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THE saratogafalcon



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FALCON // MINA YEAP and ATREY DESAI

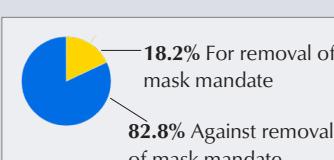
BY ChristinaChang
& LynnDai

On Feb. 28, California, Oregon, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and Washington announced they would be gradually removing the mask mandate in schools in the following weeks. Santa Clara County ended their mask mandate on March 2. Additionally, California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced that the statewide indoor mask mandate

for schools would be lifted for all students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, on March 11.

In an email released on March 3, Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District superintendent Michael Grove announced that, starting March 14, indoor masking at school will be “strongly recommended, but optional for students and staff.” Teachers can request but not require students to wear masks.

The change was established



The Falcon polled 33 students via a Facebook poll.

as a result of the CDC’s updated metrics: Before Feb. 25, indoor mask mandates were recommended for dense public areas.

Now, the CDC’s COVID-19 community level metrics are dependent on three factors: new hospitalizations, hospital capacity and new cases.

Many students disagree with these updated masking policies.

In a Google form sent out in the SHS 2021-2022 Facebook group which received 33 responses, 81.8% of respondents were against the removal of the school mask mandate, while 18.2% were supportive of it.

When asked whether they would continue to wear masks even after the lifting, 81.3% said they would, whereas 12.5% are unsure and 6.3% would not.

The statistics from the survey have been reflected on campus: Despite the removal of the requirement, the vast majority of students and staff at SHS continued to wear masks in the first week when they weren’t required.

>> MASKS on pg. 3

Measure E: School to conduct major summer renovations

BASEBALL FIELD AND ENGINEERING LAB UP NEXT

BY JonnyLuo
& AidenYe

When assistant principal Brian Thompson was hired here seven years ago, the school was buzzing with excitement over the construction of a new state-of-the-art music building. The building was funded by the Measure E bond.

Measure E, passed in 2014, is a \$99 million local general obligation bond split between both Saratoga High and Los Gatos High to fund new infrastructure and

school resources. So far, funds have gone to projects like building the new robotics room, turfing the upper field and providing new technology like Chromebooks for students.

The district has already spent roughly \$74.4 million on Measure E projects.

This summer, Thompson said that the school is planning to use most of the remaining bond money allocated to Saratoga High to install a new heating.

>> MEASURE E on pg. 3

Night rally, football and dance planned for Spring Fling Week

BY NicoleLu
& SarahZhou

For the first time in two years, the spirit, rally and dance commissions are working together to host a Spring Fling Spirit Week starting on March 28, one that is highlighted by a night rally, a dance and a new twist on the traditional football games played during the week.

Spring Fling Spirit Days

Monday and Tuesday, March 28 and 29, will be themed dress-up days hosted by spirit commission. Inflatables will also be brought on the upper field on Friday, senior

co-head spirit commissioner Johnny Hulme said.

To determine the themes of the dress-up days, the commission will be posting polls on their Instagram account to survey student preference.

According to senior co-head commissioner Sadaf Sobhani, in past years, students would go to the upper field during lunch for a party consisting of obstacle courses, races and food trucks.

“However, this year, because our [budget] was cut short, we had to limit the activities we host,” Sobhani said.

>> SPRING FLING on pg. 4

Students and staff denounce Russia’s invasion of Ukraine

BY LynnDai, AndrewLin
& DanielWu

In the past few weeks, sophomore Minh Do has felt dismayed as he has followed news about Russia’s military assault on Ukraine.

He is especially focused on the mounting economic and humanitarian problems for Ukrainians



along with the role social media has played as disinformation within the war.

In addition, junior Apoorva Talwalkar said she worries how war will affect Europe. Still other students have expressed differing opinions that China may invade Taiwan in a similar course of action.

>> UKRAINE on pg. 5

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newsbriefs

ASB elections experience historic voter turnout

This year's election saw the largest turnout in recent history with 712 students, or 79% of eligible, non-senior voters casting a ballot for 2022-23 ASB officers.

Junior Mason Wang was elected as president, junior Julian Berkowitz-Sklar as vice president, junior Anand Agrawal as treasurer, sophomore Taylor Chu as secretary and junior Avani Kongetira as the clubs commissioner.

ASB recently passed an amendment that allowed Anand, the current treasurer, to run for office again, Wang said.

"The ASB treasurer position is highly specialized, and allowing an existing treasurer to hold the position again would increase ASB productivity and decrease [training time]," Wang said.

Incoming ASB officers plan to work with the district to provide feminine hygiene products in the school restrooms, reimplement daily tutorials and provide more wellness center resources to ease academic pressure.

Many of the officers are friends outside of leadership; thus, Wang believes this will increase their productivity.

"I couldn't have asked for a better group of officers," Wang said. "I am definitely looking forward to a year with them."

— Tiffany Wang

School plans to host Grad Night in person on June 2

The school plans on hosting the Class of 2022's Grad Night in-person with COVID-19 safety precautions. Tickets will cost \$245, and the event will run from 10 p.m. until the early morning of the next day.

It is organized by parents who have graduating seniors. Tickets will be sold until April 1 with over 150 of them already sold and plans on selling 100 more.

As of early November, organizers were planning on individually wrapping food and serving students food directly out of food trucks. The final food choices will be finalized once tickets stop selling and they know what their budget is.

The organizers plan on keeping the theme a secret and providing a DJ, carnival games, inflatable structures and a mock casino in the gym. The senior video, a compilation of pictures of the Class of 2022, will also play during the event.

Assistant principal Matt Torrens hopes the experience of Grad Night will be "a memorable one — one where the kids enjoy each other's company for the last time."

— Sam Bai and Andrew Lin

Benefit fashion show postponed until April 23

The annual Benefit Fashion Show, originally planned for March 5, has been postponed to April 23. Instead of the quad, the show will be held in the gym, with models being masked. Tickets will sell at \$10 online and \$15 at the door.

Head Benefit commissioner senior Tiffany Wang attributed the postponement to pandemic-related issues, including difficulties finding stores to sponsor the event and lack of experience in running an in-person show. Previously, the event was sponsored by local clothing businesses, but these vendors have seen their sales severely affected from COVID-19. This means all models, besides ones in the Prom category, will have to use their own clothes.

Additionally, both Wang and fellow head commissioner senior Grace Hsu only have experience with the magazine they created last year. The rest of the commission, seniors Amarangana Tyagi and Chris Liu and juniors Avani Kongetira and Haley Marks, is entirely new.

Along with these challenges, around a dozen models have dropped out due to the schedule change, and there are now a little under 200 models for the show.

"Postponing the show will give us more time to organize," Wang said. "That way we can allow everyone to experience walking down the runway in all its glory."

— Harshini Velchamy



picturethis



WALKOUT | Freshmen Anusha Tadikonda and Alan Cai walk along Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road to advocate against gun violence during the school's March for Our Lives San Jose walkout held on March 16.

FALCON // SELINA CHEN

Post-pandemic woes — school organizations face funding issues

by Jonny Luo
& Nikhil Mathihalli

after last year's mostly online school year.

Junior ASB treasurer Anand Agrawal said the Class of 2022 didn't have the chance to do the ordinary fundraisers that would have stocked their bank account for events like prom.

ASB package sales also took a hit during the pandemic, continuing a downward trend over recent years; they sold 1080 cards from 2017-18, 980 from 2018-19, 771 from 2019-20 and 326 sales during the fully online 2020-21 school year.

According to senior class vice president Kaylie Wong, the senior class office's financial problems stem from two especially strenuous years, where the class of 2022 received much fewer parent donations during online Parents Nights.

Though the class office has a much lower budget — \$6,000 compared to a typical budget of \$20,000-25,000 after paying the down payment for prom, Wong said that the class budget is "not stretched thin."

"Normally, in person, we would give a presentation on why parents should donate, and it made them more inclined to donate," Wong said. "However, online, a lot of parents weren't paying attention and had to pay online through the SHS website [instead of writing a check], so it makes it more difficult for parents to donate."

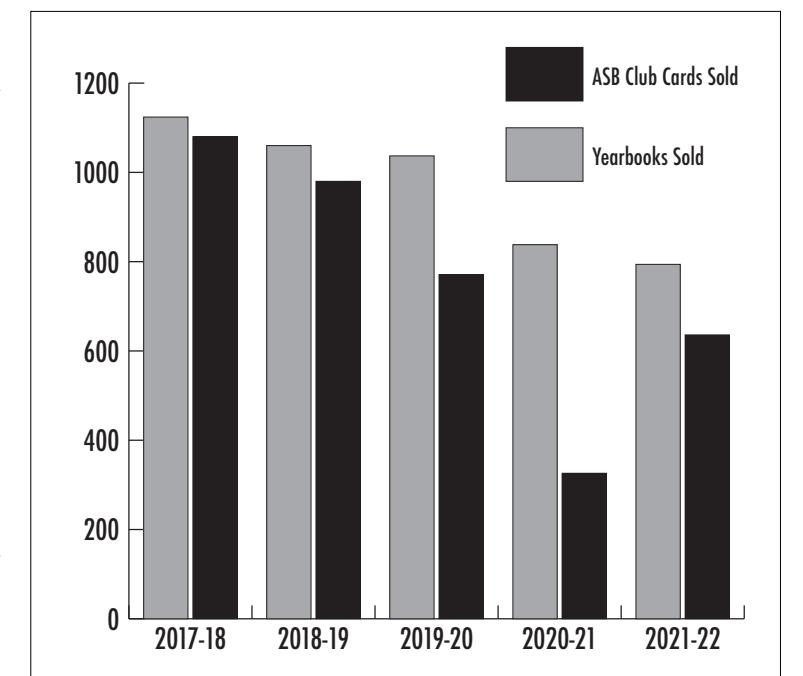
Additionally the senior class of 2022 has held small fundraisers this year, such as selling roses at the recent Bombay in the Bay show and holding a mask fundraiser, to increase its budget.

Sales partially rebounded this year, with 636 packages sold at the cost of \$159 each; however, much like yearbook sales, ASB package sales have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

With less money than usual, ASB applied for a grant from the Saratoga Foundation to cover the \$35,000 cost of new bleachers for quad activities. Agrawal encourages students and parents to help support the ASB with donations.

"ASB is the main organization that funds school-wide activities and items, and the ASB package is the main source of income for the ASB," Agrawal said. "Decreasing sales means a decrease in funding for school-wide activities and items, so it is imperative that more people can buy class merchandise and the ASB class package, especially since it pays itself off quickly."

"The senior class office is not in an ideal situation [monetarily]," Wong said. "I hope that once an in-person Parent Night returns, funds will start coming in easier for future class offices." ♦



Falcon // NIKHIL MATHIHALLI

MEASURE E

continued from pg. 1

ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC) in some wings, replace the baseball field's grass with turf, replace single-pane windows in the gym, build a new pool shade for the poolside bleachers, install new roofs, remodel the covered walkways and remodel the engineering power tools for student use.

"We're super excited about the changes. It's been in the works for a long time, and I'm really looking forward to working in a more healthy place, both emotionally and physically," Warmuth said.

In addition to the overall building structure, the building's heating system will also be upgraded. In the past, Warmuth said that the lack of a working heater and air conditioning has been difficult for students to contend with.

"It's so hot in the summer and so cold in the winter, and that really just wears on you year after year," Warmuth said.

The plan is to place individual HVAC systems in each room in the math, 100, 300 and 600 wings. Currently, these wings can only control temperature using a 25-year-old system within a range of five degrees, which is sometimes distributed unevenly throughout classrooms. Construction will begin on June 3, the first day after graduation, and end on Aug. 15, the week of school reopening.

"The benefit is it will increase efficiency by giving teachers the ability to control the temperature in their own rooms for the comfort of their students," Thompson said.

Baseball field to be turfed

Along with heating, the school plans to turf the baseball field, a renovation project to start near the end of the school year and finish before the next baseball season in

into the robotics building, which has significantly less space. As a result, she has had to compromise between important inventory and working space. While the engineering classes still have a bin of materials and tools, the majority of the power tools from the engineering room will not be accessible during the remodel, although the robotics room contains many similar engineering power tools for student use.

"The hope is that these projects will be finished before the 2022-23 school year starts. The remodeling will, however, prevent the school from renting out its facilities to summer program organizations such as Los Gatos Rock and Maxwell Soccer.

Long overdue projects prioritized

The summer renovations seek to upgrade a long-overdue remodel to the engineering building; the work began over February break and will continue for the remainder of the school year. With a cost of approximately \$3 million, the project will remodel the lab's interior and add a working HVAC system. Windows will be added to provide sunlight; the ceiling lights will be secured and a new electrical panel will be installed.

According to engineering teacher Audrey Warmuth, the current lights do not satisfy the school's earthquake safety standards. Warmuth is also concerned about the antiquated electrical panel, which would often blow when students used large amounts of current while soldering.

Since the engineering room shares infrastructure with the fitness center, the fitness center will also be closed for part of the summers, potentially impacting coaches who want to get a head start training athletes.

While the building is being remodeled, Warmuth has temporarily moved her class-

Thompson



Thompson



The engineering room was cleared out before February break to allow for remodeling. Current students in engineering classes have moved to a previous robotics building.

January 2023.

Despite the project's high estimated cost of \$4.45 million, baseball players said the change was necessary.

In addition, a turf field requires less maintenance from the school. Currently, Saratoga's landscape personnel must patch up missing grass, trim the edges and address any other natural deterioration before every season, resulting in additional maintenance and costs.

Thompson is thankful for the community members and parents who supported the Measure E project and for helping create a positive impact on the community.

"I would like to thank our community in Saratoga and Los Gatos for voting for Measure E," said Thompson. "For the last seven years that I've been on campus, it has been amazing to see the modernization and modernization of the school, and I truly believe that it impacts students in a positive way for their education, physical safety and emotional well-being." ♦

'I'm really looking forward to working in a more healthy place, both emotionally and physically.'

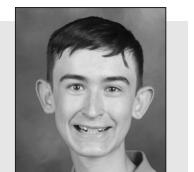
TEACHER Audrey Warmuth

togatalks

Will you still wear a mask after the mask mandate lift and why?

"I won't remove my mask until my unvaccinated siblings receive the COVID-19 vaccine."

freshman Joseph Warren



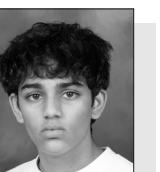
"COVID-19 hasn't disappeared. I'll wear my mask since I want to protect myself and family."

junior Morris Yu



"Masks are pretty uncomfortable, and students are vaccinated, making masks obsolete."

senior Konark Navare



MASKS

continued from pg. 1

However, if trends continue and cases remain low, more say they may begin to unmask in the coming weeks.

While sophomore Dhruva Jayanth said he is not worried about his safety as he is fully vaccinated and has received one booster shot, he doesn't mind others going without masks inside.

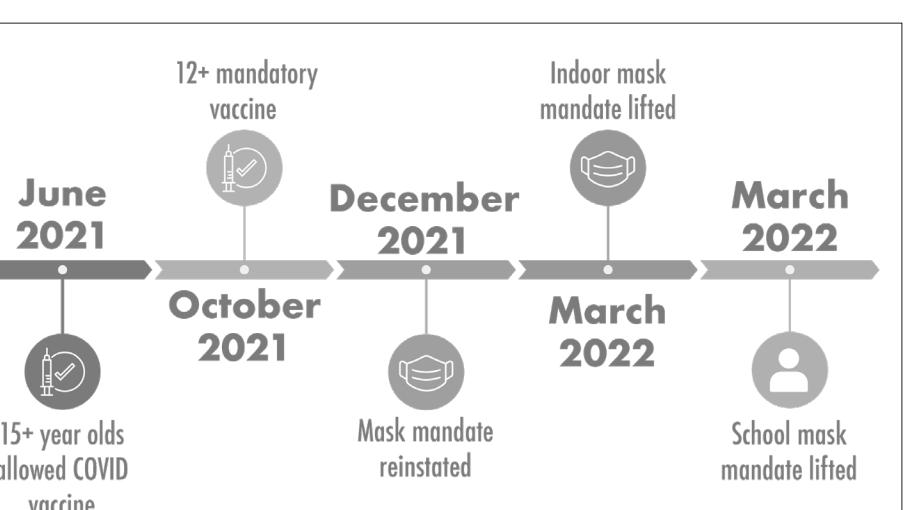
For her part, biology and chemistry teacher Kellyann Nicholson, who is immunocompromised, described the dropping of the mask mandate as concerning.

"I am a little freaked out," she said. "I'm worried about getting sick and about students bringing the virus home to little ones under 5 who haven't been vaccinated yet."

Nicholson noted that schools around the nation were shutting down because of a few cases in March 2020; yet in the first week of March 2022, there were 10 new cases on campus, and school has continued to run as usual with safety precautions. She is especially concerned about the transmission of cases inside smaller classrooms — in most math classrooms at school, students are tightly packed next to each other in rows and columns. While she said she understands the political and economic reasons for the new masking guidance, Nicholson will be asking students to keep their masks on in her classroom or sit in the back.

Although she's not sure when the mask mandate should ideally be removed, Nicholson prefers to keep masks on while people are already used to it rather than flipping back and forth with mask requirements.

"If cases start increasing again, we'll have



some fresh air."

Similarly, physics teacher Kirk Davis supports the removal of mask mandates as he thinks it's "appropriate given the infection rate" as the number of cases are dropping.

Additionally, Davis has not known anybody who has gotten severely sick with the virus after being vaccinated. Regarding his students who have contracted COVID-19, a majority were asymptomatic and mostly just "frustrated to stay home for five days."

However, because Davis will be flying to Scotland for his daughter's wedding in early April, he will continue to wear an N95 mask to be extra cautious.

"I'm fully vaccinated and boosted. I have no other health liabilities," Davis said. "So I think even if I got [COVID-19], it wouldn't be a severe illness."

Another reason to not wear masks has to do with good teaching, he said.

"I think there's a lot that can be communicated [through facial expressions]," Davis said. "I tend to joke a bit in class, and it's hard to tell when I'm joking versus when I'm serious without seeing all my facial features."

He also looks forward to seeing his students' faces because when he sees students outside his classroom without their masks, he sometimes can't recognize them.

Davis sees the lifting of the mandates as a sort of middle ground.

"I think it's an individual choice," he said. "People who say 'no more masks; I don't want to wear them,' they can do what they want. And if you feel comfortable wearing a mask and want to be protected, [you can wear it]. Everybody's got different opinions, and [we have to make sure that we respect that]."

SPRING FLING*continued from pg. 1*

"In the past years, we could accumulate more money from our dances, but this year we had to cut some inflatables out."

To advertise spirit activities to students, the commission plans on creating promotional social media videos and graphics and placing posters around campus in popular places such as the cafeteria, the library and the office.

Flag Football Games and a night

Along with spirit days, intramural flag football games will begin at lunch on Wednesday, March 30 and will continue until Friday.

After receiving positive reception from implementing a gender-inclusive Homecoming court, the rally commission has replaced the Powderpuff, a traditionally girls-only football game, with flag football under the name of Falconpuff to reemphasize gender inclusivity.

The rally commission is also organizing a potential lip dub that may happen later in the school year and a night rally, which hasn't been done for ten years.

Earlier this year, the commission surveyed students on their interest in attending a night rally through Instagram polls.

Because of the positive student responses they received, the commissions will be hosting the first night rally that the school has held in ten years.

"Our rally that we recently had in February was not the best that we've ever had because we had some emergency setbacks," Christie said. "So we started planning over [February] break, outlining our script and brainstorming promotional material to avoid dealing with those difficulties again."

The night rally will be held indoors. While the maximum capacity is 1000 people, commissioners are confident that stu-

dents will practice the necessary social distancing measures.

They plan to sell tickets at low prices to prevent outsiders from other schools from sneaking in, and food and drinks will also be sold on-site.

"We got approval from our COVID task force to have the dance indoors, so it's very exciting because it will be the first indoor dance since 2020."

TEACHER Kristen Cunningham

Because this event is completely new for the rally commission, Christie hopes to heavily advertise and ask teachers to promote the rally to their students as the date draws closer.

The commission is also in talks to film a lip dub.

"Some things are still up in the air, but we're really excited for all the events we have planned out for Spring Fling," Christie said.

"We're working under a 'go big or go home' mentality, so our commission is definitely planning on making this week memorable for everyone."

Spring Fling dance concludes

Lastly, Spring Fling week will wrap up with a semi-formal dance, similar to Homecoming, that will be held on Saturday, April 2 from 8-10 p.m. in the large gym.

The commission has settled on "Winnie the Pooh" as the theme and urges students to dress in colorful outfits like springtime dresses.

Ticket sales begin the week of March 14 starting at \$10 with ASB package and \$15 without, with prices increasing by \$5 every



Christie

Spring Fling Dance

WINNIE THE POOH

April 2, 2022 || 8-10pm
Large Gym

Courtesy of SHS Dance Commission

The Dance Commission expects at least 400 students in attendance at the Spring Fling dance

week.

The commission is in the process of finalizing logistics such as finding catering and DJs.

Though the dance was originally to be held on the tennis courts, issues arose with the lack of restrooms and the ongoing tennis season.

The dance will also adhere to the school and county COVID guidelines, Cunningham said.

"We would have had to spend thousands of dollars for the evening to rent bathrooms, and that would really have brought the ticket prices up which we didn't prefer," activities director Kristen Cunningham said. "We want to end the year with good memories for them." ◆



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Saturdays	9:00am - 5:30pm
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SAT Advantage Session 1: Jun 13 - Jul 8 (11 days)

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SAT Summer Boot Camp 2: Jul 5 - Aug 4 (10 days)

Tue, Thu	9:00am - 5:30pm
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SAT Advantage Session 3: Jul 8 - Aug 1 (11 days)

Mon, Wed, Fri	9:00am - 3:45*pm
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ACT Boot Camps**ACT Summer Boot Camp 1: Jun 14 - Jul 14 (10 days)**

Tue, Thu	9:00am - 6:15pm
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ACT Summer Boot Camp 3: June 13 - 24 (10 days)

Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri	9:00am - 6:15pm
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ACT Summer Boot Camp 4: Jun 18 - Aug 20 (10 days)

Saturdays	9:00am - 6:15pm
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* SAT Advantage Classes' end times vary by class structure. Please visit our website to see detailed class breakdown and syllabus.

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UKRAINE*continued from pg. 1***Economy and social media**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shaken the global economy, consequentially raising prices of raw materials like gasoline. According to CNBC, the nationwide average gasoline price is likely to rise past the four dollar mark — the average California gasoline price has soared above \$5 and sometimes \$6 a gallon — accounting toward an extra \$75 billion in annual spending by Americans to fill their gas tanks.

People are already spending more than ever before, and the issue has only worsened. It's remarkable that a conflict 10 time zones away has such a profound international impact," Do said.

Aside from economic damage, Do strongly disapproves of the behavior exhibited across social media platforms regarding the war.

Many users have viewed the war as a means to generate content, with TikToks about the "ghost of Kyiv" taken from footage in a military-based shooting game, disregarding the role that hero propaganda plays and the severity of the ongoing crisis.

Do noted that the Russo-Ukrainian war is among the first where social media has played an outsize role, with individuals inside Ukraine releasing rarely-seen-before footage from the perspective of citizens under attack.

"The stark contrast between a Ukrainian civilian posting a video of a cruise missile striking his home versus an entitled teenager in the U.S. making jokes about World War III is striking," Do said.

Do emphasized the importance of staying informed and understanding the scope of diplomacy before posting something which could be detrimental and downplay the crisis at hand.

Additionally, Do feels the war is a prime example of ignorant usage of social media, and believes people who are granted the luxury of free speech ought to use it to create a positive impact.

"I think people should look at the situation from the angle of a citizen from Ukraine or the Baltic states. It deeply saddens me that people have poked fun at the situation because it is not a joke and my heart reaches out towards the Ukrainian people," Do said.

Dispute over NATO's responsibility

Countries such as the U.S., Britain, Germany, Hungary, Poland, China and Syria have already seen the conflict between Ukraine and Russia impact its economic and foreign relations. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, alliance security commitments between NATO members will likely cause tensions between Russia and neighboring NATO countries to increase, especially if such countries are likely to involve the U.S. Moreover, the war may strain future cooperation on arms control, cybersecurity, nuclear nonproliferation, counter-terrorism and more.

togatalks

What are your thoughts on the conflict in Ukraine?

"I find the current situation in Ukraine very concerning."

sophomore William Cao

"The people of Ukraine are facing Russian imperialism and that is bad."

junior Jasmine Ispasoiu

"I just hope that all of the refugees will be able to get away from the conflict safely."

junior Jeremiah Chung

UKRAINE AND RUSSIA CONFLICT

Data as of March 10, 2022



50,000

Estimated number of casualties in Ukraine from 2014-2021

\$2.5 billion
U.S. assistance committed to Ukraine since 20142.3 million
Refugees fleeing Ukraine since February 24, 2022

Graphic by ANJALI PAI

pledged support for Ukraine and Moldova, she said that it's important to back it up with action and measures that will help Ukraine.

"Right now, just donate when you can," Talwalkar said. "Unicef has a link in bio to donate for aid to Ukrainian children, and there many more charities that are taking donations to aid Ukraine and provide relief for refugees."

"Do we come together to rally around a country that is independent and free?"



HISTORY TEACHER Jerry Sheehy

Parallels with past conflicts

World History teacher Jerry Sheehy said he sees a lot of parallels between the current crisis and the event leading up to the start of World War II in Europe — particularly with Hitler and Czechoslovakia.

"Putin has used language similar to Hitler's in claiming that he is not invading Ukraine or even starting a war, but instead aiding Ukrainian dissidents," Sheehy said. "However, in this case, Putin has access to nuclear weapons that Hitler didn't."

In his 23 years of teaching at the school, Sheehy said he doesn't remember "anything quite like this."

Considering the pandemic and the recent political polarization in the U.S., the direct involvement of the U.S. and Russia makes the conflict unlike anything else post-Cold War.

However, the "million dollar question" still remains, Sheehy said: How does the U.S. support Ukraine without starting WWII?

While he isn't sure what the best course of action for the U.S. is, Sheehy said the Russian-Ukraine conflict will be a "pivotal moment in history."

"Do we come together to rally around a country that is independent and free and wants to be part of NATO, E.U., etc. — or is Putin allowed to annex it?" Sheehy asked. "Do we stand up to an authoritarian regime and the growing authoritarianism in general in today's world? And if Putin is allowed to annex Ukraine, will this only embolden him to take back more former Soviet states?" ◆

Taiwan — a possibly mirrored situation

While the unfolding crisis may not severely impact Americans beyond a significant uptick in prices, students of Taiwanese descent with family members on the island are worried that the West's course of action — or specifically, lack thereof — against Russia may embolden neighboring superpower China to invade Taiwan.

Sophomore Owen Chang, who is Taiwanese-American, expressed deep concern regarding China's provocative actions toward Taiwan, which have risen over the course of the past few years.

Beijing considers Taiwan as a rogue province of China and has stated it is willing to commit to any means to "reunite" the island with the rest of the nation. China has regularly breached Taiwan's airspace since the start of the pandemic in an effort to antagonize their neighboring country, with violations numbering 380 in just 2020 alone, according to

The Guardian. Recently, their efforts have only strengthened; numerous Chinese warplanes were detected within Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone, with the largest incursion being 39 planes in a single day.

Chang fears the tensions between China and Taiwan could boil toward a conflict similar to the Russo-Ukrainian war, where Russian forces initially limited their attacks to key military targets but later transitioned to the shelling of civilian areas.

"My primary worry is that China will not restrict itself toward attacking purely military targets and target civilian areas as well," he said. In addition, Chang believes Beijing is monitoring the Western response to Russia's aggression and taking note of how it could influence a hypothetical invasion of Taiwan in the future.

In Chang's view, the U.S. and its allies ought to step up their efforts by arming the Ukrainians with higher tier anti-tank and airplane weaponry along with placing even tougher sanctions on Moscow.

"The United States needs to realize that if it's not careful with its response, it could further fuel the flames of another conflict in the Taiwan Strait," Chang said.

The best-case scenario is that the U.S. can maintain diplomatic relations with China and take into account the millions of Taiwanese citizens whose fates lie in the hands between two jockeying superpowers.

On the other hand, senior Derek Hsu, the ASB president, has extended family in Taiwan and says there are "undeniable differences" between China-Taiwan and Ukraine-Russia tensions. Both of his parents are from Taiwan and immigrated to America as children.

Beyond military action

However, Talwalkar said, "No one is really sure how far Putin will go because he believes he is doing the right thing for Russia and the world. Putin has also threatened Europe and the west, and we could possibly be seeing a nuclear world war in our future."

Beyond military action, however, Talwalkar emphasized the importance of having access to credible information. She said that Putin's actions of blocking social media platforms such as Facebook (now renamed to Meta) in Russia prevents Russian citizens from gaining access to credible information, leaving them with only government-fed propaganda.

"Misinformation plays a huge role in the conflict," she said. "It's important to look at credible sources to get your information and do your research on the situation."

While Talwalkar is glad that the U.S. has



Graphic by TEFANY WANG

Photo by ANJALI PAI

THIRDPERIOD
STAFFPOLICY

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

LETTERS^{to}EDITOR

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

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Lifting of school mask mandate is not premature but we must remain wary

"Wow! That's what your nose looks like?"

We've all dreamed of a time where we don't have to wear these nefarious masks. A time where we can actually see people's mouths move — avoiding those frequent moments where we awkwardly nod to nondescript mumbling, pretending to understand.

Since California officially lifted school mask mandates on March 15, that time has finally come. Although there are some that consider the lifting of mask mandates to be premature, lifting the mandate was a necessary move to improve the learning of students — after all, we've been wearing masks for the past two years. Without masks, students can interact better with teachers, communicate easier with their peers and learn in a more proficient manner. Verbal communication is much more effective without masks, as according to the National Institute of Health, facial cues are extremely important to building meaningful conversations with peers. Additionally, masks can affect coherence and listening — factors that are integral for classes that teach a second language, like Spanish, in which pronunciation is especially important. Many teachers have also noted the effects that masks have on the development of elementary school students who are just learning English.

Even without the mask mandate, the school should maintain its Screener-19 policies.

According to Megan Powers-Dunn, a teacher who runs a child care center in Rancho Cordova, there has been a significant increase in behavioral and language issues for children when teachers teach in masks five days a week. However, in this mask-less academic environment, certain measures still need to be taken to mitigate risks.



COVID-19 is not disappearing anytime soon. Like the flu, it will be a recurring illness that has the power to make lives miserable or worse. Even without the mask mandate, the school should still maintain its Screener-19 policies. Though admittedly a hassle for students to fill out every morning, students should still elect to be truthful in their responses, as Screener-19 is still an essential first check prior to arriving at school.

Rather than speedrunning the familiar "no, no, no, yes" answers in quick succession, students should be honest about their health — if they have a sore throat or feel nauseous, they should remain at home (as they should have remained at home before the pandemic), even if they may not have COVID-19.

Similarly, having students check in with Screener-19 for their first and second period classes is also helpful in contact-tracing, in case a virus outbreak does happen on campus.

To maximize student safety, the district should keep offering its frequent opportunities to get PCR tested or rapid tested; testing is now more important than ever to know if the virus comes roaring back or stays in check.

Perhaps most of all, students still have the choice to wear a mask, and most are choosing to do so. For those who are immunocompromised, wearing masks still remains the safest and ultimately best option. Accordingly, students should still be mindful of others and continue being careful. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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Opinion Editors
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Writer
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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 28-8 in favor of this article.

To take AP Lit or AP Lang? Ay, there's the rub

By Selina Chen

If you're an underclassman envisioning your incredibly exciting academic journey, or a junior having doubts about your senior year schedule (I sympathize), my humble opinions here might be of interest to you. I cannot choose a favorite between AP English Literature and Composition (Lit) versus AP English Language and Composition (Lang), but I will make a "quantified argument" — something you'll become intimately familiar with should you decide to take the latter, but that's beside the point.

Mythbuster No. 1:
Lit = reading & Lang = writing

When I was a junior, the only piece of information I received to inform my decision was that "Lit has more reading, and Lang has more writing." Knowing that I love both reading and writing, I decided to take both classes. However, I've found the dichotomous classification untrue, because in all honesty, the two classes have a highly manageable load.

In general, I've been doing less writing in either Lit or Lang in person than I did when taking English 11 Honors online last year. If you

are daunted by writing, don't fear either class. If you want more writing, hey, we could always use more Falcon reporters.

Mythbuster No. 2: Lit = long, easy texts & Lang = short, difficult hard texts

In the beginning of the year, this was somewhat true. I was jarred by the juxtaposition of Lit's sudden load of 100 pages per class and Lang's meager three pages per class. Furthermore, the accessible verses of

"The Odyssey" were the antithesis of some confounding philosophy written in Latin by a French dude born in the 1500s who decided to meditate on whether a table is really a table. Seriously!

However, this soon evened out. Lit readings increased in difficulty and decreased in page count as we ventured into Shakespeare and poetry, not to mention braved works

such as Dostoevsky's incomprehensible "Crime and Punishment."

On the other hand, Lang is a philosophy course with a touch of argumentation — nothing like the English classes you're used to. On a typical day, we hop between small-group and whole-class discussions about the previous night's reading, covering units that question "What do we know?" "Who am I?" "What is ethical?" and so on. If you're a voracious reader and enjoy an audience, consider Lit.

If you're introspective and embrace intellectual challenges, consider Lang. I'll even dare to say, the former is more Gryffindor-Hufflepuff while the latter leans toward Slytherin-Ravenclaw, though I never felt that House classifications are mutually exclusive.

Beyond the crossroad

That said, Lit versus Lang is not a binary choice. You can always take Saratoga's unique MAP program or English 12.

However, here I'd like to advocate for my choice of taking both Lit and Lang — known as a "doubler." I know our community is heavily focused on STEM, with the English requirement often treated as a burdensome necessity.

I won't try to convince you that literature or philosophy should be your foremost passion in life, for I acknowledge that math is far from mine. But I invite you to try both classes, where you'll find doors to topics — empathy, agency, morality and more — that speak to all of us as humans. ♦

Truth: Lit = fiction & Lang = non-fiction

Right wing rhetoric seeks to tarnish Biden court nominee

By HannahLee

After Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, 83, announced his coming retirement earlier this year, President Joe Biden said he would fill the empty seat with a Black female judge. In February, Biden tapped Ketanji Brown Jackson, a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, as his nominee.

After Biden's announcement, Ilya Shapiro, former Vice President of the Cato Institute, tweeted right after Biden announced his plans to fill the spot in the high court with Black woman: "Objectively best pick for Biden is Sri Srinivasan (an Indian-American jurist and attorney serving as the Chief Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals) ... but alas doesn't fit into the latest intersectionality hierarchy, so we get a lesser Black woman."

By tweeting, Shapiro not only tore Jackson down, calling her underqualified with an extremely racist and sexist tone but also inserted another person of color into the conversation, feeding into this detrimental idea of pitting minorities against each other.

This tendency to pit minorities against one another is an old and often successful tactic, but it's as wrong today as it was a generation ago.

It's ironic that people tend to be enraged when it comes to topics that shouldn't be controversial in the first place, especially minority women, or minorities in general. But when other groups, such as white male politicians say or do something actually controversial, take for instance President Donald Trump's unyielding series of fiendish racist and homophobic remarks; they often escape the intense criticism directed at minorities and women.

Affirmative Action in the high court

While the term affirmative action is commonly used in the context of college admissions, the phrase aptly describes Jackson's nomination — and it should engender no shame for Jackson, Biden or anyone else.

As defined by Cornell Law, affirmative action is "a set of procedures designed to eliminate unlawful discrimination among applicants, remedy the results of such prior discrimination and prevent such discrimination in the future."

The two other candidates who competed with Jackson for nomination included Michelle Childs, who earned her bachelor's de-



gree at the University of South Florida and J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law; and Leonda Kruger, who comes from a family of doctors, graduated from Harvard and attended law school at Yale. The now-nominated Jackson graduated from Harvard for both her bachelor's and Ph.D. in law. All three also hold positions as judges in numerous district courts.

Although Kruger and Jackson could bring new perspectives on the basis of their race and gender despite their upbringings, Childs could contribute more through her difference in socioeconomic background and schooling on top of her race. Especially when the Supreme Court plans to hear the lawsuit against affirmative action policies at Harvard later this year, it'd be interesting to hear her opinion.

Despite this, I'm looking forward to learning more about Jackson and what she plans to bring to the high court if the Senate approves her. Seeing her recent decisions on certain issues such as workers' rights and how she advocates for a liberal stance on social and economic issues despite the intense backlash she has been receiving from many conservatives, I am confident that she would make a principled and empathetic justice who will serve to protect the people and the law America's democratic institutions oath to protect.

Although important, Supreme Court nominations shouldn't solely take qualifications for the job into account, but rather should embody the principles America states it's built on — including diverse ethnic groups, culture, individuality, etc. Therefore, affirmative action is an effective and necessary step to ensure the court consists of justices with different perspectives, best representing the American people. ♦

The U.S. should not pursue direct military action in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

By EthanLin

In April 2021, Russia began amassing thousands of troops near the Ukraine border — the country's largest military mobilization since the 2014 Crimea annexation.

Just over half a year later in December, Russia's dictator Vladimir Putin demanded the international community bar Ukraine from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and reduce NATO troops in Eastern Europe — ultimatums which, if met, could trigger "undefined military action."

Unsurprisingly, the U.S. and NATO rejected these demands, prompting Russia to make the shocking move of invading Ukraine on Feb. 24 — the largest military mobilization since World War II.

Many historians, fearful of imminent global conflict, have compared this invasion to the start of the Cold War and even Germany's initial invasion of Poland at the beginning of World War II. The U.S., a leader of NATO and a strong proponent against Russian expansion, is a major part of this brewing dispute; the potential decision to mobilize troops in Ukraine could permanently shift international relations, for better or for worse.

According to CNN, about 42% of Americans call for direct U.S. military involvement "boots on the ground" — to help Ukraine fight for its sovereignty should sanctions fail to work, following U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's promise of a "swift, severe" response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ultimately, however, the U.S. should not mobilize troops for the sake of avoiding greater international conflict. They should instead play an indirect military role by supplying training and weapons to Ukrainian troops, or even better, negotiating with intent of compromise. Instead of direct conflict, Washington should choose to increase support for Ukraine via arms provisions, as this approach will incur relatively little cost and risk to the U.S. — a view championed by Michael Kimmage, professor of history at the Catholic University.

If American soldiers and air power were to mobilize along the Ukraine and Russian border, this could radicalize Putin's war aims and cause substantial short and long-term financial costs. Currently, U.S. forces in the region are too small to make any dif-

Don't believe the narrative of "saving kids from sex ed"

By EstherLuan

Earlier this month, the Florida State Senate passed a bill prohibiting "classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity" in primary schools.

Dubbed the "Don't Say Gay" bill by opponents, the legislation is part of a much larger attack on LGBTQ+ rights that has resurfaced in recent months in some conservative-leaning state. The bill would additionally allow parents to sue educators or schools that teach said prohibited topics. Particularly concerning is the way the ban is worded: It restricts teaching content that is not "age appropriate" or "developmentally appropriate" for students.

These bills are rooted in the idea that teaching adolescents and younger students about gender identity and sexual orientation will encourage sexual activity. In reality, elementary and middle school sex ed courses rarely teach anything beyond positive biological and gender self-image, consideration of and options for safe sexual practice and respectful treatments of peers.

There is no scientific evidence or basis for the assertion that teaching children basic sex and gender knowledge leads to anything harmful. While conservatives have long advocated for sex education to be taught at home rather than in schools, it is impossible to ensure all students receive education that covers understanding of abuse and healthy sexual conduct without mandating it in the classroom, a lack of which may leave children vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence.

Guidelines for sexual education should first and foremost be set by educators, not politicians.

The fact that this bill and its related controversy are being weaponized as a talking point by conservative figures is a sure-fire signal that it doesn't stem from any real concern for children affected by harmful sex-ed. Rather, it's a campaign to demonize the LGBTQ+ community and its generally more communicative perception of sex — a moral qualm fighting against supposed degeneracy rather than ill education. The distinction lies in that considering sex, which LGBTQ+ individuals are forced to do by nature of societal norms, is not the same thing as encouraging it.

For LGBTQ+ youth, education about gender and sex is vital, not political. This misunderstanding underscores the issue: Education about sexual or gender identity is not degeneracy, nor can it be changed through "education." For example, studies have shown that suicide risks for transgender youth are abnormally high — a statistic often cited to invalidate gender transition. Context shows, though, that this pattern is intimately linked with codified discrimination.

The inclusion and legitimization of LGBTQ+ identities in general school-administered sex education is a way for young LGBTQ+ youth to at least feel seen and acknowledged.

As institutions for social and moral development as well as academic learning, schools — and sex education — have the unique power to validate LGBTQ+ identities in a political climate that is trying relentlessly to dismiss them. ♦

* HAKONE GARDENS * THE MOUNTAIN WINERY * MONTALVO ARTS CENTER * WILDWOOD PARK * SUSHI HEAVEN * SARATOGA VILLAGE * GARROD FARMS * HONG'S GOURMET * CONGRESS SPRINGS * WEST VALLEY COLLEGE * SUE'S GALLERY CAFE * LA CUEVA *

ANNIE LIU

Waking up on Saturday mornings, my mom often greets me with: "Do you want to come along with me to the farmers market?" "Yeah, I'll come."

The weekly farmers market at West Valley College is the only part in Saratoga that reminds me of my old home in Taiwan. We arrive to find bustling stands with sellers advertising their products and people carrying large grocery bags or even roller baskets to buy fresh vegetables and fruits, reminding me of Taiwan's night markets and morning flea markets.

At age 3, I began going to the farmers markets of Taipei with my mom. Just like the farmers markets here, it only opens in the morning, and the alleys would be filled with stands and people who carried around grocery bags full of goodies.

Now, when time allows, it's always nice to go for a walk during weekend mornings at the farmers market. My mom and I stroll through the rows of stands, eagerly surveying the artisan ceramics, piles of freshly picked fruit and seasonal vegetables even when we don't need to buy anything.

From afar, we can see a parade of flamboyant, brilliant colors; the flower stands. They're marvelous — the flowers are well taken care of and come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and colors. Bouquets of meticulously picked roses, delicate baby's breath and smiling daisies are neatly bundled together. Though overpriced, it's still nice to look at things you will never buy.

Ironically, my mom often gets severe allergies from the flowers that grow in this region, sometimes to the point that her face is entirely swollen. She found her remedy at the farmers market: a daily spoonful of unpasteurized, local-made honey.

Also at the farmers market are pastries, freshly baked bread, crepes and other ready-to-eat food.

I personally really like to buy lasagna from a specific stand and bring it home for lunch. The tomato sauce is rich and savory, the cheese is nicely melted so that it has a stringy pull and the beef is loaded with flavor that ties it all together with its juicy and tender taste. There are also fruits and vegetable stands that always seem to have crowds scrutinizing goods for blemishes or ripeness.

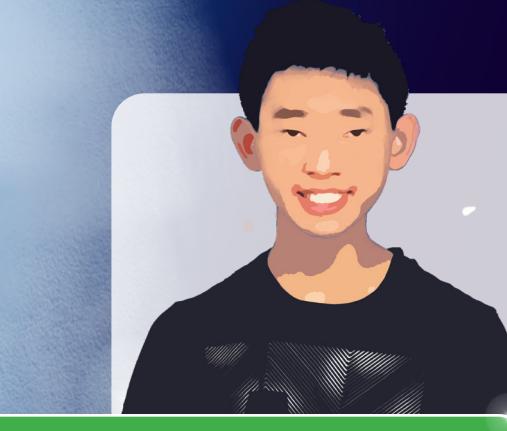
Customers hold the fruits, examining them and picking out which ones they think are the best.

The farmers market here is a much smaller version of Taiwan's. Taiwanese markets are like very diverse supermarkets but just in the form of a long street. They're loud, often unsanitary and unpleasant, but I grew to appreciate them.

There lie the shops and stalls. Each and every one of the street market stands sell its own particular products. From meats, veggies, clothes, bags and so on, the products lay on rickety tables covered with tablecloth under tents with faded colors. Meats are freshly cut, and pieces from big to small are all available. Just ask, and the friendly seller will put it in a bag for you. There are bags that replicate designer bags, and believe it or not, some can be very durable.

The items sold there are not the best quality, but once loved and used as intended, they all work perfectly well. Merchants yell as loud as their throats can bare to advertise their products. "Pork chops, buy one, get one free!" yells one seller. "Hand powdered fans, get 20 percent off!" cries another.

Though the markets in Saratoga and Taiwan differ in character, they give the same homey feeling — I just love the way people come and go from the stands and streets. The farmers market is where people gather to buy things, stuff their bellies, walk away from a week's hard work and find community. ♦



JONNY LUO

roads — a confusing layout that my friend said looked as if "the city planner scribbled on a piece of paper."

Weirdest of all, it was dark; flashes of lights from far-away houses were the only source of light in the pitch-black night.

During my first night-time outing, I noticed that Saratoga lacked street lights. My parents' car, an old Acura, had feeble headlights that failed to pierce far into the night, a fact I didn't appreciate until much later in my life.

To be frank, I was scared of the night when I was younger. The dark hid monsters who feasted on children, and I couldn't walk around a dark house without flicking on every light switch. For me, night was a time to stay inside, bundled up in blankets, and build "forts" with my brother, although he soon graduated from these childish games.

I remember the first day my parents drove into Saratoga. It was strange, coming from a neighborhood in San Jose with narrow streets and stereotypical, picket-fenced houses, and suddenly seeing sprawling mansions interspersing rundown houses and endless deadends that splintered off from bustling

SARATOGA STROLLS (city of no lights) ♪

an old grandma, one who wakes up early every morning to volunteer at Argonaut Elementary. Inside the brightly lit house, I picture an overworked student struggling under the SHS workload.

When I go on walks at night, I take two things with me: earbuds and a lantern. Earbuds heighten the experience with music — I usually listen to classical — and the lantern is for warning drivers that there is someone on the road.

I often feel like a Hobbit, holding a small lantern against a sea of black, venturing through the night.

When I finish my walk and return to my house, there is a shock as I adjust to the warm environment. Afterwards, I'll either head straight back to my room to finish my homework or lounge on my couch, cradling a cup of warm hot chocolate.

The safe environment in Saratoga that allows me to walk alone at night is something that I am immensely grateful for.

These nighttime walks are something that I'll never forget, and though the lack of streetlights scared me as a child, I've come to appreciate their absence. ♦

My public library — because yes, it belongs to me and the hundreds of other people who frequent it every month — has shaped me into the person I am today. You may think I'm exaggerating, but my first memories in Saratoga after moving here in second grade seem to have all taken place in the lively children's section of the Saratoga Library.

Without the library, I never would have heard about Tintin's adventures with Snowy or how Augie overcame his struggles in "Wonder."

The Saratoga Library, a modern 48,500 square foot structure, instilled in me a love for reading that will last a lifetime.

My house is a 10-minute walk away, so when I first moved here, I went to the library with my sister and parents every weekend.

I looked forward to those two hours in the library, the time I spent picking out Tintin comics with my dad or Magic Tree House books with my mom.

As I grew older, my capacity for literature expanded, and I began taking different routes during my library visits. Instead of taking the usual right-turn to enter the children section, I started taking a left into the teen section. I was introduced to the magical world of Harry Potter and the dangerous expeditions featured in the Hunger Games and Maze Runner series. My fascination for books increased — all because of my visits to the library.

It was also at this time that I noticed the other rooms in the library. Some days, after school ended, I would walk with my friends to the library. For the most part, we were responsible and did our homework together, but sometimes we played "Minecraft" or "Super Smash Bros" in the Community Center or at the desks near the window in the adult fiction section. My experiences at the library have taught

me many necessary lessons in life. For example, I learned how to strike conversations with complete strangers — you can meet all kinds of people at the library, and just talking to them can be an eye-opening experience.

For instance, when I was in 5th grade, I met a college student who was looking at a textbook that had to do with advanced calculus. Being one of those kids who wanted to brag about knowing calculus, I asked the man if he could teach me some of the basic concepts in his book. He agreed, and I understood almost nothing, but my interest in math —

which still remains today — grew so much just because of that one conversation.

The library is a place where I can go to study for tests, work on projects with my friends and be productive. The countless hours I spent in the various areas of the library have given me memories and friendships that I still cherish today.

In a few years, I'll go off to college and leave Saratoga. I'll get a job and probably live elsewhere, maybe even start a family someday. But my experiences at the Saratoga Library, a truly special place, will stay with me for the rest of my life. ♦



NIKHIL MATHIHALLI

SARATOGA LIBRARY



Producer of 'Butter' explains its making as a family affair

By Hannah Lee
& Stephanie Sun

On Feb. 25, "Butter," director Paul A. Kaufman's feature film debut, was released in theaters. The film, originally released in 2020 at the Cinequest Film & Creativity Festival and the Socially Relevant Film Festival, follows titular protagonist Butter as he struggles with social acceptance at his high school.

Butter, bullied for being extremely obese but fed up with his social status, devises a plan: On New Year's Eve, he will eat himself to death on the internet. Immediately, Butter gains newfound attention from his classmates, who begin to see him differently and talk to him about his plans, treating him more positively as a result.

The film struggles slightly in its storyline; Butter's newfound friends like him, but don't do anything to discourage him from his suicide plan. Overall, however, it's a sweet film with a message of acceptance and the importance of kindness despite superficial differences. The Falcon had the chance to interview Julie Bram, a producer for the film, about it.

Q. What first drew you to the movie's concept and why did you decide to do it?

My husband and I are actually both in real estate — my husband is in finance and real estate, and I've spent much of my adult life in charity and philanthropy. The filmmaker is actually my brother, Paul Hoffman, and around six years ago, he said he wanted to discuss his latest project with us. At first, my husband said he wouldn't even give him a penny, but he came over and explained the concept of "Butter's Final Meal" and how it was based on a young adult novel



Bram

by Erin Jade Lange. As soon as he finished explaining, I asked him how much he needed — and that's how we got involved in this amazing independent film. We didn't have any backing from any kind of studio or streaming platform.

Q. What was it like working on the movie?

As executive producers, we were really responsible for raising the money. The budget was only \$1.7 million which is really, really low for a film to be made. The thing about this film is that everyone involved — from the cast, the filming crew, to the studios — all were gravitated to the themes of this film and wanted to make a difference in the world. So it's been sort of elevating experience.

Q. With the film airing this year, what are you currently up to?

Right now, we're trying to get the word out. I'm also trying to get through the emails and messages we're getting from people all over the world, saying they can't wait to see the film and how much it resonates with them. Some of the emails say, for example: "Thank you for reaching out to someone who has personally struggled with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and ADHD and has been diagnosed with a mood disorder, not to mention has struggled with my own physical appearance. I relate in a lot of aspects to the film."

Q. Did you have any difficulties working on the film?

The main challenge was staying on budget. Thankfully, my brother's whole adult career has been in the making of TV shows, so we got a studio at a great rate, donated cameras and Dell computers that were sponsored. Many people wanted us to make

this movie, so they were really helpful. Another hardship was a specific scene when Butter, the main character, had to jump off a cliff into the water. Because there was a drought the year we filmed (about four years ago), my brother couldn't find a place for him to jump. And so we started thinking, maybe we could find someone with a big swimming pool and he could jump off the roof. Eventually — I don't know how my brother found it — but he did a pool and the scene looks great in the movie.

Q. Who is the target audience for this film?

"Butter's Final Meal," though it will appeal to teenagers, can also be enjoyed by anyone with special needs or specific mental health illnesses. I think anyone who raises a child will want to see the movie. It's also a great movie to see with one's parents and spark a discussion.

Q. With the film airing this year, what are you currently up to?

Right now, we're trying to get the word out. I'm also trying to get through the emails and messages we're getting from people all over the world, saying they can't wait to see the film and how much it resonates with them. Some of the emails say, for example: "Thank you for reaching out to someone who has personally struggled with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and ADHD and has been diagnosed with a mood disorder, not to mention has struggled with my own physical appearance. I relate in a lot of aspects to the film."

Q. What do you hope viewers gain from the film?

We have a whole campaign launching called "R U OK?" to sort of help people open up. I think there's the definite message that over time things will be OK and that there's always someone available to help. You know, Butter goes through his own struggles — there are people and there are resources.

Q. Do you have any goals regarding the film for the future?

Originally, "Butter's Final Meal" was going to open in around 20 to 25 theaters across the country. Apparently, though, AMC and some of the other theater companies loved the movie so much that it's now showing in close to 200 theaters. We're really excited and after its national release, we hope to get a good international deal.



Butter's Final Meal is a coming-of-age film.

We're also doing a TikTok campaign, and it would be great if people could follow the film on TikTok — we've got Jack Griffio and so many other amazing people on board.

Q. Anything else viewers could look out for?

At the end of the credits roll, there's a really nice shout-out to my husband and me in a really cute way. Pentatonix also has a song playing through the credits, and it's really beautiful.

The film is like our baby, and has become a real family passion project. We want to see it soar and do good in the world. ♦

'Dawn FM' embodies versatility

By Arnav Swamy
& Tiffany Wang

On New Year's Eve, fans of Canadian singer Abel Tesfaye, professionally known as The Weeknd, opened Instagram to find a since-deleted screenshot of a cryptic text message exchange between Tesfaye and his creative director Le Mar Taylor. In the message, Tesfaye described how "music can heal" and how he has to drop his upcoming album and "enjoy it with the people."

His succeeding post on Jan. 2 urged his audience to "wake up at dawn tomorrow" for the drop video of "Dawn FM," his fifth studio album, which was ultimately released on all streaming platforms on Jan. 7.

The album's theme revolves around a radio station aiming to entertain listeners who are currently in purgatory, waiting to reach their destination or the "dawn" of their life. 103.5 Dawn FM settles listeners into around 45 minutes of immersive synths.

With its bass-heavy, psychedelic retro theme, "Dawn FM" contrasts extremely well with the darker, more introspective tones of Tesfaye's previous album "After Hours," which sought to explore the blindness and loneliness that fame has brought him. "Dawn FM" seems to be a comforting reconciliation of these issues as the increased mention of death



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

bum is only complete as a consecutive story. The intermittent beeps from the radio host result in the majority of songs being somewhat incoherent for single streaming. As such, the flow and meaning of the story are fractured when the album is shuffled.

Regardless of these nitpicks, the album's dance-pop feel complements the lyrics and theme of all the songs, which revolve around the tumult but relentless love in a declining relationship. With the aforementioned immersion of the instrumentals, Tesfaye unlocks his emotions and thought process on relationships on a personal level.

Although the composition and execution of "Dawn FM" are extremely strong, one of the album's downsides is a lack of depth behind the lyrics. Besides the mysterious interludes, the consistent theme of heartbreak and its aftermath became somewhat stale, especially since the pop scene is already inundated with extremely thematically similar songs.

With the progression of the album, Tesfaye clearly marked the album as a reflection of a past stained with sin. The last song before Carrey's conclusive interlude, "Less than Zero," is a testament to accepting and embracing the life Tesfaye has led and how he has found internal peace at the summit of the music industry.

The internal gearing of "Dawn FM" also dictates that the al-



Graphic by ANJALI PAI

A SIMPLE YET COMPELLING LETTER GAME

By Jonny Luo

I love Wordle.

For those of you who don't know what Wordle is, Wordle is a simple, slightly addicting, online game where the player tries to guess a five-letter word in less than six guesses. The letters in guessed words are color-coded based on their correctness: a gray letter means it's not in the word, yellow means it's in the word but in the wrong position and green means it's in the right position.

Wordle is a browser-based game, something that confused some people when they downloaded the game — which, at the time the browser-based Wordle went viral, did not include the game where users guess a five-letter word in six guesses — off of the App Store. The creator of this other word game, Steve Cravot, actually ended up donating all the money he made from in-app transactions to charity.

Unlike many others, I did not discover Wordle by seeing a grid of gray, yellow and green boxes on my Instagram page. I discovered it a few weeks ago while reading the news on my phone. Poetically, Wordle ended up replacing my daily news brief when I ate breakfast every morning. Now, I read the news, and immediately hop onto Wordle for my daily dose.

Every morning, I start by guessing the word, "adieu." Every one has a different strategy, but I like this word because it contains

four vowels. Afterward, I try to incorporate the correct letters from "adieu" and add the vowel "o" or other common letters like "y." Then, it's just a guessing game until I, hopefully, get the right answer. Fingers crossed, but so far I haven't lost a single Wordle.

For me, Wordle is compelling for a few reasons.

One — you only get one puzzle per day. By limiting the number of times you can play, Wordle doesn't become boring, and it turns into something that I look forward to playing every morning while eating cereal.

Two — everyone gets the same puzzle. It's great to be able to talk to people about how difficult or easy the day's puzzle was. This social aspect of the game spreads the word about the game in a fun, entertaining way, as players have the option to share their results (spoiler-free) on social media platforms, using emojis to depict their daily results.

Recently, the game was sold to The New York Times to be eventually folded into its subscription game package. It's supposed to "initially remain free," but I'm skeptical about how long that will last. But when it does start costing money, I'm not sure I will pay for the NYT games bundle.

But that's all in the future. If you've been living under a rock and haven't yet played Wordle, you should hop on your browser, search for Wordle and start your addiction. ♦



NileRed: a professional amateur chemist, savior of students

By Sam Bai

Do you hate chemistry? Does your brain refuse to understand the subject? Do concepts like stoichiometry, thermodynamics and titration make you want to physically repulse and clutch your stomach?

If so, might I suggest a remedy: NileRed, a highly bingeable, chemistry-oriented YouTube channel. While it has the potential to confuse you even more, the channel has one other effect: It will make you want to keep learning chemistry.

Nigel Braun, the creator of NileRed, focuses his content on a wide variety of ideas, from exploring myths and creating dangerous substances to answering important life-altering questions: for example, whether cyanide smells like almonds.

Starting the channel from scratch in 2014, Nigel started with simple experiments like exploring piranha solutions, an extremely reactive solution that quickly dissolves any substance that enters it.

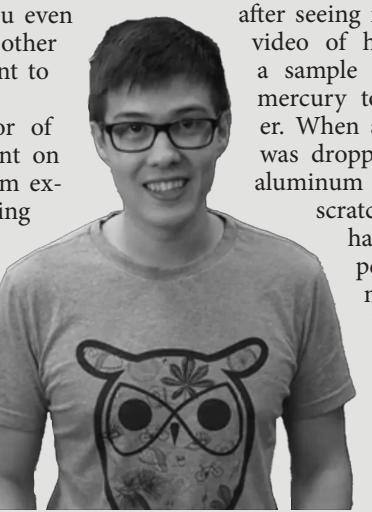
One thing that sets his work apart from other educational channels is his ability to explain difficult topics in a way that even complicated jargon can start to make sense. Along with easy-to-follow footage demonstrating what he's doing, it is easy to become immersed in whatever experiment he is working on.

NileRed also has side channels and fan-made channels such as NileBlue, NileRed shorts, and NileGreen.

NileBlue contains all of the smaller experiments that Nigel does such as the process for cleaning up a larger project or explaining about the dangers of chemistry.

NileGreen is a fan-made channel that uses an AI Nigel voice changer and clips from NileRed to create parody videos, like "what if Nigel was bad at chemistry" and "Nigel making a nuclear reactor in his parents' garage."

If you ever have some extra time on your hands and you would like to learn some chemistry, then visit NileRed. You will be entertained for hours, maybe even days on end, while learning valuable life lessons (and not-so-valuable chemistry ones!). ♦

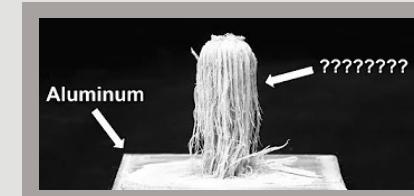


ments like exploring piranha solutions, an extremely reactive solution that quickly dissolves any substance that enters it.

As time passed and his channel grew, Nigel began tackling greater topics like turning cotton balls into cotton candy, creating grape sodas from plastic gloves and making deadly chemicals in his parent's garage.

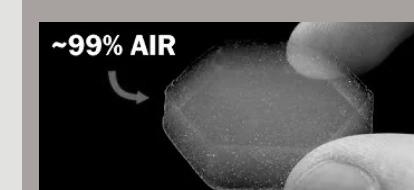
I was first introduced to NileRed after seeing my cousin watch a video of him demonstrating a sample of aluminum and mercury touching each other. When a bead of mercury was dropped into a plate of aluminum with its outer shell scratched, tiny white hairs started to appear where the two made contact. Soon, the hairs grew into a tree-like structure until the weight of the aluminum hairs crashed down on itself.

CC G D M S



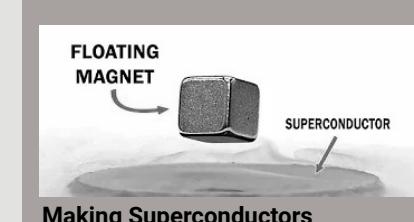
Aluminum and Mercury

43M Views · 4 years ago



Making Aerogel

23M Views · 1 year ago



Making Superconductors

16M Views · 1 year ago



Making Transparent Wood

12M Views · 10 months ago

Courtesy of NILERED

Best Of: Educational YouTube

The perfect blend of Ent and Ed: 'Kurzgesagt — in a nutshell'

By Jonny Luo

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you dropped a bird in a black hole? No, probably not. But if you have, I present to you the YouTube channel, "Kurzgesagt — in a nutshell," to satisfy all of your quirky scientific questions.

Looking through the channel's history, viewers can find that the channel's excellent animation extends back to its very first video on evolution, with an arguably questionable scene where two teddy bears have censored intercourse (for purely educational reasons, of course).

Although the channel's videos are short for the complex content they cover, often glossing over specific details, it provides a perfect mix of visual enjoyment and education. And in a

world where it seems hard to trust scientific information online, Kurzgesagt stands out for the hundreds of hours its team spends on researching topics.

These birds are somehow given increasingly more gruesome deaths in each subsequent video. They first appear as cute little animals, until they get obliterated by a planetary nuke or sucked into a black hole mere moments later.

What stands out most about Kurzgesagt is its amazing animation and

watching the channel's videos has often led me to conduct fur-

ther research, which often include looking at sources the channel lists in its description.

For example, after one video brought up the 1975 Banqiao Dam failure in China, I dove into independently researching the dam and even had a conversation with my mother about its collapse. Death estimates range from 26,000 to 240,000, statistics that were never published in China. She only learned of the catastrophic failure when she immigrated to the U.S.

A few months ago, I decided that I wanted to support the channel for bringing me entertainment over the years, so I decided to buy their app that shows the scale of objects in the universe from the incredibly small Planck length to the entire observable universe.

I paid \$3 for the app, but haven't even used it once. I try to console myself by saying that I'm contributing to spreading science throughout the world, and that I can't even buy a school pizza slice with the money I spent on the app.

Thankfully, buying Kurzgesagt merch isn't necessary to gaining value and entertainment from this channel, and if you learn one thing after reading this article, it's this: Go watch Kurzgesagt; you won't regret it. ♦

CC G D M S



The Black Hole Bomb

24M Views · 3 years ago



The Immune System Explained I

45M Views · 7 years ago



What If We Nuke a City?

23M Views · 2 years ago



AP Art History teacher reflects on Catholicism's impact on his teachings

By Arnav Swamy

On late Red Day afternoons, Joel Tarbox can be found clicking through an elaborate slideshow of European Christian art and architecture for his seventh-period AP Art History students.

When delving into the intricacies of concepts such as patronage and the various subjects present in a piece, he finds that his Catholic upbringing is instrumental and effective in helping him understand and explain such art to his students.

"A good slice of European art revolves around the teachings of the Bible," Tarbox said. "With the pantheon of characters in Christianity to keep track of, I feel that I can help decode the images better."

Tarbox's Catholic upbringing

His Catholic understanding is rooted in his childhood. Growing up in Maine, he said that Catholicism was "a part of daily life during the '80s."

His mother went out of her way to ensure that he and his siblings attended weekly Mass and mass until they reached adulthood.

Holidays, especially Christmas and Easter, were also highlights of his religious experience throughout his adolescence.

From kindergarten until 11th grade, Tarbox attended a Catholic after-school program, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, that was taught by local nuns.

He also later attended a Jesuit high school and eventually attended Bowdoin College, where he served as vice president of the Newman Association, an on-campus Roman Catholic student ministry.

Into Tarbox's sophomore year, he began noticing some viewpoints of the Newman Association which he felt opposed to, sparking a deteriorating relationship with the faith.

"While I did enjoy the Newman Association, I couldn't help but question some of the activities they did, specifically protesting against pro-choice rallies that popped up on campus," Tarbox said.

Tarbox said the massive scandal helped him sever his last ties to the religion.

One of the priests uncovered in 2002, after committing his crimes at Boston College High School, was sent to my high school to teach history, coach wrestling and serve as a parish priest," Tarbox said. "It bothered me that someone committing such vile acts

Although he still remained

Catholic, Tarbox also participated in a multitude of Buddhist studies courses to pursue his increasing interest in exploring other religions.

In his senior year in 1991, he decided to participate in a study abroad program offered by Bowdoin.

He chose to visit and live with a Buddhist family in Sri Lanka, a traditionally Theravada Buddhist country.

While living in Sri Lanka, Tarbox recalls Buddhism intermingling and evolving with other religions such as Hinduism.

Buddhists would regularly attend Hindu temples and vice versa to fulfill their religious duties.

During the Sri Lankan Civil War, he noticed that Buddhism provided people with a moral footing that guided them through daily life.

Living in Sri Lanka unveiled so much more about Buddhism and people in general than I anticipated," Tarbox said. "Reading about profound Buddhist philosophies versus seeing them put into practice during the war was disappointing but also very relatable. It was very telling of human nature."

Separation from Catholicism

Upon returning, Tarbox said his experiences with how religion was used in Sri Lanka along with the Newman Association helped him find clarity regarding the disagreements he had with the Catholic Church as a political asset.

He chose to detach completely after hearing a snippet from a priest at a service commenting on an article in the Santa Cruz Sentinel regarding the issues.

"One of the priests said to a crowd that priests should be let go [in light of recent events], and with that, I decided to leave," Tarbox said. "It's immoral that victims are not prioritized."

As of now, Tarbox considers himself agnostic.

Tarbox admires this piece's underdog element with the story behind it of Veronese thwarting the Church.

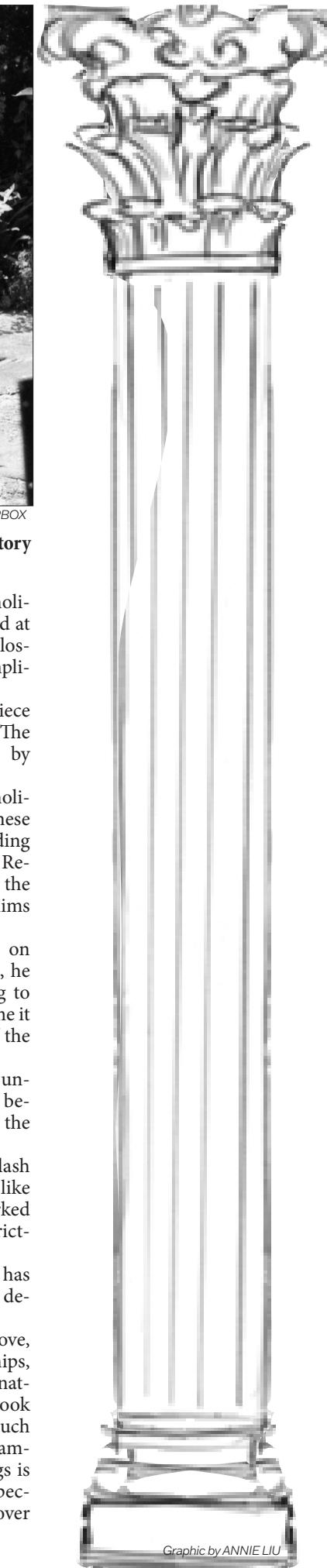
He said such art throws a splash of fresh humanity into an era like the Renaissance, which sparked both the blooming and constricting of human identity.

Tarbox said that religion has opened his eyes to what truly defines humanity in art.

Human attributes like love, violence, sexual relationships, politics and religion are fascinating and beautiful when you look closely," Tarbox said. "So much of our world is visual, and examining art and our surroundings is a powerful unfurling of perspectives that we may have glazed over otherwise." ♦



While in Sri Lanka in his senior year of college in 1991, AP Art History teacher Joel Tarbox kneels to take a photo of a Buddhist monastery.



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

togatalks

What's your favorite concept you've learned this year?

"Rulers that use art as propaganda or for legitimacy and how the purpose of art changes over time."



junior Lisa Fung

"Different cultures appreciate art for different things and not every piece is meant to look realistic."



sophomore Matthew Zhang

"How different forms of art like photography and sculpture surfaced over periods of time."



junior Jonathan Si

Año Nuevo State Park allows environmental students the chance to observe elephant seals

THE MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE INCLUDES TOURING THE PARK AND WATCHING ELEPHANT SEALS FIGHT

by Victoria Hu
& Sarah Zhou

Instead of heading to their usual morning periods on Feb. 10 and 11, most students in science teacher Kristen Thomson's AP and regular Environmental Science classes boarded buses to Año Nuevo State Park in Pescadero to see dozens of elephant seals in their natural habitat.

The field trip, a staple of the Environmental Science classes pre-pandemic, was the fruit of Thomson's efforts — she had been planning the event for months in advance, since first semester. As the only Environmental Science teacher, she handled the logistics of the trip by herself, as she had in previous years.

"It was cool to see these animals in their undisturbed habitat because it's hard to see animals in areas without human interference."

SENIOR Lance Wong

Thomson said, "We were supposed to go the last week of school before lockdown, so it was tragic that we missed the trip by two days."

Nevertheless, the field trip was able to proceed on Feb. 17 and 18 as positive COVID-19 cases began to dwindle.

To mitigate the possible spread of the virus during the trip, particularly from spending two hours in enclosed buses, students and chaperones were required to take rapid tests a day or two prior to leaving. Once they arrived at the park, students were required to keep their masks on if they were unable to maintain a 6-foot distance from rangers or other groups.

During both days of the trip, the buses left at the start of the school day and took a little over an hour to get to Año Nuevo. Once they arrived, students were able to walk around the park and visit the beach before their tours.

Depending on the day, the students were split into three or four different tour groups of around 20 that took hikes to the park's ranger station.

Once they met with a park ranger, the group would listen to the ranger provide background information on the seals and park environment and follow the ranger to a beach where the elephant seals resided.

Students walked two to three miles total on hiking trails and tours, returned to their buses and made it back to the school by 3 p.m. Due to the field trip's earlier than usual date, there were more seals and activity than in previous years.

"We got to see some pretty cool elephant seals," she said. "We got to see babies and females. We even got to see males fighting, which I'd never seen before. It was the easiest I've ever seen, so that was fantastic."

"I was really nervous that they were going to cancel it like they did two years ago,"

Senior AP Environmental Science student Lance Wong said he was glad to go to

Elephant seals at the Año Nuevo State Park lay on the sand and prepare for mating season.

Año Nuevo and see practical applications of environmental science.

hard to see animals in areas without human interference," he said.

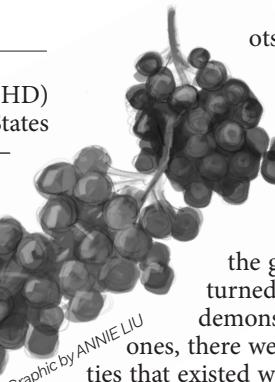
Ultimately, Thomson was happy and proud of those who went out of their comfort zones on the trip.

"I just hope the students enjoyed the trip and felt more connected with nature," Thomson said. "I think if students have an experience that they have fond memories of, then I can ask for anything more." ♦

APUSH students take on National History Day

By Lynn Dai

For their National History Day (NHD) project this year, juniors in AP United States History used a variety of mediums — historical papers, documentaries, exhibits, performances, podcasts and websites — to explore issues based on the 2022 theme of "Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences."



ots a turning point for gay rights as popular understanding had commonly suggested? She found out that while the Stonewall movement sparked a change in the gay rights movement and turned previously "complacent" demonstrations into more active ones, there were still LGBTQ+ minorities that existed within the gay community at the time. People of color and people of different gender identities, such as transgender individuals, were still discriminated against.

The juniors in teacher Faith Daly's classes took inspiration from issues ranging from the 1969 Stonewall riots advocating for gay rights to the 1898 annexation of Hawaii.

Saratoga High has participated in National History Day for over a decade, with the exception of last year due to pandemic conditions. This year, 81 students participated in the senior division of the Santa Clara County competition, held at the school on March 12. Each category selected an honorable mention and three champions to proceed to the next level.

"We thought that a documentary would provide a more complete picture because it has both audio and visual elements," she said. "It just took a lot of time."

Dyne Lee: The Delano Grape Strike and Boycotts

For junior Dyne Lee and her two group members, the subject of the annexation of Hawaii fit their interest in American expansion into overseas territories.

They created a website documenting the influences over the debate in Congress, which discussed possible economic advantages and ethical concerns about Native Hawaiians opposing annexation.

Kulkarni and her two group members made a group documentary titled "Stonewall and the Gay Rights Movement: Continued Oppression on the Basis of Gender and Race." It won one of three Champion group projects awards at the competition.

Kulkarni conducted her research with a question in mind — were the Stonewall ri-

toons and photographs of people."

Wasil Khan: The Legacy of Change Brought by the Vietnam War

As soon as he saw the theme "Debate and Diplomacy," senior Wasil Khan immediately thought of the Vietnam War.

Throughout the war, public opinions about U.S. participation remained half-half. Khan's website, which won a Champion award at the competition, talks about the specific impacts the division caused and factors that influenced foreign policy and immigration decisions.

While most groups said they started the project in January or early February, Khan admitted he started the afternoon before it was due and finished at 4 a.m.

"There's a lot of things I could've done better, but I enjoyed making the website because it was something new," he said. "I also felt that this project was better than ones I've done in the past. It's more formal since it's an actual competition."

Khan's interest in history started in elementary school. Other subjects didn't make as much sense to him, but he found history interesting because it was similar to the retelling of a story.

"I couldn't get enough of it," he said. Daly has noticed that the freedom of choice in the competition frequently allows students to be passionate about their subjects.

"For many students, it's a life-changing experience, or at minimum, a highlight of their middle and high school years," Daly said.

You can find the full list of NHD winners and their projects on saratogafalcon.org. ♦

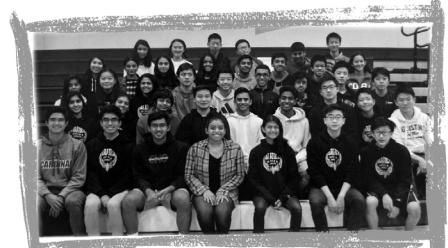


Speech & Debate:



1960

2018



Orchestra:



1960

2018



Courtesy of THE TALISMAN

DATED WASC RECORDS

By Lynn Dai
& Howard Shu

In 1968, Mary Monroe was a senior at the school and was the ASB treasurer. She lived in a secluded house on top of a hill surrounded by orchards on Glen Una Drive. Her high school sweetheart and later husband, Kim Monroe, the Class of 1968 ASB president, frequently biked through streets that were then still lined with orchards rather than multimillion-dollar houses on his way to school.

Then, the school's 1,461 students were mainly from white, upper middle class families living in booming suburbs of a growing tech industry. Other students came from farming families who tended to vineyards and horses.

In the 54 years since the couple graduated, many of those family farms have disappeared, transforming the then-agricultural environment to the pricey upper class neighborhoods of today.

This change in scenery and socioeconomic status of students is just one of several staggering changes in the school highlighted by the school's 1968 Western Association of Schools and Colleges' (WASC) record, a 246-page documentation of the school's climate, courses, academic statistics and concerns.

Since WASC's founding in 1962, the organization has asked schools to self-study their culture and campuses and, in return, earn accreditation that verified them as providing adequate educations. WASC is responsible for accrediting the schools in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Northern Marianas Islands. If a school isn't accredited, state colleges and universities will not accept its student applications.

In the WASC accreditation process, schools use rubrics to self-study and rate attributes such as school services, personnel, student culture and academics.

During evaluation years, the school, led by a WASC coordinator as a school staff volunteer, prepares a binder full of information collected over the year. The procedure involves several committee meetings where administrators, teachers and select students discuss and evaluate individual reports, which are then summarized into a list of major recommendations. Faculty and administrators then use these recommendations to improve the school.

For example, in response to a 1968 WASC recommendation that the school should continually evaluate how effectively it is achieving its objectives, faculty conducted evaluation studies of graduates' records, collected reports on first and second-semester grades from colleges and set up informal personal conferences with graduates and their parents.

After reading and evaluating the report and visiting the school, WASC gives a term of accreditation anywhere from one to six years based on how well the school meets their criteria.

"Saratoga has always gotten a six-year [accreditation term] because they're not too worried about the school in terms of meeting the needs of the students," said now-retired assistant principal Kerry Mohnike.

From outdated language to yellowed pages, the 1968 WASC record on Saratoga High comprehensively describes a seemingly foreign school culture, course selection and system of assessing and placing students in classes.

While there were some similarities between the school in 1968 and now, including low dropout rates and top academics, nearly everything else has changed.

IQ Tests: standardized exams of the past
While state-mandated standardized tests

like the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) are currently used to gauge student academic performance and construct a school's profile, a different and controversial test was used then.

In 1968, incoming freshmen and transfer students were administered the Lorge-Thornade test, later renamed the Cognitive Abilities Test, which estimated students' problem solving abilities

icient" college experience to prepare for a good marriage, an opinion deemed as "important" by 90% of parents of incoming freshmen, according to WASC records.

In 1965, 133 students — 86% of the graduating class — planned to attend college, 23% of which went to state universities. 20% attended state colleges, 19% attended other four-year colleges and 38% attended two-year colleges, with 94% of those students attending West Valley.

Mohnike, who started working at Saratoga High in 1991, believes the school has always been academically focused.

She does believe, however, that student stress levels have grown since the 1990s, since the competitive nature of the college application process has intensified.

A study by the American Psychological Association (APA) stated that students in the 1980s reported more anxiety than child psychiatric patients in the 1950s.

"When I was in high school, almost anybody that had a decent GPA could get into UCLA," Mohnike said. "Now it's very difficult for students to get into colleges like UC Berkeley and UCLA. It's just that the pressure on the seats has gotten worse."

A look into past course offerings

The 1968 WASC report showed that classes were markedly different from today. More humanities-focused courses were offered: visual and performing arts, sociology, homemaking, music and industrial arts. In some homemaking classes, the school taught sociological aspects of family problems. Other offerings included office practice, typing, salesmanship, woodshop and mathematics levels.

Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests measuring students' innate abilities, which were selectively administered to graduating classes, were then separated into two sections: students with an IQ of 115 or above, and the rest of the class. The school then analyzed the percentages of these "upper students" who completed an adequate number of courses in English, math, science, foreign language and social studies.

Homemaking, a group of electives taught from 1959 to 1981, sought to "integrate and apply [all the subjects taught in high school] in the daily process of making a home," the report said. Such classes were primarily taken by girls.

A teacher who saw the downside of using these tests was Dr. Hugh Roberts, one of the school's original social studies teachers who was hired when the school opened in 1959.

"When I was teaching, counselors would use or misuse IQ tests as one of the measures to suggest future employment or college," Roberts said. "They used them less and less over time."

In the 1960s, enrollment in advanced classes was contingent on achieving a certain score on standardized tests. For example, some classes would administer the reading exam to determine whether a student would qualify for it.

According to the 1968 WASC records, the average Home Ec student

"[came] from a lovely home with progressive parents. They want[ed] help in planning, entertainment and deco-

rating for gracious living."

The course was marketed toward the "less able student" who was usually "discouraged" by the prerequisite of biology, chemistry, mathematics and other STEM classes to apply for college. It stressed the importance of budgeting, using credit wisely and other consumer buying practices to aid students' "expensive tastes for gourmet foods, social graces, flower arrangements and history of furniture and architecture."

Members from professional departments were invited to the school to provide their perspective in homemaking departments. Doctors, parents, nursery school directors, pre-school children and returning SHS alumni were invited to provide different outlooks and ideas for the students. In the food sector of Homemaking I and II, for instance, the school invited butchers to present lessons on meat.

The curriculum for these classes were a "necessity for the economic success of the boys," girls were expected to have "suf-

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REVEAL AN UNFAMILIAR PAST

by Lynn Dai
& Howard Shu

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She does believe, however, that student stress levels have grown since the 1990s, since the competitive nature of the college application process has intensified.

A study by the American Psychological Association (APA) stated that students in the 1980s reported more anxiety than child psychiatric patients in the 1950s.

"When I was in high school, almost anybody that had a decent GPA could get into UCLA," Mohnike said. "Now it's very difficult for students to get into colleges like UC Berkeley and UCLA. It's just that the pressure on the seats has gotten worse."

A look into past course offerings

The 1968 WASC report showed that classes were markedly different from today. More humanities-focused courses were offered: visual and performing arts, sociology, homemaking, music and industrial arts. In some homemaking classes, the school taught sociological aspects of family problems. Other offerings included office practice, typing, salesmanship, woodshop and mathematics levels.

Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests measuring students' innate abilities, which were selectively administered to graduating classes, were then separated into two sections: students with an IQ of 115 or above, and the rest of the class. The school then analyzed the percentages of these "upper students" who completed an adequate number of courses in English, math, science, foreign language and social studies.

Homemaking, a group of electives taught from 1959 to 1981, sought to "integrate and apply [all the subjects taught in high school] in the daily process of making a home," the report said. Such classes were primarily taken by girls.

A teacher who saw the downside of using these tests was Dr. Hugh Roberts, one of the school's original social studies teachers who was hired when the school opened in 1959.

"When I was teaching, counselors would use or misuse IQ tests as one of the measures to suggest future employment or college," Roberts said. "They used them less and less over time."

In the 1960s, enrollment in advanced classes was contingent on achieving a certain score on standardized tests. For example, some classes would administer the reading exam to determine whether a student would qualify for it.

According to the 1968 WASC records, the average Home Ec student

"[came] from a lovely home with progressive parents. They want[ed] help in planning, entertainment and deco-

rating for gracious living."

The course was marketed toward the "less able student" who was usually "discouraged" by the prerequisite of biology, chemistry, mathematics and other STEM classes to apply for college. It stressed the importance of budgeting, using credit wisely and other consumer buying practices to aid students' "expensive tastes for gourmet foods, social graces, flower arrangements and history of furniture and architecture."

Members from professional departments were invited to the school to provide their perspective in homemaking departments. Doctors, parents, nursery school directors, pre-school children and returning SHS alumni were invited to provide different outlooks and ideas for the students. In the food sector of Homemaking I and II, for instance, the school invited butchers to present lessons on meat.

The curriculum for these classes were a "necessity for the economic success of the boys," girls were expected to have "suf-

cient" college experience to prepare for a good marriage, an opinion deemed as "important" by 90% of parents of incoming freshmen, according to WASC records.

In 1965, 133 students — 86% of the graduating class — planned to attend college, 23% of which went to state universities. 20% attended state colleges, 19% attended other four-year colleges and 38% attended two-year colleges, with 94% of those students attending West Valley.

Mohnike, who started working at Saratoga High in 1991, believes the

JOEL SCHNEIDMILLER

SHS ALUMNUS PLAYS PROFESSIONAL VOLLEYBALL FOR DUTCH TEAM LYCURGUS

by Sarah Zhou

The greatest men's volleyball player in school history, 2017 graduate Joel Schneidmiller, is now playing the sport professionally in Europe.

After SHS, he went on to play at UC Irvine, earning a string of honors, including selection as a three-time National Volleyball Association/American Volleyball Coaches Association Division I-II Honorable Mention All-American. The UC Irvine Class of 2021 alumnus is now playing for Lycurgus, a Dutch professional volleyball team.

Schneidmiller's 9-month contract began in August; the Netherlands was one of Schneidmiller's top destinations when looking at clubs overseas, as most Dutch natives are fluent in English due to the standard education taught in Dutch high schools, removing the language barrier he would likely have faced in some other countries.

Before playing professionally, the 6'6" Schneidmiller was a star at UC Irvine, where he built strong bonds with his teammates. Still, the bonds differed from those cultivated through playing professionally.

"When I played at UC Irvine, it was a balance between school and volleyball and trying to find time for some personal time in between," Schneidmiller said. "Now, volleyball is my job and basically all I do. Guys come in, work hard, do what they need to do and we go our separate ways, whether that's



Schneidmiller

to an 'actual' job or back to their apartment."

Playing professionally, Schneidmiller found, requires dedication and focus.

"Playing professionally takes a different level of commitment and love for the game," Schneidmiller said. "You don't have some of the distractions that you have when you're at school. Volleyball is a job and everyone treats it that way."

Every morning from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m., the team meets to lift weights or have morning practice. They then practice beginning at 4 p.m.

Between practices, Schneidmiller relaxes or cooks, he said. He routinely stays in touch with friends and family through various communication platforms.

"Living on my own was the hardest thing to get used to, and being away from my friends and family for nine months takes a toll on my mental health," Schneidmiller said. "But the more I get out and do things or hang out with teammates the happier I am."

Though members of the team try to spend time with one another, the ongoing pandemic has posed challenges — Schneidmiller tested positive for COVID-19 in December and was quarantined for a week.

Schneidmiller said he began playing volleyball because of his dad, citing that the two would go to Santa Cruz to play beach volleyball. When he was 12, Schneidmiller began playing at the Bay to Bay Volleyball Club in Campbell, which was when he "really started to focus on Volleyball."

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

Falcons adapt to new coach, build teamwork

by Nikhil Mathihalli & Viraaj Reddi

After an injury-ridden 2021 season, the recovering team hopes to run back a similar, albeit healthy roster to reach CCS. They started their season with two 3-0 losses against Harker on March 11 and Cupertino on March 16.

Senior captain and outside hitter Andy Tran said the team is confident in their potential, especially with rival schools having lost many of their star seniors.

While the team did lose graduated seniors outside hitter Dylan Li and libero Oliver Ye, Tran emphasized the team's "youth" and rapid improvement gives them an edge over other teams.

According to Tran, many current sopho-

mores have gotten better since last year.

Additionally, unlike recent years, there is a JV team this year. Previously, there was only a varsity team due to a lack of participation from underclassmen. As team captain, Tran has needed to coach JV players to prepare them for varsity.

"We just pick one or two of the players and pull them up to try and get them to our speed," Tran said. "We're really trying to refine one player at a time."

SENIOR CAPTAIN Andy Tran

"We pick one or two players and pull them up to get them to our speed. We're trying to refine one player at a time."

BADMINTON

Led by Mar, team works to develop foundational skills

by Jonny Luo & Nikhil Mathihalli

The badminton team won 16-14 in a game against Gunn on March 17, ending a string of losses that plagued the team. They had previously lost 16-14 against Lynbrook, 24-6 against Cupertino and 16-14 against Monta Vista.

"These games could have gone better, but we're still very early on in the season and figuring out our lineups," said senior co-captain Enoch Jung.

According to Jung, the team did better against Lynbrook because they had the home-field advantage.



"I think that, in badminton, the court really does matter," said Jung. "The lighting in the gym and the ceiling really does matter."

In badminton, players cannot play the same player twice in different events, so players need to be strategically placed where they will likely beat the opponent. However, lineups often need changes as positions should not be "overkill or underpowered."

Additionally, head coach John Li often swaps players around in different events to give athletes exposure to multiple positions.

The team is led by senior co-captain Adriana Mar, who has played badminton for eight years and is currently ranked as the

No. 1 badminton player under 18 in the U.S. He currently plays at the Campbell Bintang Badminton court and participates in school practices when he can.

Mar attends all games and also acts as an assistant coach, where he helps both new and veteran players improve their technique.

"I see the underclassmen as a group of individuals who have a lot of potential to grow, and I am excited to see their improvement throughout the season," Mar said. "They are a hardworking bunch, and it is very fun to work with them this season."

The team faces one significant obstacle: lack of experience. That means the team

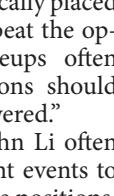
has much to learn, according to junior Evan Oaklander.

"A lot of new players [close to one fourth of the 48-player team] have joined that don't really know how to play," he said. "So we're developing as a team right now and trying to raise their skill level."

Despite the early losses, Jung sees reasons for hope for the remainder of the season, especially as the team has already played the top three schools in the league: Monta Vista, Cupertino and Lynbrook.

"They are a hardworking bunch, and it is very fun to work with them this season."

The team faces one significant obstacle: lack of experience. That means the team



Assistant principal Brian Thompson continues growing his million baseball card collection

by Arnav Swamy

On June 29, 1980, 7-year-old Brian Thompson peered over the crowd on his father's shoulders to witness baseball sensation Willie McCovey's last at bat at a home game for the San Francisco Giants against the Los Angeles Dodgers. A tense moment was shattered by a crack of the bat, igniting a torrent of screams as the crowd sprung up to see McCovey sprinting across the bases. The Hall of Famer had hit a double off the fence, winning the game for the Giants and sparking Thompson's lifelong passion for the sport.

Rookie cards are the first iteration of cards created for prospects, and their cards can skyrocket in value. For example, New York Yankees prospect Jasson Dominguez's rookie card was auctioned for \$474,000.

"I love to open cards with my family and add to our collection," Thompson said. "In order to fund it, I play in the prospecting market."

When Thompson was a child, he said that many shopping centers had card shops in them. But with the advent of the internet, most card shops have been driven out of business. With the exception of cards bought at the Stevens Creek Sports Card Shop, which he occasionally visits to support the local business, Thompson acquires his cards through Facebook.

Card collecting has also connected Thompson to fellow enthusiasts across the country through Facebook groups. In a group, a member purchases a large case of cards for a sum, and the rest of the members in the group pay the buyer for a specific team's cards from

the case. This process is called "box-breaking," and it allows Thompson to obtain far more cards

from a single team compared to purchasing a box of random cards.

"Box-breaking" is how I gain most of my rookie autographed cards," Thompson said. "Social networking is the most streamlined and effective way to get the cards I want."

Building social connections

Thompson's search for completing personal collections and sets is shared by his family and friends. His extensive social networking has introduced him to an

BASEBALL

Falcons look to win with their well-rounded roster

by Howard Shu

The Falcons went 4-3 to start the preseason but lost 4-3 against Gunn on March 17 in their first league match. They are looking to dominate the league following their success in the second half of last season.

Thus far, the team lost 6-1 against Sacred Heart Prep on March 12, won 16-6 against Mission at home on March 8, won 5-4 against Del Mar at home on March 5, lost 4-3 against Lincoln on March 3, lost 8-6 against Piedmont Hills at home on March 1, won 1-0 against Gunderson at home on Feb. 26 and won 22-1 against Galileo at home on Feb. 25.

In the game against Gunderson, senior outfielder/catcher Adrian Gecils won the game after laying out to catch a fly ball. Two weeks later, against Del Mar, sophomore pitcher Jason Bugg, who played college baseball for San Jose State and minor league baseball on the affiliate team for the Atlanta Braves. He has

had around 20 years with the San Jose State team and other high school teams, and is replacing former head coach Sean Hodson.

"[Coach Bugg] has been pushing us to new limits that a lot of us probably didn't think we could get to," Casini said.

"We have a lot of good underclassmen coming up and a lot of them have played baseball their entire lives."

JUNIOR Max Timmons

The team has also seen more participation from the freshman class this year than in previous years. Though all the freshmen are put on JV initially, Dennis is confident

that many will get pulled up to varsity at some point in the season.

Junior outfielder and catcher Max Timmons believes freshmen and sophomores, despite inexperience, will be key players for varsity sometime in the near future.

"We have a lot of good underclassmen coming up and a lot of them have played baseball their entire lives," Max said. "We don't really have to teach them how to play; they're just coming in and helping."

Even with a new coach and new underclassmen players, Dennis believes the team morale and chemistry is similar to what it was in the second half of last season, especially since many team members have been playing together since their freshman year.

"We could go really far. I think our immediate goal would be to win the league," Dennis said. "Obviously, CCS is looming behind that, but we'll take it one game at a time."

SOFTBALL

Increasing participation fosters growing enthusiasm

by Lynn Dai & Victoria Hu

to 10 players on varsity (five new players) and 10 players (nine new players) on JV compared to last year's 13-member varsity team. Some will be "going back and forth between JV and varsity."

The team is training in hopes of back-to-back making CCS. Last year, they opted out of the playoffs because the seniors did not want to risk contracting COVID-19.

According to senior captain Arya Taymuree, last year was a "strange time," as some players were at school for hybrid learning, while others were coming to practices from home. Due to COVID protocols and the rearrangement of sports seasons, the team was undersized and there was no JV team — many softball players chose to partake in other sports such as track, she said.

This season, the team's roster has grown

skills, polishing them and getting back into our normal rhythm of playing softball," Taymuree said. "A big thing right now is just learning how to work together as a team, because there are a couple of new faces."

As one of four team captains, Taymuree hopes to encourage new players, build team confidence and foster a healthy learning environment as past captains have done.

Sophomore outfielder Ariana Tootoonchi, who is beginning her first year on the softball team, found the team to be supportive.

The team has practiced scrimmages within themselves in order to prepare for future games, Tootoonchi said. The Fal-

cons played their first scrimmage on Feb. 17 against Los Gatos, a team placed in a higher division, where they lost. However, Tootoonchi found her first scrimmage to be a nerve-wracking but fun experience.

While the team's first preseason game on March 3 against San Jose High was postponed due to their team not having enough players, she looks forward to future games in Santa Cruz and far distance tournaments. Their next game is scheduled for March 14 against Lincoln High School. Overall, the team has a positive outlook on the upcoming season.

"Each day we've been getting better and better," Tootoonchi said. "So it's really just the confidence and motivation that we need to keep up."



Taymuree



extremely diverse group of people all across America. With this social circle, Thompson completes sets for less money by exchanging cards, connecting with others living in very different situations.

Shaping Thompson's work ethic

Since McCovey's game-winning hit versus the hated Dodgers, card collecting has only reinforced Thompson's love for baseball. He has coached baseball in the Bay Area for a number of years, but as assistant principal at SHS, he hasn't found time to coach and instead oversees all of the school's athletics along with athletics director Rick Ellis.

Thompson said much of the money he has made from collecting cards amounts to smart speculation and luck. The card collecting community pays close attention to card manufacturers, who typically create a small number of a valuable card for distribution, polarizing supply and demand.

"It's like buying stocks: You're investing money and time, hoping that you get something worthwhile in return," Thompson said.

For now, Thompson has sorted his inventory of over a million cards into sections. One portion of his collection are cards he is willing to sell to earn a profit from collecting.

"[Card collecting] is an expensive hobby," he said. "I don't spend much money, so I sell my inventory so I can pay for what I value."

The other section is of antique and emotionally valuable cards that Thompson wants to pass down to his children.

"I have hundreds of Buster Posey cards I've kept for my fam-

BOYS' LACROSSE

Fueled by early wins, Falcons hope for a dominant season



Courtesy of NOW & FOREVER STUDIOS

During a home game on March 1 against Woodside High School, senior Zachary Joe dodges past defenders, cradling the ball into opposing territory, allowing the team to win 8-1.

By Lena Aribi
& Meher Bhatnagar

The Falcons won their first four league games starting with a dominant 9-1 pre-season opening win against Latino College Preparatory Academy on Feb. 17.

They won 6-2 in a home game against Leland High School on March 15, 9-8 in a home game against Aragon High School on March 10, 13-4 in an away game against Pioneer High School on March 8 and 8-1 in a home game against Woodside High School on March 1.

While last year, in an attempt to decrease COVID-19 transmission, the number of games the lacrosse team played was halved, the team is expected to play a full set of 16 league games this season.

The team's successes thus far have not been without challenges: Most notably, the Falcons lost eight players to graduation.

"It's incredible how much we're improving [...] It's going to be a great season."

SENIOR Victor Nyden

The team now numbers 21 players, enough to make up a full varsity team with a comfortable number of subs, but not enough to form a JV team, senior attack Na-than Zaragoza said.

Despite relatively low numbers, senior

captain and midfield Victor Nyden has high expectations for this season as he has seen the players' increasing vigor reflected in their practices and games.

"It's incredible how much we're improving as a team. Yesterday, we had practice and we were running plays that I've never seen run before," Nyden said.

Midfield player Sawyer Chao, the only freshman on the team, said he has warmed up to both the environment and his fellow teammates. Because the team is mostly seniors, his teammates emphasized guiding him and their newer members through plays, which he quickly adjusted to.

"I am a little scared of getting injured out there because I'm playing against guys two to three years older than me and it's a pretty high intensity sport," Chao said. "Still, I'm pretty good friends with all the other guys and I'm liking the sport, so overall I think I'll be good."

Another slight roadblock at the start of the season was that many multi-sport athletes on the team were unable to attend practices because other winter sports like soccer were still wrapping up.

In spite of this, head coach Jeff Roper said that the team did "a really good job" of working together on both offense and defense. Because of the team's strong early start enabled by their ability to collaborate on the field, Nyden is hopeful the team will make CCS.

"It's going to be a great season," Nyden said. ♦

By Stephanie Sun

Following the loss of three seniors to graduation, the team lost 17-1 to Los Gatos on March 9 (with a goal scored by senior midfielder Caroline Keogh) and 13-3 on March 14 against Mountain View (with all three goals scored by senior midfielder Casey Gilligan).

The team faced low participation during their pre-season: Eight of 23 athletes returned at the beginning of the season, prompting uncertainty regarding if the team would have enough athletes to field a team. Since then, they have grown to be a 15-player team.

With a fuller roster, the team hopes to improve their overall performance under the guidance of new head coach Alyssa Dunlap.

Dunlap played D1 lacrosse at Vanderbilt University for four years.

Additionally, Dunlap has three years of coaching experience, after work at Stanford from 2014 to 2016.

She is also a co-founder and coach at Verve Lacrosse club.

"We actually didn't know whether we would have a team this year because our old [head coach Mario Lile] left to coach at a club full time in Marin, but I feel like we've all adjusted really well," junior defender Lucy Campbell said.

Campbell added: "She's a very intense coach and you leave practice feeling really accomplished."

Dunlap emphasizes conditioning drills like sprints and 7-mile runs, and the team dynamic has improved in aspects like communication,

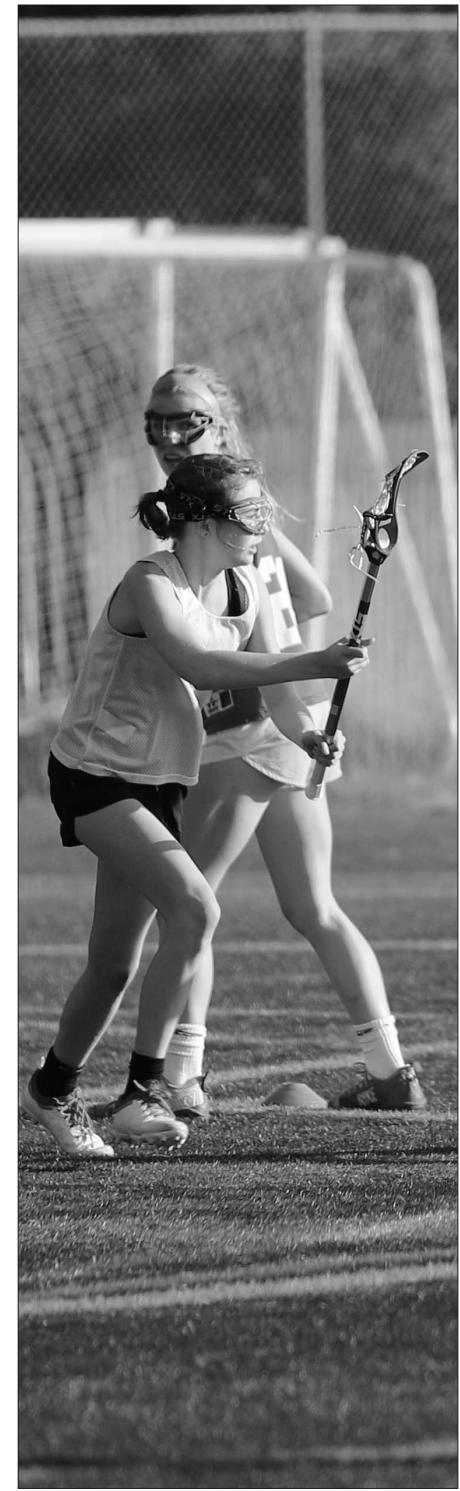
Campbell said. Despite their early lopsided losses, Campbell is optimistic about the rest of the season. During practices, the team has been working in the weight room and developing stick skills as well as practicing plays.

After their first match against Los Gatos, the team also switched their practices to focus more on offensive work, Campbell said.

"The entire team worked well together and we support one another," Campbell said. "We really got an idea of where we need to be." ♦

GIRLS' LACROSSE

With a new coach in tow, team works toward building chemistry



The Saratoga Falcon
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SWIMMING

Broken pool leads to all away meets

By Andy Chen
& Tiffany Wang

The swim team's 2020-21 season was characterized by rare triumphs in the face of ever-constant low morale.

The team implemented a split-schedule practice format that minimized COVID-19 exposure but sacrificed team bonding opportunities; athletes live-streamed and recorded their times in an individual digital meet format, rather than competing side-by-side with other schools.

Though COVID-19 protocols have since decreased, the team has continued to face its fair share of challenges coming into the current season including the school pool's pump and filter breaking, preventing the swim team from using the school pool since late February.

Until the repair is completed, which Huynh estimates will be March at the earli-

est, the team is practicing at West Valley College (WVC) and all meets will be away.

Practices have been moved from right after school to 4 to 6 p.m. and mostly function like normal, although WVC pools lack flags and the team is unable to practice backstroke, senior swimmer Ethan Chan said.

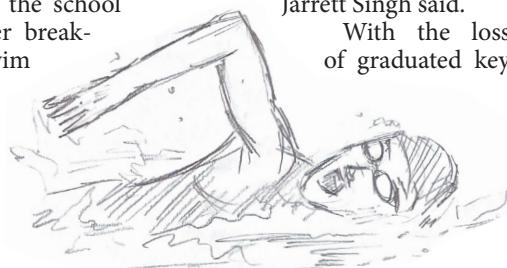
Even so, senior Brooke Huynh said practices have been progressing well so far, and the underclassmen have proven "surprising fast."

Still, the team suffered a loss during their first meet against Los Altos on March 4.

"Since it was our first meet, people are still getting back into the groove of things," sophomore Jarrett Singh said.

With the loss of graduated key

"We can actually interact with everyone," Huynh said. "Because of the pandemic last year, we only had two people per lane who would swim on opposite sides — you were pretty much just linked to yourself, which made it a little bit harder because what gets you through the sets is that interaction with others." ♦



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March 25, 2022

Titans of tennis: Siblings leave legacy at SHS and beyond

By Lynn Dai

"He was born on the tennis court," said Sheila Stratakos of her son, sophomore Luke Stratakos, who will be playing for boys' varsity tennis this spring.

She's also the mother of Class of 2020 Monica Stratakos and Class of 2018 Dean Stratakos, two of the school's past No. 1 singles tennis players. Monica now plays for UC San Diego and Dean plays at Stanford.

He plans to continue building special relationships and experiences through tennis.

"Tennis is a sport that can be played for life, and I will continue to build lasting relationships through it," Dean said.

Monica Stratakos: deadly lefty since age 3

Monica, who also attributes the mental aspect of the sport as one of the main reasons she loves tennis, trains 20 hours a week, plus overtime for tournaments.

"When Dean and I are both home from college, we practice together and motivate each other," she said. "It's nice to have a built-in hitting partner who doubles as a brother!"

One skill that has gained her an advantage over other players is her lefty spin — it is difficult for right-handed players to play against left-handers because there aren't many of them.

"As is the case with many athletes, my sport helps me find balance in my days," Dean said. "It gives me a great outlet for the stressors in other parts of my life such as academics, and it allows me to focus my energy into competition for a few hours each day."

Dean Stratakos: Pac-12 Champion

Having played tennis since age 5, Dean said it has always been a constant in his life. His dedication and drive for the sport also "transfers back" to the rest of his life.

He led the SHS tennis team to an undefeated season in 2017 as the team captain and MVP. Since then, he has won the title of 2021 Pacific Coast Conference (Pac-12) Champion with Stanford, besting a collegial athletic conference that has won more NCAA national championships in team sports than any other conference in history.

He attributes his success to maintaining a confident and positive attitude, a guiding principle throughout his tennis career.

"Tennis is a very mental sport. You can play tons of matches and practice for endless hours, but if you are not mentally strong, then you will not see success," Dean said.

Dean said his parents have always been a source of unwavering support. Additionally, he said playing on a team at Stanford is drastically different from the largely individual tennis he played in the juniors and high school. He said many of his favorite

As such, Monica has modeled her spin after her role-model Angelique Kerber, a left-handed player from Germany. Monica starts off her games with a big serve and pushes through with her lefty spin.

She has been ranked among the top ten in Northern California by the United States Tennis Association (USTA) every since age 10. Since her parents enrolled her in a tennis camp at age 3, it has been one of the

TRACK

Team hits the ground running

By Esther Luan
& Harshini Velchamby

Coming off a shortened and COVID-19-ridden season, the track team has seen a steep decline in returning team members: Most of the team is newcomers.

"With COVID-19, fewer people decided to take sports back up in general," head coach Archie Ljepava said. "We have a lot of athletes that are coming out for the first time, so they're just learning how to sprint properly."

"We won't be resting any more athletes, so our next invitationals should go pretty well."

SENIOR Soorya Kuppam

Jepava forecasts the season to start out rough, but sees a lot of potential in the members — especially with the increase in girls' cross country members participating in distance events.

Also, with the return of star athletes such as senior Giulio Morini, Bianzino, junior Yuvraj Singh who were away from practice because of winter sports, Ljepava has high hopes for the main part of the season.

The team's first meet on March 3 at Santa Clara set them off to a good start, according to senior sprinter Amitav Rawat.

Off the back of key performances by star players, the boys' varsity team won 78-43 and the girls' varsity team won 85-34.

Notable performances included Singh winning the 100m, senior Harrison Dance winning both 1600m and 3200m, junior Elizabeth Stoiber getting first in the 1600m, junior Isha Goswami winning the 400m and junior Jalyne Harrigan posting the fifth fastest time in CCS for the women's 300m hurdles.

A second meet on March 10 at Mountain View was less successful; many of the stars, including Dance, were resting.

Singh won the 100m again, junior Jason Cheng won second place in the 400m and senior Soorya Kuppam won long jump.

"We won't be resting any more athletes, so our next invitationals should go pretty well," said Kuppam. "Overall, we've been sweeping our events and have good performances." ♦

memories come from his time on the college team, a sentiment echoed by the Bryan Brothers.

"On our team, we have cultivated an amazing culture that allows everyone to lift each other up, hold each other accountable, and push one another to be better teammates, tennis players and people," he said.

He plans to continue building special relationships and experiences through tennis.

"Tennis is a sport that can be played for life, and I will continue to build lasting relationships through it," Dean said.



Courtesy of DEAN STRATAKOS

From left to right: Class of 2018 alum Dean Stratakos, sophomore Luke Stratakos and Class of 2020 alum Monica Stratakos. The siblings are a cornerstone of Saratoga tennis history.

than just a mental relief. It's his way of expressing himself, of "hitting the ball so hard when angry" and reaching a state of happiness and peace afterwards.

"Tennis is a sport that can be played for life, and I will continue to build lasting relationships through it."

2018 ALUM Dean Stratakos

Before the pandemic, he would practice three days a week, two and a half hours each day. While lessons stopped during COVID-19, he continued to practice with his siblings. However, when games started trickling back near the beginning of 2021, Luke had surgery on his left knee, a "wear and tear" injury he had already been battling for a couple of years.

"I couldn't move my leg but I kept hitting because I loved the feel; I didn't want to lose it," Luke said.

Having received full clearance a couple months ago, Luke said he now works on strengthening his body for a full recovery.

"There's been a lot of influence and support in getting me to play the sport, and I love that, but it's just a part of growing up," Luke said. "You got to come to do something you love." ♦

BOYS' TENNIS

Sophomore leads singles lineup

By Hannah Lee
& Aiden Ye

Ending the 2020-21 season with a short-lived CCS run and a 7-1 regular season record, the boys' tennis team is working toward continuing their momentum and starting the season off strong.

As of March 17, the Falcons have a 2-3 record: a 4-3 loss against Homestead on March 8, 6-1 win against Los Gatos on March 10, 5

