

# The York Oracle

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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## AFFINITY CLUBS FOSTER INCLUSION

by Esther Spaulding



The Black Student Union, 2024-25  
photo credit: Alexa Arango-Cuevas

At York School, affinity clubs foster an inclusive environment, offering safe spaces where students who share common aspects of their identities can connect and find support. This year, the school made the decision to alternate A and B clubs to help make space for affinity clubs, a choice that has helped to make the school a more welcoming space. By putting all affinity groups on the same club day, students can now join both a group and a club. However, it doesn't leave room for students with mixed backgrounds to connect with two or more different groups.

York offers three student-led affinity groups: the Kapwa Alliance,

SAGE, and the newly formed Black Student Union. These groups bring together students who are eager to explore and share their cultures, values, and experiences with each other and the broader school community. One of the leaders of the SAGE club, an affinity group for the LGBTQIA+ community, says that these groups "also bring awareness to the achievements and existence of said groups which builds tolerance schoolwide across York."

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## LANGUAGE OFFERINGS REFLECT CALIFORNIA'S DIVERSITY

by Sofia Teresa Mejia Contreras

In small schools such as York, it is difficult to sustain language courses if there isn't enough student enrollment. A survey that collected information from 305 independent schools said that French, Spanish, and Mandarin are the top three languages offered. Starting in the 2023-24 school year, York decided to focus on Mandarin and Spanish. Not only because French saw a decline of interest from 2016-2021, but also, as Mr. Zeljo stated, because of the "prevalence of Spanish and Chinese speakers in California."

California is home to innumerable languages and cultures. As of 2021, Spanish is the second most spoken language in California after English, spoken by 28.18% of the population. In Monterey, Spanish is spoken by 48.71% of the population, according to the World Population Review. While Spanish is in its category in the California records, Mandarin is not given its own language category. The category of "Chinese" includes more than one language, including Mandarin and Cantonese. In Monterey County, 3.52% of the population speaks an "Asian and Pacific Island" language. "I think that it groups people into one category...and it hides the culture of people that are completely different," Esther Spaulding comments. Still, Chinese is the third most spoken language in California.

There is a constant debate over whether Mandarin is a dialect or a language, and what better way to learn which one it is than to take a Mandarin class to find out? Both Mandarin and Spanish are important to our community and it is our privilege to learn these languages to bring our community together, now more than ever.

## SERVICE LEARNING Q&A

by Sage Martin, Lauren Mosebach, and Chloe Weil

One of the most difficult parts of getting your volunteer hours can be to find nonprofits that work for your schedule and your interests, so we interviewed Ms. Thielen who is, in addition to Communications and Marketing Manager, the Service Learning Coordinator. We asked her some questions that might come up for students completing their volunteer hours.

### What are some of the most common charities that students volunteer for?

Our students volunteer for all kinds of organizations, but some of the most common community partners that York kids work with are Community Partnership for Youth, the Village Project, Special Kids Connect, the Food Bank for Monterey County, the SPCA, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium. All of the organizations York Students commonly work with are listed in the Community Partner Directory under the Canvas Service Learning page.

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## AFFINITY CLUBS, cont.

In a recent survey, the leaders of KAPWA Alliance and SAGE seem to agree that being part of affinity groups has helped them learn more about their identity and connect with their heritage. One answer from the SAGE leaders says that being part of the group has taught them how to be part of something bigger than themselves, and form a stronger connection with others in the queer community.

However, there have been struggles in these clubs, especially for the Black Student Union. "It took us three years and three different Student Life Coordinators to create the Black Student Union," says Ava Hoffmeister, Co-President of the BSU, "but after the school dropped the ball on having a Black History Month Forum, I knew I had to create the club."

Ava Hoffmeister added that even those without an affinity group need spaces to vent. "Dealing with racism, homophobia, transphobia, micro- and macro-aggressions is emotionally draining for anybody, so even if you don't join an affinity group, please find an adult you feel comfortable with and talk with them."

Historically, affinity groups have helped students feel welcomed and valued, bridging gaps that can sometimes exist in a larger school community. However, students who are racially mixed sometimes have a harder time connecting to and feeling included by one affinity group. To this, Trevor Bernardino, Co-President of KAPWA says to just try, and if it doesn't work for you, then try something else.

Through clubs like the Kapwa Alliance, SAGE, and the Black Student Union, York students find connection, learn about different perspectives, and strengthen the bonds that make their school a more inclusive and compassionate place for everyone.

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## SERVICE LEARNING, cont.

### **What charities are best for your 20 hours?**

For 20 hour internships, it's best to find organizations that have established, regular volunteer programs. That could look like set shifts with organizations like the Food Bank or MB Aquarium, or that could be a scheduled program like Special Kids Connect's REACH.

### **What charities are best for smaller amounts of time?**

For picking up smaller numbers of hours, special events can be a great opportunity to introduce yourself to and try working with an organization without a large commitment. Most organizations will have one-off events like fundraisers, animal adoption fairs, community cleanup days, concerts, etc. so it just depends on your interests. Citizens for Sustainable Monterey County hosts many monthly opportunities for short-term volunteering, and check out the Arts Council for Monterey County's volunteer page for a list of event volunteering opportunities like the Monterey Jazz Festival, First Night Monterey, and art fairs.

### **What charities would you recommend for students interested in science?**

Students interested in science might enjoy working with the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Citizens for Sustainable Monterey County, Save our Shores, the Big Sur Land Trust, the Habitat Stewardship Project, and MEearth.

### **What charities would you recommend for students interested in helping animals?**

Those who love animals should definitely check out the SPCA, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Hope Horses and Kids, Star Riders, the Animal Friends Rescue Project, and Peace of Mind Dog Rescue. There is even an all-rabbit rescue nonprofit called The Bunny Trail Rabbit Rescue, and they just announced a new volunteer program for youths 12 and up!

### **What charities would you recommend for students interested in helping with homelessness?**

We have some organizations that fit into that category in our directory, like the Homeless Garden Project and Food Bank, but there are also kitchen's like Dorothy's Kitchen in Salinas that offer face-to-face service. I also recommend reaching out to shelters in your city to see how you can help them meet their needs.

### **Is there anything else you want to tell us?**

I hope that this interview provides some guidance on how to go about completing your Service Learning requirement, but more than that, I hope that in this process you find something that really inspires you to engage in your community beyond those 40 hours. Service can be an extremely meaningful lifelong passion.



# THE SPORTS REPORT

by Jenna Alaniz (Tennis), Samara Albitar (Volleyball), Ivan Bischoff (Cross Country), and Gael De La Rosa (Water Polo)

## Volleyball

The York girls volleyball team had a great season! There has been a great improvement in the team's performance and connections with each other throughout the matches. In a recent interview with the coaches, Anna Russell and Simon Butler, Coach Anna said that the best way to motivate our athletes is "both a combination of positive energy and conditioning," and Coach Simon added, "with a delusional amount of cheerleading." Over the season, the girls volleyball team had overcome many challenges, whether it be in their playing strategy or team communication. Varsity team captains Esbeidy Rodriguez-Calvo '25 and Emily Geiser '25 led the York girls by example and kept up positive team spirit, pride, and enthusiasm. The York dynamic of having good sportsmanship while being an athlete truly shows how York athletics are different from other teams. Coach Anna stated that "the best part is that York looks at their athletes as a whole, and teaches students kindness, not just competitiveness."



## Cross Country

The Cross-Country team has had a great season so far this year. Overall, they have been working very hard and have won several meets. The Cross Country varsity team has been doing so well that they won their first league meet and placed third in the championship. Next year they might be promoted to the fourth division to face bigger and better schools. Ivan B. '27, Diego S. '26 and Peter S. '28 have achieved CCS status and now can continue to race at Crystal Springs. Overall, the Cross Country team has been putting in a lot of work and with some incredible times they have become a better team than last year. The Cross Country team is concerned with senior Alvin L. leaving next year and in a recent interview with Diego S. he stated, "He is one of our Big 5, the five fastest long distance runners in the school, so losing him is terrible; someone will have some big shoes to fill."



## Water Polo



This year, the York Water Polo team has built a vibrant community with a strong young core. The team has a very supportive atmosphere that has contributed to their 8-7 win against Monterey and their 11-8 win against Alvarez High in Salinas. The team had great chemistry with players like Sam stood out due to his speed, positioning and his ability to score. They were able to maintain positivity throughout the season and in return made long lasting memories such as their wins, team photos taken at Alvarez High's swimming pool after their win, and their bus rides to practices and games. *(continued on Page 4)*



# SPORTS

## SPOTLIGHT: FIELD HOCKEY

by Jenna Alaniz

The York School Field Hockey team is a true model of what a sports team should be. From the wins to the connections between players, the team has grown together and created a supportive community. This season in particular has been one to remember for the York Field Hockey team, filled with laughter, kindness, and growth. With the help from coaches Mike Borrowman, who has been coaching for 15 years, and Dan Gurska, who is in his first year coaching, the team has accomplished so much and it would



not be the same without them. The team has an incredible record of 3 wins, 6 ties, and only 2 losses. Both coaches are very proud to be a part of a team where players support each other on and off the field. "It's the friendships, joy, and teamwork that truly define the team," says Coach Borrowman.

The entire season of Field Hockey has been a highlight, but there are certain parts of the season that stand out the most, including when the team bounced back from their first loss of the season. Everyone came together in a positive way and supported one another. "It was really special watching the team play in the way that I know they can," said Coach Gurska. Other memorable moments include trips to frozen yogurt, the team stretch circle where players bond and "talk tea," Coach Borrowman's "amazing parking skills," and blasting music and singing in the van before games.

Every player brings something different to the team. Captains Sasha, Lily, and Jenna are incredible leaders. They are always there to lift the team up and give guidance to whoever needs it. The seniors Sasha and Lily are the heart of the team, and they will be missed.



Sky's talent as a goalie is a big advantage for the team. When a player from the opposing team tries to score, Sky kicks the ball out. Esther is described as tenacious and she is always willing to help. Xinyao shows what a team player is by her kindness and willingness to play any position. Sofia Teresa is a strong defensive player who always tries her best. The progress of new players like Evera, Robbie, Isabelle, and Olivia has shown how dedicated they are to the sport and how much the team has improved throughout the season.

As the season came to an end, both coaches were happy to see how much the team achieved and improved. For Coach Borrowman, it's about watching the players develop each practice and enjoy the sport he loves. For Coach Gurska, it's about seeing the team always come together no matter the outcome. The York School Field Hockey team has truly set a standard for what it means to be a team, a team where memories and friendships that are created last a lifetime.

# THE SPORTS

## REPORT, cont.

...Together the water polo team has succeeded tremendously, as coach Chris Barlow said, "the team is growing in skill and maturity, their great respectful players and a pleasure to coach." With Milana, the captain, providing guidance for her teammates and Luke as a key goalkeeper, the team has been a welcoming environment for all. Coach Barlow also highlighted his joy of seeing players who aren't traditional scorers step up, and mentioned the fact he buys dinner for the team after every win. He expressed his gratitude to York for being able to coach such an incredible team.

### Tennis

This season has been one to remember for the York Tennis team. Players have improved throughout the season and made memories that will never be forgotten. Coach Mio Kvenild is proud to coach a team with "good team spirit". Players never fail to support each other through difficult times and rise to the occasion when needed. The team has good sportsmanship and humor, their favorite phrase being "yas queen." During the season, the team had many highlights. For instance, how flexible players are, their 1st win at Chamisal, the progression of new players, and how connected they are as a team. Captains Yolanda, Winnie, and Kiyari are always there to support and encourage each player. Winnie particularly has excellent team spirit, receiving The Peregrine Falcon Award. Julia is the heart of the team, demonstrating incredible effort. Lucy is a standout player, making a remarkable impact on the team her first year playing with wins for both singles and doubles. Team mom Lisa Davenport, mother to former captain Marie Claire, has always been there to support the team in any way she can. The team overall has come a long way. Win or lose, the York tennis team always has fun and finds ways to make the team come together as one.





# GET TO KNOW NEW FACULTY by Willow Weisblum

This year we have had a few new faces on campus. Here is a little Q&A to get to know some of them!



## Dr. Halaz

**Q: Where did you go to college?**

**A:** I actually went to a few different colleges- I first went to Metropolitan State College of Denver for 2 years, then Cabrillo College for 2 years, and then finished my Bachelor's degree and got my PhD at UC Santa Cruz.

**Q: Do you have any pets?**

**A:** I have two horses named Whiskey and Demi and a husky/german shepherd mix named Maia.

**Q: What's your favorite mushroom?**

**A:** My favorite type of mushroom is Cordyceps.

## Ms. Danishanko

**Q: Where did you learn Spanish?**

**A:** I first started learning Spanish in high school! I took my first Spanish class as a 9th grader; my Spanish 1 teacher is an incredible person who ignited my curiosity and passion for learning the language. In college, I had the opportunity to study and live in Peru where I only spoke Spanish (except when teaching English to high school aged students). Even now, I try to put myself in new situations to learn more of the language! The Spanish-speaking world is so diverse, so I try to put myself in different situations (through travel, watching shows, meeting new people) to hear different accents and learn sayings or slang terms specific to different country.

**Q: What do you like about York over other schools?**

**A:** York School really is student-driven. So much of what is done on campus is led and produced by students: break, pep rallies, Fall Fair, forums, clubs, admissions events, etc. Students have a lot of responsibility here, which makes our community feel like a team rather than a hierarchy. That is something very unique and sets York apart from other schools that I have been at.

**Q: Pizza or tacos?**

**A:** Tacos!



## Ms. Faith

**Q: How long have you lived in California?**

**A:** 8 years

**Q: How has your experience with TedX affected you?**

**A:** It was one of the scariest and most amazing things I have ever done. Like many, I struggle with impostor syndrome, I never would have thought that I could be chosen to speak at a conference. But my story was worth telling. Having gone through this process I would encourage everyone to find something they are passionate about and share it with the world.

**Q: What was your favorite class in high school?**

**A:** I can't pick just one! My two favorites were physics and Ukrainian Literature!

# ASK AYDEN

**Question:** How can I prevent myself from being catfished?

**Answer:** So, you want to find TRUE love and maybe you are a little desperate. But, being too desperate can be exactly what gets you catfished.

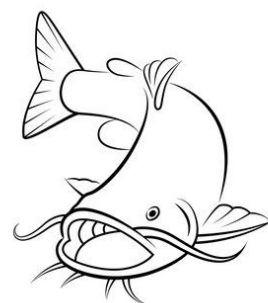
The **F.I.S.H.** acronym is a helpful tool to prevent yourself from becoming catfished. Here is what it stands for:

**F: Face** – Are they always too busy for FaceTime? Well, this might be a 🚩 (trust me it's red, the newspaper is just black and white). You should probably try to hop on a video chat with them.

**I: Image** – If you think you've found a love and they look perfect tonight, then... darling, I think you look like the perfect target to be catfished.

**S: Save Your Money** – "If they constantly want money, give it to them. This is what you have saved your money for." This is what you say if you want to get catfished. Anyway, aren't you trying to date someone with a lot of money? If so, they won't need your hard-earned cash.

**H: Hold Back** – Don't rush into a relationship! It's always better to play hard to get anyway.



# REVIEW: ALMOST, MAINE

by Sage Martin, Lauren Mosebach, and Chloe Weil



The cast of *Almost, Maine*

Two weeks ago, we had the pleasure of seeing our school's fall play, *Almost, Maine*. Directed by Ms. Andrea Hart and produced by Mr. Spencer Williams, the show took us into the quaint small town of Almost, Maine, where love and relationships are explored in heartwarming and heart wrenching ways, while featuring the ups and downs of romance.

*Almost, Maine* is a play comprised of nine smaller love stories. Premiering in 2004, the play by John Ciarani broke box-office records in Portland. It is now one of the most produced high school plays in the United States and has been adapted into a novel format. *Almost, Maine* explores many different themes and ideas such as: love, loss, and human connection. *Almost, Maine* uses symbols throughout the play to represent love, an example of this shown in the play was when one of the characters was carrying her heart in a bag, and another example was when love was displayed through balloons. At the end of each scene, either when the couple falls in or out of love, the northern lights are projected across floating houses, connecting each story.

We as a community are all so grateful that we had the opportunity to watch our peers perform this touching, funny, and romantic production of *Almost, Maine*. A special thank you to the director, Ms. Andrea Hart, the producer, Mr. Spencer Williams, and the screen and projection designer, Mr. Scott Boyton, for making this production possible.

## MORE HEADLINES



### Tesla Sponsors York (page 28)

Elon Musk personally donates 20 million dollars worth of Tesla products to York in exchange for four students' eternal souls.

### Lionel Messi Joins York Girls Soccer Team (page 13)

Lionel Messi decides to leave Inter Miami to play for York: "What can I say, I love fog."

### Wild Turkeys Hospitalize 8th Graders (page T for turkey)

### Mr. Key Uses York Budget for Private Jet (page 1,989)

"If Taylor Swift can fly to work, why can't I?"

### How Mr. Zeljo Cured His Daily Nightmares (page -1)

#9 Is Crazy!



# HEAVENLY HOROSCOPES

by Angelic Ava

**Aries** (March 21st- April 19) You're energetic, bold, enthusiastic, courageous, and super annoying. Just like your animal counterpart the ram, I am afraid and you should stay in L.A where you belong. In your future I see politics or prison, but if you play your cards right, you can do both!

**Taurus** (April 20 – May 20) Loyal, practical, patient and with a love of luxury. Just like the bull, you do well in expensive parts of Spain but unlike them you don't run. In your future I see a lot of cucumber water, a keto diet and gold jewelry. (Gold, please; silver is not your color.)

**Gemini** (May 21 – June 21) You're fearless, curious and a social butterfly. Usually we'd be friends but you are represented by twins and all twins scare me. Yes, I'm twinophobic, cancel me. In your future I see you actually succeeding in life because you know how to play by the rules.

**Cancer** (June 22 – July 22) Intuitive, sensitive, caring and empathetic. Aww, adorable! And your spirit animal is the creepy weird ocean spider– the crab! Did you know crabs ate Amelia Earhart? So other signs be wary, because who knows what these self-proclaimed nice guys and girls are capable of.

**Leo** (July 23 – August 22) Confident, bright, vivacious. Those are some Patrick Bateman-esqe qualities. And you do have a dark side, you are–brace yourself–a theatre kid. Anyway, you're a lion, but not the Lion King, as you describe yourself on your several failed dating profiles.

**Virgo** (August 23 – September 22) You're kind, elegant and perfectionistic. (That means everyone hates you but is also super jealous of your life). Your animal is an unmarried woman aka the scariest beast in history. I mean, my god, you're almost 18 already– quick, lock someone down before you turn into an old maid!

**Libra** (September 23 – October 23) Charming and approval-seeking. Anyways you guys are represented by the scales– my god, they were really running out of ideas. I guess (insert joke about the legal system) HAHAA im such a good writer

**Scorpio** (October 24 – November 21) Your qualities include being amazing, hotness, intelligence, overall just being the best. We are the scorpions, nature's baddies. Like them we are strong, fierce and thrive in all ecosystems.

**Sagittarius** (November 22 – December 21) Ew, you remind me of the stupid sagittal suture from anatomy. I definitely got that question wrong UGH why don't you have two g's! You're the centaur, aka the weirdly hot people from Harry Potter. And use those horse legs to gallop away from your ex because unlike you he has the *face* of a horse instead of the body.

**Capricorn** (December 22 – January 19) You're the super sweet but annoying overachiever. But you know who isn't overachieving? Your lil mascot, the sea goat. Oh my gosh I wish I had room for pics. I love it so much!! It's like if Ariel got hit by several propeller boats.

**Aquarius** (January 20 – February 18) Truthful, progressive and altruistic. You are the water carrier. You are probably thinking, "Oh my gosh this symbolizes how I bring gifts to underpr-" Shut it up rn, you work at an unpaid internship for a billion dollar "non profit," you are NOT Mother Teresa.

**Pisces** (February 19 – March 20) Empathetic, mystical, pleasure seeking. Oooh, how vague and mysterious! You guys are the fish. And that can go either way. If you're the guy at chipotle who only gave me like 5 pieces of chicken, you're an ugly blobfish and I hate you. If you're the girl who helped me find a good lip liner, then you're the elegant sexy koi fish and I love you.




# MASTHEAD


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