

NEWS 5

Marching band finishes season on high note.

SCHOOL SCOPE 16

Music building remains elite campus hotspot.

SPORTS 21

Following 9-1 season, field hockey loses in second round of CCS.

THE saratoga falcon



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TEACHERS RALLY

Pay raise demanded from board



BY SamBai, ShreyaRallabandi
& AidenYe

Just before the start of the Nov. 16 board meeting in the school library, more than 60 Saratoga High and Los Gatos teachers — all members of the District Teachers Association (DTA) — lined up outside while holding signs with messages like “Reserves don’t teach students, Teachers DO!!” and “This Is a School, Not a Savings Account.”

During public comments, 10 of the

>> SALARIES on pg. 6

Drama puts on first fall play since 2019-20 school year

BY LenaAribi, ChrisChen
& StephanieSun

As blue and green stage lights gradually brightened in the McAfee Center the past two weekends, students dressed in loose fairy-like clothing skipped onto the dark green stage and danced around in circles, their giggles filling the theatre. This was the opening scene of this year’s fall play, William Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer’s Night Dream,” which premiered as the school’s first drama production since the pandemic hit.

Around 130 people watched the show in-person on opening night, a slightly smaller audience turnout compared to previous years, while 13 people watched via the livestream — a number that remained consistent throughout the five performances. The actors staged their final production on Nov. 20, with other shows on Nov. 11, 12, 13, 18 and 19.

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream” follows the story of a love rectangle between Hermia (sophomore Ella Tamas King), Lysander (freshman Krishnen Khanna), Helena (senior Gianna Cagliostro) and Demetrius (senior Jack Bulas). The play is set in the woods of Athens that Hermia and Lysander have run away to and Demetrius

>> FALL PLAY on pg. 3

Graphic by SELINA CHEN

Los Gatos responds to severe vandalism incidents

BY SanjoliGupta
& TaraNatarajan

On Nov. 1, Los Gatos High School’s staff and students entered a defaced campus: Hateful, racist, anti-semitic and homophobic slurs were spray painted on the walls and windows, while various rooms were egged throughout the campus. Additionally, a student-grown 529-pound prize pumpkin on display at the front of the school had been smashed in.

In a YouTube video addressed to the Los

Gatos and Saratoga communities, Los Gatos principal Kevin Buchanan asked members of the Los Gatos community to speak up if they had any information regarding the perpetrators or saw anything relevant on social media because the vandals were seen filming with their cell phones — presumably to post about their work — in surveillance tapes.

“It really is time that we end this culture of silence,” Buchanan said. “Please help us — otherwise this just may continue, because I simply can’t do this alone.”

After reviewing security footage, authorities determined three different groups on campus that night. One defaced the walls, windows and doors by spray painting the n-word, homophobic slurs and antisemitic language, another smashed the pumpkin and a third group egged the campus.

Of the multiple graffiti messages that had been spray painted onto the Los Gatos campus, the vandalism contained messages directed at specific faculty members.

One of the victims was chemistry teacher Ken Porush, whose classroom is adorned

by a web of criss-crossed strings and dangling molecule-like paper balls attached to the ceiling. Porush decorates his walls with posters featuring anti-bullying messages, humorous quotes from students and a pride flag with a Star of David on it — expressing support for the LGBTQ+ and Jewish communities.

But when Porush came into school a little before 8 a.m. on Nov. 1, he spotted a message spray painted on the wall next to

>> VANDALISM on pg. 3

Schedule change advances

BY ChristinaChang
& LynnDai

During its Nov. 16 meeting, the district board unanimously agreed to modify the bell schedule to incorporate a daily tutorial starting next semester, but the change wasn’t finalized. Among the six possible schedules, the board unanimously supported three but didn’t yet settle on a final decision: Choice A, consisting of 85-minute periods and 10 minute passings, was favored among students

in survey for the uniformity of start-stop times in periods; Choice C, consisting of 88-minute periods and 8-minute passings; and Choice F, consisting of 90-minute periods and 5-minute passings.

Two board members supported reducing class minutes from 90 to 88, two supported reducing it to 85 and one disagreed with both options. The board also noted that students favored increasing lunch time, and agreed to organize a change in the bell schedule by the end of this semester. ♦



New finals schedule released by administration

During remote learning, there was no specialized finals schedule — many teachers also elected not to give finals. However, with the return of in-person school, the finals schedule has reverted back to the traditional four-day schedule during the last week of first semester from Dec. 13-16. Unlike in the past, the finals schedule includes a tutorial period between finals.

Principal Greg Louie announced the finals schedule for the 2021-22 school year fall semester in an email sent on Oct. 29. On Monday, Dec. 13, the first half of the day will consist of consecutive 20-minute classes of periods 2, 4 and 6, followed by periods 1, 3, 5 and 7. During these 20 minute blocks, students will have the opportunity to ask teachers any last-minute questions and review for finals. After lunch, a 2-hour block will be allotted for period 7 finals.

From Tuesday Dec. 14 until Thursday Dec. 16, days will be split into a final in the morning and a final in the afternoon. The final exams will be two hours long from 8:30-10:30 in the morning and from noon-2:00. Finals for periods 5 and 6 will be on Tuesday, Dec. 14, periods 1 and 3 on Wednesday, Dec. 15 and periods 2 and 4 on Thursday, Dec. 16.

Juniors and seniors found this year's final schedule reminiscent of the annual pre-pandemic finals schedule.

"I feel like the new finals schedule is similar to the one we had in our freshman year," senior Amitav Rawat said. "I think it works, and it's good to return back to a normalized schedule after a year and a half of the confusing remote learning schedule."

— Ethan Lin

Attendance issues lead to various consequences

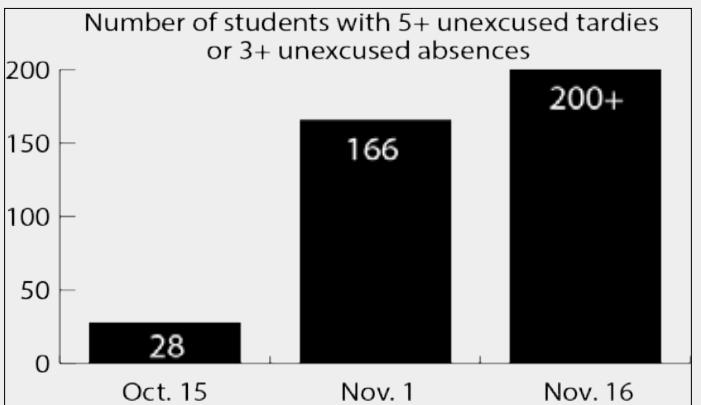
Amid concerns about suddenly increasing tardiness and unexcused absences, the administration is considering assigning detentions and Saturday schools if the situation does not improve. Already, the administration has rolled out a community service program known as "Treasure Toga." Students with more than 10 tardies can pick up garbage for after school on select days, with every 2 hours making up 10 tardies at a time.

As of Nov. 16, over 200 students, or 15% of students, have five or more unexcused tardies or three or more unexcused absences, an increase from 28 students in mid-October. Assistant principal Brian Thompson said most tardies were given to students who were late to class after a passing period, as opposed to being late to their first class of the day.

"Tardies, especially with 10-minute passing periods, really just are about our students not respecting their classmates, not respecting their teachers and not making it a priority to get to class on time," Thompson said.

Though principal Greg Louie is not an enthusiastic supporter of detentions, he "may not have a choice in the matter if students don't improve their attendance." When detentions are re-introduced, the administration will try to make them as inconvenient as possible, to encourage students to change their behaviors. This may include not allowing cell phone use and even prohibiting doing homework during detention.

— Andrew Lin



picturethis



FALCON // SELINA CHEN

Tape it Up | Junior Charlie Jarvis volunteers to tape up an athlete's ankle while athletic trainer Caitlyn Steiding uses a roller to massage a student as a part of rehab in the trainer's office on Nov. 19.

Winter Formal planning aims to overcome COVID-19 setbacks

by Victoria Hu
& Sarah Zhou

Although this year's dance commission faced challenges planning for Winter Formal due to COVID-19 restrictions, they rose to the occasion. Hoping for an off-campus formal — the first in four years — junior head commissioner Avani Kongetira, juniors Elsa Blom and Jackie Ryu, sophomore Skyler Dyal and freshman Haasika Thammaneni began planning well in advance.



Kongetira

"We've been working on Winter Formal since before homecoming," Kongetira said. "Finding a venue takes a long time to get approved by admins."

The commission was initially interested in an indoor venue. However, the administration asked them to find an outdoor site in anticipation of a surge of COVID-19 cases before holiday break.

Kongetira

While looking at outdoor venues, the commission took factors such as space, catering availability, security and clean-up services into consideration, before finally settling on the Gilroy Gardens Event Plaza. They booked the venue for Dec. 4 from 7-10:30 through email in mid-September. During the search, the dance commission often consulted activities director Kristen Cunningham and ASB secretary Anna Ybarra for guidance and budget confirmation. After the commission settled on the venue, the administration helped handle official logistics, like contracting.

As Kongetira, who served as the class of 2023 class representative last year, is the only member of the dance commission with prior experience in leadership, the team occasionally felt overwhelmed during the planning process.

Kongetira

"I feel like we're all learning as we go. Planning an off-campus formal in my first year on commission is scary because all of us are so inexperienced."

JUNIOR Avani Kongetira

Kongetira

"With people complaining about how \$25 was 'expensive' for a homecoming ticket, I don't know how they'll respond to the formal prices," Ryu said. "It's as low as we can get it, so I really hope people can just be understanding about the prices."

Despite facing COVID-19 restrictions, hitting roadblocks in finding a venue and having a general lack of experience on the commission compared to previous years, Kongetira is optimistic that the Winter Formal will be a memorable dance.

"I'm really lucky because the commissioners are really reliable and have great input. Dance commission is kind of like a little family," Kongetira said. ♦

togatalks

Will you be attending the formal despite the changes this year?

"Yes, since I've never been to formal before and don't think it's any riskier than school!"



senior Bella Lin

"No, but mostly since I plan to work on college apps and study for finals, not because of COVID!"



senior Shaarvari Malladi



FALL PLAY

continued from pg. 1

and Helena have followed.

The play, a comedy, is outlandish and fantastical, especially in scenes with the fairies, but comical whenever an acting troupe of the laborers shows up.

Although there are more dramatic moments, such as when the king of fairies, Oberon, played by senior Taylor Zhou, announces his plan to Puck, his right-hand fairy, with evil laughter or when the four lovers have brief fights, the overall tone of the play is light.

According to junior Olivia Smith, who played Puck, the play presented the actors with an unique challenge: to ensure that the audience understands the gist of the action occurring onstage despite the complex nature of Shakespearean language.

Despite initial worries, Smith was relieved that the audience was able to follow and understand the actions onstage.

"We are proud of any stage combat that's included in the show," Smith said. "We got a couple gasps out of the audience when a couple of actors were fighting, so I think we're pretty realistic, which is the goal."

Smith said she and others in the cast experienced pre-show jitters due to the



TALISMAN // CARY CHEN

Junior Olivia Smith (Puck) faces senior Taylor Zhou (Oberon) as he gazes into the horizon.

experience of having a live performance for the first time in almost two years.

"Everyone had a lot of nerves on opening night because we forgot how nerve-wracking it can be with a live audience in the theater," she said. "It wasn't necessarily difficult, but we had to work harder to get into the right mindset for a live performance."

To combat this issue, drama director Benjamin Brotzman took the crew through energy-focused warmups that calmed them and helped them focus on acting, blocking out extraneous thoughts about school or homework.

The McAfee has a sound system that picks up microphone audio and projects it to the

audience, but depending on the direction actors spoke, the degree of amplification varied — a discrepancy that was especially noticeable when actors were walking back and forth on stage. The footsteps of the actors were also easily picked up by the microphones, often muffling their voices. On opening night, multiple loud booms echoed through the theater as a result of audio feedback.

Freshman Diya Kapoor, a member of the technician crew and the technical theater class, elaborated on this challenge, noting that it was difficult to make sure that all the microphones were placed securely on the actors and didn't interfere with their masks.

"Sometimes during the performance, the microphone would make a big thump. Other times it would not be placed correctly or something would happen to the microphones — like the microphone dying," Kapoor said.

Although the crew faced technical difficulties and a post-pandemic learning curve, she said the drama students were still able to put on an amazing performance and improvise with what they had.

"I think our strength lies in how we are able to come together and work well as a team," Kapoor said. "For what it has started as, this play as a whole has come so far and I'm proud of this entire cast and crew." ♦



Courtesy of SARAH HANSEN

a loud "altercation." Sheehan then accused the mayor's husband of allegedly threatening to kill her, and put up a restraining order.

When a resident was dropping off the letter at the mayor's home, the door went unanswered and the resident began to scream "f--- LGBTQ+" and demanded the mayor leave Los Gatos, according to Mercury News. Following this incident, a decision to keep council meetings online to prevent such disruptions was made.

The increased distress prompted California state legislator Senator Dave Cortese and Assemblymember Evan Low to send a letter to Town Manager Laurel Prevetti on Oct. 19, requesting an explanation of the policy on harassment for public leaders and what is done to protect their families, in addition to keeping elected officials safe and preventing bullying. He also condemned the recent disruption of meetings.

Gary thinks this hatred stems from fear and that a lot of hateful behaviors grow from a need to find a scapegoat for the difficult situations people find themselves in.

More recently, Los Gatos Mayor Marico Sayoc was verbally attacked by a group of attendees during the Oct. 5 town council meeting. A far-right group of residents had been consistently disrupting Town Council meetings by refusing to wear masks, expressed racism and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and touted QAnon talking points, according to Mercury News.

The event, which took place on Nov. 14, involved over 2,000 attendees marching from Fisher Middle school to the Civic Center to condemn hate speech and encourage community unity.

Gray's hope was to strengthen community bonds and encourage community members to combat discriminatory attitudes and acts

of hatred.

"People need to understand and learn to trust each other in order to solve the problems that are happening in our society," Gray said. "If I could make a statement, to anybody that I think might make a difference, it would just be, 'Let's talk. Let's get to know each other. Help me to understand what it is that you're afraid of?'

According to Gray, there are many people in the community who wish to stand together despite divisive and hateful attitudes, and the United Against Hate rally is a reflection of that sentiment. She is hopeful that the rally helped to "bolster all of us in rejecting the kind of hurtful, hateful behavior that we're seeing."

I think there's so much power in a large gathering of people standing together.

JSV CEO Lael Gray

"I think there's so much power in a large gathering of people standing together and saying, 'We're here for each other, and we don't hate you.' It's the most powerful thing to see that there are allies," Gray said. "It's good for me to stand there and say, 'I'm with you, I see you and I'm not going to do the same for me. It's just so reassuring.' ♦

Student cites culture of bigotry

Junior Yo-Han Gorman, who is nonbinary and identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, recalled walking onto campus the day after Halloween to see anti-gay slurs plastered out in black letters on the cafeteria's double doors.

"I first thought it was a prank by the sophomores or freshmen. But I know that Los Gatos has a huge problem with racism, and the [hate speech] was just really disturbing to see," Gorman said.

"Anti-semitism in [our culture] is the type of thing that is very difficult to change," Gray said. "Jewish people tend to be

audience, but depending on the direction actors spoke, the degree of amplification varied — a discrepancy that was especially noticeable when actors were walking back and forth on stage. The footsteps of the actors were also easily picked up by the microphones, often muffling their voices. On opening night, multiple loud booms echoed through the theater as a result of audio feedback.

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ASB faces legal issues raised by a denied club

By Selina Chen
& Lili Shoshani

When a student — whose identity remains confidential due to Associated Student Body (ASB) rules — was notified in mid-October that their club was rejected, the student emailed the club commissioners and brought to their attention the Equal Access Act of 1984, a federal law that prohibits schools from denying student groups the right to meet for “religious, political, philosophical or other content of the speech” reasons. ASB is now grappling with determining the law’s scope and potential repercussions that may fundamentally change the club approval process.

Traditionally, ASB evaluated clubs by the criteria outlined in a holistic rubric in order to avoid an oversaturation of opportunities offered to students. The club that cited the access act was rejected because it did not meet the majority of the criteria listed on the rubric. After the rejection, the student notified the ASB of the Equal Access Act.

“[The student] talked about how the rejection was supposedly unlawful and discriminatory,” senior club commissioner Grace Hsu said. “Once [the student] introduced this act to us, it just crumbled our system. Everything has been really confusing because we don’t know how the act specifically applies to our school.”

In response, the club commissioners set up a meeting with the student, two members of ASB and activities director Kristen Cunningham.

The ASB is also talking to principal Greg Louie, district superintendent Mike Grove, representatives from the Federal Department of Education and Santa Clara County Department of Education, the district’s legal team and other schools in the area.

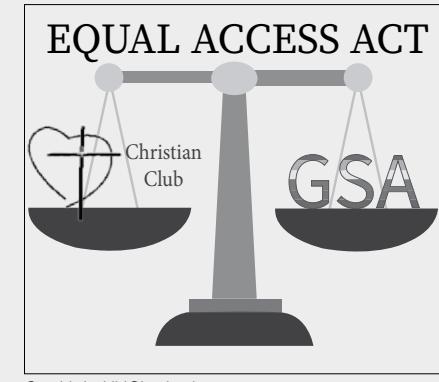
The act states that public schools cannot discriminate against non-curricular clubs based on their “rhetoric” and was intended to protect clubs such as a Bible group or a LGBTQ+ group.

But “rhetoric” is so vague so the act can practically apply to all clubs, senior club commissioner Nandini Desai said.

However, the club commissioners found some differences between ASB-affiliated clubs and the clubs that are protected under the act: Clubs that are not accepted by ASB do not receive funding, have a bank account or participate in Club Rush and Club Day.

But rejected clubs can still function as an unaffiliated group, Hsu said. Currently, ASB is trying to figure out what the law means, as it could lead to potential lawsuits if a club believes a rejection is unfair.

“We’d rather handle it now and take it head on rather than pushing it onto future ASB officers when it might create a much bigger problem,” Hsu said. “We’ve been pretty transparent about it, and we’re not afraid to tell people.” ♦



Graphic by Lili Shoshani

Board supports graduation requirement alignment, door open for full alignment

By Christina Chang
& Lynn Dai

At their Nov. 16 meeting, the Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District board discussed potential methods to align the SHS and LGHS curriculums, which would drastically change the current course offerings for both schools.

Three board members voted in favor of aligning graduation requirements and two graduation requirement alignment or full alignment. Superintendent Mike Grove recommended aligning graduation requirements in the next few years. However, no definite consensus was reached, and exploring the differences in AP and Honors classes at the two schools at some future time for full alignment is still a possibility.

The board earlier heard the conclusions of the Curriculum Alignment Course Pathway Committee (CACPC), composed of Grove; associate superintendent Carrie Bosco; LGSUHSD board members David Guidry and Katherine Tseng; Director of School Culture, Climate and Curriculum and Instruction Jamal Splane; the principals of both SHS and LGHS; two guidance counselors; nine teachers; seven parents and five student representatives. The group discussed alignment options this fall.

SHS and LGHS differ in course pathways, graduation requirements

Currently, nearly all the core math courses are aligned, but SHS has a larger selection of advanced courses, while LGHS has a wider range of support and remediation courses. Similarly, both schools offer a variety of science courses at different levels. Juniors and seniors share nine courses at both schools, but LGHS offers Agroecology while SHS offers Marine Biology, a combined AP Physics 1 and 2 and college prep Environmental Science.



Grove

According to the committee’s final report, current 9th and 10th grade English courses at SHS maintain homogenous learning environments that “create more community and support students with the additional academic stress” while LGHS courses give students more leeway in choosing between honors and college prep (CP) courses.

The primary difference in the two schools’ pathways are the different graduation requirements and AP/honors course offerings. Both schools require four years of English, two years of math, science and PE, one year of either world language or visual and performing arts and one semester of applied arts. However, SHS requires 3.5 years of history and 65 additional credits to graduate, while LGHS requires 3 years of history and 75 additional credits.

Chang wanted to ensure that students at both schools have flexibility in their decisions regardless of the alignment of course pathways. As such, she recommended combining the options of aligning graduation requirements and core academic pathways, albeit not immediately.

Ultimately, the board has not yet made a final decision on which pathway to take regarding course alignment, though teachers, parents and students continue to voice their opinions.

Sridhar said a major problem with trying to make a decision on curriculum alignment is the poor timing of the discussion. For him, this year is the most stressful he’s had, not just because it’s his junior year, but because of the return to in-person education, the new bell schedule and COVID-19 protocols; amid grappling with all the reforms, teachers and students would have to also face a potentially massive change affecting all students and educators.

I do not believe a ‘one size fits all’ is a good approach in this case,” math department head Kristen Hamilton told The Falcon. “Creativity, innovation and passion come from autonomy. Students and teachers are not robots with the same program; let’s not turn ourselves into numbers. We are people and deserve to have a choice. Universities specialize in different areas, high schools should be able to do the same.”

Hamilton said adding honors and APs to the schools is detrimental to students because they will have to take more of those courses in order to compete against their peers on paper during the college application process.

Committee votes against alignment

Going in, the committee was presented with two potential recommendations: full alignment for core academic pathways in



FALCON // SELINA CHEN

The LGSUHSD board, Curriculum Alignment Course Pathway Committee, teachers, parents and students converge to discuss the issues at hand at the Nov. 16 board meeting.

science, social studies, English and math or autonomy (maintaining the status quo).

Through three Zoom meetings — two hours on Sept. 22, three hours on Sept. 30 and three hours on Oct. 21 — the committee discussed the situation and also came up with a third “alternative” option: aligning graduation requirements.

By the final meeting, 15.4% of the committee was in support of the full alignment option, 42.3% in support of autonomy and 42.3% in support of graduation requirement alignment. In all, about 85% of the committee voted against full alignment, including all teachers and students.

If curriculum alignment were to occur, both schools would offer the same core classes and grading policies. The district would formulate small staff workgroups for identified pathways to study and make recommendations to the board regarding recommendations to the board regarding aligning course pathways and of students’ academic stress.

Supporters of this approach of this approach reasoned that similar course offerings would allow students to reach their maximum potential and should be available at both schools, as the “fundamental student populations are not that different;” according to the Curriculum Alignment Course Pathway Advisory Group Report released in November.

Committee members who supported aligning graduation requirements said doing so defines what the district values but also allows autonomy.

Junior Shaan Sridhar, who sat on the committee, said his perspective on the issue changed during the meetings. In the first meeting, he was supportive of total alignment, but after hearing the arguments against alignment — the lengthy process to align and how a fully aligned curriculum may not support the different cultures of the two schools — Sridhar’s perspective changed. By the third meeting, however, he supported the aligning graduation requirements as he realized that the school’s graduation values should be the same.

Teachers and students advocating for no alignment said autonomy promotes innovation and allows both schools to address the needs of students in real time, while full alignment disempowers educators and pits schools against each other.

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Department chairs voice their wide-ranging concerns in an open letter to district leaders

FACULTY BELIEVES THIS ISN’T THE YEAR TO IMPLEMENT NEW AGENDA

By Victoria Hu

ing while juggling curriculum changes and district-pushed committees, they have struggled to pace with growing workloads.

This feeling of fatigue in SHS’s educators comes amidst a nationwide trend prevalent since the start of 2021: In a survey of National Education Association members, 32% of respondents said the pandemic caused them to plan quitting their profession earlier than expected.

In the process of reopening for the new academic year, teacher resignation caused a dire shortage which the California State Board of Education president, Linda Darling-Hammond, called “a nationwide and definitely a statewide issue.”

Saratoga is part of this mass exodus of staff members: assistant principal Kerry Mohmike, administrative assistant Janet Verson, science teacher Jill McCrystal and librarian Kevin Heyman have retired since the start of the pandemic. The open letter reported that SHS’s significant administration turnover and staff member retirement have increased work for those remaining, leading to a rough start to the new year.

For the teachers that have returned to the classroom, COVID-19 protocols have hindered their lessons.

Guidance department head Kristen Hamilton said she struggled to read students’ expressions through masks to decipher when they do not understand concepts.

As a result of projecting her voice through a mask, she has lost her voice three times since the start of the semester.

Furthermore, learning loss from the pandemic has caused teachers to spend immense amounts of time making accommodations and adjusting curriculum pacing to support students.

“It’s all these little things adding up,” Hamilton said. “It’s hard, and we’re tired.”

On Nov. 4, Los Gatos High School department chairs replied with their own letter to the district and board in support of the opinions expressed by many in Saratoga High.

Both schools urged the board and district’s decision-makers to postpone huge decisions, such as employing PLCs and curriculum redesign, in order to prioritize student and staff mental health.

The letter closed with hopes for productive discussion and collaboration among staff and policy-makers.

As a result of the letter, district leaders and two board members met with the SHS department chairs on Nov. 9 in a world-cafe-style exchange of ideas. Los Gatos department chairs participated in a similar event a few days later. ♦



Marching band performs together at the Napa Valley Band Reserve competition on Nov. 13.

Courtesy of ISABELLE GECILS

Marching Band finishes season on a high note

By Shannon Ma
& Brian Sheen

The 150 members of the marching band waited in anticipation, breaths misting in the cold night air as they watched drum majors Ryan Lee, Christopher Okuno and Petr Tupitsyn stand at attention on the football field below for the results of the Nov. 13, Napa Valley Band Reserve to be announced.

“Not having played together for a year and a half, we really pulled off a show that was very creative, artistic and effective,” Tupitsyn said.

The show included innovative elements such as a “big band” that played while the rest of the band danced as well as a percussion feature, which brass captain and senior trumpet player Yoshiki Shimokawa said was not done before by many schools.

After nearly three months of rehearsals, they were thrilled to take home all four sweepstakes awards — general effect and showmanship, music, visual and mayor’s choice — as well as first overall in brass, percussion and color guard.

Along with the Napa Valley Band Reserve, the marching band also performed at two other competitions: the Cupertino Tournament of Bands (TOB) on Oct. 9 and the Foothill Band Review on Oct. 23.

Despite half the band being new to field performances, the marching band won third place in woodwinds and percussion, second place in color guard, first place in general effect and overall champion in the 6A division at TOB. Their performance at the Foothill Band Review earned them second place in percussion, general effect, visual and second place overall in the 6A division as well as first place in color guard.

Shiuan added that this year’s show has set the band up for continued growth. “It was a big success thanks to a solid sense of community in the group, and the student leaders really stepped up to make sure the experience was positive,” Shiuan said. “I think it creates a lot of momentum for us, looking into what we want to be able to do in the future.” ♦

their daily drills and rehearsals, Shiuan said that the band “brought into the mindset that if we do this right now, then it’ll pay off.”

Shimokawa pointed to the design of the show as spurring the band’s enthusiasm.

“Because the staff was able to design such an impactful show, the members were more excited and able to understand the show at a high level,” Shimokawa said.

Shiuan credited all this success to the students’ patience, focus and determination in the unique post-pandemic season. During

the show, Shiuan said that the band “brought into the mindset that if we do this right now, then it’ll pay off.”

THIRDPERIOD
STAFFPOLICY

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MISSIONSTATEMENT

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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School needs a tech-based booster group

Tech funding is a challenge that schools across the nation have wrestled with for years and SHS is no exception. Even the district's funds, the SHS Foundation and other sources haven't been enough to meet the growing needs.

Students have returned to campus with aging laptops ranging from 2 to 8 years old to use in classrooms and the district technology department, composed of a mere 4.5 members, has weathered students' frustration and concerns.

One example: In classes like newspaper and yearbook, where the effectiveness of Adobe programs is dependent on the hard drives of existing technology, entire electives are at stake. If these computers are hanging on their last thread, so are the classes.

The current iMacs in the journalism room, for example, are 2013 models. Developments since then, such as faster, 18-core CPUs and updated ventilation systems in iMac Pros, satisfy speed requirements for Adobe software. Without them, Adobe software cannot reliably be run on 2013 iMac computers.

Combined with some 350 students from the entire Media Arts Program, which also heavily relies on Adobe software, these classes impact 470 students — nearly 40% of the school's population.

While the technology department actively reviews applications for new technology and technology replacements, such changes consume tens of thousands of dollars at a time. Refreshing all 33 of the J-room computers will likely cost upwards of \$55,000, according to Julie Grenier, the district's director of educational technology.

For an aspect of daily life that has arguably had the greatest impact on students over the pandemic, technology should be top

priority. But even so, funds are limited and the school district can't refresh all classrooms at the same time — that would cost millions of dollars. So where can the school allocate the necessary funds to refresh technology?

In recent years, students have been encouraged to bring their own devices to school for classes. Admittedly, this does save money, but not every student can or will be able to bring an acceptable device.

Outside the current scope of the school, seeking donations from alumni is another possible way to get more tech funding. According to US News, alumni donations at U.S. colleges alone totaled more than \$11 billion in 2019.

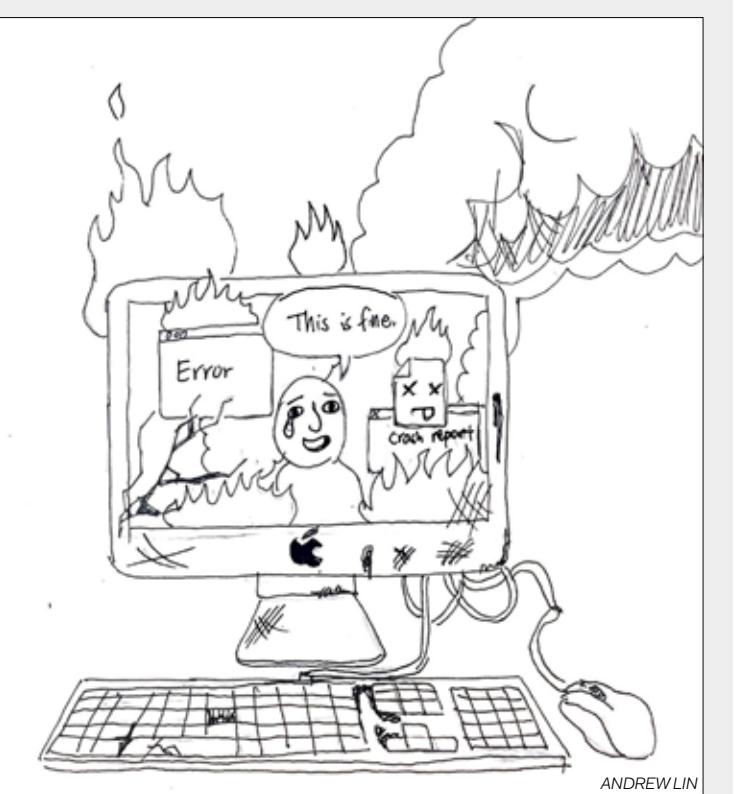
Along with measures to cut costs or seek funding from outside sources, the school should create a booster organization dedicated only to tech funding.

A tech-focused booster organization could fund additional (and important) tech employees and focus on raising money for everything from iPads in math classes to Chromebook carts in science classes.

In addition to funds from students and parents, the booster organization could also reach out to companies like FAANG on behalf of Saratoga employees, which could land relatively up-to-date technology and simultaneously help recycle equipment that would otherwise end up in landfills.

Historically, collecting adequate funding for refreshing outdated technology in schools has been a struggle. In 2011, the state gutted education funds as population declined, an issue that has progressively been getting worse since the pandemic.

Despite the \$1.69 million annual loss in funding for the district at the start of the pandemic, the district tech department



was able to issue Chromebooks for students during quarantine, and nearly every staff member received a new laptop in addition to other necessary equipment such as document cameras to weather the change to online teaching.

Funds were also directed toward upgrading wireless infrastructure in 2020, which include rooftop wireless sites and other facilities that transmit wireless communications, thereby providing more access points for students when they returned on campus.

With the huge role of technology in the school today, more should be done to maintain it, and a dedicated booster organization is a good place to start. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief Andy Chen
Harshini Velchamy
Opinion Editors Lynn Dai
Tiffany Wang
Reporter

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 38-0 in favor of the story.

Keep new bell schedule simple and consistent

By Shaan Shridar

The first option (Draft A) features shortened 85-minute classes (as opposed to the current 90 minutes), 10-minute passing periods, 40-minute daily tutorials and consistent class times. It ends at 2:20 p.m. or 3:55 p.m. on Red Days, and 2:25 p.m. on Blue Days.

The schedules are complicated, but if analyzed closely, it is clear that Draft A is the best option.

The second option (Draft C) features 88-minute classes, 8-minute passing periods and wildly inconsistent start times; there are daily tutorials that are 30 minutes on Red Days and 37 minutes on Blue Days. It ends at 2:19 p.m. or 3:55 p.m. on Red Days, and 2:31 p.m. on Blue Days.

The third and last option (Draft F) features 90-minute classes, 5-minute passing periods and inconsistent class start times; daily tutorials are 25 minutes on Red Days and 45 minutes on Blue Days. It ends at 2:20 p.m. or 3:55

p.m. on Red Days, and 2:45 p.m. on Blue Days. In all honesty, the schedules are complicated, but if analyzed closely, it is clear that Draft A is the best option. The strange start times of Draft C make it a non-starter — no student is going to remember that third period starts at 10:43 a.m. or that sixth period starts at 12:58 p.m.

Draft F is attractive: It fixes warning bells by reducing passing periods to 5 minutes, keeps classes at 90 minutes and implements a daily tutorial.

But the tutorials are unbalanced and the 25 minutes allotted to Red Days is simply not enough. To top it off, the schedule remains inconsistent as class times are not the same between Red and Blue Days.

So we are left with Draft A. A 40-minute tutorial is added to both Blue and Red Days, allotting teachers and students a large chunk of time to work together and combat learning loss.

The schedule is consistent between Blue and Red Days, making it less confusing. School ends earlier on than all the other schedules, allowing students more time to relax at home and focus on their homework and extracurriculars.

So — district leaders — among these options, please choose Draft A to be the next bell schedule. ♦

by Sarah Zhou

Saratoga is a relatively progressive school; students advocate for numerous political issues. But while the majority of these are worth supporting, universal healthcare — in its currently proposed form in the U.S. — is not.

Simply put, there is currently no universal healthcare system — and it should remain that way. The health care system is supported by both private and public insurance programs such as Anthem, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Medicare and Medicaid.

On average, Americans and their employers spend over 17% of their yearly income on health care-related expenses. When over half the U.S. population lives mostly paycheck to paycheck and surgery bills average in the tens of thousands of dollars, people who cannot afford healthcare bills avoid seeking medical care.

While "free" or universal health care is a seemingly simple solution to the cause of 18% of Americans' debt, the unintended consequences risk outweighing the benefits.

Medical workers will get paid less

In 2020, the federal government collected over \$3.42 trillion in tax revenue, yet this amount wouldn't even cover a year's worth of medical expenses — a total of over \$3.8 trillion.

Should UHC apply to chronic illnesses?

Plenty of tough medically related decisions are then left to the broken system to decide. If a person is chronically ill, should they still be entitled to free treatment until they pass away?

If the answer to that question is yes, to what extent does free healthcare apply to patients? On average, cancer treatment costs nearly \$150,000 per patient with some cancers such as mesothelioma having a mortality rate of 92.8%. Would a patient with an expensive mesothelioma treatment plan still be covered?

For one, being on the government's payroll through tax income would leave a flawed pay system in dispute. The process of determining salaries of surgeons, pediatricians, nurses and various other hospital workers would vary, much like the varying minimum wage across states.

Under a single-payer system, the government would lower payments to

hospitals and cut provider payments by around 40% compared to private health insurance.

This would lower the money for physician salaries by nearly 30%, disincentivizing our best and brightest from going into an already demanding profession that requires many years of education beyond a bachelor's degree. Currently, doctors working for private practices can charge whatever they want, and usually, the price depends on their level of expertise.

Under universal health care, however, salaries would be proportional mainly to a doctor's seniority and the number of patients doctors see or hours they work.

On average, Americans and their employers spend over 17% of their yearly income on health care-related expenses. When over half the U.S. population lives mostly paycheck to paycheck and surgery bills average in the tens of thousands of dollars, people who cannot afford healthcare bills avoid seeking medical care.

While "free" or universal health care is a seemingly simple solution to the cause of 18% of Americans' debt, the unintended consequences risk outweighing the benefits.

Why would they sacrifice their quality of life — earning the same income as the average U.S. citizen during their residency — to do a job 15 times as stressful?

Free health care is lower quality

In countries with universal health care, such as Sweden, Japan and Canada, many single-payer health care systems have set budget caps. When the cap is met or exceeded, many patients requiring medical treatment would cover the rest.

This system still has many exceptions where coverage does not apply. For instance, if it can be proved that someone is purposefully ignorant of their health to abuse the system, they would have to pay out of pocket.

For treatments that cost over \$50,000, the amount a person pays for treatment is capped at 10% of their income for all income levels, preventing people in lower-income levels to be forced to pay their entire yearly income to health care bills.

Though the above-proposed plan isn't the perfect solution — it still requires a tax hike, reallocation of funds and provides certain disputable gray areas — it's still a better alternative to nearly doubling taxes and creating unfair wage gaps between medical professionals. ♦

Ethnic studies should be a whole-year class

by Andrew Lin

A bill passed in October requires California schools to offer an Ethnic Studies course by 2025 and makes taking a one-semester Ethnic Studies course a graduation requirement starting in 2029.

In the best-case scenario, some students will not pay attention or take the content seriously.

In the worst case, students will act disrespectfully, joke around and in general make the experience of the class worse for people actually interested in it.

In fact, mandating enrollment in an Ethnic Studies course may cause the opposite of what lawmakers want to achieve, influencing some students to take legitimate issues in society lightly.

These problems can be solved by going with a full-year course. This will allow teachers to take their time and cover all the information thoroughly.

Additionally, this will give it legitimacy as a class, as well as preventing students from viewing Ethnic Studies as something they can halfheartedly cruise through for 18 weeks and never worry about again.

Because of this time constraint, the Ethnic Studies course is fast-paced — especially for a freshman — and students taking the current iteration of the class experience a much higher workload compared to World Geography.

Even though this option will eliminate Health/Driver's Ed, the administration could move the content of that class into Advisory or cover it in some other way.

Additionally, students here so far have mostly shied away from the class. Due to a combination of social stigma, parental pressure and lack of interest in the class or

lack of knowledge about the course, roughly 60 freshmen out of 285 chose to enroll in Ethnic Studies over World Geography this year.

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Minimize harm for teenage girls on Instagram

By Kaasha Minocha

I got my first Instagram account in seventh grade. Excited, I curated my profile carefully, posting every two weeks while aiming to get as many followers as possible.

Scrolling through my feed, I constantly saw girls wearing heavy makeup and sharing their best moments, and I wanted to be like them. This constant desire to obtain Instagram's impossible standards reached its peak during my junior year.

I began to judge my own value, attractiveness and success, based on what I saw from others.

I fell into the vicious cycle of comparing myself to celebrities, models and other girls at school, and reminded myself that I wasn't "smart enough" after seeing our school's college decisions Instagram account.

Over time, this initial anxiety began to eat away at my self-worth, leading me to develop an overwhelming fear of rejection.

Still, I couldn't convince myself to delete the app. I felt that I would constantly be missing out.

This decision changed after listening to a Wall Street Journal podcast, "The Facebook Files, Part 2: We Make Body Image Issues Worse," revealing how Facebook's research concluded that Instagram, which Facebook

owns, was toxic for teenage girls. Their internal study reaffirmed my belief that Instagram negatively affected my mental health.

According to their research, the app has made body image issues worse for one in three girls and more than 40% of Instagram users said they felt "unattractive" while using the app, blaming Instagram for increasing rates in anxiety and depression.

An internal Instagram presentation by the Journal added that when 32% of teenage girls "felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse."

Most striking to me, Instagram research showed that 13% of British users and 6% of American users traced their suicidal feelings to Instagram.

So, what shifted my decision to delete it? Through the podcast, I learned that Facebook is extremely aware of how Instagram harms users, but dismisses their negative points; company executives do not make their research available to academics, lawmakers or the public because it might damage their reputation.

Facebook could also design an algorithm that would sense patterns to improve well-being.

If a user is engaging or obsessing about posts that could be harmful, ranging from body dysmorphia to violence to cyberbullying, the app could gently nudge the user to images that lead them in a better direction.

Instagram should take immediate steps to improve it for the most beneficial user experience, but I decided that I'm not going to sit around until they do. After much contemplation, I deleted Instagram.

And rather than accepting Instagram's downsides, the company flaunts the opposite. In March 2021, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said to lawmakers at a congressional hearing that research showed that social media apps had "positive men-



Graphic by LYNN DAI

delete button, but at the end of the day, at least I know that I'm doing this for my good, rather than letting FOMO rule me. ♦

It



Rape culture fueled by glorification of sexual violence

By Hannah Lee

TW: The following content includes subjects on sexual violence, rape, and assault.

For decades, media and pop culture have consistently portrayed men and women through strict stereotypes: men dominant and powerful, women as passive and powerless objects of male sexual desires.

In pop culture, women rarely see their intelligence or other less-sexualized attributes praised.

Then there are the so-called rape myths that play a huge factor in influencing our culture: supporting the notion that women are somehow "asking for it" based on how they dress and enforcing the idea that a man who is sexually active is a source of envy. Traits such as sexual aggressiveness among men and the compliance of women have been highlighted so much — think of the James Bond franchise, for instance — that it has led society to believe that these behaviors are not just acceptable but laudable. It is time to stop glorifying assault for entertainment reasons.

Rape culture surrounds us in many mediums. From movies to shows to song lyrics to mainstream pornography, women are too often harmfully reduced to mere sexual entities.

Popular shows on Netflix, Hulu and more all take part in glorifying and romanticizing sexual assault and violence. One of Netflix's 2020 releases, "365 Days" has become one of the most viewed films on the platform in the U.S. despite its controversy on glamorizing kidnapping and rape.

The Polish-erotica film, which trended as No. 1 on Netflix's top 10 for weeks, follows an abusive relationship where a powerful man drugs and kidnaps a woman, justifying his cruelty with gifts. The film itself feeds into the popular subgenre of mafia boss/bil-



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

lionaire romance novels, which are known to romanticize abusive relationships by labeling the man as a "bad boy."

This romanticization of abusive relationships is incredibly harmful to how women view relationships as it normalizes the idea that traits like hyper aggression, recklessness and even kidnapping are sexy rather than red flags.

Similarly, the TV series "Game of Thrones" features multiple rape scenes. Characters such as Khal Drogo rape and abuse their wives regularly.

Nonetheless, these characters are largely viewed as bad boys that the audience admires and swoons over, rather than what they actually are: rapists.

Even shows with the intention of being supportive of rape victims such as the "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," accidentally reaffirm damaging ideas present in the worsening rape culture today.

Certain episodes in the show follow the storylines of failed cases against the perpe-

tators and judges blaming victims for their assaults. Certain critics argue that these depictions, despite being realistic to the criminal justice system, could discourage real-life victims from coming forward.

This situation is catch-22 because at the same time, portraying failed cases and how they unfairly treat victims in criminal justice is important in demystifying the myths of rape culture.

Portraying the system that supports the victim no matter what can also invalidate the victims who have gone to court and had their perpetrators walk free, but nonetheless shouldn't be the basis of a show. Even hit songs you may be harmlessly singing along to may exemplify rape culture. For instance, Robin Thicke's hit single "Blurred Lines" speaks on "blurring the lines" of consent with lyrics such as "I know you want it... When you get them jeans on... Swag on 'em When you dress casual, I mean, it's almost unbearable... No more pretending... It always works for me."

The lyrics encapsulate the crux of rape culture, ultimately assuming that every woman inherently desires sexual advances and blaming female clothing for sexual assault.

Media telling victims that sexual violence is normal or sexy makes it much harder for victims to believe they will be taken seriously if they come forward, or even cause them to gaslight themselves out of the situation.

Even pornography, one of the most consumed forms of media and often viewed from an early age, usually inaccurately representing what sex can be with the abundance of themes including violent sex acts and rape fantasies.

Constant viewing of this harmful material perpetuates the romanticization of rape, an increased tolerance for rapists, a rise in sexual violence, thus lowering the value of women in society. ♦

A recent report by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention from 2020 explored how portrayals of sexual abuse can lead to lasting, serious consequences for real-life female victims.

The study found that common media depictions of sexual assault and rape tend to increase victim blaming, and often influence the way criminal systems and the public perceive female victims.

It may also lead viewers to view rape as an act of sex rather than an act of violence. This type of media sends the message that sexual violence is normal or enjoyable for victims causes both abusers to believe that mimicking this behavior is OK.

The best way to put a stop to the popularization of rape culture in media is by stopping harmful depictions in mainstream media as a whole.

Boycotting films for sexist and degrading depictions of women or censoring certain themes of pornography could help halt the spread of glamorizing rape culture.

Media literacy, which is a person's ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending, could also help alleviate part of the issue and spread awareness of normalized sexual violence or abuse.

Despite my friends' annoyance, being indecisive can actually be helpful at times. When I'm faced with multiple choices, my indecisiveness keeps me from making uninformed decisions.

The problem: Such detailed analysis leads to a kind of paralysis. When I have to choose between the different classrooms I need to go to during tutorial, and I find myself stuck in the hallways. Sure, I could split my time between different classes, but I'm not that punctual and definitely too lazy to walk that much.

Puffy but practical

By Victoria Hu

As this year's mid-October chill settled in, I sought out ways to combat the cold.

I brainstormed several options: stuffing my face with Hot Cheetos, leg-warming with my overheating laptop or yelling at my mom to provoke her burning wrath.

But by far the most effective, tried-and-true (not to mention simple) way to stay warm is by wearing a puffer jacket.

For me, wearing one is a seasonal tradition: Every year, I end up dressing like an Antarctic hiker for Halloween. And as a result, I've faced backlash from people who think my fashion taste is either hilarious or as terrible as their Chinese grandmas.

You might say puffer jackets aren't that bad, but as any English teacher will tell you, context is key.

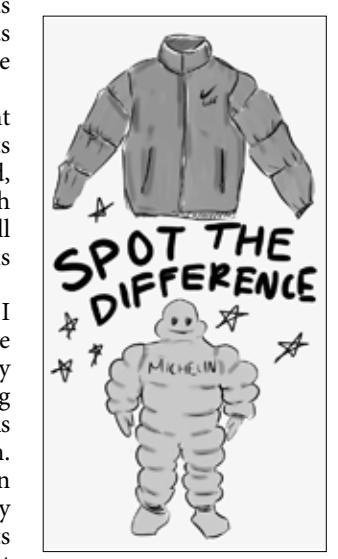
The kind I wear isn't the expensive, trendy kind hanging on the racks at Nordstrom. Instead, I don't buy swollen jackets my mom buys at a discount from Costco that practically double me in size.

In elementary and middle school, I wore a poofy dark blue number with sleeves three times as thick as my own arms. For its discounted price, it was of surprisingly good quality and durable enough to last me through many years of scampering across playgrounds and rolling in the tanbark.

I remember walking to my heavily air conditioned classroom to avoid feeling like a chunk of meat in Ranch 99's refrigerated section.

No matter how many strange glances I receive, I continue to stand by my controversial wardrobe choices for practicality.

This winter, my beloved puffer jacket will keep me warm and toasty while I watch other people turn themselves into fashionable icicles. ♦



SOPHOMORE STYLES

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Style #3

Toga



6th-grade core class wearing this very jacket and hearing a few snickers in the hallway.

I held my ground and shared a few laughs with my friends about being a blue Michelin man — the joke warmed me inside as much as my puffer jacket's insulation technology did.

But when I noticed that tufts of fluffy white cotton had started to escape through the well-worn and patched sleeves of my now too-small jacket, I knew it was time for a change.

When I was in 8th grade, I graduated to my older sister's bluish-purple hand me down, swapping the look of a walking blue cotton candy cloud for an indigo Baymax aesthetic.

This new (well, not really) jacket, although slimmer than my previous one, still has the same level of insulation.

This is crucial, given my distinct lack of cold tolerance — I am someone who is comfortable in 90-degree weather but would quickly die of hypothermia in even slightly sub-room-temperature climates.

I wear thick jackets in every heavily air conditioned classroom to avoid feeling like a chunk of meat in Ranch 99's refrigerated section.

No matter how many strange glances I receive, I continue to stand by my controversial wardrobe choices for practicality.

This winter, my beloved puffer jacket will keep me warm and toasty while I watch other people turn themselves into fashionable icicles. ♦

THANKSGIVING



PREPARING AN ENTIRE THANKSGIVING TURKEY

LYNN DAI

Picture this: You're rushing through the grocery store when something catches your eye — a fridge of full-sized turkeys, selling at just 29 cents a pound, or \$5 each. You look back to make sure it's real.

Now comes the inevitable question: How can such a good deal on the most coveted grocery item of the season last until the end of November?

During the pandemic, restrictions on transportation made it difficult for many families to congregate. As such, fewer families bought turkeys, most of which weighed 15 lbs, nearly 10 times the recommended 600 g intake per week. Thus, grocery stores like Safeway turned to running extreme sales to free up their fridge space.

Considering the low price, my family and I thought it would be a good value. Roasting a turkey is a fun way to

spice up your Thanksgiving and connect with family (and friends!) before the school year reaches its busiest period.

Once we decided to invest in a turkey, however, figuring out how to handle it proved to be a challenge. For one, clearing out enough space in our fridge was quite a task on its own. Following our purchase, we were reduced to eating leftovers for the next two days, leaving the turkey to thaw.

Three days later, we seasoned the interior of the turkey with salt, pepper, onions and a blend of herbs including thyme, parsley and rosemary from our garden.

The body wasn't as deep as I had expected; it was only about half the length of my forearm, not more than a foot. Perhaps childhood cartoons and TV shows like Mr. Bean that portray turkeys more or less as inflatible balloons had skewed my perception of them.

After spreading a layer of herb butter over and underneath the skin of the turkey breasts, the turkey was ready to marinate in the refrigerator overnight.

The next morning, we gently massaged the turkey — now properly tanned — for 15 minutes. Don't let the word "massage" deceive you: It's a full body workout.

Once we tied the legs under the body with twine and covered the body with aluminum foil, the turkey was set to roast at 325 degrees Fahrenheit for four hours, then placed to cool for half an hour outside the oven.

Ideally, we should've let it cool for longer, but the smell of roasted turkey had wafted throughout the house by then and was too tempting to resist. My parents ended up burning themselves twice each in their eagerness to cut the turkey; it took both of them to crack off a section of the back with a chef's knife, as we didn't own a cleaver.

The flavor was as expected: simple and tasty.

The cooking process made the meal more enjoyable, or so the saying goes: You're more inclined to enjoy meals you prepare yourself. Ultimately, eating turkey for Thanksgiving is a simple, hearty meal great for establishing the homey, cozy atmosphere associated with fall.

So you might be wondering: How did three people manage to finish a whole turkey before it went bad? We sliced off the meat suitable for eating and finished within a few days, then used the remaining bones to make turkey soup.

As one of my first experiences cooking in the kitchen, preparing a turkey with my parents gave me insight into just how much time and effort it takes to prepare meals for the family — and I wasn't even doing half of the work.

Even though this recipe was, according to my mom, beginner-friendly, it doesn't detract from the high level of planning required ahead of every meal and the clearheadedness needed during the actual preparation, not to mention the extensive clean-up process after.

I discovered a newfound respect for my parents. But Mom and Dad, please don't take this as my offer to do the dishes every night. ♦






INDIAN THANKSGIVING: REWORKING AMERICA'S MOST FAMOUS MEAL

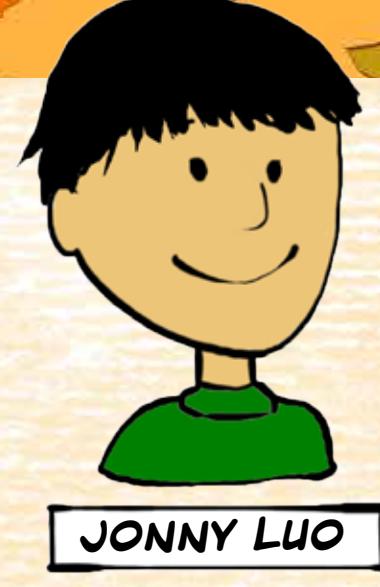
ATREY DESAI

Dosas. Indi. Sambar. Lassi. Welcome to my family's annual "Indian Thanksgiving": a conglomeration of various Indian dishes assembled to resemble a traditional American Thanksgiving meal.

Indian Thanksgiving started when my aunt, uncle and cousins moved from Chicago to the Bay Area and wanted to spend time with family. Thanksgiving offered a great opportunity to get together — the kids were on break and the adults were more than ready to kick back and relax.

There was just one problem: the Thanksgiving menu. They are vegetarian. My family — and most definitely my brother and I — are not. But despite our mountain of protests, we both folded and accepted that our

A CHINESE KID'S THANKSGIVING!



dishes, including some of our favorites: braised pork and stir-fried vegetables. She pulls out all the stops, buying the most expensive ingredients and plating each dish to perfection.

Last year, my mom made a delicious chicken soup, stir fried celfuce and steamed lobster tails. That afternoon, delicious sweet and salty scents poured from the kitchen.

And instead of American dinner rolls, we make fluffy, white Chinese steamed buns. I always enjoy making the dough, rolling it out and shaping meatball-sized portions into beautiful balls of deliciousness.

After they are steamed, we like to eat them plain, deep fried with a side of condensed milk or in "sandwiches" with meat and vegetables. But we don't just cook Chinese food. Thanksgiving is one of the few times during the year when our family eats American food. We almost always have Chinese food (even when we order takeout), but on Thanksgiving, my mom watches YouTube videos on how to cook American dishes, adding her own Chinese spin to the often heavy and buttery American classics.

Typically, my mother spends the entire Thanksgiving day cooking a combination of Chinese and American.

What the **Falcon** is thankful for:
lollipops! - Joann + Audrey
PEACH SNAPPLE - HANNAH




friends! - Tiff
great food - Sam
time w/ family + friends - Jonny

Even for a Chinese Thanksgiving dinner, roasted turkey is still the most important dish. We usually buy a turkey from Ranch 99 (a local Chinese grocery store), but last year, my mom decided to make one herself. Her turkey came out with crispy skin and juicy meat — it was perfect. I look forward to this year's iteration of her now household-famous turkey.

Compared to American turkeys, the turkeys we eat are generally less buttery and don't contain stuffing; instead of rubbing butter under and over the skin, my mother brines the turkey to draw out moisture and crisp the skin.

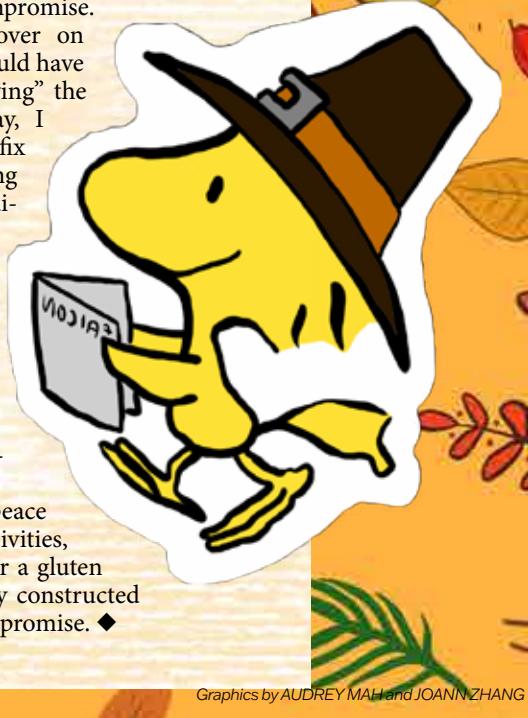
We also go to Costco for a massive and affordable pumpkin pie. For the week after, we'll stuff ourselves with leftover turkey and sugary pumpkin pie. Compared to an American Thanksgiving, we normally have dinner with family friends instead of relatives — all of my relatives still live in China.

After dinner, the parents spend hours chatting over roasted sunflower seeds and playing cards, while the kids play games in the living room.

To me, the separation of parents and children highlights the cultural divide between the immigrant generation and their children, and it makes me cherish my Chinese heritage.

While the parents converse in Chinese, discussing Chinese events and eating traditional snacks, my older brother and I speak in English, chat about American music and guzzle American sodas. Being an American born Chinese, I've always identified more as Chinese than as American — I eat Chinese food, live in an area with a high percentage of Chinese immigrants, and hang out with mostly East Asian friends.

My family's yearly mashup of American and Chinese cuisine during Thanksgiving serves as a reminder that a whole different, delicious culture exists outside of my Asian bubble in the Bay Area. ♦



So, after much brainstorming, my family came up with a compromise. If our relatives came over on Thanksgiving Day, we could have an "American Thanksgiving" the weekend after. That way, I could get my turkey fix while still accommodating my uncle and aunt's dietary restrictions.

Now, the annual "Indian Thanksgiving" with my relatives and family has become one of the greatest reunions of my lifetime, filled with a myriad of delicious, savory dishes.

I can only hope that peace remains for this year's festivities, lest lactose intolerance or a gluten allergy ruin our carefully constructed Thanksgiving-menu compromise. ♦

Graphics by AUDREY MAI and JOANN ZHANG

'Bloons Tower Defense 6' is the best game ever

BY SamBai
& JonnyLuo

"Bloons TD 6," released mid-2018, is the latest edition of the well-known Bloons Tower Defense series by video game developer Ninja Kiwi. The first installation in the series was released as a flash game in the middle of 2007.

Each monkey has three different upgrade paths, and players can only choose two of these paths to upgrade. One of these two paths can be fully maxed out, while the other path is locked at two upgrades. Players are also limited by the amount of cash they have, and complex strategies revolve around making more cash through monkey abilities and banana farms, a cash generating monkey.

"Bloons TD 6" (Bloons stands for Balloons) falls into the category of games called Tower Defense games, where a player places down towers to defend against oncoming enemies. Another well-known game in this genre is Plants vs. Zombies.

Unlike other Tower Defense games with very limited selections of how to play, "Bloons TD 6" has a near infinite selection of choices, with millions of unique monkey combinations available to defend your base from the evil bloons.

"Bloons TD 6" has two main tower types: heroes and monkeys. There are 13 heroes in the game, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Each hero levels up automatically, gaining XP (experience) based on the difficulty of the map. One essential part of the game is choosing which hero would go best with one of 62 maps you can choose to play.



Graphic by SAM BAI

Community members can also make custom challenges that greatly expand on the preset gameplay, and seemingly simple challenges can take hours to beat after searching for the correct strategy.

We also love how "Bloons TD 6" is one of the few games where non-paying players are not at a noticeable disadvantage. Initially, monkey upgrades are locked, and instead of paying, you can naturally unlock these upgrades by using the monkey to defend against Bloons. Additionally, no game modes, monkeys or maps are locked behind paywalls, unlike some games by major publishing companies with multitudes of expensive expansion packs.

Overall, "Bloons TD 6" has great value, especially because you can easily get hundreds of hours of play-time for a mere \$10 (sometimes one dollar on sale). If you are ever looking for a new game to add to your Steam library, you cannot go wrong with "Bloons TD 6." ♦

Why I'm so terrible at playing competitive Valorant

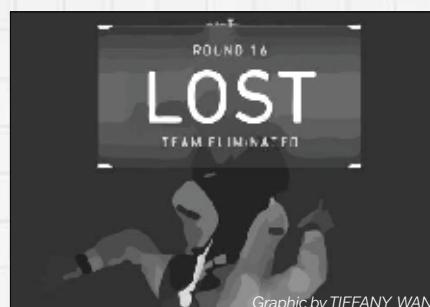
BY TiffanyWang

3, 2, 1. The round starts and the barriers in front of me disappear. I pull out my virtual "Vandal," a rifle based on the real-life AK-47, and immediately run forward into A-site, where defenders are patiently waiting for this exact, extremely illogical play.

"Tiffany, don't peek!" my friend says frantically. "You're going to die immediately."

"Don't worry. I got this!" I run into the open, and before I even see the red outlines denoting the enemy team, I get shot once in the head and watch my sad virtual agent topple to the ground. I press tab and look at the kill leaderboard: 0 kills, 3 deaths.

Over the summer, I finally hopped on the Valorant bandwagon and downloaded the game. Valorant is a first-person shoot-



er game developed by Riot Games released in 2020.

The game has a big learning curve, especially since I've never played an FPS game before. I had to learn all the basic mechanics including controlling movement through the WASD keys, aiming with my mouse and getting used to the 3-D perspective. ♦

For my first game, I played with the character Sage and walked around healing my teammates while trying to not get killed. It was a complete failure: I got maybe one kill in 20 rounds and died basically every round.

Worst of all, I didn't have a fancy PC, instead stuck with my 5-year-old Lenovo laptop that turns on the fan when I open one too many Chrome tabs. This resulted in my game running at only 20 frames per second and always lagging, further hindering my experience. Even my keyboard and mouse were the generic office ones, so when I tried to jingle peek, it did not work.

Currently, I don't have much time to play now that school has started and college applications are taking up most of my time. Hopefully when second semester starts, I can grind Valorant again and maybe hit Bronze. ♦

Graphic by ANNIE LIU

Jaz's Blog: Junior experiments with poetry as outlet

BY HannahLee

"Your hand on the edge of my jaw... An arm against the small of my back... Legs tangled together... Like the roots of a tree."

These lines are found in the first stanza of "Roots," a poem junior Jasmine Ispasoiu published in October on her self-produced blog website.

From what started as a love for writing and spoken word (performance-based poetry that focuses on storytelling and experimentation with other art forms) in eighth grade, Ispasoiu now updates "Jaz's Blog" almost weekly. She started writing poetry in August of this year.

On it, readers can find an array of her poems, many of them expressing traumatic or deeply personal experiences.

Each piece Ispasoiu writes is usually inspired by subjects or metaphors she comes up with in her daily life. She then turns that metaphor or topic into poetry. Ispasoiu said she started posting her poetry on her blog because she felt that people could relate to her writing.

"I felt like a lot of people might be going through similar experiences and might take comfort in knowing someone else is going through these things or someone has lived through these things and are able to talk about it," she said.

Junior Alexandria Pak has been an avid reader of Ispasoiu's blog since the blog went public in August. She appreciates Ispasoiu's perspective as a local student who shares Pak's own struggles.

"I think her blog is great representation for people who deal with the topics she talks about because you don't see this stuff in

mainstream media," she said. "I relate to it a lot so reading her poetry makes me feel more secure in my own thoughts and my own person."

Ispasoiu prefers to type her poetry and spends little time on each piece — an hour being the longest she's ever really spent on a first draft.

She goes through her own editing process. After she writes a first draft, she starts by rereading her work multiple times, and as she goes over each stanza she either edits it or deletes it entirely. She mostly edits as she goes, and does one last final edit on her final draft before uploading it to her blog.

Ispasoiu attempts to upload on her blog consistently even throughout the school year so every Friday she will write a new piece.

"Every time she uploads a piece, I get so happy seeing her grow as a poet," Pak said. "It's also so cathartic as a reader to hear about her deeper experiences many are so afraid to share."

Although she said that she doesn't specialize in any genre of poetry, Ispasoiu finds writing poems as a form of therapeutic self-expression.

"I feel like poetry is an art form; specifically a form of self-expression," she said. "You can do anything with it because it's such a malleable, broad and diverse art form."

Outside of writing poetry, Ispasoiu enjoys reading and baking and is interested in social justice.

As for what goes on her blog, Ispasoiu said she's not very selective. If she likes a piece enough for others to see, she uploads it. Whenever she updates her blog, she pro-



Courtesy of JASMINE ISPASOIU

motizes it on her Instagram story for readers to view, and it's also linked in her Instagram bio, @fatherjasmine.

Though Ispasoiu said her experiences with writing poetry have been mostly positive, she said she faces hardships when people say things like "you better be nice to Jasmine or you'll end up on her blog."

Although Ispasoiu said she doesn't have any notable accomplishments, she said she prefers to keep it mostly recreational for the time being. She's also considering applying to the Kenyon Review, a selective literary magazine. Though she doesn't think she'll get selected, she plans to enter her poetry and see where it goes for fun.

Though Ispasoiu said she is unsure of what her future plans are with her blog or her poetry, she wants to try slam poetry (poetry spoken before a live audience and a panel of judges, often loud and lively) in the future, possibly by going to a youth poet group after COVID-19 dies down.

"It's all very cathartic," Ispasoiu said. "I feel like the things I write about are kind of hard to talk about with other people because they may not understand or may be going through it themselves, so just to have that kind of personal outlet is really awesome." ♦

Mac Miller's album 'Faces' caps his remarkable legacy

BY ArnavSwamy

When the announcement of late rapper Mac Miller's album "Faces" circulated online recently, a wave of nostalgia was natural. The album, which was a repurposing of his mixtape of the same name in 2014, included a few extra tracks and was officially released to streaming platforms on Oct. 15 after seven years of dormancy.

Miller's death, due to an accidental drug overdose in September 2018, sparked a tsunami of regret and mourning for the loss of one of the most diverse and honest rappers in the music industry. His music, which was marked by lamenting beats and pensive lyrics, became a treasure to those interested in rap and revolutionized the emotional power that the genre is capable of.

Miller's musical career is rooted in his hometown, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he began singing and teaching himself how to play instruments from age 6 on. His commitment and love for music would remain unwavering until his death at age 26.

Miller styled his music around the lifestyle of the Pittsburgh ghettos. His talent has always been jeopardized by his long addiction to drugs, and while his addiction eventually beat him, it enabled him to produce a dark but ultimately cathartic album like "Faces."

The album does an excellent job living up to his legacy. While the majority of it was produced before his death and was only just released to streaming platforms, its themes and messages reach a new height after his death. The album's quiet and introspective lyrics question his significance in the increasingly more materialistic music industry, facetting his continuing ability to be one of the most powerful storytellers in the rap scene.

Compared to mainstream rap music, which is typically volatile and invasive, "Faces" incorporates an unusual instrumental style. It's signed by an andante, consistent rhythm,

a cleanly simple but complex array of instruments and exceptional flow between Miller's rapping and the thoughtfully crafted beats.

Lyrical, it is amplified even further due to his death, giving it an extremely distinctive "it's the last day" mood, which is trademarked by its wistful but prospecting sounds and his carefully tired speech.

Miller's album is not monotone, though. The album features songs that can satisfy any listener. Songs like "Insomniak" cement his ability to be ferocious in message and tempo. Tracks like "Funeral" slow it down a notch and unpack Miller's intricate understanding of himself and his issues, spare of the materialism prevalent in today's rap.

Other songs like "Diablo" and "Ave Maria" exemplify Miller's excellent taste and ability to create a catchy but moody beat, hooking new listeners easily to the core introspective message that signifies the album's identity: cold, unadulterated realism.

Miller's honesty and transparency as an artist come together perfectly in "Faces." Every song, especially songs like "Happy Birthday" and "Polo Jeans," treat listeners with a painfully realistic scope of his modest upbringing.

It forged a relatable bond with his listeners, who typically find it difficult to connect to the impressive lifestyle that mainstream rap is inundated with.

Despite Miller's passing, "Faces" serves as a reminder of how music can deliver a powerful message, especially in a diverse scene like rap.

Miller's legacy will only continue to blossom thanks to the foundation created in his legacy by his family and close friends.

The foundation, known as the Mac Miller Fund, aims to educate adolescents on the dangers of drug usage and provide young artists the tools to fully utilize their talent through music workshops and the like. The crown of rap will always shine in a certain angle of the spotlight with the jewel of Miller, whose piercing messages and the care in his craft places him on his own throne. ♦

By KaashaMinocha

Most teens spend their Friday nights with friends, but not me. On a typical evening, you can find me seated comfortably in front of the TV, eating scrumptious brownies and watching the classic British series "Downton Abbey" with my grandparents, sisters and mom.

When my mom initially recommended the show this summer, I had low expectations. A historical drama about a British aristocratic family and social hierarchy set in the early 1900s? No thank you. But, to my surprise, I — along with the rest of my family — loved it.

The show is set at the fictional Yorkshire country estate of Robert Crawley and Cora Crawley, Earl and Countess of Grantham, respectively, and depicts the lives of the Crawley family and their servants.

Our obsession with the show began in July. Though each episode had so many moving parts and were over 50 minutes, we couldn't help but watch more (Extra perk: You feel less guilty binge watching with others than alone).

It's the simple yet iconic theme song and Crawley family matriarch Violet Crawley's witty and honest one-liners such as "an aristocrat without servants is about as useful as a glass hammer" make this show so enjoyable.

The show creates an amazing sense of depth for each character, despite there being so many, which causes viewers to become invested in each character's love life, happiness and well-being. I get caught up in their lives, whether it's wanting to know more about Lady Edith Pelham's (daughter to Lord Grantham) work as a magazine columnist in a patriarchal society.

Ultimately, something about watching and discussing a show with my grandparents allows us to connect and bond despite generational gaps and calms the frenzy of my college apps.

Through serving as a much-needed escape from the frenzy of senior year and allowing me to create invaluable memories with my family, "Downton Abbey" has reminded me to cherish each moment of time with family and realize what truly matters. ♦

'Downton Abbey' brings three generations together

By KaashaMinocha

"Downton Abbey" is uplifting; the show makes you champion the central characters, feel emotionally connected to the setting and reminisce about a completely different world.

The incredible setting and phenomenal dialogues give all characters individuality as they mature throughout each season, like Daisy (an assistant cook), who grows from an uneducated kitchen maid to an assertive and intelligent cook.

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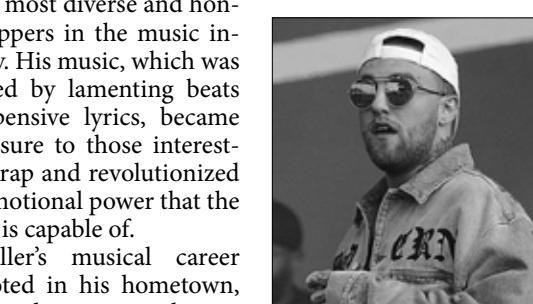
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Courtesy of PENN STATE



Courtesy of NICOLAS VOLCKER

MAP 10 brings ghost podcasts to reality

by AnamikaAnand
& VictoriaHu

From focusing on daily news to acting as reporters from the 20th century, Media Arts Program students in the past have produced podcasts on a variety of topics. However, for this year's twist, MAP 10 students explored the supernatural world by recording podcasts based on ghost stories.

Cortez said the skills students gain from editing audio by piecing together interviews and smoothing out transitions directly improves their writing abilities.

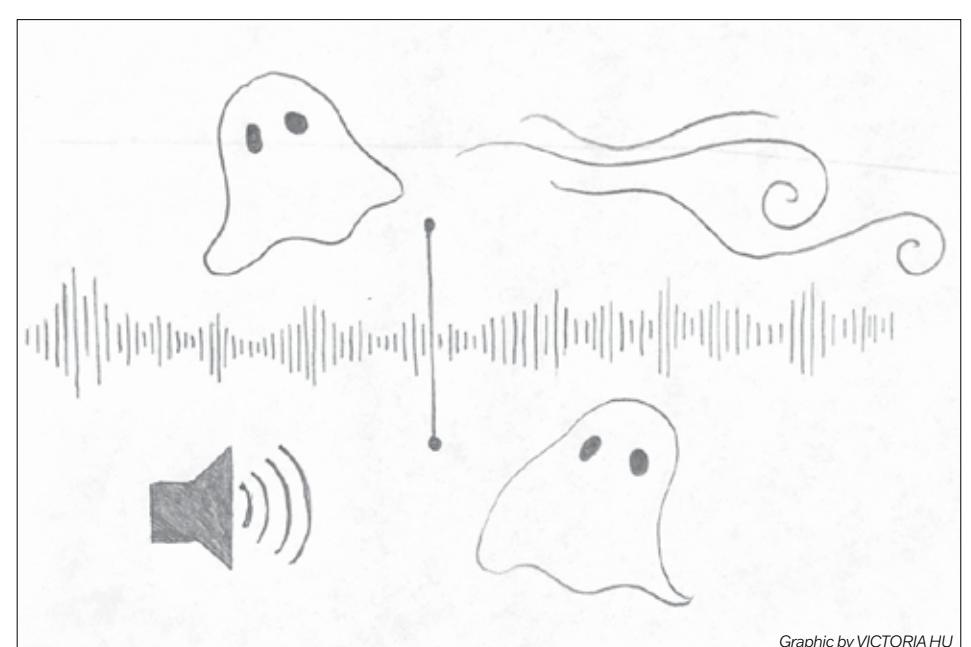
"When students edit audio or film, it demands that they look very critically at the words they're using, and at what point they're ending one sentence and beginning another," Cortez said. "I have found that this translates really well to writing."

While students gained proficiency working with editing software, they also developed interpersonal skills by collaborating, planning and delegating roles, Hemmerich said. He enjoyed watching students "build this atmosphere, this vibe around ghost stories, by combining components in a very thoughtful, intentional manner."

For sophomore Adeena Kadire, creating a ghost podcast was challenging yet



Kadire



Graphic by VICTORIA HU

rewarding. Her group's first hurdle was finding someone with a supernatural story to tell. They called churches, but never received responses back.

However, by simply asking the people around her, Kadire discovered that her mother had a ghost story about seeing an apparition from a haunted tree in China. Although she felt glad to find a story for her project, she was shocked to hear about the paranormal affecting her own family.

Her group also faced additional difficulties while editing their audio, due to her mom's multilingual interviews.

"Because my mom's first three languages

aren't English, we had to cut out certain words in other languages," Kadire said. "We also had to cut out filler words, such as 'likes' and 'ums,' and switch the order of words around."

Despite the difficulties with audio editing, Kadire said she enjoyed working with her group mates and "loved the project so much more than anything else done so far this year."

Cortez ranks the ghost podcast project among his favorites.

"I enjoy ghost stories," he said. "And I see the value in students going out and finding really good stories to tell." ♦

Music building remains the elite campus hotspot

by ShannonMa

Most students know the places to be on campus for fun, camaraderie or intense studying. In recent years, the Student Center, the library and the music building have been top go-to stops due to their high-level offerings in comfort and convenient locations.

However, coming back on campus during the pandemic has forced administration to place restrictions on indoor gatherings in places like these; eating in the Student Center is completely blocked off and the library stays closed during tutorial and lunchtime. As a result, once-popular student hotspots are now frequently desolate.

One exception is the music building, which bustles with activity during tutorials and after school. Before COVID-19 shut down the school, the Student Center was one of the most highly demanded lunch locations. The numerous desks of all sizes and heights, couches and bean bags were perfect for eating, working and socializing. Similarly, the availability of printers, computers and the bright working environment made the library highly sought-after during tutorials.

But ever since the school year commenced, indoor lunch-eating was banned because constricted air transmission increased COVID-19 risks. Meanwhile, the music building has seen few restrictions and has kept its availability just as before.

The pandemic situation improves and restrictions loosen, the Student Center and library will open regularly and invite throngs of students into its doors once again. But for now, the music building is the hottest hotspot on campus. ♦



FALCON // SANJOLI GUPTA

vast, carpeted space in every rehearsal room are so spacious that they do not violate any regulations.

Besides its luxurious space provisions, there are 10 practice rooms upstairs, each containing a piano. Music program students gather to practice their instruments in a peaceful, focused environment.

But perhaps the music building's foremost calling feature is its pristine bathrooms. In contrast to the other restrooms on campus, the tiled floors shine pearly white and are void of stains, the mirrors are shiny and contain no cracks, the flush sound of the toilets is not a jumpscare-inducing roar and, best of all, there is no unpleasant stench.

Instead, visitors are greeted by bright lights and the scent of soap.

But perhaps the music building's foremost calling feature is its pristine bathrooms.

The comfortable restroom experience, enormous space options for work, chances to socialize and practice and consistent availability add up to making the music building the epitome of an ideal campus hotspot.

As the pandemic situation improves and restrictions loosen, the Student Center and library will open regularly and invite throngs of students into its doors once again. But for now, the music building is the hottest hotspot on campus. ♦

"I felt like, especially coming out of COVID-19, it would be helpful to open up more avenues of communication with the parent community," Satake said.

The idea of Friday Family Time started when Satake was invited to

School hosts Friday Family Times

by JonnyLuo

Principal Greg Louie, guidance counselor Alinna Satake and 15 parents sat in a circle on Oct. 15 in the community center, discussing topics such as college admissions, GPA calculations, concerns for students' mental health and even the Los Gatos mom who was arrested in October.

The meeting was the first Friday Family Time meeting, a monthly meeting that Louie and Satake have set up to discuss parents' questions and concerns. These meetings occur on the third Friday of every month, from 9:30-10:30 a.m.

"The school takes into consideration the concerns brought forth by parents during the meetings and through the Google Form. For example, after a parent brought up a question about student stress after reading 'How to Raise an Adult' by Julie Lythcott-Haims, Satake decided to start a Book Club for parents to discuss the book and others that discuss student stress."

Parent Baoming Huang said she is planning to attend more meetings in the future and prefers the in-person format.

The Friday Family Time meetings are held in-person instead of online because Louie "hates hybrid-mode with the fire of a thousand suns." Parents have similarly expressed the idea that they prefer meeting in-person rather than online.

"I really enjoyed Friday Family Time; it was candid, friendly, and very informative," Huang said. "I appreciate the opportunity to have a dialogue with the school administration in such a productive way — nothing beats being able to sit in a room, look at a person, and have a genuine conversation." ♦

The Saratoga Falcon
November 23, 2021

The Saratoga Falcon
November 23, 2021

Technical theater now offered as after-school class

by VictoriaHu

"OK, flats teams, go!"

A steady stream of cheerful chatter and the low hum of machines sound through the workshop located behind the science building. The scent of wood fills the room as stage tech students bustle around sawing, drilling and assembling planks of wood to create set pieces for the fall play "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which will be performed on Nov. 12-13 and Nov. 18-20.

While the drama club has traditionally been responsible for designing and creating the set for previous fall plays, this year, due to high student interest in the crafting aspects of stage preparation, the school is offering technical theater as an official semester-long course. Students learn to handle the set, props and costumes for drama productions.

Currently, 13 students are enrolled in the class to prepare for performances including the fall play, the spring musical, a New Works festival in May and a sketch comedy night fundraiser. Volunteers not registered in the course also help with the work.

Unlike other classes, technical theater is recognized as an 8th-period class to allow for scheduling flexibility outside of school hours. In order to meet the minimum mandatory instructional hours, stage tech members attend class as well as optional sessions outside class and log the "hours" they spend working to receive course credits.

"We do meet one consistent time a week, from four to six on Wednesdays," drama director Benjamin Brotzman said. "That gets us about 35 of the 66 hours we need. The other time is covered by working outside of class on projects and tasks to run the technical aspect of the show."

Although Brotzman teaches the class, adult leaders Nicholas Friend and Cathie Theron also guide and supervise students when they attend workshop sessions on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in the weeks leading up to the fall play. Friend oversees the engineering and construction of the set, while Theron leads students in costume design.

On top of designing the Shakespearean set, props and costumes, stage tech students

are also responsible for coordinating the light and sound systems of the McAfee stage and applying stage makeup for performers. During the week of the show, students will work front of house by selling tickets, scanning e-tickets and ushering the audience into their seats.

"They're getting real-life experience doing building, costuming and actually working on the play itself," Brotzman said. "Instead of a sit down, instructional kind of class, [stage tech] is more of a hands-on experience to create physical things."

At the start of each class, Brotzman compiles a list of tasks students need to complete. The students then volunteer for roles accordingly.

Due to the physical nature of working with wood and tools such as hammers, screwdrivers, panel saws, staple guns and sanders, students wear gloves to protect from cuts and splinters as well as safety goggles and face shields to prevent sawdust from entering their eyes.

Brotzman said he believes that students gain engineering skills through the process of taking brainstormed ideas on paper to final, tangible products. They learn to focus on details and think as customers in order to design pieces to fit their standards.

Due to high student interest in the crafting aspects of stage preparation, technical theater is offered as a semester long course.



During an after school technical theater class, drama director Benjamin Brotzman draws and describes the design and dimensions of a set piece to senior set designer Leslie Robinson.

FALCON // VICTORIA HU

record and edit sound effects, Maheshwar said.

Some students who are actively involved in both technical theater and drama often struggle to find time to show up to work sessions due to conflicts between acting, rehearsals and workshop hours in the busy rush leading up to the performance date. Maheshwar is one student facing these challenges. "It's always a time crunch," she said. "I'm excited for the play, but also a little stressed."

Nevertheless, Robinson believes that technical theater has made great progress and is on track for the performance. For both students, the class's friendly environment, the satisfaction of preparing for the show and the skills they gain ultimately contribute to an enjoyable experience.

"I love the behind-the-scenes aspect of theater and seeing what adds up to a final show," Maheshwar said. "I really feel like tech theater is a place where I belong and it is something I really love to do." ♦

Student ambassadors work to increase Wellness Center use

by AnamikaAnand

Imagine a place away from all the bright lights and noisy chatter of school. Herbal aromas fill the air, spreading a calm feeling throughout the room. Two small fountains flow on either side of the room, adding gentle splashing sounds to the peace and serenity.

Enter the Wellness Center. Located behind the student center in the 800 building, it's somewhat hidden away from the rest of the school, despite being intentionally placed in the middle of the school by previous principal Paul Robinson so that students could easily access it.

"Not many students know that we're here and what we're here for," Wellness Center coordinator Marina Barnes said. "The Wellness Center is here for you to come and take a break to destress, as a way to take care of yourself."

In addition to providing a calm environment to destress, the Wellness Center also offers beanbags and tables laden with fidget toys such as stress balls and kinetic sand. Among other relaxation activities, there is a zen artboard, where students can paint with water and watch their art disappear.

"[The artboard] is a reminder that things in our lives are impermanent," Barnes said. "I find it really calming and helps you to destress."

Students can "simply sit and relax for a little while," and there is a team of four therapists accessible for students to talk to, Barnes said.

Students can walk into the center anytime, but there is also a referral form in which a student can remain anonymous



FALCON // ANAMIKAAANAND

when asking for help. Another resource the Wellness Center provides is an online therapy resource called TalkSpace. Through TalkSpace, students can call or message therapists when they need to.

Despite these resources, Barnes feels that not many students are aware that the Wellness Center exists. Thus, the Wellness Center created a student group called the Youth Outreach Committee (YOC) that has been tasked with spreading awareness.

The YOC ambassadors meet twice a month. The main goal of each meeting is to figure out new ways to spread information about wellness services. The ambassador group consists of Noora Fayad, Tanya Ghai, Sadaf Sobhani, Alaina Srivastav, Catherine Kan, Grace Hsu, Aditya Vekatram, Emma Foley, Elizabeth Stoiber and Sahil Shaik. Many of the students are presidents of other

wellness clubs at school as well, like Yoga For All or Sources of Strength.

So far, the group has discussed bringing Wellness Center information directly to classrooms as well as making kits that students can order based on their needs. The wellness kits can include things as simple as fidget toys or soap.

Srivastav, who is working to get her Gold Award as a Girl Scout, has also spearheaded an initiative to create a digital bulletin board on campus that will display mental health resources for students, encouraging them to seek the help they need.

Having experienced mental health struggles herself, Srivastav understands the importance that it should have in everyone's lives, especially students.

"After I dealt with so many of my problems in high school, I realized that [mental health] is super important, especially when it comes to academics," Srivastav said. "If my mental health is suffering, then my grades are also going to suffer."

Even if students know that help is available for them, mental health services are one of the most stigmatized organizations at school. According to the American Psychiatric Association, stigma and discrimination can worsen symptoms and reduce likelihood of getting treatment. Barnes said she believes that the Wellness Center is the healing center for the mind and heart, just like the doctor is the healing place for physical injuries.

"Mental health is something that we can't see," Barnes said. "If you break a leg, you can, and there's no stigma around going to the doctor for that. So I encourage kids to approach mental health and emotional assistance that way." ♦

PRESERVING SARATOGA?

City wrestles with state demands for increased housing

by LynnDai

Saratoga is known as a tranquil suburb where single-family homes boast residents living in one of the wealthiest cities in the nation. The classic suburban atmosphere features quiet mornings and peaceful streets — features that, along with its high-ranking public schools, lure a consistent wave of home buyers, despite the city's median housing price of \$3.5 million, more than 11 times that of the national median as of September 2020.

It's not surprising that the last thing many residents want are duplexes and fourplexes changing neighborhoods — a situation now made more possible when Gov. Gavin Newsom signed SB 9 into law recently, allowing property owners to reconstruct parcels zoned for single-family housing to duplexes or fourplexes. Suburban communities all over the state are now wrestling with what might happen because of the new laws. It's also in a race to add 1,712 new units by 2023 because of state requirements, but that goal is exceedingly hard to meet unless major changes happen quickly.

"Saratoga is basically the city of trees, and it's beautiful," said Danny Moon, a resident who is also the school's girls' cross country coach. "High-density housing isn't conducive to the streets here; it takes away from the rural aspect of the city. There's not many places like Saratoga around anymore, especially in neighboring cities like Campbell, which have been condensing very heavily."

The town went from being rural to suburban after World War II and was incorporated in 1956. The slogan "Keep it rural" was used in campaigns for its incorporation process, according to late historian Willy Peck.

While California had an adequate supply of affordable housing units in the 1970s, according to an NPR article, the federal government slashed the budget for affordable housing in 1981 and gutted state funds for social programs such as mental institutions. Critics say the move incited a surge of homelessness and housing shortages

across the state. As regions like the Bay Area attracted the attention of highly paid professionals in the computer-driven economy, the addition of new units failed to keep up with demand for them.

Since the California Housing Element Law was adopted in 1969, cities and counties in California have been required to designate sufficient housing with a varied number of units to accommodate the needs of people across all income levels.

Despite this legislative initiative, California has not produced enough housing to accommodate its population growth. Just last year, according to the 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), nearly 30 percent of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. reside in California. The RHNA allocation methodology approved on Jan. 21 by the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board allocates an additional 1,712 housing units, with 454 in the very low-income range and 719 in the above moderate range. By contrast, only 439 building permits were issued in December 2019, with 147 in the extreme and very low-income sectors and 93 in the above moderate income range.

High-density, residential and commercial housing that accommodates more people per unit is the state's solution to address its housing crisis. Specifically, Newsom's Sept. 16 approval of Senate Bills 9 (SB 9) and 10, two days after he overcame a Republican-led recall effort, ends many of the protections for single-family housing and allows for single lots to be converted into duplexes or fourplexes. It also facilitates upzoning of up to 10 units.

Developments that aim to combat California's housing shortage — especially SB 9 and 10 and updated Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goal of supplying 1,712 units of high-density housing by 2023 — have many Saratogans worried that if these changes lead to more duplexes and fourplexes in neighborhoods, their city will begin to lose its defining characteristics: lush greenery, serene streets and an idyllic semi-rural atmosphere.

The lure of Saratoga's houses

On a recent fall day, a young millennial couple window-shopped Saratoga's streets after lunch together. The man stopped by a

two-story single-family home that caught his eye: Bedecked with greenery and pools with cascading waterfalls on a 0.98-acre lot.

Such homes are real-life Shangri-las. The house above, located on hilly Saravie Court just a kilometer from Saratoga High, is listed for sale at \$4.3 million.

The couple, who wish to remain anonymous, moved from Mainland China to Mountain View in 2015 to work for FAANG companies. Now living in a \$2 million single-family home, they are searching for a more spacious home in a peaceful community.

"I don't think there's an area that can satisfy these factors at the same time," the woman said. "That's why it's so difficult to buy a home around here."

She said she could afford the home because her parents provided part of the down payment.

"Even if the goals of SB 9 are established, I'd still want to live in Saratoga," the woman said. "It'd still be more spacious than the homes in areas like Mountain View."

While housing in Mountain View has an average lot size of 6,750 square feet, the average lot size in Saratoga is approximately 23,000 square feet.

Her partner, however, primarily wanted to buy a home in Saratoga because of the similarities it shares with his hometown in China — shaded trees, hills and mountains.

For new residents like Cindy Wu, an art teacher who previously lived in Milpitas, making the decision to move to Saratoga was a no-brainer, despite the grueling six-month process of buying a home.

As a result of the high housing prices in Saratoga, she could only afford a \$1.79 million townhome despite the fact that she lived in a single-family home in Milpitas.

Though Wu considered homes in Los Gatos and Palo Alto, she said she was drawn to Saratoga and the high ratings of its schools.

"I love the cultural diversity here," Wu said in Chinese, "and the people are motivated and inclusive. That's the environment I hope my children will grow up in."

Benefits of high-density housing

Advocates of ending legal preferences for traditional single-family housing say favoring high-density housing won't be an uncontrollable spiral. According to the "Myths and Facts About Affordable and High Density Housing Report" by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (CAHCD), it may "help balance" communities, as it did for Silicon Valley in the Renaissance Project, which upzoned a 56-acre site in 1985 yet halted NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) sentiment, a characterization of residents' opposition to proposed developments in their area.

More than half of Saratoga land is in the Wildland Urban Interface area, consisting primarily of hillsides at high or very high risk for wildfires. Some critics of density have pointed out that fault zones like San Andreas are identified as extremely high fire hazards, yet the few roads of escape are narrow, steep and can

Saratoga resident Steven Moustakas is an avid supporter of the two housing bills. In his response to city council member Rishi Kumar's email about SB 9 and SB 10, Moustakas lauded the goal of solving California's housing problems by increasing housing supply.

"From my experience having watched my low-income childhood neighborhood

"Take some photos, because if we don't stop the development, this is all going to be gone in 20 years."

SARATOGA RESIDENT Glenda Onnie

in Perth, Australia, be converted positively from single dwelling to multi-dwelling homes, expensive Saratoga houses will not be replaced ad nauseam with duplexes and multiple units," he said.

Instead, Moustakas maintains that lower-income neighborhoods tend to be converted into multi-unit homes while expensive cities like Saratoga mostly remain single-family housing with the addition of some conversions to expensive duplexes.

He referenced an article from The Economist: California projects a need between 1.8 million and 3.5 million homes by 2025 to address the shortage, and the impact of SB 9 on single-family homes is critical to that goal. According to the Terner Center For Housing Innovation, an organization established at UC Berkeley in 2015, it would enable development on 5.4 percent of single-family lots, an amount that constitutes 40 percent more than would otherwise have been developed.

While the immediate impact of these laws that take effect Jan. 1 isn't clear, Moustakas said the city needs to start taking action and residents shouldn't partake in the "needless fear-mongering" that commonly portrays SB 9 and SB 10 as a one-sided doomsday situation for single-family homes.

Housing plans don't take aesthetics, safety into account, critics say

The RHNA methodology has garnered backlash from many residents who believe its proposals failed to address the unique infrastructure and resources in different communities. In an appeal drafted on July 8, both residents and the city council of Saratoga expressed heavy opposition to RHNA's required additions, calling out its failure to consider the existing and projected jobs, the lack of available land suitable for urban development and the increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Neither SB 9 nor SB 10 takes into account the potential impact of additional infrastructure on wildfire containment, water storage and the blocking of rooftop solar panels, concerns that many Saratoga residents outlined in a string of public emails to the RHNA.

More than half of Saratoga land is in the Wildland Urban Interface area, consisting primarily of hillsides at high or very high risk for wildfires. Some critics of density

have pointed out that fault zones like San Andreas are identified as extremely high fire hazards, yet the few roads of escape are narrow, steep and can

not be widened.

Glenda Onnie, a Saratoga resident who has lived on Pierce Road for over 35 years, referenced a UC Berkeley study from a front-page Mercury News article on June 10. The study showed that clustered defensible housing in high-risk areas like hillsides dwellings "means destroying the peace and tranquility of their neighborhoods," DeMartini wrote in the letter. People in outlying communities see Saratoga as a beacon for its peaceful, sleepy environment — a trait that, for Saratoga residents, is an indisputable element of the city's culture and place identity.

Proposals for RHNA high-density housing sites

At the Housing Element Community meeting on Oct. 27, the city revealed that there are currently 164 units proposed or under construction in the Quito Village Development, Marshall Lane Subdivision, Quito Vessing Subdivision and Saratoga Retirement Community areas. Nine of the units are low-income housing designated for families whose incomes don't exceed 80 percent of Saratoga's \$191,000 median family income, and the rest are designated for above moderate-income families.

SB 9 and 10 also raise concerns for Saratoga's water storage, which, unlike other cities in Santa Clara County, is dependent on its own aquifer instead of water provided by other sources. Although the city enforces strict regulations to ensure the amount of water is enough to replenish the aquifer, critics say an increase in housing could reduce the space for water storage and simultaneously reduce aquifer replenishment and supply as water demand rises.

Additionally, as the number of housing units increases, the city will use more energy. "Every unit put up is going to consume so many kilowatts," Moon said. "During the heat time, with air conditioning running, we're going to have more power outages caused by high-density housing. There's no way around it."

The reality of the state's housing crisis

In a letter to the editors of Mercury News, former SHS guidance counselor Kirch DeMartini, a Saratoga resident who worked at the school in the '90s, argued that although SB 9 and SB 10 were created to improve housing affordability, they would only exacerbate the divide between poorer and better-off communities. He described SB 9 as "California dream's death knell."

"In reality, if you create multifamily housing and neighborhoods in Saratoga, it's still going to be extremely expensive," DeMartini said. "Those new housing units will be snapped up by well-educated people from out of the area who have the education and money to afford it. You haven't solved anything — you've just increased the population density — but you've still got a homeless situation. People who can't afford to live in the Bay Area are not going to be served by expensive multifamily housing."

DeMartini and his family moved to Saratoga in 1968. He said that they wouldn't be able to buy a home here today. With the boom in housing prices and skyrocketing property taxes, the difference between conditions for installing high-density housing now and 50 years ago are "apples to oranges."

DeMartini said high-density housing risks changing Saratoga's culture and making it a less desirable place to live. Destroying single-family



met, whereas cities were primarily responsible for planning for them in the past. Cities where development is not on track to meet projected housing needs are subject to by-right approvals of qualifying multi-family residential projects by SB 35. These state obligations strip away public input and local control over future growth.

In other words, the effects of SB 9 and SB 10 could go either way. More housing units may require more services and alter the character of neighborhoods, but also may generate more jobs, increased construction and a thriving downtown.

Tse stressed the importance of affordable housing in Santa Clara County. He described the RHNA appeal and senate bills as a "wake-up call" for communities who haven't been on par with addressing the issue.

"There is a need for more affordable housing and the goal for adding 1,700 housing units is a good idea, but I don't think the way these bills are written — as a goal to provide more affordable housing — is going to happen in our area," Tse said, noting that upzoning from SB 9 is unprofitable in a wealthy community like Saratoga. "There are better ways to address all the issues of housing shortages and protect Saratoga home values and neighborhoods."

According to Tse, residents who have lived in Saratoga for a long time wouldn't want the increase in density caused by SB 9, while those desiring "quick money" would.

"Just like anything else, people fear what they don't know," he said. "Whenever something changes, we worry it will make things worse, so I don't think it's certain that these bills would hurt us." ♦



Graphic by ESTHER LUAN

While their concerns may be understandable, former Santa Cruz County supervisor Gary Patton projected that upzoning property to allow more buildings would cause the price to go up instead.

Even so, Tse said gauging the future impact of these laws is incredibly difficult, as most entities, including Saratoga's city and planning departments, are confused about how they will be adopted.

This comes as no surprise: Despite RHNA numbers that set concrete requirements for housing, more than 78 percent of the 95 units allocated for low-income housing were permits issued for ADUs. Most of Tse's clients are installing ADUs on their property to provide more space for grand-

children.

More alarming to residents, however, is the increasing legislative pressure on cities to ensure that state-determined housing needs are



Graphic by SHREYA RALLABANDI

FOOTBALL

Football season cut short by a lack of healthy players

BY JONNY LUO
NIKHIIL MATHIHALLI

After an exhilarating 31-14 Homecoming win over Monta Vista on Sept. 24, the football team hoped to turn their season around. Instead, they never won again, ending the 1-4 in league and 1-8 overall. They finished in sixth place in the El Camino League.

As the season wore on, the Falcons fell victim to a string of injuries, weakening their already small roster size of only 25 players to start the year. Nevertheless, no JV players were brought up to varsity.

The season ended on a historically rough note with three forfeits: the first one against Los Altos on Oct. 14, Cupertino High on Oct. 29 — which marked their senior night game — and Fremont High on Nov. 5.

Sophomore quarterback Shane Timmons was disappointed to see the team end this season that way.

"It was just really sad," Timmons said. "We put in a lot of work during June and July [for conditioning], and not being able to play those three games was devastating."

Over the season, the team lost ten players to injuries: five concussions, four shoulder injuries and a broken leg.

"Not being able to substitute players was playing a dramatic role in our performances," co-captain Parsa Hashemi said. "Players



In this football game against Westmont, the varsity football team had their entire roster fully healthy. They were unable to do so for the rest of the season due to season-ending injuries.

with low participation for years, a trend that started with the loss of four to five athletes who transferred to Los Gatos High for the more social and less academically pressuring environment, according to Hashemi.

This year's football season was also different from previous years because of the COVID-19 pandemic — some athletes decided to play different fall sports or drop sports entirely due to safety concerns.

To lower injury rates and increase accessibility of the sport, this year football coach Tim Lugo coordinated with the league to shorten quarter lengths to five minutes because athletes were coming out of an unconventional COVID-19 season.

According to principal Greg Louie, this was "just to make sure athletes did have games to play."

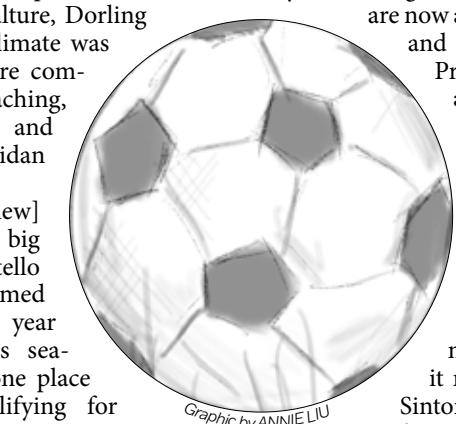
Louie also mentioned that next year, the league may also decide to go from 11-man tackle football to smaller variants, such as 7- or 8-man tackle football, although nothing has been finalized. According to junior running back and wide receiver Paolo Navarro, other schools in the area, such as Monta Vista, have also been struggling with low foot-ball numbers.

"[The future of the football team] is all ultimately going to depend upon who comes out to play football next season," Louie said. "If we get a strong freshman class, we'll be able to build up the program over time." ♦

BOYS' SOCCER EXCITED TO PLAY AFTER ANAMALOUS YEAR

Head Coach: Max Dorling
Last year's record: 6-6
Recap: Due to COVID-19, there was no JV team. The varsity finished 4th in the league.
Key Matchups: Lynbrook, Monta Vista
Star Players: Seniors Andrew Choi, Aidan Costello, Shaheen, junior Dylan Sinton, sophomore Yul Hong
Key losses to graduation: Kyle Massie and Nolan Chen
League: SVCAL El Camino League
Prognosis:

Last year, after the departure of head coach Chris Stott, the team adjusted to new coach Max Dorling, a Class of 2012 alumnus who had played soccer during his time here.



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

GIRLS' SOCCER PREPARES TO CONTINUE RECENT SUCCESSES

Head Coach: Ben Maxwell
Last year's record: 11-1
Recap: The team placed first in the league.
Key Matchups: Wilcox
Star Players: Senior wing players Emma Foley, Casey Gilligan, Anjali Nuggehalli and midfielder Lauren Yarrington
Key losses to graduation: Center forward Leila Chaudhry and center back Michelle Lim
League: El Camino (B) Division
Prognosis:

Although the girls' soccer team lost three starters to graduation, the Falcons

hope to carry forward last year's outstanding 11-1 record. Not enough players tried out to make a JV team this year, so some players were cut during varsity tryouts, which lasted from Nov. 2 to Nov. 15.

"I think we have a strong, competitive group, so I am excited to work with them," head coach Ben Maxwell said. "If they can take their training into the games, we will do well."

Maxwell has coached soccer for 15 years in both Scotland and the U.S. and has coached girls' soccer at the school for 10 years, during which the team qualified

for CCS five times.

Although the team placed first in the division last year, due to COVID-19, officials didn't do delegations, meaning that the team couldn't move up to division A.

As such, a goal of this season is to win the league again and move up to division A. A key game will be against Wilcox, which is the only team that they lost to last season.

"Our coach made it clear that last year's success doesn't translate to this year," Foley said. "If we want to win the league, we need to maintain a good work ethic." ♦

— Jonny Luo and Arnav Swamy

WRESTLING WELCOMES YOUNG TEAM FOLLOWING LOSS OF SENIORS

Head Coach: Taylor Wilson
Last year's record: 0-1
Recap: Due to COVID-19, few athletes could attend meets; low participation resulted in losses for the team.
Key Matchups: Gunn, Milpitas
Key Additions: freshmen Rebecca Bossow and Solbee Lee, Sophomore Stephan Murphy and Ishaa Attawar
Star Players: Juniors Sohum Bhan and Irene Frazier, sophomores Gabe Ho and Justin Jiang
Key losses to graduation: Karan Vazirani, Trevor Green, Xander Kim
League: El Camino League

Due to COVID-19 concerns and conflicts with other sports seasons, like basketball and baseball, the wrestling team was unable to fill all weight classes last spring during their COVID-19 delayed season, forcing them to forfeit the majority of their matches.

Exacerbating the team's low participation, seven seniors, including star wrestlers Trevor Green, Karan Vazirani and Xander Kim, graduated, leaving few returning athletes.

Junior Sohum Bhan was initially worried about low participation, fearing a

repeat of last year's forfeited season. His anxieties soon turned to pleasant surprise: Over 10 new faces — a majority of the team — have joined the wrestling program this year.

"Even though I just started, I really enjoy wrestling, and hopefully next year I can get some of my friends to join too," sophomore Ishaan Attawar said.

Wilson wants the team to support each other, emphasizing teamwork among athletes.

"The results of this season really depend on the team," Wilson said. "It's not my team; it's their team." ♦

— Mitchell Chen

GIRLS' BASKETBALL STARTS SEASON WITH 1-1 RECORD

Head Coach: Josh Rivera

Last year's record: 4-10

Recap: While the Falcons made it to CCS last year, they opted out due to seniors leaving and people going out of town. The team finished 6th in the De Anza league.

Key Matchups: Lynbrook and Palo Alto

Star Players: senior power forward Naomi Mallik, junior guards Jenny Campbell and Tanya Ghai

Key losses to graduation: center and power forward Bereket Bailey, point guards Iris Lee, Jane Loo and Athena Mahajani

League: De Anza

Prognosis:

After a challenging 19-4 second quarter, the girls' basketball team lost 58-49 at their first scrimmage against Mt. Eden on Nov. 16. Despite their first loss, key starters like junior guard Tanya Ghai — who scored 21 points, 5 assists and 7 steals — performed strongly, leading to a 34-27 win against Independence on Nov. 18. The team hopes to work on consistency and decrease the number of fouls and turnovers for their upcoming games.

The team plans to focus on practicing for themselves rather than looking at matchups.

"In the past, we used to do a lot of scouting and we would sit through and see who we were playing against, who their good players were and how they played," Tyagi said. "But this year is kind of all up in the air because of COVID-19."

Nevertheless, junior guard Tanya Ghai is optimistic about the team's standing this year, as many other teams face the same obstacles.

Due to these key losses, Tyagi feels uncertain about the team's prospects this year due to "a lack of height." The number of posts on the team has gone down from four to five to just two: Tyagi and junior Mikayla Tippets. Considering the team's lack of experience, Rivera said the team is working on building

the team range from returning seniors to freshmen, so it's a mixed bag."

Rivera's hiring follows the departure of coaches Danny Wallace and Jaclyn Brode after the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons, respectively. Wallace retired after 13 years of coaching, and Brode left to be head coach at Castilleja after her one-year stint at SHS.

Though many of the players are familiar with Rivera already, the team will still take time to transition.

"Everyone one through 10 is very important, I would say," Rivera said. "I have a good mix of seniors right now, who I think could definitely impact the game as far as bringing experience on leadership. And my juniors can do the same. But I believe my team one through 10 is just going to impact the game."

The team plans to focus on practicing for themselves rather than looking at matchups.

"In the past, we used to do a lot of scouting and we would sit through and see who we were playing against, who their good players were and how they played," Tyagi said. "But this year is kind of all up in the air because of COVID-19."

Nevertheless, junior guard Tanya Ghai is optimistic about the team's standing this year, as many other teams face the same obstacles.

Senior point guard Christopher Liu was happy with how the team played defensively but believes there is still room for improvement for the team to reach its maximum potential.

"We played well, but we haven't unlocked our true potential yet," Liu said. "But, I'm really happy with the way we played."

After a successful season last year, finishing third in the El

Camino League and just falling short of CCS finals after a 57-51 loss against Burlingame, the team is looking to dominate again in the El Camino League this winter. This year's varsity team is comprised of 14 players: seven seniors, six juniors and one sophomore. Although the Falcons lost seven players to graduation, the team remains strong because the current lineup largely consists of seniors that share good team chemistry, with many having played together since middle school, power forward Ayaz Shah

Key Matchups: Los Gatos and Burlingame

Star Players: Seniors center Giulio Morini-Bianzino, shooting guard Som Teymouri, small forward Christian Li and point guard Christopher Liu, power forward Ayaz Shah

Key losses to graduation: Point guard Tyler Chu, shooting guard Cameron King, point guard/forward junior Mayson Yu

League: El Camino

Prognosis:

The boys' basketball team opened the season with a 56-40 win against Aptos High School. The game started smoothly with the Falcons finding themselves up 27-16 by halftime. The game stayed in their favor in the later half of the game as well, with their biggest lead coming in the third quarter at 44-24. Key runs by Christian Li, who ended with 15 points and 3 3-pointers, and Som Teymouri kept morale high, and the team finished satisfied with a 16-point lead.

According to Liu, the team played 20 scrimmages against other Bay Area schools over the summer and only lost two against Los Altos, which is in the stronger De Anza league. Liu believes the team's efforts over the pandemic strengthened them, as they continued practicing hard whereas "many other teams took it as an off year."

"(During COVID-19), our coaches really united us through practices and group outings," Liu said. "Even though we couldn't play in the gym, we practiced together outdoors."

Liu said the team is better set up than last year to win CCS due to members' experience and the additional training.

"It's something we wanted to do for years now but have never been able to achieve, and I think we have a good shot [this year]," he said. ♦

— Benjamin Li, Esther Luan and Howard Shu

SAT Boot Camps

SAT Winter Boot Camp: Dec 20 - Jan 15 (10 days)

Mon - Thu, Dec 20-23	9:00am - 5:30pm
Mon - Thu, Dec 27-30	9:00am - 5:30pm
Saturdays, Jan 8 & Jan 15	9:00am - 5:30pm

SAT Feb. Express Boot Camp: Feb 21 - 25 (5 days)

Monday - Friday	9:00am - 5:30pm
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SAT Apr. Express Boot Camp: Apr 18 - 22 (5 days)

Monday - Friday	9:00am - 5:30pm
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ACT Boot Camps

ACT Winter Boot Camp: Dec 20 - Feb 5 (10 days)

Mon - Wed, Dec 20 - 22	9:00am - 6:15pm
Tue - Wed, Dec 28 - 29	9:00am - 6:15pm
Saturdays, Jan 8 - Feb 5	9:00am - 6:15pm

ACT Jan. Exp. Boot Camp: Jan 8 - Feb 5 (5 days)

Saturdays (Cupertino)	9:00am - 6:15pm
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ACT Feb. Exp. Boot Camp: Feb 21 - 25 (5 days)

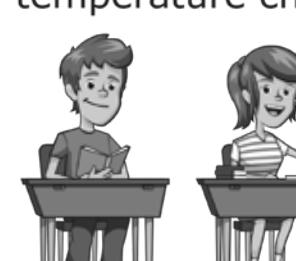
Saturdays (Cupertino)	9:00am - 6:15pm
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Water Fountain Reviews

Water. Ever important for our survival, we humans can't last more than three days without this treasured resource. We reviewed every water fountain on campus in a quest to find the holy grail of water fountains.

— Andy Chen and Bill Yuan



Robotics Room Fountain ★★★★★	400/600's Fountain: ★★★★★	700/900's Fountain ★★★★★	Wellness Center Fountain ★★★★★
• EzH2O style fountain. Elegant construction, pristine, with a mileage of only 300 bottles. • Water quality: Despite looking so good, the water still tastes average. • User-friendliness: Bottle filler is operated by a manual button push, but still has a nice laminar flow.	• This fountain is a classic dual uneven fountain. • Water quality: The water pressure is adequate for one user, but since both fountains source water from the same pipe, the water pressure drops when the second fountain is being used. Water tastes heavily of minerals, typical for unfiltered water fountains	• Three-head bathtub style fountain. • Water quality: Water tastes average, but the water pressure is peculiar. • User-friendliness: The fountains are on a shared pipe, so using one fountain is far too high pressure. Using two, however, is just right. But three being used makes it too low. The fountain is ambitious with the increased number of fountain heads, but fails to perform.	• Extremely clean for an uneven style fountain. • Water quality: Water tastes less heavily of minerals, as expected, and pressure is adequate for the lower fountain, but slightly too high for the top fountain. Overall, exceptional for its style. • User-friendliness: Rails on the sides provide good support in case you lose your balance while you are drinking the water.
000/Library Fountain ★★★★★	Fountain Outside Pool ★★★★★	QUAD	Journalism Room Fountain ★★★★★
• From the outside, this fountain looks like any other uneven style fountain, being a little bit dusty and tarnished. • Water quality: has exceptionally crisp water at an appropriate pressure, much better than the average tap water taste.	• Has a central bottle filler and two fountains to its sides. • Not functional • Its green paint job makes it look like a cactus which is pretty cool.	SCIENCE BUILDING MAP LIBRARY TEAM ROOM GYM POOL BOYS' LOCKER	• This is an Elkay EzH2O style fountain, more affectionately known as the hydration station. • Water quality: Water is very cold and dispenses at an appropriate pressure. • User-friendliness: Push-bars on the front and sides are tactile and responsive. Bottle filler is sensor activated, has a mileage of about 16,000 bottles. Flows rapidly and laminarily, but filter status is red. Not many flaws with this one.
Boys' Locker Room Fountain ★★★★★	Barrel Fountain Outside Pool ★★★★★	STUDENT CENTER CAFETERIA MUSIC BUILDING	200's Fountain ★★★★★
• Only the lower fountain in the uneven setup • Water tastes even worse than average.	• Looks really dirty and water shoots really high. • Really hard to drink out of but you can spray your friends pretty easily.	XOO OFFICE	• Another old-school dual fountain. These are dusty to the point where students have drawn on it. When we checked, the lower fountain had a pentagram drawn on it, and the upper fountain has the word "blessed" written on it. • Water quality: Corrosion around the fountain nozzle, and the tap water taste is to be expected.
Fountain Outside Girls' Locker Room ★★★★★	Student Center Hydration Station ★★★★★		Music Building Fountain ★★★★★
• Only fills bottles at an excessively high pressure. Water fills slowly and sprays on you. Fails to deliver on its only purpose. • Looks kind of like an among us character.	• No drinking fountains. • Has lower mileage than some stations on campus at about 4,500 bottles filled, but filter status is red.		• EzH2O fountain with two drinking fountains and one bottle filler. • Water quality: The water marks everywhere indicate mineral-y water, and the poor tastes are to be expected. • User-friendliness: 16,000 bottles saved on the bottle filler, but is very much lacking on its fancier design.

All graphics by ANJALI PAI and BILL YUAN

The struggles of being unfunny

real-lee
(steph)-unny

Hannah Lee and Stephanie Sun

Have you ever wanted to write a backpage story for the school newspaper but couldn't because you KNEW you weren't funny enough?

We admit, it's probably not a universal experience, but trust us, it happens to us every six weeks — awkwardly sitting in our fifth row in room 303, trying to think of a good backpage idea.

But we're self-aware. The issue is that we lack a sense of humor and we're lacking it right now as we write this. You may be laughing at how cringe this is but all we can think is: What is the backpage editor going to think? Like, "Dang, they really weren't kidding. How is it possible that these people are so unfunny?"

"So you know how there's a scale between being funny and cringe?" junior entertainment editor Atrey Desai said after reading our intro paragraph. "This story is leaning toward funny but it can become cringe real quick."

Ignoring that, we continued writing.

"Backpage should take like 30 minutes to write," the editors-in-chiefs said during spreadsheet check. "These stories should go by quickly if you're funny."

And then there's us. It's like our fourth day working on this story, so that should definitely tell you something about our abilities to be funny.



"Well, I believe that you guys can be funny," junior web editor Martin Xu said, with our fingers held up to his head like a gun.

So you may be asking, how unfunny can they possibly be? Well, if the first few paragraphs haven't made it clear enough, pretty unfunny. It's not even the room-goes-silent bad — it's like awkward laughing to get us to shut up. Or us just laughing at our own jokes to fill the silence and the odd stares that come in a failed attempt to be funny. Play it off, act like you weren't being serious.

"I really relate to what you're saying," junior in-depth editor Shreya Rallabandi said. "Hahahahahahaha."

At least we're relatable.

"If you don't use a quote from me, I will hunt you down and write it in all caps so it looks like I'm shouting," junior chickadee Shannon Ma said, adding no real substance to the story. "Actually don't use that quote;

I have a new one: This story is all over the place but that's what makes it a masterpiece."

After seeing the popularity of our story, senior in-depth editor Esther Luan immediately wanted in on the fun. "Can I stage a quote for you guys?" she asked.

Our complete reliance on other people's quotes makes for a funny story, but adds to the growing list of evidence about our own unfunniness.

"Have you ever eaten a clock? It's really time consuming!" Xu said. "It's funny because it's like a play on words. Time consuming means something takes a lot of time, but consuming also means eating something, so time consuming could also mean eating time, or eating a clock. Get it? I thought it was funny at least."

It was not.

Just like this story (and us). ♦

topten

PLACES TO CRY

10 The vegetable aisle at the supermarket. Bonus points if you include onions in your routine.

9 At home, listening to music. Those slowed + reverb remixes hit hard.

8 Inside a bathroom stall. No one is going to notice more fluid traveling in a downward direction here.

7 In bed, hugging a large tub of ice cream. Rainbow Sherbet always makes the pain go away.

6 At a wedding. Vent your pent-up feelings and show all those fake-crying pretenders how it's done at the same time.

5 In your gaming chair. Instead of blaming the rest of your team for losing, take your loss like a champ and lament your skill issue obnoxiously.

4 In the loving arms of your significant other. Significant other not included.

3 In class, during a group project. The expectations of your teachers and classmates are completely unreasonable, so your sulking is justified.

2 At the gym. Exercise and crying both release endorphins, so why not double the efficiency and do both at once?

1 On your couch, listening to "Certified Lover Boy" for the first and last time.

— Andrew Lin