126 others but holds special prominence in Mormon history.

In July 1838, Butler arrived at the polls at Gallatin, Missouri, for the Daviess county seat elections. Butler and his fellow Mormon citizens came to vote against a prominent citizen named William Peniston, who — upon realizing the Mormons' plans — verbally attacked the Mormons with abusive and inappropriate language.

"[Peniston claimed that if the county allowed] the 'Mormons' to vote, the people would soon lose their suffrage," wrote Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism and translator of the religious text "Book of Mormon."

After Peniston's speech, a citizen received by Butler as a "drunken brute" began beating a Mormon preacher, and fighting broke out. Seeing the injustice in "four to a dozen" men battering a single Mormon, Butler found a stick and helped his fellow Mormons, taking "great care to strike none except those who were fighting the brethren."

Leslie finds it "a little nerve-wracking" to talk about the standards she follows because stereotypes may misconstrue them, such as viewing all Mormons as "uptight." Some of these standards include dressing modestly — such as refraining from crop tops — and social restrictions, such as waiting until after age 16 to date. Also, she doesn't swear or drink coffee and certain types of tea.

The Election Day Battle at Gallatin incited what became known as the first Mormon War. It was a prominent chapter in Butler's eventful life, detailed in his biography.

Today, seniors Leslie and Emma Robinson, Butler's great-great-great-granddaughters, are two of the several Saratoga High students and staff who are part of the Mormon Church, formally known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The community surrounding their faith is essential to the lives of teen Mormons like the Robinsons, who say they are sometimes misunderstood and whose faith has faced persecution over the decades.

The Robinsons' devotion

In 2020, the Robinsons' father, Colin Glenn Robinson, was called to be president of the Saratoga stake, an administrative unit that includes approximately 1,000 people from seven wards — local congregations headed by a bishop and separated by location.

Callers are almost always connected directly to a staff member or volunteer at a local sexual assault service provider, but callers may be sent to an answering service during daytime hours.

Within the Saratoga stake, Emma's calling — a request or assignment from the church — is Young Women's President, a role which entails planning fun or spiritual activities for young women in the Saratoga ward every Wednesday, with Leslie as her First Counselor.

Each weekday morning, the twins attend seminary class from 6:45 a.m. to 7:30 a.m., focusing on a different scripture each year. Unlike their cousin in Utah who has seminary as an elective at school or their Southern Californian cousin whose seminary is divided by grade level, the Robinsons' class combines all four high school grades, totaling about a dozen students.

Additionally, they go to church weekly for Sunday school, and to the Oakland Temple occasionally for sacred ordinances.

Unlike churches that allow entry to everyone, temples are only open to those who receive a recommend — an approval of a member's worthiness — from stake or ward leaders, Emma said.

For Leslie, school events held on Sundays have always been ones she must miss out.

"It's not that we're not allowed to do things on Sundays, but I choose not to because I'd rather spend the day at church with my family and honoring my faith," Leslie said. "When school events are on Sundays, I feel left out."

correct information about her religion. Most people have heard of it briefly in history classes, but many don't really think about it.

Connections across geographies

For example, Leslie said that the musical "The Book of Mormon" is "filled with a whole bunch of jabs my church," because people frequently bring up Mormons' history with polygamy even though it's not accepted anymore. People perpetuate such stereotypes, joking, "You're Mormon, so do you have like 10 wives?" she said.

People also poke fun at Smith and Mormon standards because they don't understand why Mormons follow them, she said.

"There's always going to be people that bash on and hate on other groups," Leslie said. "I try to stay out of it, but I do my research and feel pretty comfortable with my faith. I just wish people would find more solid and trustworthy sources because there's a lot of misinformation online."

Leslie finds it "a little nerve-wracking" to talk about the standards she follows because stereotypes may misconstrue them, such as viewing all Mormons as "uptight." Some of these standards include dressing modestly — such as refraining from crop tops — and social restrictions, such as waiting until after age 16 to date. Also, she doesn't swear or drink coffee and certain types of tea.

The church was started in the 1830s in New York, but moved westward due to persecutions. After a mass migration across the country led by their Apostle and second president Brigham Young, the church settled in Utah and grew from there. Now, it has 6.5 million members in the US and 16 million worldwide.

This fall, the Robinsons look forward to learning more about Mormon history as they attend Brigham Young University (BYU), where 98% of the student population is a part of the Church of Latter-day Saints. After a year in college, the Robinsons plan to embark on their missions, an important chapter in most Mormons' lives.

As young men turn 18 and women 19, they are encouraged to apply for a mission. They will be assigned by Utah headquarters to go somewhere in the world to "proselytize" for the church and share the Gospel," Emma said.

Their father went to Italy and their mother to Brazil, while Emma hopes to proselytize somewhere "with running water" and Leslie hopes to go to a Mandarin-speaking country.

"I think many missionaries find that [going on a mission] helps them better understand their faith as well," Leslie said. "It'll be a really fun experience that will help me improve my Mandarin, as well."

Prior to moving to Saratoga, the Robinsons lived in Hong Kong from when they were six months to age 4, then lived in Shenzhen, China, from ages 4 to 9. Practicing their faith was different and difficult in China, where Mormonism isn't one of the five state-recognized religions.

These days, a big part of his understanding of Mormonism centers around education, both spiritual and historical education. Additionally, a big part of Mormon culture is personal ancestry and heritage, including passing down stories and keeping genealogy libraries in all of the temples, Torrens said.

"I learned the importance of listening to people," Torrens said about his mission. "As a 19- to 20-year-old young man, you're pretty much in a selfish state of your life, thinking it's all about me. A mission is very structured, so you have to learn obedience and responsibility — very good principles for me to learn at that point."

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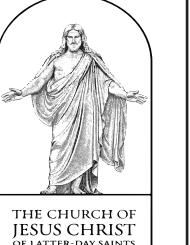
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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

>> falconfigures

98

% Brigham Young University students are Mormon

16

million people worldwide are Mormon

~6

million Mormons live in the United States

with Chinese nationals and foreigners separately," Emma said. "[The Chinese government] is really strict about it, which is sad because I believe that if they let us be more open about [Mormonism], then they'd have a lot of happier people."

Religion is essential to Leslie because it created a community and a strong sense of connection with other members of the church, both when growing up abroad and in Saratoga. She said that it's comforting to be able to spend time with people who have the same standards and background as her.

The role of education

Mormons can also take on domestic missions: assistant principal Matt Torrens did missionary work in Pennsylvania and Delaware for two years as a young Mormon who grew up in the North Bay. He then went to BYU and later taught in Washington, D.C., Japan and Utah with his wife before returning to California.

"I learned the importance of listening to people," Torrens said about his mission. "As a 19- to 20-year-old young man, you're pretty much in a selfish state of your life, thinking it's all about me. A mission is very structured, so you have to learn obedience and responsibility — very good principles for me to learn at that point."

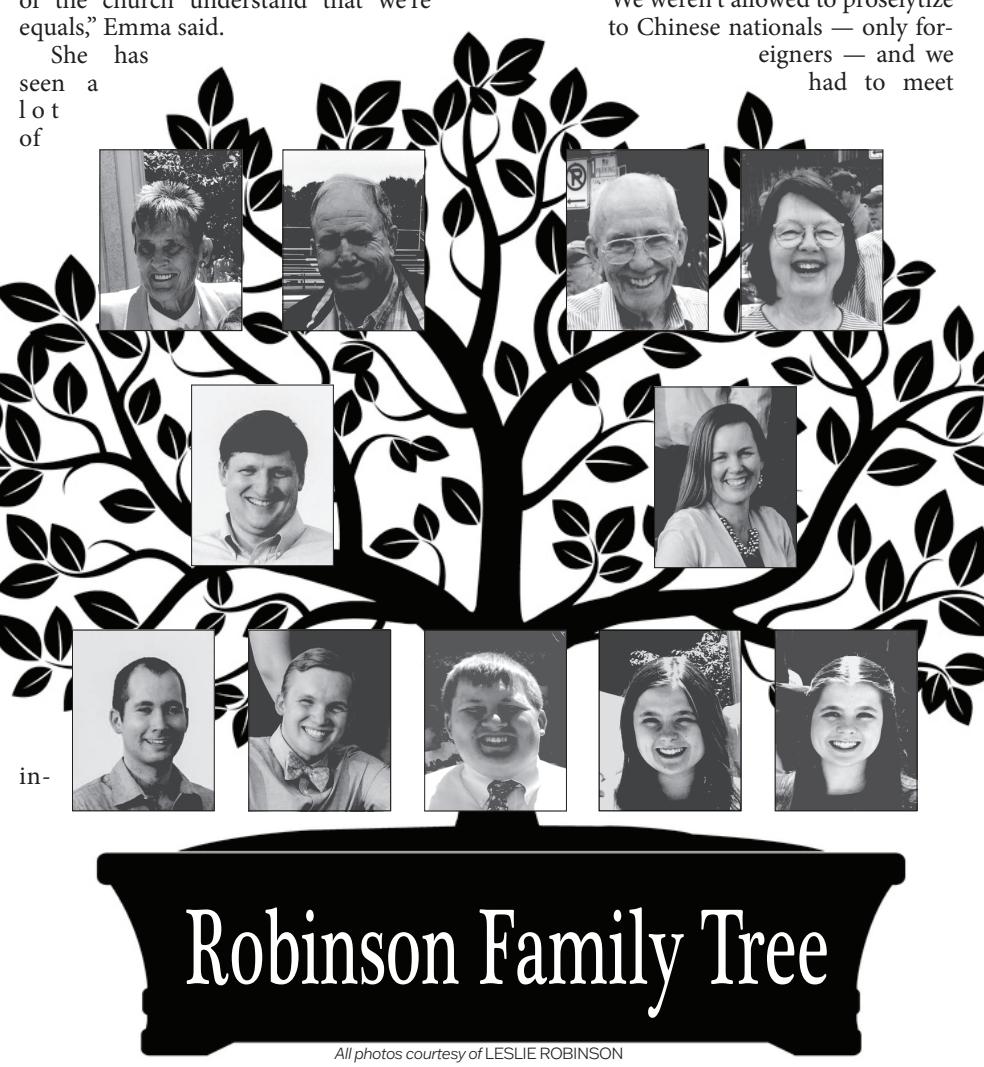
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"I don't know if that's why I'm a history teacher, but history has always been a big part of my life," he said. "[My religion] is pretty much intertwined with my life, my thinking and my belief system, with certain core values I incorporate."

Torrens has observed changes in the religion within his own lifespan: There have been 15 prophets who headed the church, and he finds that with each, rules and customs change, albeit minimally.

In the past 20 years, there has been more emphasis on service, helping others and working closely with other religions such as the Catholic Church and the Baptist Church on welfare issues. According to Torrens, the number of times parishioners are expected to attend church has decreased from four times a week to just Sunday. For Torrens, it's sometimes a choice between what he has to do for Saratoga High and his church commitments. For him, Sundays are busier than his school days, with church commitments spanning from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m.

"If you're active in the Mormon Church, you're going to have lots of activities and meetings, so you have to make choices," Torrens said. "Sometimes we have a thing referred to as the 'Family Filter': Your family is most important, and if something conflicts with your family — whether for church, school or a hobby — you don't do it." ♦



All photos courtesy of LESLIE ROBINSON

TRACK AND FIELD

Talented 'underdogs' take on bigger schools

by TaraNatarajan
& ShaanSridhar

After defeats in their first two meets against Santa Clara and Mountain View, the Falcons were victorious over Cupertino High School on March 24, dominating three out of four racing categories — JV boys, JV girls, and varsity girls.

Last week, the Falcons had one of their biggest competitions of the season: the Stanford Invitational on April 1 and 2, a season highlight for track and field athletes. (Results were not available in time for the print edition).

Athletes at Stanford Invitational

During the Stanford Invitational, which has been held since 1975, hundreds of high school athletes compete from schools both within and outside California, with coaches from various colleges also present.

The 4x400 meter relay team was one of the teams and athletes scheduled to compete. Senior runner Ayaaz Shah, a member of the relay team, said he was determined to make the most of the invitational after being disqualified in the March 31 meet.

Monta Vista meet ends with close score

The Monta Vista meet on March 31 yielded good overall results. Despite Monta Vista being a far larger school, the Saratoga athletes performed well on individual levels, treating the meet as preparation for Stanford.

Shah said he was content with his results,



Junior Yuvraj Singh competes in the 200 meter event against Monta Vista on March 31.

having taken part in the 200 meter sprint and long jump. He placed second in the long jump event, and placed fourth out of 12 runners in the 200 meters. He set a personal record in the long jump, and was satisfied with his placement in the sprint.

"As a school, we did well considering how much smaller our track team is," Shah said. We were leading until the last two events, and fought hard."

Junior thrower Jalyn Harrigan also set a personal record during the meet, in the shot put event — the only event she participated in to conserve her energy and prevent injuries leading up to the larger Stanford invitational.

Victory against Cupertino High School

Though coaches were upset with the team's performance, the Falcons defeated Cupertino with flying colors in their first home meet.

Senior runner Harrison Dance, a member of the relay team and the team's fastest distance runner, did not participate.

Notable performances included Harrigan in the women's 4x400 meter relay, and junior runner Yuvraj Singh in the men's 200 meter sprint, placing the Falcons at first and second place in their respective events.

Harrigan competed in the 100-meter and 300-meter women's hurdles and the 4x100 meter and 4x400 meter relay. She placed third and first in the respective hurdle events, and the Falcons placed first in both women's relays.

Harrigan is unsure of whether she wants to run track in college, but looks forward to meeting college coaches and athletes during larger meets, as well as competing with runners from a wide range of schools.

In contrast, Singh felt he had an "average" personal run at the Cupertino meet — he placed second in both the men's 100-meter and 200-meter sprints, although he set a personal record of 22.95 seconds in the latter. Because of missing runners in the 4x400 meter relay, Singh said his relay team didn't do as well as they had hoped.

Because Singh is seriously considering running track in college, he will begin the recruiting process over the next couple of months.

For the time being, however, he wants to make the most of the remainder of the track season, citing its competitiveness as one of the reasons he loves the sport.

Singh is optimistic about Saratoga's performance at upcoming invitational, with the team improving between meets.

"Compared to a lot of schools, we're the underdogs, but I think our team is talented enough that it can beat a lot of the bigger schools if we can just execute what we need to do," Singh said. ♦

BASEBALL

Solid pitching leads Falcons to one-run victories

by DerekHsu
& MinsuiTang

The varsity baseball team is playing in high-stakes, competitive El Camino League games, holding an overall record of 8-7 and a league record of 4-2 as of March 31.

Coach Jason Bugg's focus on fundamentals and defensive drills during practice has paid off with a recent three-game winning streak including key victories over Fremont 5-4 on March 31, Gunn 4-3 on March 26, and Milpitas 4-3 on March 22.

According to junior outfielder Kevin Zhao, the team's "good mindset" encouraged them to "take care of the details" that they went over during practice and apply them in games. Their defense has gradually

grown stronger over the past few games, which prompted the team to shift their focus toward hitting during practices.

"We need to work on our confidence at the plate," Zhao said. "If we are aggressive and aren't afraid of strike-outs, we set ourselves up for solid hits."

Big contributions on offense from freshman Doug Bettinger and seniors Derek Casini and Derek Hsu. As of March 30, Bettinger and Hsu recorded more than 10 steals each for the season.

The main reason behind the recent wins is the stellar pitching of sophomore Shane Timmons and junior Lucas Dennis.

Dennis.

morale going into a two-week hiatus of no games. Players will condition individually with optional batting practice after school.

"We have all the momentum heading into the break," Lee said. "All of us will use this time to rest and recover from our lingering injuries."

The team's goal remains to qualify for CCS and win the El Camino league. Future matchups against Gunn, which they split the series so far with a win and loss, are bound to be a high-pressure atmosphere for the Falcons.

"All the pitchers have been the best players on the team," Timmons said. "I think [we can achieve our goals by] keep doing what we're doing: playing solid defense, locking down pitching and getting hits."

"Our pitchers have been locking it down on the mound," Lee said. "We will get the hits when we can, but our pitchers are putting us in these winnable positions."

Their most recent run over the current league champions, Fremont, has raised

ably efficient innings with shorter at-bats.

have players that have been playing for years."

BOYS' LACROSSE

In the face of challenges, Falcons persevere to 8-1 record

by MitchellChen

As the final whistle blew during the first boys' lacrosse league game on March 3, indicating a 8-1 for the Falcons against Woodside, senior goalie Parker Smith realized how strong of a roster the team had, despite the small numbers.

"We are still learning how to really work as a team," Hawthorne said. "It's exciting to see what we'll do when we get that down."

Hashemi noted that the team started the season off strong, but has "struggled to come out with intensity during the beginning of games" against stronger opponents.

As a result, the team has had to scramble to score toward the end of matches. During the game against Gunn, the Falcons were down 6-2 in the first quarter, but came out victorious 17-10.

"We always end up having to dig ourselves out of a hole," Hashemi said. "We hope to make it to CCS, but can't afford any more losses."

Nevertheless, the team has found success so far, and is looking forward to keeping up that momentum in future games, Smith said.

With 24 new freshmen players, she and the other captains work to help players improve their technique, form and agility through drills.

Though the team wins have been rare this spring, individuals like sophomore singles player Sannidhi Boppana, a team captain and badminton veteran, have been teaching younger players how to play the game.

On March 31, the Falcons fell 16-14 to Cupertino, marking their fifth loss of the season.

The team has also seen a record high in the number of girls joining, making it more well-rounded and diverse compared to previous

pairs players up to practice in doubles to help players get to know each other.

"We're pretty close with the coach and he treats us very respectfully," Liu said. "He just wants us to have fun so we can work well together."

During practice, Li randomly

Vista, Lynbrook, Milpitas, Wilcox and Cupertino.

The team plays rematches against Lynbrook on April 5 and Wilcox on April 21.

The team has seen progress in recent games.

"All our games have been pretty close recently," Liu said. "We were losing quite a bit, but we're hoping to make a comeback."

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

New coach fixes errors alongside young team

by SelinaChen
& ArielZhou

set," he said. "We had a tight match and it was unlucky that we lost that one, but it just dropped the team's confidence. We weren't as focused and motivated."

However, Hwang is optimistic because the team is developing stronger chemistry, as well as a "more confident and enthusiastic coaching staff," he said. Having last coached Saratoga in 2011, Lori Gragnola has returned to her position as head coach, with no assistant coach by her side — an unusual situation for the varsity team.

"[Gragnola is] really energetic and relaxed but takes coaching very seriously," Hwang said. "Plus, she's a cool person outside of coaching volleyball, so it makes the team more fun."

Outside hitter Andy Tran, a senior captain, said that at the start of the season, the team assumed that she wasn't very competitive and instead wanted to give everyone a chance on the court. Now that the season has progressed, they learned that she's fiercely competitive, giving them hope that they will win more games.

"[Gragnola] 'bullies' us into becoming better — like tough love," Tran said. "She nurtures some kids but makes it clear to more experienced kids that you should know stuff like clockwork."

Gragnola acknowledged that the team has less maturity and fewer club players than other teams in the league, but is practicing "really, really hard" and has thus far been better on the court compared to last year. "We are the underdogs in the higher league, and we know that, so we have to step it up, which we have," Gragnola said. "We have the ability to win, and all of our matches have been super-duper close — within five points — so hopefully in the second half of the season we'll be able to take some wins. We just need to mentally get ourselves in the right space."

To do so, Gragnola applies her coaching philosophy that players should show up and do their best, knowing that she "absolutely despises laziness." She tends to play the best players, taking players off the court if they're having a bad day. She even chose to bench one of her key players after he failed to show up to practice without notifying the team in advance, which hurt the team as a whole. Now the team "knows better than pulling a no-show," she said.

As captain, Tran aids Gragnola's efforts by helping out the less experienced players and serving as the role model of the team.

He said it's a difficult job, however, when some players don't give him as much respect because they think that they're better despite having space for improvement, he said.

Gragnola recently canceled two practices after one player acted out and broke the team mindset; she wanted to give them time to reset. The situation also spurred sophomore setter and floor captain Sam Kau into



Sophomore Samuel Kau delivers a serve against Cupertino on March 21. The players focused on refining their serving and passing technique in practice drills leading up to the game.

action, since his role requires him to "get the team more organized and help people calm down in tough situations," he said.

In this case, he talked to the player individually to work things out. As an underclassman, Kau finds it tough to command authority even though he is qualified through extensive club experience. However, he said he believes that the team has potential to get better if it fosters more chemistry. Another thing Kau looks forward to is the return of sophomore Kali Duuvuri, a key player.

These renewed efforts from every member of the team is summed up as "taking second chances" by sophomore middle blocker Scotty Rich.

"[I hope] the team can adjust its mentality towards each other — redoing and learning from mistakes," Rich said. ♦

GIRLS' LACROSSE

Despite early losses, team rebuilds to find successes

by SerenaLi, AnjaliNuggehalli
& CiciXu

View on April 14.

The team held a 2-3 record as of

March 31, with losses against Los Gatos (17-1) on March 9, Mountain View (13-3) on March 14 and Gunn (11-7) on March 21, and wins against Wilcox (15-0) on March 28 and Palo Alto (9-7) on March 30.

The victory against Palo Alto was the girls' first win of the season, and was especially notable due to the Falcons only having just one substitute player going into the match.

The team has rematches against two teams they lost against: Los Gatos on April 9 and Mountain

stronger, according to Keogh. "She's definitely a lot tougher than our coaches last year, but I think that's the reason we've made these improvements," Keogh said. "She notices the little things that other coaches hadn't before."

Despite the roster being smaller and younger than most of the other teams in the league which could make the team seem less competitive and more injury-prone on paper, the smaller team size has allowed each player to form stronger and more cohesive relationships with each other which can outweigh the drawbacks.

Junior midfielder Kayla Steele said the main goal of the team is currently to "play with intention" and to put full effort and all of their energy in every game that they compete in.

"For the rest of the season we'll just cherish our time together and really work together as a team to grow and understand how to work well with each other," Steele said. "Everyone on the team counts."

Graphic by GEORGE JUNG

BADMINTON

Veteran players form close bonds with teammates

by SanjoliGupta
& SerenaLi

years, according to junior captain Jason Liu.

As a result, head coach John Li is focusing on team bonding to form closer relationships with each other.

At the beginning of the season, players sat around a circle and introduced their interests and backgrounds.

During practice, Li randomly

pairs players up to practice in doubles to help players get to know each other.

"We're pretty close with the coach and he treats us very respectfully," Liu said. "He just wants us to have fun so we can work well together."

The team holds a 2-5 record as of April 1, winning against Los Gatos and Gunn, but losing to Monta Vista, Lynbrook, Milpitas, Wilcox and Cupertino.

The team plays rematches against Lynbrook on April 5 and Wilcox on April 21.

The team has seen progress in recent games.

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snapshots



FALCON // ATREY DESAI



Courtesy of AMY HAWTHORNE



FALCON // ATREY DESAI



FALCON // SANJOLI GUPTA

Senior Adrian Mar responds to a serve against Cupertino at home on March 31.

Seniors Ed Greene and Victor Nyden, and junior Daniel Cordova celebrate after scoring against Gunn on March 29.

Leading the race, senior Harrison Dance runs the 1600 in a dual meet on March 31.

A Falconpuff match takes place between senior and sophomore girls on March 29.

Dear colleges, we reject your rejections

**RejecHsun
LuoL**



Derek Hsu & Allen Luo

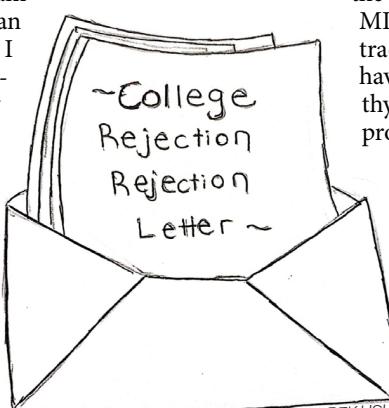
Dear Massachusetts Institute of Technology,

I would like to send my condolences to the admissions team who seems to be in the first stage of grief: denial. I want to offer my personal support in helping them achieve the last stage: acceptance. I was recently notified that I might not be admitted

into the Class of 2026. I am hopeful that this is solely an egregious, gross mistake. I herewith reject your rejection letter, and here are my reasons.

The letter used the following language, which I quote directly: "Please understand that this is no way a judgment of you as a student or as a person, since our decision has more to do with the applicant pool than anything."

While we recognize



Graphic by DEREK HSU

the limited space available in MIT Class of 2026, it is extraordinarily odd that you have not judged us as worthy. Again, humans are error prone, even very small with people at MIT.

We also reject your rejection letter itself; how dare you say it's not a judgment of our qualities as a student. After all, the college admissions process is supposed to be about merit, not the randomness that your

mistaken rejection letter attributes admissions to.

We also reject this wording further into the letter: "Since all of our decisions are made at one time and all available spaces have been committed, all decisions are final."

Final? Final? Nothing is final. We realize that this rejection of your rejection may come as a surprise. There is no doubt MIT has a prestigious admissions team, but we are supremely confident that your letter was intended for others and not ourselves.

Regards,
Disgruntled Seniors, Hopeful MIT Class of 2026 ♦

A Quote Passage Analysis of Kanye

**Apete
Davishaan**



Shaan Sridhar & Apurva Chakravarthy

In English 10 and English 11, a heavy emphasis is placed on using Quote Passage Analysis (QPA) — a short analysis of a quote focusing on word choice, figurative language and more — to discern the deeper meaning behind a piece of writing.

For this article, we have tried to make the example as relevant to student culture as possible — we will focus on the Instagram posts from Ye.

On Feb. 12, Ye — formerly known as Kanye West — posted a "rant" to his Instagram account about actor Pete Davidson, his ex-wife Kim Kardashian West's new boyfriend. It's important to understand that there is a lot of emotion in this post, which is why it is so compelling:

"THIS AINT ABOUT SKETE PEOPLE IT'S ABOUT SELLING YALL A NARRATIVE SKETE JUST PLAYING HIS PART IN FROZEN 3 ACCEPT ITS NOT IN THE THEATERS THIS TIME ITS ON DAILEY MAIL TELL BOB AND THE ENTIRE DISNEY STAFF YOU WAISTED YOUR MONEY ON STARWARS AND MARVEL BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH IT MAKES MONEY YOU WILL NEVER CONTROL

THE HIGHSCHOOLS NO ONES EVER HEARD A MACHINE GUN KELLY SONG BOB"

On first glance, the quote's structure immediately stands out to the reader.

Note the way Ye uses all capital letters and no punctuation, a technique similar to famous poet E.E. Cummings, but is still able to structure his argument and separate ideas by the use of double spaces.

Ye's first idea focuses on a person he calls "SKETE," a play-on-words alluding to "Saturday Night Live," the comedy show that Davidson acts in. Ye's lack of punctuation leaves the meaning of the word "PEOPLE" in doubt: He simultaneously addresses his fans and refers to Davidson's friends.

The next idea focuses on Davidson's supposed involvement in "Frozen 3." Ye argues that Davidson is "JUST PLAYING HIS PART" in the larger Disney franchise, referencing the high pay that Disney voice actors earn to portray Davidson as a sell-out. Ye claims that the movie will not play in theaters, using the word "ACCEPT" instead of "except" to emphasize the general public's complacency in accepting Davidson's dubious business.

Because "Frozen 3" does not actually exist, Ye further casts Davidson as a greedy capitalist willing to do anything for money, even if there is no substance — unlike Ye's award-winning music.

Ye's last idea focuses on the Walt

"TELL BOB AND THE ENTIRE DISNEY STAFF YOU WAISTED YOUR MONEY ON STARWARS AND MARVEL"

ARTIST Kanye West

Disney Company, a detour that encapsulates the struggles Ye is facing as a result of his divorce. Ye lashes out at "BOB" of Disney, a condensed attack on both former CEO Bob Iger and current CEO Bob Chapek. Ye argues that Disney's subsidiaries Marvel and Lucasfilm are trying to "CONTROL THE HIGHSCHOOLS" so the company "MAKES MONEY," which it is currently achieving via its partnership with Davidson (Ye later clarified that Davidson is a "pawn" to Disney, further supporting his argument that Disney is complicit in Davidson's insulting attack on Ye).

Ultimately, Ye's creative language forms his thesis: Davidson's relationship with Kardashian, an insult to Ye, is part of a larger corporate agenda to make money.

Or, instead, you can choose to find an entirely different meaning: Ye's Instagram post is an assault on his ex-wife and he should get the mental health help he needs.

In the end, it's all up to interpretation — which is why your QPA skills are so important! ♦

topten

WAYS TO SPEND SPRING BREAK

- 10 **Wearing family t-shirts.** Imagine walking around with a cult of people that look remotely alike.
- 9 **Call a stranger 'mom.'** The only thing worse is the puzzled face that the stranger makes turning around.
- 8 **Order something you don't want to eat because you don't understand the language.** Pulpo ≠ Tomato sauce
- 7 **Fall asleep on the beach with no sunscreen on.** Go looking for a tan, and leave looking like Clifford.
- 6 **Accidentally destroying hotel property.** Don't push huge metal balls in the middle of the hotel lobby.
- 5 **Getting your belongings stolen.** All a pickpocket will be able to find is an empty wallet and touristy keychains.
- 4 **Seeing someone you know on vacation.** Hide behind your dad to avoid any unwanted contact.
- 3 **Being awkward in front of a waiter.** Nothing worse than responding with "you too."
- 2 **Ordering room service and getting in trouble with your parents.** Blame your younger siblings for an unwanted bill.
- 1 **Breaking a souvenir in a souvenir shop.** We dropped a shot glass, leading to banishment for life from the shop.

>> Kavya Patel & Sarah Thomas