

COVID-19 pandemic affects mental health of students, teachers at Country Day

BY HÉLOÏSE SCHEP

The fear of contagion and loss of routine, physical contact, friendships and the lives of family members or friends caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the mental health of students and teachers in the Country Day community, according to social-emotional counselor Pat Reynolds.

Reynolds still meets weekly with her middle school Social Emotional Learning (SEL) classes for a full class period; she also has contacted some high school students and had others reach out to her.

According to Reynolds, students' experiences differ vastly and change often.

"It goes in waves," she said. "A person might feel lonely, isolated, paralyzed by life for a while and then move along a little bit and actually feel great."

Losing a daily structure while in a fear-inducing pandemic can be especially damaging, according to Reynolds. Students may worry about their family finances or exposure to the virus.

One senior who spoke on the condition of anonymity expressed feeling isolated and confined, increasing the student's depression and anxiety.

"Not being able to go out and see friends is upsetting," the student said.

To connect with others, the student met with friends through Zoom, which the student said was fun and rewarding.

Nevertheless, the student feels less motivated in classes and worries about college.

"I'm upset because I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to attend college in the fall, and I really want to go," the student said.

Another senior who spoke on the condition of anonymity agreed, adding that quarantine added stress to selecting a college.

"You're not sure if your school will be open in the fall, and (the virus) changes your outlook on smaller or larger schools," the student said. "What if small universities are able to open and large universities aren't? Now, there's a huge difference between having 15 students in a classroom and 300 students."

The student said isolation, a loss of routine and news reports have increased their

anxiety and depression.

"There's a lot of news about how you're never safe," the student said. "There are healthy, asymptomatic people that suddenly have strokes. I don't read a lot about the pandemic, but you can never avoid it."

The student lost motivation and began to procrastinate, increasing anxiety.

"It's a self-perpetuating cycle," the student said. "It was really difficult to motivate myself to do my math homework. Then I didn't understand my math homework, so I would have a mental breakdown when I tried to do it, so I didn't do it."

The student said teachers have been very accommodating.

"My hope is for people to be understanding if others are late to finish assignments, because they're probably doing the best they can," the student said.

Nevertheless, during one three-day period, the student was "constantly filled with panic" and unable to complete any work.

After that, the student's therapist recommended taking antidepressants temporarily.

Yet certain elements of a remote, digital classroom can be very beneficial, Reynolds said.

For example, students who are disconcerted by the loud noise of a classroom can focus better in a quiet space with headphones.

Those who are shy about speaking up in class or struggle with social interactions can use the "chat" function of Zoom to share answers to teachers' questions without speaking.

"Some other people like the casualness of it," Reynolds added. "I've got a couple of fellows who I don't think have changed out of their pajamas when they come to my 9 o'clock class."

Lastly, some students said they enjoy getting more sleep.

"I feel less stressed because I have a more flexible sleep schedule," freshman Christian Dwumfuoh said. "I'm able to feel refreshed."

Reynolds said Country Day has excelled at making accommodations for students.

If students don't reach out to Reynolds themselves, she relies on their peers, parents and teachers to identify students who are struggling.

"If we know it, we're on it," she said.



Illustration by Eric Lechpammer

But one student who spoke on the condition of anonymity disagreed.

The student said their depression worsened severely during the quarantine. The student felt isolated from both friends and teachers and struggled with reaching out to others because communicating via email induced anxiety.

Ultimately, the student missed two weeks of classes around spring break.

"I had one class where I really felt like I wasn't able to communicate correctly and get questions answered, and I was getting really frustrated and stressed out," the student said. "I just shut down and was like, 'I'm not doing this anymore.'"

The student said only one teacher reached out before the student informed teachers of their depression.

The student ultimately dropped a class and gradually began attending their other ones. The student said teachers were accommodating about the absences but initiating the conversation was challenging.

"(My teachers were) all super understanding, but I had to make that first move," the student said. "That's a huge

thing for me, to be really flat-out and say, 'I'm super depressed, I can't get out of bed, I don't want to eat, so school is not my first priority right now.'

"So many other people probably need to be in contact with teachers about mental health, but it took me so long to do it (because) I had to reach out first."

The student said teachers should reach out when students don't attend class or get behind on assignments, and the teachers should adjust their attitude toward missing class or work.

"Don't just reach out and be like 'Hey, you need to do this right now; I told you to do it two days ago,'" the student said. "Instead, just say, as one teacher did (to me), 'I noticed you haven't turned this in yet. Just let me know what's going on. I hope you're feeling fine.'"

During meetings with high school students, Reynolds said her mission is to "reduce the anxiety, not fix it, but just (for the student to) be aware of it and manage it."

The anonymous student agreed but add-

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Professionals see increase in anxiety, depression due to quarantine

BY MING ZHU

Jamie Pedersen, a psychiatric clinical counselor and the mother of junior Connor Pederson, recently told a sad story about one of her patients, a high school senior.

"It was her last year (in theater class), and the sets she designed for the last play are just sitting backstage, and she will never see them again," Pedersen said.

Pedersen said her patients are

showing signs of anxiety and depression during the quarantine as they realize they cannot control the situation.

"Children, teens and college students are wondering if they will be able to go back to school in the fall," Pedersen said. "They also wonder when they will be able to see their friends again."

"Parents still have to work, so there isn't a lot of interaction in the households even though everyone is home."

Rising anxiety is common

among adolescents and adults alike, according to Dr. Richard Mancina, '73.

Mancina, a psychiatric consultant for three mental health organizations, said his patients' primary source of anxiety is financial stress.

"The group of people that I serve tend to already be in the lower socioeconomic classes," said Mancina, the father of Peter Mancina, '07, and Sarah Mancina, '11. "So actually, providing food and things that they need is

probably the most helpful thing right now for most of the people that are calling in crisis."

Pedersen said her patients' most common reason for depression is missing their friends and teachers.

"Truthfully, it's uncommon to hear about students missing school so much," Pedersen said. "During the breaks, I (often) hear students telling me how happy they are to be out of school. I think they will have a new appreciation for school and their

teachers when they return."

According to Country Day social-emotional counselor Pat Reynolds, anxiety and depression can be triggered by any sort of loss.

"This can be a loss of rituals — going out to eat on Mother's Day, loss of ordinary life — jobs or finances or loss of social interaction," Reynolds said. "All of this ties into possibly creating a sense of loneliness. If one is sen-

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After 20 years, Glass Knife moves online for adviser’s final publication

BY ETHAN MONASA

The final edition of the Glass Knife under adviser Joanne Melinson is not the typical literary magazine. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was moved online.

“I brought up the idea of creating an on-line publication as soon as school closed,” senior co-literary editor Anu Krishnan said.

The publication was changed from a magazine to a blog. It was published on Squarespace because senior Maddie Woo, who is part of the publication staff, had experience using the site.

The staff decided to break into smaller teams once school closed to accomplish its goals faster, according to Melinson.

Woo said communication was challenging due to the quarantine.

“Usually when we make the publication, we get together on weekends and talk about pieces and discuss how the book is going to look in terms of layout,” Woo said. “This time, it was more difficult because we had to use a Google document and write suggestions (on that).”

Krishnan said the staff changed its work process early.

“We quickly realized that we would not be able to have our frequent board meetings and work nights in person and would have to use Zoom,” she said. “Some of our staff is in different time zones, and finding a time to meet that worked with everyone’s schedules is difficult.”

Krishnan said texting is inefficient, “especially if (people) take too long to reply.”

A difference Krishnan and Woo noted in the publication process was how the literary and audio pieces were posted individually, or in small groups, rather than simultaneously.

“Anu and (senior co-literary editor) Héloïse (Schep) typically edit pieces,” Woo said. “On Friday nights, they tell me which pieces are ready to go with which artwork, and (junior) Stephanie Ye sends me the audio that’s ready to post.”

The first online edition is the final publication for Melinson, who will step down in June after 20 years as the Glass Knife adviser.

“After doing it for 20 years, I thought I would like to direct my time and efforts toward other pursuits that I feel passionate about,” Melinson said in a March 4 online Octagon story. “Some of those being diversity, inclusion, equity, civic engagement and fostering our community of readers. It has been a bittersweet decision, as I have loved supporting the creative arts through the magazine.”

Melinson said there have been “so many highlights. I got to see something a lot of other people at the school don’t get to see: students creating something of their own. They’re not working for a class. They pour their heart and soul into it.”

Melinson said she’ll miss working closely with students “although I always joke that my job is to make sure students eat and don’t light anything on fire.”

“A lot of times, (students) train each other. People will come to me with questions, (but) it’s really (the students) that take the reins.”

Melinson reminisced about the many traditions and inside jokes of the publication.

“We have what we call ‘family meals,’ which I kind of stole from the restaurant business,” she said.

Rather than eating at their workspaces, staff members would sit together during their work nights.

“We might talk about the book or other things,” Melinson said. “It’s a time to hang out together.”

Another tradition Melinson said she will miss is ‘family meetings.’ If someone wanted to make a significant change, they would call out, “Family meeting!”

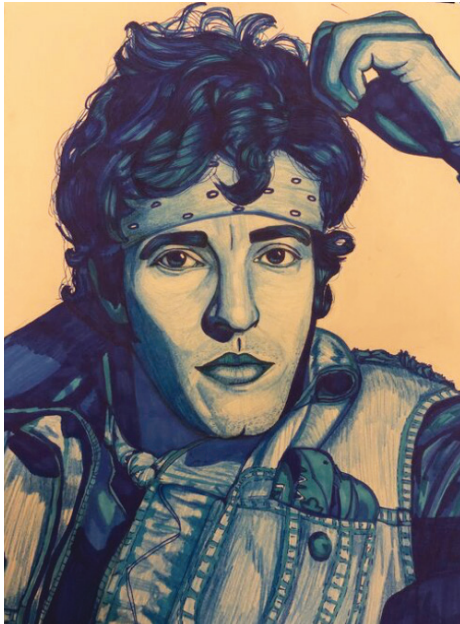
“Rather than make the decision alone, everybody comes over, and they talk it through,” Melinson said.

Krishnan said she will miss Melinson and the Glass Knife’s family meals.

“Ms. Melinson has been supportive to all the staff,” Krishnan said. “Over the years, she has played an integral role in creating a fun and unique publication.”

Woo agreed.

“Ms. Melinson was always so organized, and she helped us get everything together,” she said. “She’s our number one fan, encouraging us and keeping us motivated.”



ONLINE ORIGINALS (Clockwise from top left) “Spirit Princess” by senior Emma Boersma, “The Boss in Blue” by sophomore Lilah Shorey, “Perspective” by junior Erin Wilson and “Tree Man” by senior Jason Li are featured on the Glass Knife’s website, which replaced the magazine this year. **PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GLASS KNIFE**

She’s definitely going to be missed.”

A favorite memory of Woo’s is the Glass Knife banquet after the first-semester finals.

“On the place setting, she had a picture that represents the person,” Woo said. “It’s a surrealist kind of art piece, and it was fun to compare who got what.”

Woo said the art demonstrated how well Melinson knew all the staff members.

As for the Glass Knife’s future, Melinson said, “It’ll be around in some form. But I don’t know the specifics. It’ll probably depend on who (is) hired for different jobs, and who wants to do what.”

Head of high school Brooke Wells said he plans to name the Glass Knife’s new adviser soon. New student leaders will be announced in September, according to Melinson.

Octagon, Medallion leaders announced for 2020-21 school year

BY ARIKTA TRIVEDI

The Octagon and Medallion have decided their leaders for 2020-21.

This year, the Octagon had four editors-in-chief, all seniors. But next year, three of the four will be juniors.

This year’s editors-in-chief — Jackson Crawford, Larkin Barnard-Bahn, Anna Frankel and Héloïse Schep — will pass their roles to junior Ming Zhu and sophomores Arijit Trivedi, Ethan Monasa and Sanjana Anand.

Zhu and Anand will be the print editors-in-chief, and Trivedi and Monasa will be online editors-in-chief.

In addition, Bonnie Stewart will become the adviser following Paul Bauman’s retirement.

“I hope to inspire students to dig deep and find stories that go beyond the surface,” Stewart said. “Regardless of careers (students) choose, I want to believe that they will always strive to find and tell the truth.”

The yearbook announced juniors Hana Lee and Nate Leavy as next year’s editors-in-chief. The copy editors will be juniors Layla MoheyEldin and Athena Lin. Sophomore Vanessa Escobar will be the photography editor, sophomore Lilah Shorey will be

the design editor, and sophomore Tina Huang will be the communications manager.

The Student Council leaders had not been named at press time.

Bauman and the current editors-in-chief chose the new Octagon leaders.

“We wanted people with experience who had also shown a commitment to the Octagon,” Bauman said. “We also looked at their writing and editing skills.”

It is unusual to have junior editors-in-chief, according to Bauman.

“The bonus is that they will have two years as editors-in-chief,” Bauman said.

The new editors-in-chief shared their plans for next year.

Monasa said he hopes to add more multimedia to the website.

“One of our goals this year has been to incorporate more multimedia content,” Monasa said. “We’ve done a great job of getting that going, but I’d like to build on that foundation. It’d also be nice to have a more steady flow of online (stories) and more online-exclusive stories other than sports beats.”

Monasa added he would like to work on uploading sports beat stories within 24 hours.

Trivedi said he wants to expand the Octagon’s traffic on the website and overall readership.

“I feel like the middle school is often overlooked,” Trivedi said. “While it is a high school newspaper, I think attracting middle schoolers to the Octagon would not only increase our readership but also ensure that we have future staffers that are invested in the publication.”

Trivedi said he looks forward to working closely with staffers and hearing their ideas.

Zhu and Anand said they want to make the print issues more interesting.

“I want our stories oriented on something the student body is interested in,” Anand said. “I think the biggest problem for the Octagon is its reputation with the school and its students.”

“I would also like to add more interactive activities, such as our crossword puzzle, because we have staffers who work really hard on it and it’s hardly published.”

Zhu added he would like to change some of the print issue’s formatting.

“I plan to reduce the amount of text on our issues,” Zhu said. “(I) might also experiment with having shortened print stories and posting the complete versions online. I’m looking forward to renovating our issues and working together with our staff and new adviser.”

Bauman said advising the Octagon for the past two years has been a

great learning experience.

“It’s different from anything else I’ve done,” said Bauman, who worked in the sports department of The Sacramento Bee for 18 years before coming to Country Day. “My two hopes for the staff are that they continue to learn and have fun.”

Yearbook adviser Liz Leavy said she wanted editors-in-chief who were “big-picture thinkers.”

“We have a small staff, so it’s like a jigsaw puzzle to make sure all of the editorial positions are filled with experienced staff,” she said. “We thought a lot about teamwork and balance when we selected our editors-in-chief.”

Liz Leavy said Lee and Nate Leavy complement each other.

“(Lee) is a whiz at design and photography, while Nate is more of a words guy,” Liz Leavy said. “(Lee) has a million wild ideas every day; Nate — believe it or not — is more pragmatic.”

Lee said she and Nate Leavy have not yet discussed their plans for the year.

Liz Leavy, though, said she’s “very excited about our whole leadership team for next year. Editors-in-chief have the highest profile, but without the experience and abilities of our copy, design and photography editors, the EICs and I would be lost.”



LOOMING LEADERS (Clockwise from top left) Sophomores Sanjana Anand and Arijit Trivedi, junior Ming Zhu and sophomore Ethan Monasa will guide the Octagon. **PHOTO COURTESY OF TRIVEDI**

Mental health: Students suffering from depression, anxiety lose motivation

(Continued from page 1)

-ed that not all teachers understand this approach.

“(When) I was talking with my family and teachers, I got the sense they were like, ‘Oh, we just need to patch this up and get you out of this hole,’” the student said. “But I’ve been digging myself out of this hole since I started dealing with depression, and this is definitely going to happen again. It’s not a one-time thing. It’s something I’ve dealt with for years.”

Making an analogy, the student said understanding the long-term nature of mental health issues is crucial to communicating with students.

“If you’re out sick with the flu one week, you can turn stuff in the next week. But if you’re still sick with the flu the next week, you’re not going to be able to do it,” the student said.

“If you give me an extension but I’m still not getting out of bed and not eating, you can’t expect me to do it.”

One way to better inform teachers, the student suggested, is more communication with Reynolds.

Students aren’t alone in their struggles during the quarantine.

Reynolds said that while the faculty is resilient and adapting

well, remote learning can still be difficult for them, especially for faculty members with children.

“There may be four computers in a home, one Zooming in the lower school with a parent, one Zooming with me in the middle school, one Zooming in the high school and one Zooming at San Juan district,” she said.

“I certainly try not to focus on the negative, but it’s hard. It would be irresponsible to ignore the news, but you can’t get lost in it, either.”

— Anonymous teacher

“Everyone’s working 180%, and working that way is hard. It’s hard being on screen for hours.”

One teacher who spoke on the condition of anonymity expressed anxiety because of the pressure of providing high-quality content to students during the quarantine.

Additionally, grocery shopping during the pandemic increased the teacher’s anxiety, especially since a family member is at higher risk of catching the virus.

“Going to the grocery store, you’re being faced with the fact

that this could get you the virus,” the teacher said.

The teacher also struggled with depression after a friend passed away from COVID-19 a few weeks ago.

“It was just really hard,” the teacher said. “There’s a sense of hopelessness, like you can’t do anything about it, and that’s what causes depression — feeling like you don’t have anything to hold on to, like you have no control over anything.”

Nevertheless, the teacher tries to maintain perspective.

“My family and I have been through so much in our lives, struggles we’ve been able to overcome — nothing compares to this, but we’ve built up some stamina,” the teacher said. “We have a realistic world view: You do what you can with what you have or don’t have in the moment, and you move forward.”

Moreover, the teacher meditates and observes nature for their calming effects.

“I try to rely on little things like that to appreciate the moment,” the teacher said. “I certainly try not to focus on the negative, but it’s hard. It would be irresponsible to ignore the news, but you can’t get lost in it, either.”

Reynolds said faculty members have been extremely cooperative

in helping her assist them.

“If they are feeling stressed or unhealthy, they say so; they don’t deny it,” she said.

Resources are available for both students and faculty who are struggling.

According to Reynolds, middle and high school librarian Joanne Melinson shared online resources with teachers, including information on how to teach while teaching your own children.

In addition, Reynolds shared resources with faculty and staff.

For students, Reynolds said SEL provides them with many of the skills they need to adapt to remote learning. Her classes focus on teaching resilience and providing calming tools, such as The Good News Network, relaxation apps, white noise and even a livestream of jellyfish at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Reynolds encourages high school students to pay attention to patterns in their behavior. If students experience a recurrence, they can use tools that worked

before.

“But if I’m usually a good sleeper, and suddenly I’m just tossing and turning, or if I find myself being crabby and I’m really not a crabby person, just think about that,” Reynolds said. “Is this a one-time thing, say, because I’m hungry, or do I need to look inside and say, ‘What’s going on in there?’”

If students have a therapist, Reynolds also inquires if they have contacted that person. She may even have permission to directly contact the therapist.

Reynolds’ online process is nearly identical to her technique on campus.

For those who experience new behavior patterns, Reynolds has some advice.

“What I’ve been telling people is to not be surprised by just about anything you feel or notice, because it’s OK,” she said. “It’s OK not to feel anxious. It’s OK to feel anxious. It’s OK to sleep in. It’s OK to stay up late. We don’t have any rules right now.”



WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER A message about the unity of the Country Day community has been added to the sign in front of the Matthews Library. **PHOTO BY EMMA BOERSMA**

Professionals: Coping mechanisms identified

(Continued from page 1)

-sitive to change, this loss can trigger anxiousness.”

Pedersen added anxiety generally occurs in adolescents when they become overwhelmed by fear.

“When a child does not outgrow the fears and worries typical in young children, or when there are so many fears and worries that they interfere with school, home or play activities, the child may be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder,” she said.

During the pandemic, a major source of fear comes from speculation, according to Reynolds.

“We overthink things, fill in the speculative parts as the brain will do, start to worry, and everything does downhill,” Reynolds said.

To cope with anxiety, Reynolds suggests examining the underlying fears.

“Try to separate the real fears

— washing your hands frequently — from the (speculated) fears,” Reynolds said. “Don’t make any plans based on speculations (of the pandemic) since this stuff has been changing from one day to another.”

An example of speculated fear, according to Reynolds, is watching the news, trying to make predictions and making unnecessary preparations.

“It’s like people who wake up in the middle of the night and think, ‘Did I do that project? Did I schedule that appointment? Did I set up that Zoom meeting?’” she said. “I call this the ‘hamster wheel.’ The voices in your head get your attention, and your brain goes into the ‘fight or flight’ mode.”

“In order to calm down, we have to shut down the (‘fight or flight’) part of our brain and think, ‘I can’t do anything about it at 2 a.m. I’ll write it down and go back to bed.’”

Pedersen said her patients often are too hard on themselves.

“Many people with depression or anxiety often look at one thing they have not done and beat themselves up about it,” Pedersen said. “I ask patients to write down the things they have accomplished in a day. It can be quite impressive.”

In addition, Pedersen stresses exercise and self-care.

“I believe exercise is one of the best natural medications there is,” Pedersen said. “Exercise boosts serotonin in the brain. It’s so hard to start, but once you do, it will become addictive with no side effects other than a little bit of pain.”

“It is also OK to take time to play video games, watch a funny show, (make) art or meditate. Accept your feelings and do something nice for yourself. You are important.”

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Navy veteran retires after 20 years of teaching math at Country Day

BY SANJANA ANAND

“I look back at my years in this wonderful place with great fondness,” middle school math teacher Denise Scruggs said of her 20 years at Country Day.

Scruggs, who will retire at the end of the school year, said her favorite part of teaching is the growth of her students.

“It always makes me happy when my students come to visit; the graduating class is special because I got to teach them in both fifth and eighth grade,” Scruggs said.

“I love the connections we get to make with our students, and if we’re lucky enough, we get to see them after they’ve graduated. Some of my students see me when they’re 30, and it warms my heart.”

However, Scruggs said she won’t miss grading.

“I’m sure every teacher feels this way, but I wish I could give every student 100%,” she said with a laugh.

Head of middle school Rommel Loria said he will miss Scruggs.

“She has been here for a lot longer than I have,” Loria said. “She deserves (her retirement). She works really hard and cares a lot about her students and teaching. She always speaks about her students with a lot of care and thought.”

Before becoming a teacher, Scruggs served in the United States Navy for 20 years, starting in 1977 when she was 23.

She worked in electronics, repairing communication equipment on ships.

Scruggs said her experience in the Navy has helped her teach.

“I met and worked with so many different people and have been to so many different places, so it makes me more patient, understanding and open to every-

one’s backgrounds and cultures, especially because Country Day is very diverse,” Scruggs said. “Also, if I teach a concept, and I remember a moment in the Navy which relates to it, I like to narrate the story as I teach the concept.”

While Scruggs was in the Navy, she earned her bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of Saint Leo in Florida.

After earning her degree, Scruggs retired from the Navy to start a family.

“After 17 years of being in the service, I was talking to my husband and considered having a baby,” she said.

Scruggs has one daughter, Brianna, who is now 26.

Scruggs was admitted into a Navy-sponsored program called Troops to Teachers. Through this, she earned her master’s degree in education from Old Dominion University in Virginia, where she had been stationed.

“I love the connections we get to make with our students, and if we’re lucky enough, we get to see them after they’ve graduated.”

— Denise Scruggs

“We decided to move out to Sacramento because that’s where my husband’s from, so I started looking for teaching positions here,” Scruggs said.

“Because my credentials were from Virginia, it was really hard for me to find a teaching job. In fact, I had to take extra credits for schools to be able to hire me.”

She said she saw a newspaper advertisement for Country Day.

“I was looking for math positions at private schools because they’re easier to apply to than the public school system,” Scruggs

said.

She interviewed with the head of lower school at that time, Barbara Ore, and the fifth grade math teacher, Laura Monahan. A few days later, Ore hired her as the fourth grade math teacher.

“My daughter was 4 when I was employed here,” Scruggs said. “She went here for all of lower school.”

Scruggs taught fourth grade for three years before moving to sixth grade.

“I wanted to teach higher-level math, so I stayed there for about two years,” she said.

Scruggs then taught seventh graders for seven years.

“A seventh grade position freed up, and I wanted to take it,” Scruggs said. “I really enjoy teaching algebra and geometry. When I was in high school, (they) were my favorite subjects because there’s either a right or a wrong answer.”

She then took a brief break from teaching to work in school administration.

“I took administration classes and got a job as a principal at Brookfield for three years, but then I decided I wanted to go back to a classroom,” Scruggs said.

“As a principal, you have to deal with all of the problems. As a teacher, (you) get to laugh with your students and have the best of times.”

Scruggs got a job at Sierra Oaks school as a seventh grade math and science teacher for a year.

“And then the headmaster at the time, (Stephen Repsher), called me and asked me to return to Country Day,” Scruggs said. “He offered me a math and science job for fifth grade, (which) I taught for five years.”

She finally moved to eighth grade math, which she has taught for the last eight years.

Eighth grader Riley Ta said Scruggs is very approachable.

“She explains everything su-



BATTLESHIP Denise Scruggs poses on a ship in the Atlantic Ocean in 1991 during the Gulf War. Scruggs worked in electronics, repairing communication equipment. **PHOTO COURTESY OF SCRUGGS**

per well,” Ta said. “And even if we don’t understand a concept, you can always ask her, and she will go out of her way to make sure it’s clear to you.”

Eighth grader Delsyn Beaton agreed with Ta.

“(Scruggs) is energetic and nice,” Beaton said. “She also had such a cool life in the Navy. I’m always very interested to hear her stories in class.”

Loria said Lauren Davis of Nashville, Tennessee, will replace Scruggs.

“She has taught at multiple schools even though it’s early in her career,” Loria said. “We wanted to hire someone who had the same passion for math as

(Scruggs).”

Scruggs plans to travel with her husband.

“I’ve been working for 40 years, and my husband recently retired as well,” Scruggs said. “When I was in the Navy, we traveled a lot, and one of my favorite places was Italy, so I’m hoping to go back there sometime soon.”

“I was actually born in Germany, but we left when I was a child, so I’m hoping to revisit before it’s too late — it’s definitely on my bucket list.”

However, Scruggs won’t leave Country Day altogether.

“I’m still going to sign up to be a substitute teacher,” she said. “I’ll miss this place too much!”

Director of award-winning orchestra, choir will move to Mexico

BY ARIJIT TRIVEDI

Felecia Keys created the high school choir and conducted Country Day’s orchestra, chamber and choir groups, winning more than 60 awards along the way. Now, after 10 years of directing and teaching, she will retire in June.

When Keys came to Country Day, she had been teaching music and playing the viola for 30 years. Her music career began when she discovered the violin in sixth grade.

“I feel super blessed that I’ve been able

to do music my whole life, but I felt that I’m of that age where it’s time to move on to the next part of your life,” Keys said.

Her retirement has been in the making for three years.

“I’ve been making plans to move to Mexico,” Keys said. “So, I’ve been downsizing and getting rid of my things like my scooter and furniture over the last two years. I’ve spent the last two summers in a town in Mexico near Lake Chapala, where I will be moving after retirement.”

Keys said she will continue to play her

viola.

“The town I’m moving to has an orchestra group that I have already joined,” Keys said. “I have friends down there, and we’ve been Zoom-meeting once a week for the past year. I’m just looking forward to starting my new life in Mexico with my new friends.”

Keys said she’ll miss many things about Country Day, mainly her students.

“It’s difficult for me to even think about it because I’m losing my entire family at Country Day,” Keys said. “Luckily, I have Facebook, which helps me keep in touch with my students — some of whom I taught 40 years ago and are grandparents now.”

“But that’s the hardest part, saying goodbye to students. Usually when the seniors leave, they’re leaving you. But this time, I’m leaving them, so it feels a little different from what I’m used to.”

Senior concertmaster Emma Boersma said she’ll miss Keys and her chemistry with the orchestra.

“Everyone is close with her. The orchestra has its own inside jokes with her that have made the class that much more enjoyable,” Boersma said. “(Keys) just connects with all her students, so we’re like one big orchestra family.”

Band director Bob Ratcliff agreed.

“One of the best qualities (Keys) has is that she really cares about the kids,” Ratcliff said. “She can break things down for the students and help them fully understand music and appreciate it.”

Boersma added she’s thankful to Keys for

helping her stay with music for so long.

“I wasn’t the most self-motivated violinist when I started playing with her in eighth grade,” Boersma said. “But she kept encouraging me and, thanks to her, I found an appreciation for what I did. If it had been anyone else, I don’t think I would’ve stuck with music for so long.”

Ratcliff said Keys not only engaged her students in music but improved the programs.

“She raised the string program here to a higher standard and built and developed the choral program as well,” Ratcliff said. “If I’m not mistaken, every year that (Keys) directed the chamber ensembles, at least one made all-state.”

“She just brought the level of musicality in the orchestra up a level from where it previously was. In the past 10 years, under her direction, the orchestra has had more success than the band has as far as festivals and competitions go.”

Head of school Lee Thomsen agreed.

“My first year here, I went to the winter concert, and I remember the look of pride on (Keys’) face when the fifth grade orchestra played,” Thomsen said. “That’s when I realized that Country Day’s music program was small but mighty.”

Music teacher Maria Hoyos will replace Keys as director of the orchestra, choir and chamber group.

“She’s wonderful,” Keys said. “She’s so knowledgeable, and I love the way she connects with the kids. She’ll do great things with the choir and orchestra.”



ENDING ON A HIGH NOTE Felecia Keys plays Christmas songs with students in front of the school in December 2018. **PHOTO COURTESY OF KEYS**

Assistant head of school selected from ‘diverse and talented candidates’ to replace founder, head of Sonoma Academy

BY NIHAL GULATI

Assistant head of school Tucker Foehl was named in July 2019 to replace retiring founder Janet Durgin as the head of Sonoma Academy, the only independent high school in Sonoma County, beginning July 1, 2020.

Then came COVID-19.

Sonoma Academy, like Country Day, has shifted to online learning in recent months. According to Foehl, transitioning into his new job is more challenging in this environment.

“If you asked me four months ago, I would have said that my main focus would be learning everything about Sonoma Academy,” Foehl said. “And I will continue to do that, but I also recognize that next year will be a much more intense first year, with some much higher-stakes decision-making.”

Sonoma Academy, a college preparatory high school in Santa Rosa with an enrollment of 330, focuses on diversity and commitment to learning.

According to Sonoma Academy’s announcement on July 31, 2019, Tucker was selected from “an international pool of diverse and talented candidates after a thorough year-long search process that engaged Sonoma Academy parents/guardians, students, alumni, staff and trustees.”

Foehl was selected because of his “commitment to independent school education, demonstrated love of learning, care for the student experience, warmth, vision and most importantly, his deep alignment with (Sonoma’s) mission and core values,” according to the announcement.

Foehl has worked at Country Day for six years, during which he led the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC), restarted the Diversity Committee, helped increase learning support for students across the school and led the school’s Accreditation

Self-Study in 2016 (required by the California Association of Independent Schools to judge school quality).

Foehl was born in Neptune, New Jersey, and raised in Mission Viejo, California. He has a bachelor’s degree in American Studies and African American Studies from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, a master’s in American Studies from Yale University and a graduate certificate in Educational Leadership for Independent Schools from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Before coming to Country Day, Foehl taught American Studies at the Calhoun School in New York City from 2006 to 2009 and was the head of academics at the Baltimore School of the Arts from 2009 to 2014.

Foehl described some of the difficulties he faces entering his new job during the pandemic.

“We have a lot of big things happening, in terms of the remote learning program that’s been created for the remainder of this year and finalizing our plan to begin next school year with a schedule that will engage our community.”

“The biggest challenge for me, if we are not on campus together, will be connecting with people. Connecting with students and being part of their day-to-day lives is going to be more difficult, and Sonoma Academy has a wonderful campus where so many of our students and staff really feel like they are at their second home.”

Foehl also stressed that one of his primary goals will be supporting the administrative team and Sonoma Academy’s community.



“We have lifelong friends on the faculty and staff as well as families in the Country Day community.”

— Tucker Foehl

“Sonoma Academy is incredibly well organized with their plan right now,” he said. “I’m connecting with our strong administrative team and building relationships with people I will rely on as I make this transition. Everyone on campus has a lot of experience working mid-crisis, with the Tubbs and Kincade fires and PG&E blackouts. A big plus of this transition is how philosophically aligned I am with them. That’s going to be very helpful as I lead a school for the first time.”

Foehl said he’s “still working on my goals with the Sonoma Academy board of trustees. My biggest goal right now is connecting with the immediate community and those beyond our campus in the Sonoma County region.”

“Sonoma Academy has been working in equity and inclusion on campus this past year. We have created a new position — a director of diversity, equity and inclusion — and this is an exciting development at our school. We also

have four new board members of color, including two alums, starting on the board this summer. We were set to break ground this summer on a theater project, and while that is obviously on hold, we will hopefully continue during the next school year.”

Foehl is proud of a number of initiatives over the past six years at Country Day, including restarting and reforming the Diversity Committee.

The committee’s work involved supporting and hiring faculty members and adding library books.

“One of the things Country Day should be particularly proud of is that we have a much higher percentage of faculty and administrators of color on campus than we did six years ago,” Foehl said.

Foehl said he also worked on learning support for students across the campus.

“When I arrived, we didn’t have a learning support team, and now we have three skilled professionals across three divisions of our school,” Foehl said. “I’m really proud of that team and their exceptional work at Country Day. And I’m really proud of the work the administrative team has done, particularly our work to reshape and regenerate the mission and core values of our school.”

According to head of school Lee Thomsen, there are no plans to replace Foehl.

“The school’s needs evolve over time, and with the recent increase in enrollment, we plan to steer most of those resources to increasing faculty positions for next year,” Thomsen said in an Oct. 29 Octagon story.

Thomsen also cited Foehl’s work as a reason for not needing a replacement.

“One of the great compliments I can give him is that he moved us forward in several areas, particularly in his work as chair of the (TLC) and in building our Learning Support Team,” Thomsen said. “The school is able to sustain ourselves in those areas by building on the strong foundation he created.”

Thomsen agreed with Foehl’s sentiment on his accomplishments.

“I will forever be grateful to him for his work managing the task of our Accreditation Self-Study in my first year at the school,” Thomsen said. “It is a gigantic task to wrangle, and since I was brand new, I knew next to nothing about Country Day, and we simply could never have accomplished it without his leadership.”

Foehl said he will miss the Country Day community the most.

“We’ve developed lifelong friendships here,” he said. “My son, Matteo, started in kindergarten and is leaving as a fifth grade graduate. (For) my daughter, Ruby (second grade), this is the only school she’s ever really known.”

“We have lifelong friends on the faculty and staff as well as families in the Country Day community. That’s been the most wonderful thing about our six years here, and we are all really going to miss Country Day and our home in East Sacramento.”

Director of admissions departs for Montessori school in Boston

BY MILES MORROW

After working as Country Day’s director of admission for three years, Keefe has accepted the same position at Kingsley Montessori School in Boston.

Keefe worked in admissions at Lycée Français de San Francisco before Country Day.

Before Keefe, Lonna Bloedau was the director of admissions at Country Day.

Keefe moved to Boston in early May with her family but will continue to work remotely for Country Day until the end of June. She will begin working for Kingsley on July 1.

“It’s going to be a different job in many ways,” Keefe said. “It’s located in the center of a big city. The school itself doesn’t have much outdoor greenspace. It also only goes up to sixth grade.”

However, Keefe said Country Day and Kingsley are similar in other ways — one of the reasons she chose to work there.

“Of the jobs I considered, all in the Boston area, Kingsley really stood out to me,” she said. “Similar to Country Day, it was a happy, creative, energized place. I liked that there were improvements that the school needs to

make that I’ve already successfully made at other schools and yet also some new challenges for me to take on professionally.

“Also, much like at Country Day, I get along really well with Kingsley’s head of school and leadership team. I am also a big fan of the Montessori method, which is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children.”



“Of the jobs I considered, all in the Boston area, Kingsley really stood out to me. Similar to Country Day, it was a happy, creative, energized place.”

— Hadley Keefe

any parts of the Kingsley program where there are open seats,” Keefe said. “Overall, my most important focus will be on contributing to the continued im-

provement of Kingsley’s already vibrant cultural health and the cohesiveness of the community by yielding an even broader array of families who are increasingly committed to and passionate about the school’s mission.”

Kingsley has also moved to remote learning, Keefe said.

“The school is facilitating at-home learning for students, faculty and staff,” she said. “Boston is a hotspot for coronavirus cases, and Kingsley has been very active in following the city and county guidelines.”

Keefe said she’s proud of her work at Country Day.

“Each of the three years I worked at Country Day, we were on track to experience enrollment growth,” Keefe said. “We were also able to improve the number of families that remained at Country Day. I am very proud of that. When I first arrived, Country Day had 465 students. It currently has 513.”

Dana Vargo, the interim director of admission and enrollment management, worked closely with Keefe and complimented her work in helping enrollment grow.

“(Keefe) really understood our unique community, and her fresh, energetic perspective provided an important opportunity to rede-

sign office processes and special events,” Vargo said. “She frequently drew on her experience at other independent schools and further contributed by prioritizing systems and data, attention to professional development and adherence to best practices.”

“She will be missed by the entire Country Day community, and I, for one, am excited to stay in touch and keep tabs on the trajectory of her career.”

Head of school Lee Thomsen agreed.

“Keefe did a tremendous job as our director of admissions in her three years at Country Day,” he said. “Under her leadership, we began accepting online applications and made our admissions process very child-centered.”

“In collaboration with (marketing and communications direc-

tor) Emily Allshouse, she worked to increase our visibility in the community, particularly online, which led to an increase in inquiries, applications and ultimately enrollment.”

Keefe said she will miss everyone at Country Day.

“The teachers at Country Day are extraordinary educators,” Keefe said. “They are great at building relationships with students, which is very important. I have also made some great friends through working at Country Day and am really going to miss them.”

Rebecca Lau, a Country Day parent and recent director of marketing and admissions for the Suzhou Singapore International School in Suzhou, China, has been named the associate director of admission.

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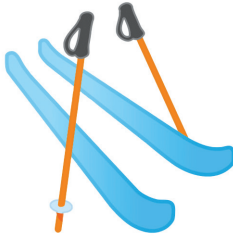
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MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Fall sports

Cross country



Winter sports

Ski and snowboard

By Miles Morrow

COACH JOE HARTMAN: "I think we broke some new ground. We had six dedicated runners led by junior captain Olivia Chilelli. With a school such as Country Day, it's not easy to get full teams, but we gained more runners and enjoyed each other's company tremendously."

"What made the season fun was that at nearly every meet, one of the runners ran one of their most amazing races of the year, so the drive home was always filled with joy and optimism."

"Chilelli and (freshman) Grace Eberhart found the Haggin Oaks golf turf to their liking and ran tremendous races on a beautiful September morning. (Sophomore) Tina Huang showed us a glimpse of her solid athletic ability with a bust-out race at the Del Oro Invitational. (Freshman) Jonah David used the fresh air of Foresthill to run his fastest two-mile time of the year. And (freshman) Eric Lechpammer saved his best race for last, coming ever so close to a seven-minute pace over the two-mile course in Angels Camp."



Freshman Eric Lechpammer
PHOTO RETRIVED FROM CAVNET

By Arjin Claire

COACH JASON KREPS: We had some new skiers, freshmen Callister Misquitta and Shivom Sharma, on the team, and it was exciting to watch them experience racing."

"The biggest, most memorable event this season was (sophomore) Hailey (Fesai) getting injured in her first race. It was heartbreaking to experience, but to see Hailey's strength and courage — she's been very positive. It was a significant injury (broken thigh bone) to go through and be a part of. I know she looks forward to racing again next season."



Junior Bri Davies (left) and sophomore Hailey Fesai
PHOTO BY SERGEI FESAI

Girls basketball

By Sanjana Anand

COACH LATONIA PITTS: "There were so many memorable moments throughout the season. (Freshman point guard Jada Grey) scored 31 points against Valley Christian (on Feb. 7), and (junior small forward Stephanie Ye) scored her first points ever in a game (on Feb. 13 against Western Sierra)."

"Also, the girls constantly rallied together to motivate each other and to make each other better despite the outcomes of the games. They even stayed after practice or a game to ask what they could work on. They are a great group of ladies, and I'm excited for next season."

Freshman Jada Grey
PHOTO BY EMMA BOERSMA

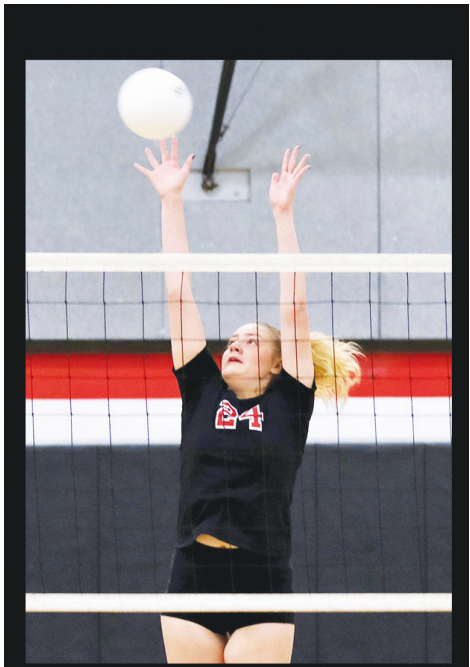


Volleyball

By Sicily Schroeder

COACH JASON KREPS: "What stands out to me from this last season is how everyone contributed to the team in huge ways. Players adapted to new roles and were constantly stepping up. What I remember the most is the joy on the team's faces as they competed. They were a really fun group to coach!"

"Game-wise, both Buckingham games (on Sept. 19 and Oct. 16) stick out to me. They both went to five sets, we won the first and they the second, and it was just a blast seeing the girls compete and have fun!"



Senior Savannah Rosenzweig
PHOTO BY SHIMIN ZHANG

Soccer

By Dylan Margolis

COACH MATT VARGO: "We started with nine or 10 underclassmen, and if I had to sum up the season in a few words, I would say growth and maturation."

"(In) the last league game, we were able to hold two-time undefeated section champion Cristo Rey scoreless in the first half (of a 2-0 loss)."

Sophomore Malek Owaidat
PHOTO BY HERMIONE XIAN

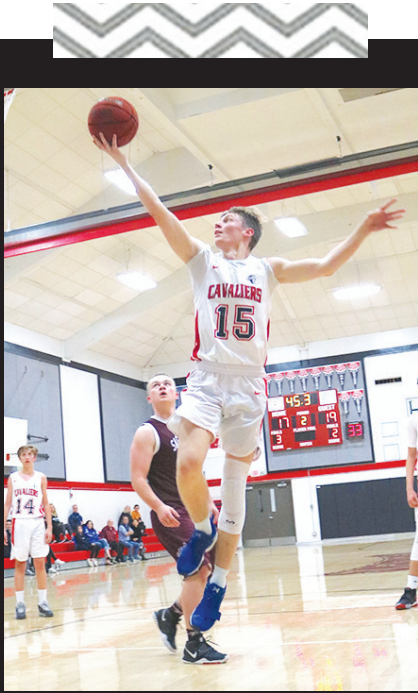


Boys basketball

By Arijit Trivedi

COACH DAVID ANCRUM: "The best part of the season was the improvement of the players and how they all handled themselves when we were pressured defensively. Specifically, the ballhandling of (freshman point guard) RJ Vargo and decision-making of (senior center) Aaron Graves improved the flow of our game."

"The point where we started improving was when the (team) started to meet for practice at 6 a.m. instead of the usual 7 a.m. It was an important decision that helped them improve right away."



Senior Aaron Graves
PHOTO BY ELISE SOMMERHAUG

Coaches, players comment on 2019-20 season highlights

Spring sports

The tennis team played only four matches, winning each, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The golf squad was limited to one tournament and the baseball team to two exhibition games. The swimming and diving team and the track and field squad were unable to compete.



Golf

By Ethan Monasa

COACH MATT VARGO: "The highlight of the season was (senior) Jackson Crawford winning the first and only SMAL (Sacramento Metropolitan Athletic League) tournament (on March 9). Jackson worked really hard on his game, and it was nice to see him go out and play well. "I also liked (freshmen) Samrath (Pannu) and Shivom (Sharma's) effort at practice. They improved a lot in a short time."

Freshman Samrath Pannu
PHOTO BY SHIMIN ZHANG



Baseball

By Arijit Trivedi

JUNIOR HAYDEN BOERSMA, A CENTER FIELDER: "I was looking forward to trying to hit a home run this season. I've never hit one before, and I thought I had a good chance this season because I'm a little stronger than I was last year. "I'll miss the seniors. They were really fun to be around and play with. It's a shame they didn't get a season this year."

Sophomore Miles Morrow
PHOTO BY HERMIONE XIAN



Track and field

By Arjin Claire

COACH RICK FULLUM: "We had a lot of high expectations this season, and our team was looking good overall. We expected league champions in pole vault for both boys (senior Garrett Shonkwiler and sophomore Arijit Trivedi) and girls (senior Emma Boersma). "Both the boys sprinters (senior Charles Thomas and sophomore Craig Bolman) and distance runners (freshman Eric Lechpammer and Trivedi) were looking good and had a chance at qualifying for sections. The girls (also) showed a lot of promise for the season. Overall, we had a solid team, and we are looking forward to the next full season."

Sophomore Craig Bolman
PHOTO BY EMMA BOERSMA



Tennis

By Nihal Gulati

COACH JAMIE NELSON: "It was our third match, against Linden High School at home (on March 5). The last match to finish was girls doubles No. 1, (sophomore) Tina Huang and (freshman) Samhita Kumar. It was close all the way. "The sun was setting, and the score was 9-9. At that point, the league rules called for a seven-point tiebreaker. It was getting dark, and the tiebreaker score ran to 5-5. The only fans left were the coaches. "Tina and Samhita had no idea that the whole (team's) victory or loss hung on the outcome of their match. They won the next two points to claim a 7-5 victory, and we eked out a 5-4 win."

Sophomore Vanessa Escobar
PHOTO BY ARIKTA TRIVEDI



Swimming and Diving

By Arikta Trivedi

COACH BRIAN NABETA: "I was looking forward to seeing if we could three-peat as Division III women's champions. The quarantine got in the way of our goals. "I'm not sure if I'm going to coach next year, so I'm up in the air on expectations. My current job, coaching the DART swim team, may require more time commitment."

Senior Rebecca Waterson
PHOTO COURTESY OF WATERSON



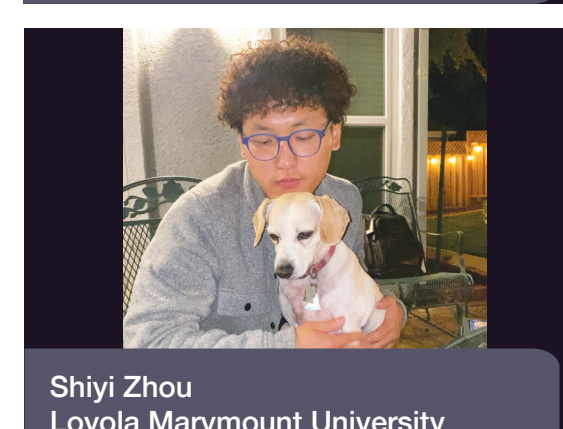
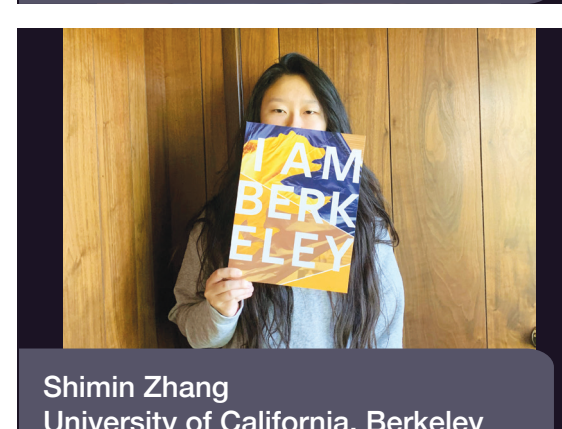
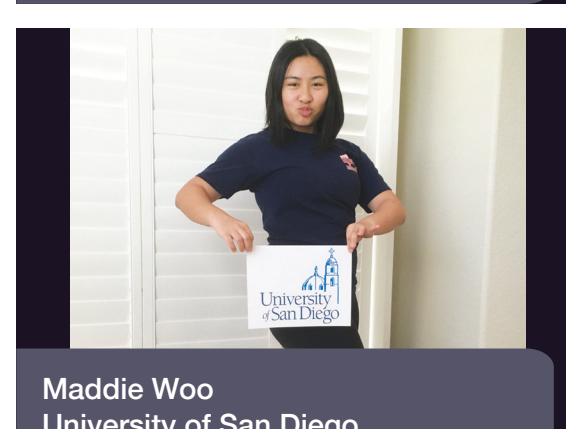
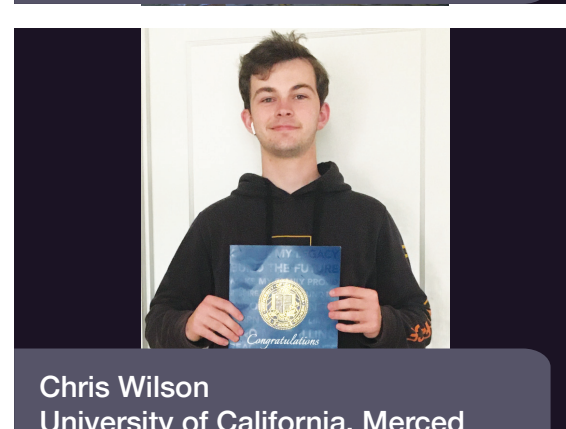
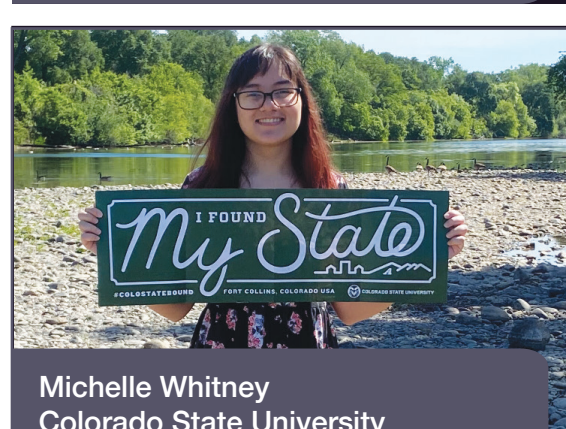
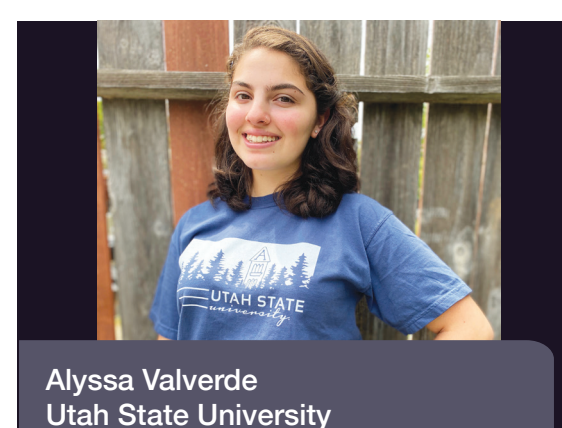
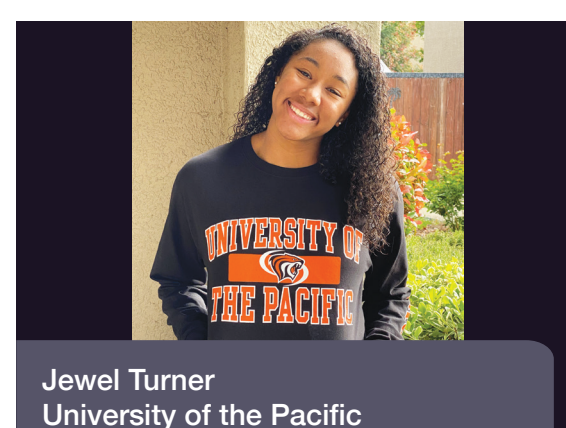
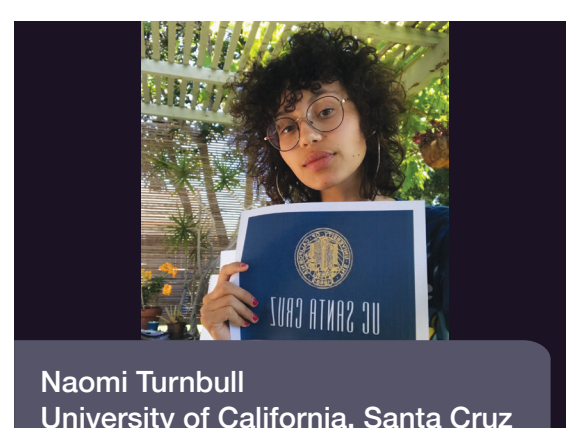
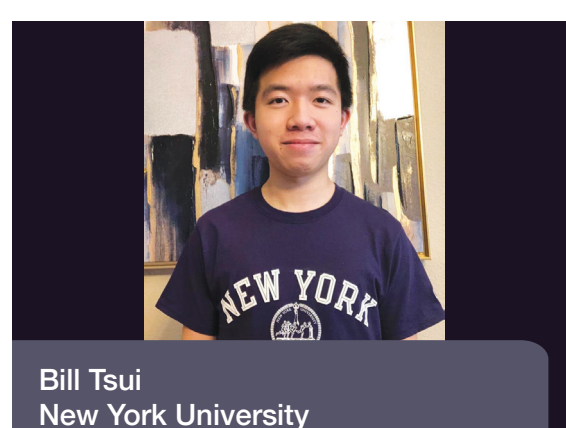
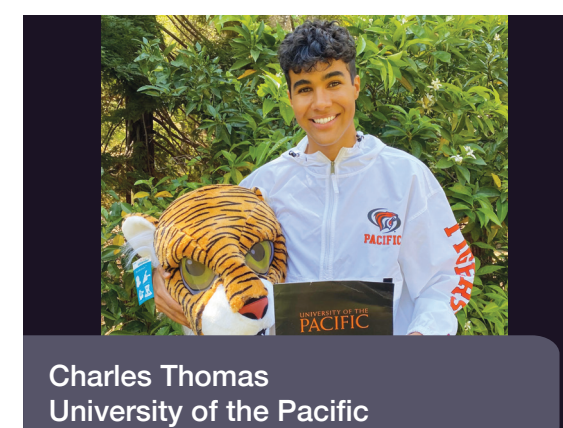
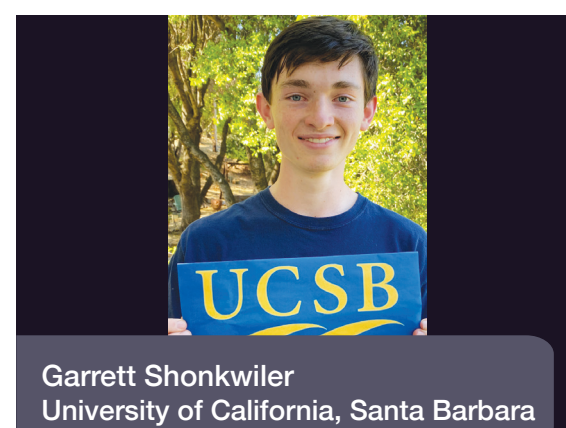
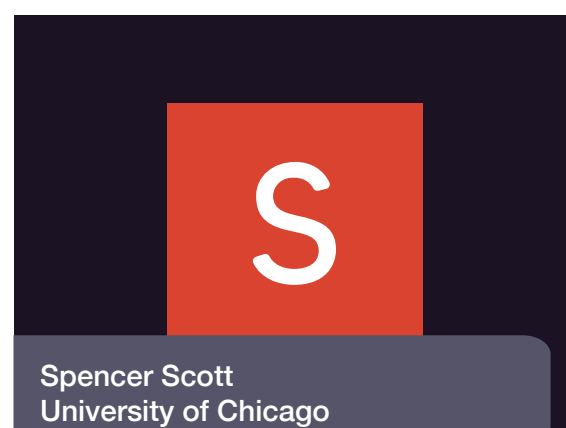
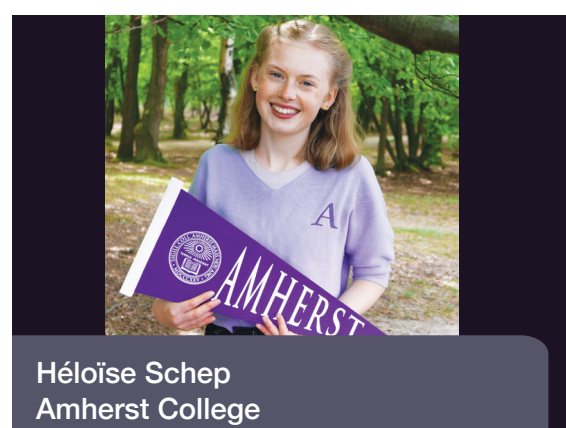
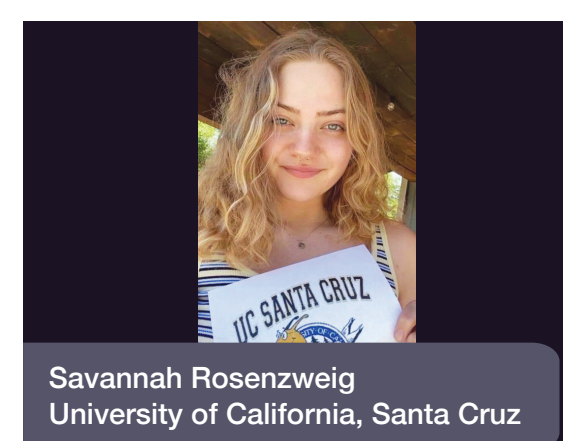
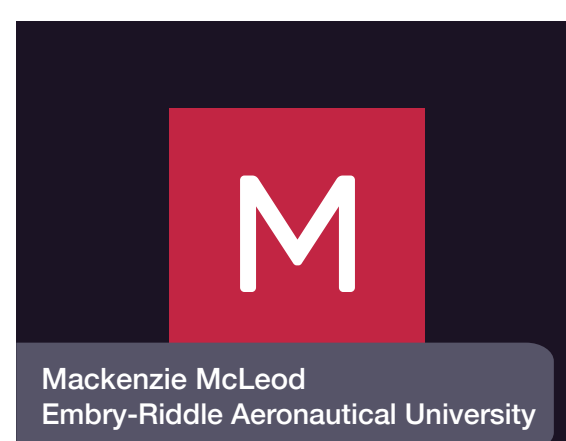
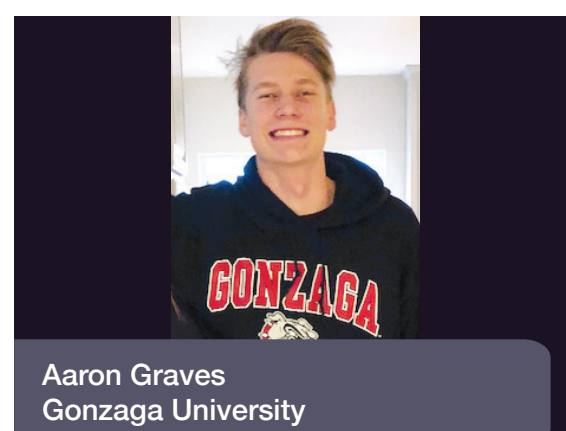
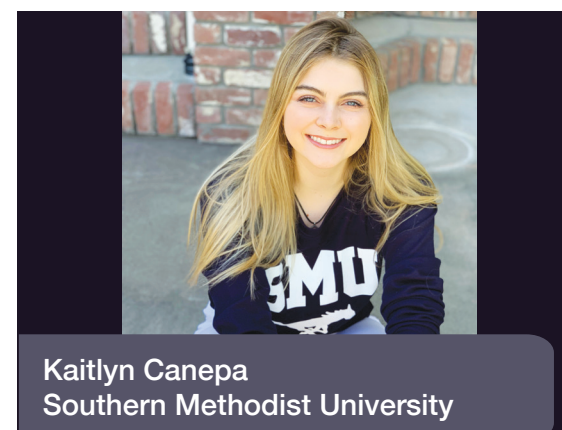
Thank you, Sports Boosters Members,

for supporting our student-athletes with your generous contributions and time! We wish we were able to finish the year with additional celebrations, but we'll be back in the fall with newly elected board officers: Sandee Chand - President, David Spradlin - VP, and Louie Dias - Secretary (*Treasurer and Membership Director filled in the interim by current members).

Go, Cavs!

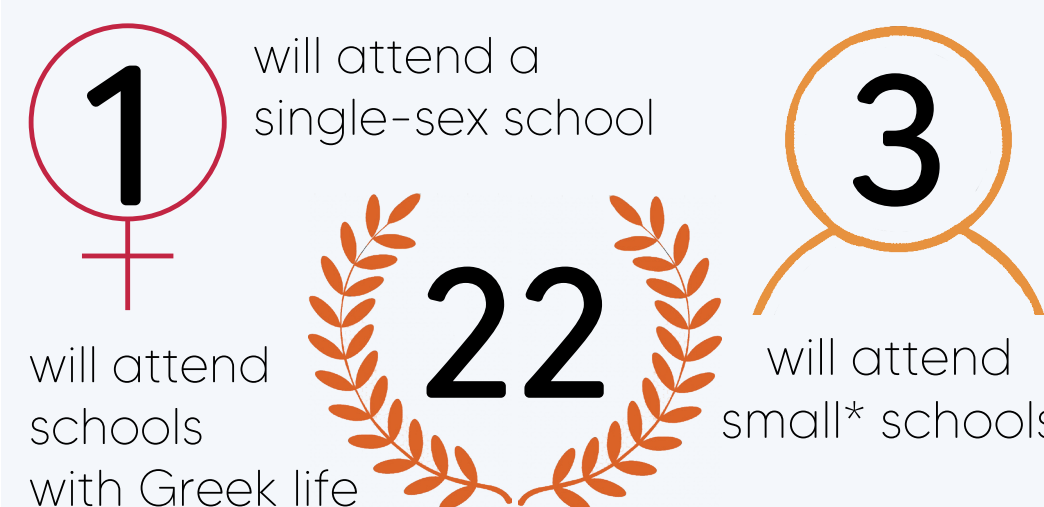
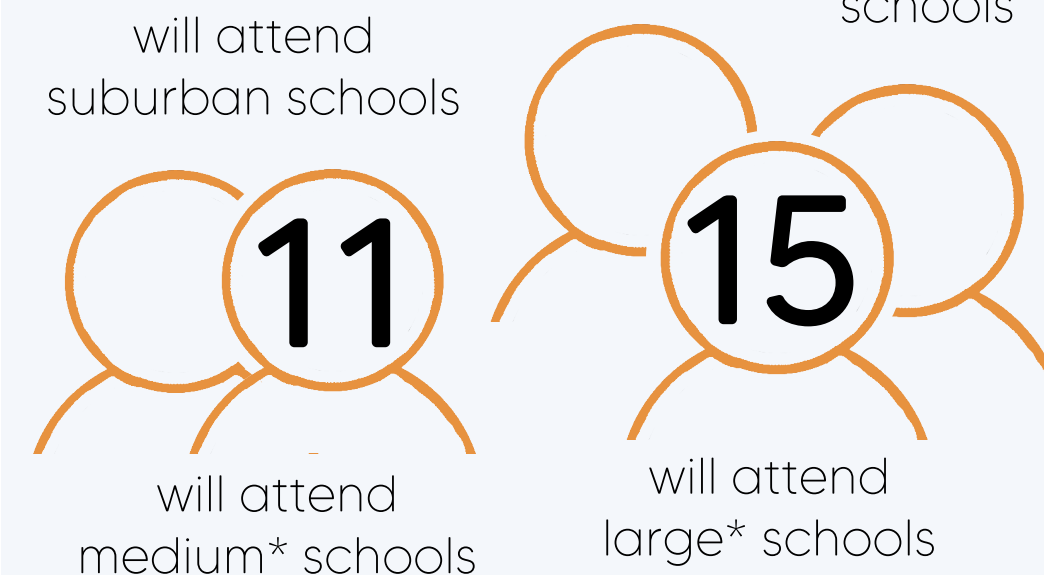
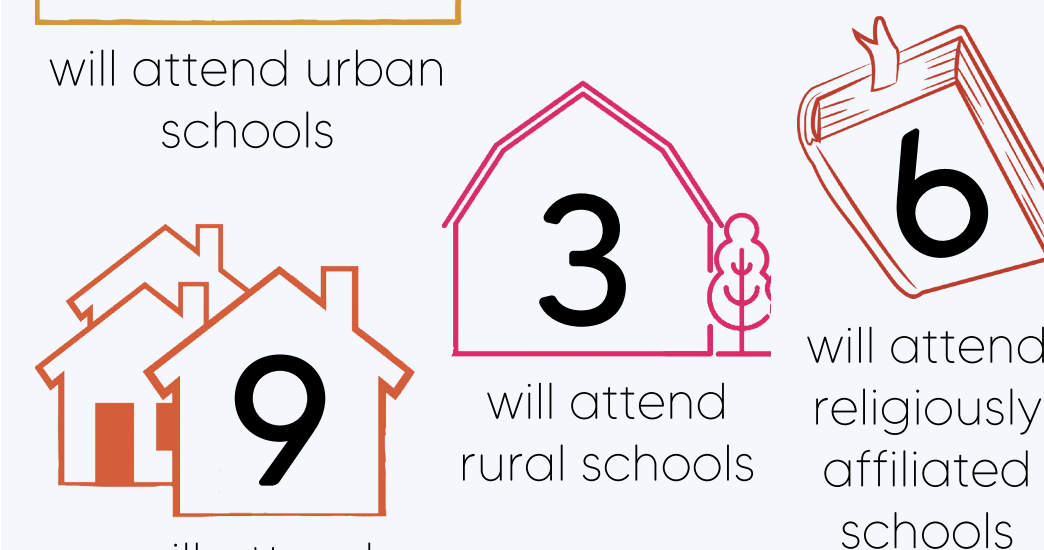
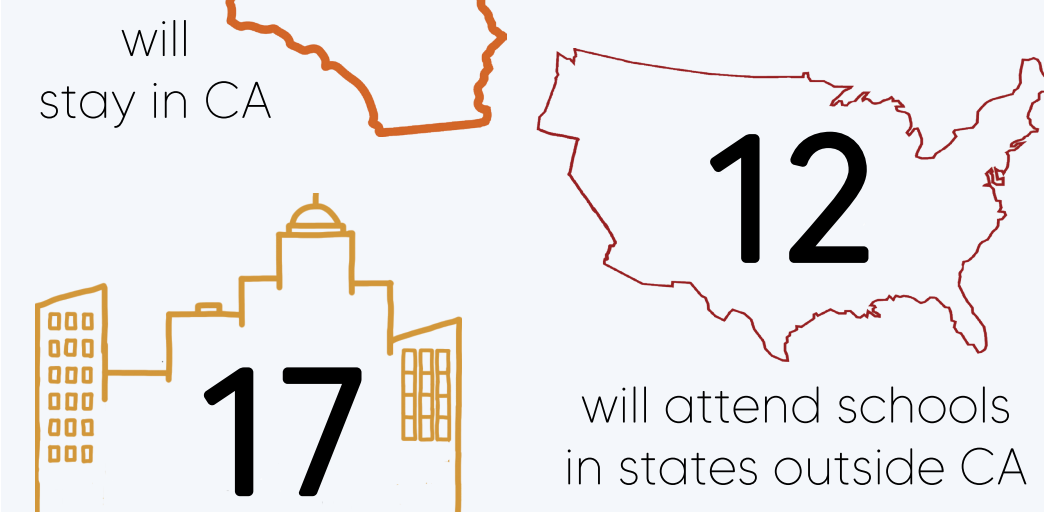
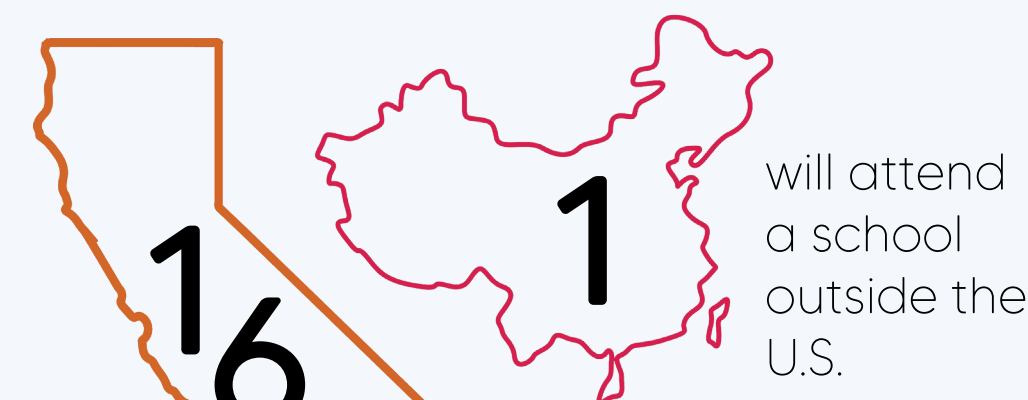
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Class of 2020 colleges



Senior stats

In the class of 2020...



* Small schools have a total student body of fewer than 2,000 students, medium schools have 2,000 to 15,000 students and large schools have over 15,000 students. GRAPHICS BY HÉLOÏSE SCHEP

QUARANTINE CRASH COURSES

Sophomore spends week focused on photography

BY ARJIN CLAIRE

With the coronavirus pandemic sweeping through the country and everyone being stuck at home, I wanted to try a new hobby: photography.

I have always wanted to learn how to take pictures properly, so I used this time to do so.

Before I could take pictures, I had to learn about cameras. I started researching them and what different settings meant and did.

The first thing I learned about

was aperture. It's one of the three pillars of photography, along with shutter speed and ISO, and is "certainly the most important," according to photographylife.com.

Aperture is the opening in a lens that light passes through to enter the camera. By adjusting the aperture, you can change how much light reaches the film or digital sensor. Aperture can be used to change the dimensions of your photo by controlling the depth field. If you change the aperture and allow more light to come through, the background is blurred and the object is in focus, whereas if you let less light through, most of the photo is in sharp focus.

Aperture is measured in f-stop, and the smaller the number after the "f," the more light comes through. So an aperture of f/1.4 will have a larger opening and allow more light in than an aperture of f/22.

Another effect of aperture is the brightness, or exposure. A large aperture will increase the brightness, while a smaller aperture will make the picture darker.

Shutter speed is the length of time the shutter is open, or how long it takes your camera to take a photo.

Shutter speed can be used to increase the brightness of a photo or create dramatic effects like freeze motion or motion blur. If you take a picture with a low shutter speed, such as five seconds, the photo will be brighter.

Additionally, a longer shutter

speed will lead to more motion blur, so something that is in motion will appear blurred in the direction that it is going.

The other use of shutter speed is freeze motion, which occurs when you have a high shutter speed. Freeze motion makes objects that are falling or in motion essentially freeze in place in sharp focus.

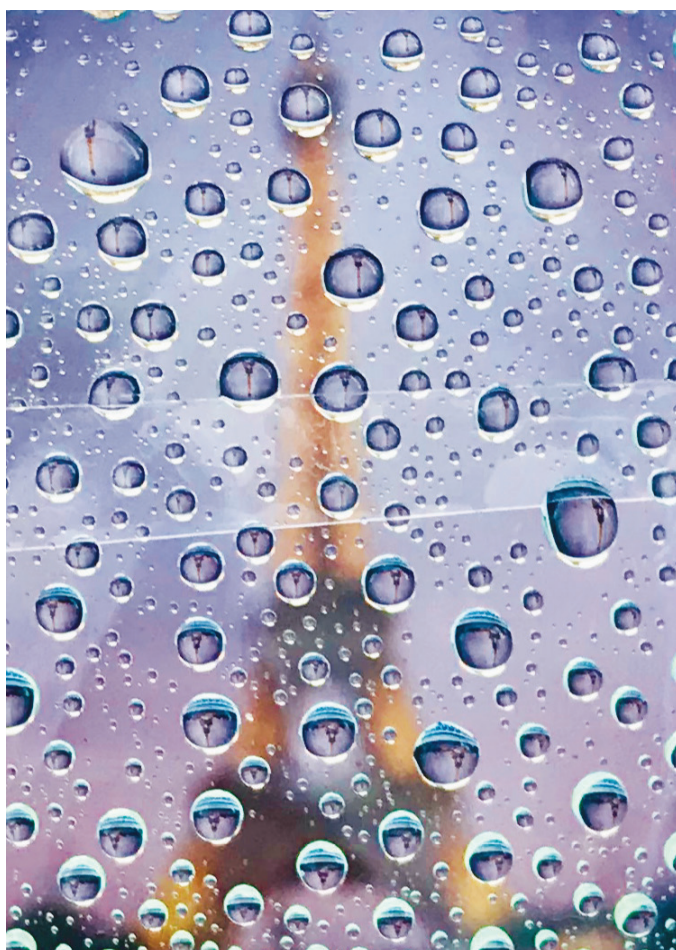
ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is measured in numbers — 100 is low and 6,000 high. The higher the ISO, the brighter the photo.

Using ISO is normally a tradeoff, because the higher the ISO, the grainier the photo. Therefore, ISO is typically used only when a photo is unable to be brightened by aperture or shutter speed.

After learning about the fundamentals of photography, I started messing around with settings and began to take pictures with a camera I had at home, a Canon EOS 60D, as well as my phone camera.

I started by taking pictures of random things that I found around my house, then moved on to making scenarios of my own out of household items like tape and flour. As I took more photos, it became a lot easier to understand what I needed to change on the camera to take better photos.

The biggest thing that I learned is to keep trying new things. If a picture doesn't turn out right, keep playing with the settings, and eventually you'll get a good picture.



THE CAMERA DOESN'T LIE Sophomore Arjin Claire took this photo by sprinkling water on a piece of clear tape over an image of the Eiffel Tower. **PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAIRE**

Freshman delves into strength training during quarantine with 1,200 pushups in one week

BY ROD AZGHADI

This past basketball season, the Country Day boys were out-toughed every single game.

As one of the tallest players, I'll take some of the blame, but I'll also take the initiative to make sure we don't have another one-win season.

During the quarantine, I've been strength-training every day to prepare for next year.

With gyms being closed, I've desperately searched for workouts that don't require equipment. That's when I discovered calisthenics. According to Men's Health, calisthenics is a form of fitness that uses gravity and bodyweight leverage.

After countless hours of browsing TikTok and YouTube for effective workouts, I came across men's lifestyle influencer Jose Zuniga. I've watched his fashion tutorials before, but never his

fitness videos.

His pushup challenge video caught my eye. It consists of 300 pushups a day — 100 in the morning, 100 in the afternoon and 100 in the evening. Each set is a variation of a pushup — incline, decline and regular.

Zuniga's video also shows him before and after 30 days of completing the challenge, and the change was impressive.

After rewatching the video to fully understand the process, I decided to embark on my own pushup journey.

My martial arts background familiarized me with pushups, but I had never done hundreds a day. With just one week to work on this story, I knew that dedication to the regimen was crucial if I wanted results.

As many people say, the first day is always the hardest.

Completing Day One was a success, but I struggled toward the last set. I also broke up each set into four reps of 25.

I felt the pain the next day when I woke up. I was so sore that it was hard to lift my glass of milk in the morning. After that, I decided to do 150 pushups a day — 50 in the morning, 50 in the afternoon and 50 in the evening.

Another reason I reduced my reps was my mom, a doctor, expressed concern about rhabdomyolysis, the breakdown of skeletal muscle that can lead to kidney damage.

The most difficult pushup was the decline. I put my legs up on a chair and my arms on the ground, forcing all the pressure into my arms and chest.

Over the week, the pushups became more difficult each day. The absence of rest days definitely put strain

Freshman turns to CrossFit in place of swimming

BY EMILY ASPERGER

Normally, I would be in the middle of swim season right now, spending most of my free time in the pool working out. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been unable to swim for almost two months.

I used to love working out, but now that I can't do it in the pool or with friends, I have had little motivation to get out of bed and do any type of physical activity.

What better time to try a new at-home exercise? CrossFit is a high-intensity fitness program that incorporates elements of several sports and types of exercise.

Before the pandemic, I did some CrossFit at swim practices, but never enough to become an expert by any means.

So, I researched CrossFit workouts and videos online to explore different programs.

I chose a two-week CrossFit challenge and a two-week core workout by CrossFit YouTubers Chloe Ting and Pamela Reif, respectively.

Ting's consisted of exercises such as squats, planks and core work. For two weeks, she devoted different days to different parts of the body with some repetition throughout each week. Workouts were 10 to 30 minutes long.

Reif's workout was shorter in length, but harder. Exercises included crunches, planks, hollow body holds and more.

The first day was a lot more difficult than I anticipated. I had not been working out very hard for a while, so I was definitely sore.

While Ting's videos included a lot of new exercises, the hardest video was definitely Reif's on core workouts. I had to complete 10 straight minutes of high-intensity exercises.

Days Two and Three were also very hard, especially since I was already sore.

But by Days Four and Five, both workouts became less difficult. I was getting used to the different exercises and getting a lot stronger.

At the end of the week, the workouts were still difficult but much easier to get through. I will continue CrossFit workouts on my own.

CrossFit is a great way to get in a workout during the quarantine. It requires no equipment and very little space. It only takes 10 minutes, and there are hundreds of videos online that target any part of your body for any age or skill level.

on my muscles.

At the end of the week, I felt stronger and overall more confident.

Unlike with Zuniga, there weren't any visual changes. If I continued the challenge for 30 days, I'm sure there would be a transformation.

However, I won't continue this challenge, as it focuses on only one group of muscles. I recommend a workout that strengthens both the upper and lower body.

After participating in this workout, I wanted to take my quarantine fitness to the next level, so I bought Bowflex 552 dumbbells. I also found a dumbbell workout program, which occasionally incorporates pushups.

Don't worry — Country Day will be back next season stronger than ever, ready to take down any opponent.

At least I will.



ROAD TO FITNESS Freshman Rod Azghadi does a pushup outside his home. Azghadi challenged himself to do pushups in order to get stronger for the basketball season. **PHOTO COURTESY OF AZGHADI**

Counselors fight pressure to apply to ‘trophy schools’

BY JACKSON CRAWFORD

Every fall, Country Day seniors begin applying to colleges, many with high hopes of acceptance into highly selective schools.

Associate director of college counseling Chris Kuipers said highly ranked schools are “the end goal” for some students, but it’s not an institutional expectation for Country Day.

“I think it’s a range,” he said. “(In) most rigorous college prep schools, there’s pressure from both external and internal forces for students to have recognition through the college search process. That’s not our expectation. I think I spend a lot more energy combating looking for a trophy school.”

Director of college counseling Jane Bauman issued similar statements about pressure students face during the college application process.

“Unfortunately, I think they do (feel pressure),” she said. “But I see my job as a college counselor to guide parents and students to colleges that are the right fit for them.”

Bauman said she and Kuipers try to match parents and students with schools that fit them “academically, socially, financially and philosophically.”

Bauman offered one point of advice for college applicants.

“As a college counselor, I never want to tell students not to reach as high as possible,” she said. “On

the other hand, they have to be realistic about their application and academic profile when they apply.

“The name and prestige of a school is not what makes it a good college experience. In fact, it could make it a bad college experience.”

“(In) most rigorous college prep schools, there’s pressure from both external and internal forces for students to have recognition through the college search process. That’s not our expectation. I think I spend a lot more energy combating looking for a trophy school.”

— Chris Kuipers

Senior Maddie Woo said there’s an expectation for Country Day seniors to apply to selective schools.

“Country Day is a private school, so we’re pressured to show that we are worth all this money and can get into top universities,” said Woo, who’s headed to the University of San Diego. “But I don’t necessarily think there’s pressure to attend them.”

Woo, who attended Pleasant Grove for her first two years of high school, said expectations are completely different at Country Day.

“(For) a lot of people (at Pleas-

ant Grove), their trajectory is a CSU (California State University) or (community college),” she said. “College isn’t really talked about a lot.

“The minute you’re on the Country Day campus, it’s setting you up for the next chapter in your life.”

Senior Chris Wilson agreed an expectation is placed on Country Day seniors from the students, not the school. However, Wilson said he didn’t feel pressure.

“I think Country Day is very good at helping you find your own path, so I think it’s classmates and other students putting the pressure on to go to higher-ranked schools,” said Wilson, who chose the University of California, Merced. “We see the previous years’ students going to these colleges and feel like we need to meet that expectation.”

Kuipers agreed.

“We are a small community,” he said. “As ninth graders, you see the M&M man and the conversations seniors are having.”

Watching multiple students go off to Stanford in 2018 and 2019, for example, does create an expectation, according to a senior who chose a highly ranked school and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

“Country Day doesn’t have a bad track record at (highly ranked) schools,” they said. “All of those people who go to Stanford went to the same high school as us, so why not apply?”

Country Day has made some accommodations to decrease

pressure, such as reducing the number of schools students can announce using the M&M man.

“You would think that would reduce the pressure, but I don’t see any evidence of that,” Bauman said.

The senior who spoke on anonymity noted the “unlearning” that Kuipers and Bauman go through with seniors each year.

“A lot is already ingrained in us from our parents or reading The New York Times (for example),” the student said. “Weirdly, part of their job is contradicting what is in our popular culture. Otherwise, we’re never going to pick a school that will fit us well.”

“Country Day is a private school, so we’re pressured to show that we are worth all this money and can get into top universities. But I don’t necessarily think there’s pressure to attend them.”

— Maddie Woo

While rankings traditionally are associated with selectivity and prestige, students and college counselors agreed they are detrimental to making college decisions.

“I never look at the rankings in order to find a school that’s the best choice for a student,” Bauman said.

Kuipers, a former admissions officer at Amherst College in

Massachusetts, added colleges prioritize aspects of their image that aren’t reflected in the rankings and vice versa.

“We spent a ton of time trying to diversify the student body,” he said. “That’s an institutional priority that’s essential to what (Amherst) is about. And it’s not reflected anywhere in the rankings.”

Woo said rankings also don’t capture the culture of the student body.

“I think when you visit college campuses, you can kind of take a pulse on their students and get the vibe,” she said.

Another common misconception is a correlation between low acceptance rate and quality of institution, according to Kuipers.

“Maybe in the big picture there’s a broad correlation,” he said. “Certainly, schools that offer really strong education and programs are offering a really good product.

“(However), the acceptance rate is a math problem. I know stories of colleges handing out free applications to students they know they aren’t going to accept, padding their acceptance rate by doing so.”

He added some colleges have rejected the most qualified students in their applicant pools, assuming those students would attend other schools, to boost their yield rate (percentage of students admitted to a school who enroll).

“(Acceptance rate) is just a really poor measure of the actual quality of a school,” he said.

CLASS
of
2020

Maddie Woo
University of San Diego

“I’m so glad my parents and I attended the accepted students webinar because colleges really showed their true colors — good and bad.

“One of the colleges was unprepared in its Zoom meeting and didn’t address the elephant in the room: What changes are being made for COVID-19? Thus, it seemed like as a student, I wouldn’t be in the school’s best interests.

“The college that was unprepared didn’t think to mute all of the attendees upon entering, so one man let out a burp, causing his name — in big, bold Zoom letters — to pop up for everyone to see. It was quite the experience.

“On the other hand, the school that was actually my second choice became my first choice because it was so prepared and proactive about handling COVID-19. They said that if they had to start the fall semester online, they would discount tuition. Their presentation overall was really polished.

“It’s not so much the money that attracted me, but the action itself. It really showed they are compassionate and caring about their community.

“A word of advice: Don’t buy into the prestige of ‘top’ colleges. Really do your research about how these colleges are taking care of their students and preparing you for the future. Stats and rankings are great, but you also have to read between the lines and think about where these rankings

Seniors spill

Jackson Crawford
University of Southern California

“I would just offer similar advice as many seniors before me, yet somehow I forgot during the process. I wish I hadn’t applied to as many schools as I did, even if I count all the UCs as one school.

“Trust the process: Everything works out how it’s supposed to despite the weird nuances of college applications. You end up where you end up for a reason bigger than you can understand at this moment in time.”

Yumi Moon
University of California, San Diego

“I would tell juniors to start their essays early because it sucks to cram them in last-minute.”

Emme Bogetich
University of California, Davis

“Don’t be afraid to copy and paste answers from one application to another if they ask the same or similar questions.”

Alyssa Valverde
Utah State University

“I wish I had looked into more colleges. I kind of just applied where I thought the college had a nice campus and the majors I wanted. I guess I never really had the money to visit them or the drive to look more into them. I kind of just guessed that I would get into a college and went with the flow.

“I’m not really upset by this choice, and I’m really excited about where I’m going.

“I was surprised when I didn’t get into certain colleges because I thought, and was told, that my applications were really good. Apparently, colleges will waitlist people they think are choosing their schools as safeties, but I’m not sure if that actually happened to me.”

Shimin Zhang
University of California, Berkeley

“I wish I had known that a lot of opportunities have a much earlier deadline than the one for the application. Do your research early.”

Rebecca Waterson
Brown University

“Choose a school for you — not for your parents or your teachers or your friends. Go where you will be happy.”

Larkin Barnard-Bahn recently asked seniors to reflect on the college application process. Quotes have been edited for grammar and conciseness.

zooming away

Octagon seniors bid farewell with memories, advice, call to action

When I was a freshman, the best thing about the Octagon was writing stories.

The power to spread my ideas across an entire community was riveting. If I cared about something, from the latest Marvel movie to the impact of a fire, I could share the story with students, faculty and family — the people closest to me.

During my first year on staff, I wrote a My Angle about the shortcomings of our Life Skills class; when I talked to students in later years, it seemed the class had changed. *That* was amazing.

I believed the most valuable aspect of the paper was our power to enact change, from adapting Country Day's lunch program to shining light on the harmful effects of a common international student company.

When I was a sophomore, the best thing about the Octagon was reading stories.

I became a page editor, and one of my responsibilities was proofreading the stories on my page. Through both my endless referencing of the Associated Press Stylebook and my (forced) reading of many excellent stories, I became a stronger writer.

Moreover, I now knew a story's content before it was published, allowing me to suggest what voices could be added. I reveled in making corrections and seeing stories transform.

When I was a junior, the best thing about

the Octagon was designing pages.

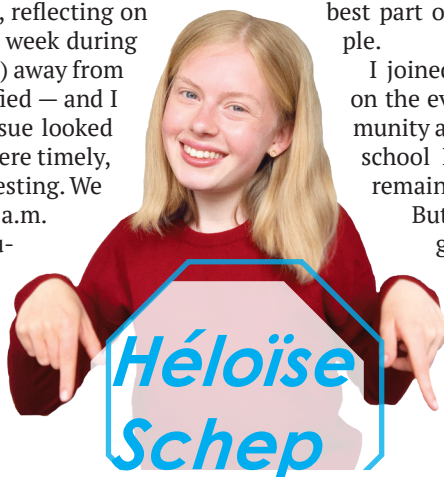
Finding the perfect combination of headlines, photos, graphics, captions, advertisements and body text was like solving the world's greatest puzzle. I loved every page, but especially those allowing me to be truly creative, adding graphics or cut-outs or different fonts.

But when I became a senior, I wasn't sure what the best part of the Octagon was.

I still enjoyed writing, reading and designing pages. I was and am grateful to help staffers, both new and old, expand their skills on the publication. But was there a single best element of every hour I spent on the Octagon? No, I thought. It was all good.

Yet a few weeks ago, reflecting on our first paste-up (the week during which we design pages) away from campus, I felt dissatisfied — and I wondered why. The issue looked great. All our stories were timely, well-written and interesting. We even finished before 2 a.m.

Though I was thousands of miles away at home in the Netherlands, I did everything I once considered the best part of my job — writing and reading stories



and designing pages. I should have been jumping for joy as I scrolled through the facsimile pages on the Octagon's website.

Then, I realized what I didn't experience that issue.

The end-of-paste-up dance party to "Ravers Fantasy." The surprise visits from Larkin's dog, Carrie, or Arijit's subsequent attempts to return the dog's "call of the wild." Emma's TikTok dances. Blasting music ranging from "Promiscuous" to "Binary Sunset." A week-long diet of pizza and Sour Patch Kids. Curses hurled at InDesign, Photoshop or God.

Those things were gone, and I'll never experience them again.

In quarantine, I discovered the truly best part of the Octagon: the people.

I joined the Octagon to report on the events affecting our community and to shape what kind of school I attended. Those goals remain crucial to me.

But I stayed on the Octagon because it allowed me to grow close to people who inspired, amused and challenged me — people whom I consider my closest friends today.

What's true about

this wonderful publication also applies to Country Day as a whole.

I joined this community because of the excellent academic offerings and its talented, committed faculty.

But I also dragged my 20-pound roller backpack across the quad every morning so I could hear Mr. Wells read one more poem. So I could fish one more Kit Kat out of Dr. Whited's brain-shaped jar. So I could taste one more of Ms. Melinson's homemade brownies at Book Club. So I could gather with the people I care most about for one more hour during one more day.

Country Day isn't perfect. Last year, Octagon co-editor-in-chief Allison Zhang, '19, called for more diverse backgrounds in our faculty and better resources for our arts departments. It saddens me to say our award-winning orchestra, choir, chamber group and band are still practicing in the same tiny music room. We can still improve mental health awareness, school spirit and the number of murals on our empty walls.

But for now, Country Day has shaped us into good readers, writers, thinkers, inquirers, communicators and risk-takers. More importantly, it's shaped us into pretty good people, and that's all thanks to every faculty member, student, relative and alum reading these words. You molded this community into what it is today.

Thank you.

Trying to come up with something meaningful to sum up my high school experience and say goodbye to this chapter of my life has not been easy — especially after sitting in isolation for over two months. My spirits right now are hardly high.

So I thought I'd start with a few highlights of the past years.

As freshmen, Emma and I decided to bake a five-layer cake to cement our friendship, then proceeded to place it in the freshman quad for our classmates to enjoy. And, boy, did they ever. We came back at the end of the day to find the inside of the cake destroyed as students walked up and took handfuls right out of the middle. It was then I learned that high schoolers turn gross for cake.

The bed-to-student ratio at the dude ranch on the sophomore trip was 1-to-1. But after Larkin saw a spider in one of the beds, I proceeded to tear the room apart in a futile effort to kill it. No one would sleep in the room. So I spent that night in a single bed tucked between Emma and Jewel. It was quite possibly the worst night's sleep of my life, but at least we got some quality snuggle time.

In our junior year, Emma and I tested how many cups of coffee we could drink in a day during our class trip to Ashland, Oregon. We made it to 10 before we were too nauseated and shaky to continue. We hit almost every coffee shop within walking distance.

My memories of senior year have been the best: from hiding with Jewel behind the lost-and-found during our 2 a.m. game of hide-and-seek at the senior sleepover, to running a lap around the back field in the dead of night to break up the endless hours of paste-up (the week in which we design each Octagon issue).



Despite all of these memorable experiences, when head of high school Brooke Wells announced the beginning of online learning on March 13, what I fixated on was not being away from my friends and classmates, but what we would do about the sixth issue of the Octagon.

After five chaotic and exhausting paste-ups, I think the staff felt that we'd finally found our groove. Stories had been written on time, and most of the pages just needed finishing touches. I thought we'd be out of there by 4 p.m.

But the rug had been pulled from under our feet. All of a sudden, our planned front-page coronavirus story was out of date. And what relevance did the spring sports page have with all competitions suspended indefinitely? Should we even spend the \$1,000 to print the issue if no one would be at school next Tuesday to receive it?

These questions were, of course, answered and the stories quickly modified. The issue was sent to the printer as usual, just not with the early finish we'd pictured.

What I find ironic is that the smooth issue in which everything went as planned, which we had been ferociously working toward all year, never took form.

Just the Thursday before, I remember sitting in the Cave chatting about how awesome the next two issues would be now that we could finally finish one smoothly. Boy, were we wrong!

No, these last two issues have not been easy or smooth, and certainly not as fun as those six we had in-person.

But for me, the spirit of the Octagon is still shining through. We now have multi-hour Zoom paste-ups with the same teamwork and silly jokes.

After sending in issue seven, the page editors had our traditional dance party to "Ravers Fantasy," each in our own home over Zoom. I think we listened to it three times.

My experience with the Octagon has had its highs and lows. (I've certainly thought about quitting a time or two.) But now more than ever, I've realized how much it's meant to me.

I've grown as a writer and editor; I've learned how to design pages and edit photos; I've become a leader and found my voice. And I've realized how much fun hard work and dedication can be. After putting 50 hours into a paste-up week, that feeling of absolute pride, joy and camaraderie makes it all worth it.

Wow. Just like that, my four years of high school are over as it's time to bid farewell to Country Day.

When I transferred to SCDS as a fourth grader, I never could've predicted the next eight years of my life. I've grown tremendously as a person and experienced so many amazing opportunities through Country Day.

Specifically, I'm super glad I joined the Octagon as a junior and gained valuable collaboration and leadership skills.

Now, I'd like to take this final opportunity to do some lighthearted myth-busting based on what I've learned over the last four years. I'd like to address some common misconceptions as well as offer tidbits of advice on aspects of high school I wish I had done differently.

Don't fall into the arms race to take the most possible AP classes. If challenging yourself at the highest level academically is what you genuinely enjoy, don't hold back, but just because your peers are taking 10-plus AP classes throughout high school doesn't mean you have to.

More to this point, taking five APs junior year isn't the play. I dragged myself through this and had to work harder than ever. The challenge was beneficial, but I missed out or didn't give enough attention to other aspects of my life.

Not to mention, if college and GPA goals are motivating students to take more AP classes, how is that a differentiator from thousands of others across the country falling into the same trap?

Your time would be much better spent pursuing a passion or taking better care of yourself so you can perform better in fewer activities.

Students always seem to add more to their plate to try to make up for their "shortcomings." I'd argue the opposite: People who are more committed and demonstrate excellence in fewer activities seem to end up better off.

Meanwhile, I wish I had done a better job maintaining relationships outside of Country Day. In high school, I lost contact with all my friends from youth sports and those who switched to different high schools.

I allowed my social circle to get really small and often blamed it on Country Day's size rather than realizing I had blown opportunities to see other friends on weekends.

This isn't to say I haven't developed strong bonds with students at Country Day — because I absolutely have — but be-

ing quarantined has made me realize how much I genuinely miss talking to long-lost friends.

My deserved reputation as flaky makes complete sense but is unfortunate nonetheless.

I'd like to end with a few messages.

To my teachers: Thank you for everything you've taught me, academically and otherwise. Along with my friends and family, you've shaped me into the person I am today.

To my classmates: It's been quite a ride to be in the same class as some of you for eight years. It's unfortunate it had to end this way, but this will bring us together and make the class of 2020 memorable.

To my brother, who will be a Country Day freshman in the fall:

Take advantage of your time at this special place. You might find yourself sad, angry or frustrated, but never forget to be grateful because it can be taken away from you at a moment's notice.

As one of my SCDS idols would say: Yo, yo. Peace.



This story marks the end of about 1,000 hours poured into the Octagon this year. That's an average of 27 hours per week!

Between attending paste-ups, elective periods and meetings with Mr. Bauman and the other editors-in-chief; writing, editing and posting stories; answering staffers' texts with essays; and financing the Octagon as business manager, the Octagon has rivaled schoolwork and become my favorite method of productive procrastination.

I absolutely love being on the Octagon — I highly recommend reading Héloïse's senior goodbye, which explains a few of the many aspects I enjoy — and am proud of the product of these hours.

However, my experience has often been marred by a harmful, pervasive aspect of Country Day's culture.

In my final article, I want to address the hateful attitude toward the Octagon despite the school's mission statement of nurturing "empathy, integrity and responsibility in a safe and supportive community that values kindness, respect and civic engagement."

We need to change this culture, inside and outside the walls of the Cave. Everyone has a role to play.

To those who resent the Octagon, I understand you may have been misquoted, your interviewer may have been late or you may feel wronged for another reason, and on behalf of the Octagon, I apologize. We take our responsibilities as journalists seriously, always quote-checking and correcting mistakes, and we appreciate your time and involvement.

People, especially high schoolers, are flawed, and we, on the Octagon, are no exception. All professionals commit errors, and in journalism, those mistakes can have serious consequences. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to rectify them, which we always do.

With this in mind, understand that we aim for professional quality with high school-level resources and training. Despite our best efforts, errors slip through the cracks and damage our relationship with the student body, teachers and administration.

Just as newspapers hold people accountable, our readers also must hold us accountable.

But the anti-Octagon discussions and jokes I heard daily pre-quarantine were not

productive, rarely proposing changes or offering advice. In fact, most of these conversations served only to vilify and belittle the newspaper, its staff and the long hours poured into the publication.

For example, during a class presentation in which seniors discussed anything they wanted — a project meant to help us get to know each other better — a peer used the opportunity to disparage the Octagon.

"You know what I would do to fix the Octagon?" he joked.

"Get rid of it."

The class erupted into laughter, while fellow editor-in-chief Anna Frankel and I exchanged upset looks of horror, embarrassment and ostracization. Would the class's reaction and the teacher's lack thereof be the same if the crack had been made at Jazz Band? Volleyball? Mock Trial?

Exemplifying Country Day's attitude toward the Octagon, comments such as this one build a baneful atmosphere that not only demonizes the student publication at a time when community and truth are crucial, but also strips students of their pride in their hard work.

If I'm able to spark change with this final article, I want future students to feel represented and empowered by the Octagon and future staffers to feel supported by their peers, teachers and administration.

It may take generations of students to completely achieve this, but you can take the first step toward that respectful environment that will not only allow Octagon staffers, but the entire student body, to flourish. A supported Octagon can better support students — showcasing their accomplishments, informing them of school developments and amplifying their voices — and the school as a whole.

I know Country Day cares about its students. I know my peers are empathetic and want to see their friends thrive. So let's start ending this toxic culture that contradicts everything SCDS stands for.

To students:

We're here because we love what we do, but we're also here for you — to inform you, celebrate you and ensure your voice is heard.

To facilitate this, I introduced the Story Idea Box at the beginning of the year: a box in which students could submit the stories they wanted to be written. However, the box remained empty the entire year.

Communicate with us. Offer suggestions and constructive feedback.

But above all, don't turn your backs on us if we make a mistake and correct it.

Student groups aren't perfect. Work with us so we can use our errors to improve.

Nothing is gained by bashing the Octagon. What could you gain by supporting it?

To teachers:

When we put 1,000 hours into something we love, it's constantly mocked by students, and teachers say nothing or even join in, it hurts. It feels incredibly personal.

There is a harmful cultural norm at SCDS in which deriding the Octagon is acceptable. If students kept ridiculing an orchestra performance in front of the musicians, how would you react?

To administrators:

We need to treat each other respectfully.

No real newspaper has a perfect relationship with its administration. (Those that do are propaganda machines.) But if we reframe our relationship to one of respect instead of viewing each other as threats to achieving our respective objectives, we'll be able to communicate better — which is beneficial for everyone.

Earlier in the year, I spoke with an administrator who treated us as a threat. In front of a group of students, the administrator disrespectfully interrogated us and asked for prior review of a story, which could operationalize censorship.

Later, head of high school Brooke Wells took a better approach to the same situation. Instead of talking at me, he talked with me, and we discussed the situation and came to an understanding.

We're not your enemy. We share the goal of making Country Day an exceptional community.

With the Octagon's finger on the pulse of community opinion, and given the administration's ability to effect change, a symbiotic relationship between us will significantly benefit SCDS.

And finally, to my fellow staffers:

Thank you for all your hard work and dedication. Over this past year, I've learned so much from you.

However, the following lesson is more important than anything else you've learned this year (yes, even comma before coordinating conjunction separating two independent clauses):



We need to have each other's backs.

I know it's easier to go with the flow and diss the Octagon — tempting, even, when the work piles up and the editors dump mountains of comments on your stories. I felt the same as an underclassman before I took on more responsibilities.

But in the end, it's only detrimental to you, your friends and our work.

Take ownership of the Octagon — the good and the bad. Be proud of the publication and your achievements, and be empowered by contributing to something greater than yourself.

This also means taking ownership of our mistakes, even if it wasn't your fault. As easy as it is to push the blame on someone else and distance ourselves from the error, we need to stand by each other.

Because if we don't establish solidarity among ourselves, how can we expect it from others?



"Yeah? What's up?" he says, looking up from his problem set.

"Can you help me with number 57?"

"Yeah, for sure."

I slide my book over to him and wait for him to read the problem. He's two homeworks behind me, but we both know who's the physics tutor here.

Meanwhile, I ask Ted when that problem set is due.

"Next period," Garrett answers for him.

I glance at Ted's paper. He's only one-fifth done.

Chris lets out an "Aha!" that tells me he's ready, and I turn back toward him.

12:12 p.m.

"Hey, buddy," Anna greets me, Anu by her side. "Wanna eat on the backfield?"

"Yeah!" I grab my lunch from my locker. "Kaitlyn and I gotta microwave, though, so I'll meet you. Did you text the others?"

"No, I'll do that."

After our food is heated, Kaitlyn and I walk to the back field.

"Oh, I see them," Kaitlyn says.

I see them, too: a small group on the grass by the fence. It looks like Yumi ended up making it, too. I say as much as Kaitlyn and I join them.

I sit on the shady side, while Yumi and Anna sit in the sun, directly across where the tree's shadow stops.

"I think today is the first day all week — no, all month — that we've all eaten together!" Jewel announces.

2:35 p.m.

I recline in the wooden library chair. Last period of the day, and it's Vibe Time, or 50 minutes of relaxing.

"Since we have free period last, I might

actually be on time for 'tracktice' today," I tell Chris, grinning.

Track practice — or tracktice — started last week, and every day, I've been late.

"Wait," Jackson says. "We have paste-up (the week in which Octagon pages are designed) today, so are you skipping?"

"No, I'm going straight after."

Chris tips his chair back and holds his phone at an obnoxiously high angle. His phone clicks loudly, and he cackles, revealing his terrible Snapchat selfie.

"Oh yeah!" I jump up. "I still need to do my streaks!"

I rest my phone against a backpack, set the timer, run out of the library and jump up facing the window. I rush back inside to check the result. Fail.

"What," Jackson says slowly, "was that?"

"Her streaks, dude," Chris replies.

3:42 p.m.

"Can you change the song?" Jewel asks as she merges onto the freeway.

She cranks up the volume as we shout the lyrics to "679" by Fetty Wap. By the time we arrive at Cordova High School for tracktice, we're late (dang it!) and breathless from laughter.

"That boy, Arijit!" Coach Rick exclaims upon seeing me. "Do you know where he put your pole? He threw it over the fence! And now I can't get it out because I don't have the key, so you go over there with him and get it somehow."

He's trying to be stern, but halfway through, I burst out laughing at Arijit's ridiculousness, and he can't help but crack a smile, too.

I catch Arijit halfway across the field, and he leads me to the pole, explaining that the shed where the pole is usually stored was locked yesterday and that he can just climb back over the fence.

While he climbs, I update him on the

status of my new pole — orange, just like I requested. Soon we won't have to share poles anymore.

6:15 p.m.

After practice, I stumble to paste-up and am greeted with "Hey!" and "You're back!" as I enter the Cave.

A few hours later, I catch a glimpse of the sun setting through the window.

"Everyone!" I yell. "Look at that sunset! It's beautiful! I'm going to take pictures, come on!"

To my surprise, everyone actually follows me out to the back field. The sophomores play on the playground while we seniors stay back and watch, like exhausted parents.

Another few hours later, Anna asks if anyone wants to brave the darkness for a bathroom break.

We make it to the teachers' lounge in one piece and start to head back.

"Wait, we forgot Arijit —"

"AHH!" Arijit jumps out of the trash can yelling, triggering a cacophony of screams, curses and laughter.

Larkin and I vow revenge.

This is just some of what I looked forward to every school day.

Now, Vibe Time is virtual and Grind Time is solitary. I eat lunch alone in my kitchen. I never ended up using my new pole, much less going to a track meet. My final paste-up was spent sans life-threatening bathroom breaks.

But I don't want to end this on a sad note. I want to acknowledge all the good things I had. I want to say thank you to everyone I mentioned and everyone I didn't.

Thank you all for giving me reasons to miss school.

Thank you for making it so hard to say goodbye.



SCREENSHOTS BY ARIJIT TRIVEDI

HOTLINE BLING Nathan Drake, the main character of the Uncharted series, stands on a tower while searching for treasure in “Uncharted 4.”

GAMING SPOTLIGHT

Looking for cinematic or fast-paced video games? Sophomore Dylan Margolis reviews two of his best picks: The Uncharted series and the new battle-royale, Warzone

UNCHARTED

This is probably the best series of video games ever made. Unlike Warzone, Uncharted follows a story in which players fight NPCs (Non-Playable Characters) instead of real people in a campaign. This story is cinematic and similar to the “Indiana Jones” movies in video game form. The games keep you on the edge of your seat and are a great experience.

The first game follows Nathan Drake, a descendant of the pirate Sir Francis Drake, who’s on the hunt for El Dorado. There are lots of twists and turns, such as when Nathan learns that El Dorado is in fact not a place but a large gold statue. In each game, there is a supernatural element, such as large mutant-like creatures and a tree with healing properties, which adds to the mystery. The game is mainly split up into three parts: fighting, solving puzzles and traversing through obstacles. Uncharted has a third-person perspective, so

most of the combat involves hiding behind corners and peeking occasionally, much different from the average first-person shooter game. The puzzles in this game are also pretty fun because they are neither extremely difficult nor too easy. However, traversing might be the best part of the game. The environment that players jump and climb through is interesting and constantly changing: You’ll never do the same thing twice. The graphics are incredible, which helps bring reality to the whole series. The day after I finished beating the second installment, I played straight through the entire

eight-hour third installment. I was never bored when playing through all four of the games — even when I played through them a second time; the gameplay was still fun, and the story was riveting. Lastly, the soundtrack is phenomenal, making the game extremely cinematic and really putting players into its world. Overall, this series is amazing.

RATING:



WHERE WE DROPPIN’ BOYS? Players drop into the Warzone map at the beginning of a match.



IT’S RUSH HOUR A player speeds across the Warzone map, escaping the harmful incoming gas that forces players together.

WARZONE

Released March 10, the most recent Call of Duty game, Warzone, provides a new take on the battle royale, an extremely popular video game type. The new battle royale features elements of the classic Call of Duty formula but also adds something new. During a battle royale, about 100 people fight on one large-scale map until only one person or squad is left alive. Throughout the game, players loot the map by opening randomly generated crates to get weapons. As the game progresses, the map’s area shrinks, causing more and more fights. Games last just 20-30 minutes, making every round seem meaningful and adding to the battle royale’s popularity. Warzone stands out because of its treatment of players’ deaths. Instead of the game ending, players get sent to the gulag to possibly gain redemption. In the gulag, they are placed against another recently deceased player. Both players have only a handgun or a shotgun and a couple of throwable items like C4 or a flashbang. Thus, each game can take more time and provide a fun and intense match. Players can use a ton of different strategies to succeed in the gulag. Moreover, players find three different types of contracts throughout the map — bounty, scavenger and recon. Contracts provide both in-game money and extra entertainment during the match. Personally, I

think the bounty contracts, which tells players the general location of a team near them, are by far the best contracts in the game. Regardless of their type, contracts help the game flow well and give players something to do when they can’t find someone to fight. Additionally, players can purchase a loadout drop, which diminishes RNG — random number generation — or someone just having a better weapon than you so they can kill you faster, making it more about skill. With a loadout drop, players can choose a customized loadout with weapons and attachments that fit their style. This way, players can use their favorite weapons every round. The game is also cross-platform, meaning people on PS4 can play with others on Xbox or PC. This is great because I can play with a bunch of people that I otherwise couldn’t. The game’s only flaw is its inconsistent audio. Everything gets extremely muffled so players can’t hear the footsteps of enemy players very well. Ironically, the game won The Game Award for Best Audio Design in 2017. Warzone is free, so there is no reason not to give it a try.

RATING:

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The Octagon is Sacramento County Day's student-run high school newspaper. Its purpose is to provide reliable information on events concerning the high school in order to inform and entertain the entire school community. The staff strives for accuracy and objectivity. The Octagon aims to always represent both sides of an issue. Errors will be noted and corrected.

The Octagon shall publish material that the staff deems in the best interest of the school community. The staff recognizes the importance of providing accurate and reliable information to readers. The Octagon does not represent the views of the administration, nor does it act as publicity for the school as a whole.

The Octagon will publish all timely and relevant news, subject to the following exceptions: obscenity; slanderous or libelous material; or material contrary to the best interests of the school community, as judged by the guidelines among the newspaper staff, adviser and school administration. Editorials are approved by an editorial board. Columns/commentaries shall be labeled as such and represent only the opinion of the author.

In the interest of representing all points of view, letters to the editor shall be published, space permitting, unless otherwise requested. All letters must be signed and conform to the above restrictions. The staff may change grammar and punctuation or abridge letters for space considerations. Comments can be made on our website to address all stories run.

"Graduating in 2020" by Emma Boersma



EDITORIAL: End-of-year festivities greatly appreciated, but utilize student voices as a resource

As the 2019-20 school year comes to a close and Sacramentans remain under lockdown, the school developed a plan to make up for the canceled high school graduation and end-of-the-year activities.

According to an email from head of high school Brooke Wells to students and parents on May 15, a drive-through celebration is scheduled for June 3. On the following day, the plan is "to take individual and group photos (with social distancing) throughout the afternoon. In the evening, we will have presentations of diplomas and special gifts and the world premier of our graduation video. We are awaiting final approval from public officials on our plans."

This plan is miles ahead of a Zoom graduation.

In the meantime, faculty members dropped off lawn signs and T-shirts to the seniors, and SCDS created a banner for Munroe Street; rented California State University, Sacramento's video billboard for the week of graduation; and bought ads in local publications.

A May 6 email from Wells to seniors and parents stated that "high school awards will be presented to the community on May 26 in a special newsletter," senior seminars will be held via Zoom that week, and the Senior Dinner is postponed to Dec. 18 "following the traditional freshman panel and before the alumni reunion that night."

Aside from a prom replacement, the May 6 email covered all the important end-of-the-year events.

While details are still limit-

ed due to the ever-changing COVID-19 regulations, the school seems to have found the perfect middle ground: Some events are moved online, while others are postponed and reworked.

The lawn signs with our quirky class photo and custom T-shirt are thoughtful reminders that our senior year was more than a nightmare.

Clearly, the faculty cares about making seniors feel appreciated and is doing its best given the current situation.

We appreciate the thought and effort that went into modifying these events while preserving the commemorative spirit.

Although correspondence went out to seniors and parents regarding said plans, we would have appreciated having input despite the limited time frame.

According to a May 18 Octagon poll of 31 seniors, 45.2% wished the school had contacted them, 41.9% didn't care and 12.9% didn't want to be contacted.

In the poll, nine seniors said they liked the graduation plan, five wanted it to be postponed, and eight had no opinion. Six wanted a virtual graduation of some sort, and three said they wanted caps and gowns.

The effort the faculty has put into this replacement graduation is admirable, but it's frustrating that the school didn't acknowledge the importance of student voices.

While the graduation plans are a creative substitute, the lack of student input begs complaint.

Yes, students typically don't have much of a say in the graduation ceremony. But

this unique situation calls for a breach in tradition. Especially while everything is up in the air these days, increasing clarity and forthcomingness is instrumental in maintaining community.

Country Day boasts of its tight-knit community and teacher-student relationship yet acted against this sentiment.

With only 31 seniors, it would be extremely easy to get input from students.

We realize that this situation is unprecedented, but shouldn't that call for more open communication between students and faculty?

The school is doing the best it can with the resources available, but why not let the graduating class be one more resource?

This is a graduation that we are going to remember for years to come, so let us help make it a positive one. In the end, both parties are working toward the same goal — ending the school year on a positive note.

Maybe that means postponing graduation. At least the result would be something students can definitively look forward to.

Set a precedent for the next class and beyond. Live up to the reputation Country Day has built for itself: a community in which people genuinely care about each other and work together.

This is what makes Country Day stand out from other schools in the area, so utilize this tool to the fullest extent.

Give us the chance to contribute our opinions now, surrounded by a community that holds our well-being in mind.



My Angle
By Miles Morrow

I was born during the best era

I was born in 2003 and grew up watching movies like "Toy Story" and "Cars," which turned out to be some of my all-time favorites. Being a product of this generation has positively affected who I am today.

In terms of entertainment, kids born in the early 2000s had it best. I grew up on today's nostalgic movies and TV shows. I would watch "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" for hours, and it was great. Even video games were the best.

Not many games today can beat classics like "Wii Sports" or "Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga." I beat the Lego Star Wars campaign at least a dozen times, and I still go back to it occasionally. I have such great memories of Lego Star Wars that my most anticipated release of 2020 is "Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga."

Today's 12-year-olds, however, are all about Fortnite, which doesn't compare. What is great about the "classics" is that they're fun whenever you play them, but Fortnite isn't always enjoyable because I'm always put into games with players who are way better, and I just can't keep up.

Back to the point. I was born at the perfect time. I grew up during the rise of technology, and I'm very glad about it. Things like Netflix and Amazon make life so much easier and enjoyable. I talk to my mom about her childhood a lot, and it seems really boring without the things we have today.

She'll sometimes tell me, "You're on your phone too much." But I know that if my mom had had an iPhone when she was my age, she would have been much worse than I am.

But there should be limits. Another difference between being born in the early 2000s and now is parenting. I'm not trying to criticize anyone, but most of the time when I go to a restaurant (or when I used to), parents keep their kids occupied by giving them a phone or some kind of screen to distract them. When I was young and went to a restaurant, I'd get a pack of crayons and navigate through mazes on my menu. I don't know if I just haven't been observant, but I haven't seen one of those in years. This is how I would stay quiet during dinner, but today, kids don't do that.

Living in such a technologically advanced era has helped people navigate this pandemic. If it had occurred when our parents were children, imagine how boring it would have been. Not only has it made life less boring, it helps me keep in touch with my friends through playing videogames.

Now we take technology for granted. If people suddenly lost all technology, the pandemic wouldn't be the only problem. People would probably be going insane, more so than they already are. I would be so bored if I didn't have YouTube, Netflix and Disney+.

Not only has technology improved entertainment, it has enhanced learning, especially now.

A lot of schools are completely shut down because not all students have laptops. Thankfully, we do and will be able to finish the school year.

A lot of today's advancements aren't even related to me, but it's awesome knowing that we're living while space travel is becoming commercialized.

It's interesting to think that one day someone is going to take a history test about what we all lived through, and it will probably be a pretty big test.

I don't consider this the best time just because of the technology and the cool stuff that has been invented, but because of how great it has been living through it.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS FOR KEEPING US IN THE BLACK!

Anand family, Barnard-Bahn Coaching and Consulting, Crawford family, Frankel family, Intel Foundation, Monasa family, Rye family, Schep-Smit family, Situ family, Trivedi family

STORIES BY SAMHITA KUMAR
AND GRAPHICS BY MING ZHU

Brooke Wells

Head of high school

Feat: “Making a really good cup of tea. Because I’m not at school, I’ve been using an assortment. One of my particular favorites is called Assam Superb.”

Flaw: “I used to get up at 5:30, exercise and read the paper, and now I get up at 7 and have a cup of tea.”

Finding: “A lot of respect for my kids’ teachers and what they do to teach little people how to read and write. I also just started ‘The Heights’ by Peter Hedges, which is wonderful. And I’ve discovered the joy of napping in a hammock.”

Glenn Mangold

Math and physics teacher

Feat: “Doing chores — lots of yard work, as we have a blackberry bush covering the lower third of our backyard, and washing my wife’s new car, a Tesla Model 3.”

Flaw: “Since the Boston Marathon was canceled, I quit my training diet. I’ve been eating a lot of chocolate, especially to get me through tedious online grading. It’s either my worst new habit or my best new habit, depending on your point of view.”

Finding: “The online tools that have enabled my classes to continue, namely the PhET lab simulations. Also, learning how to make and edit videos and use Screencast-o-Matic.”

Victoria Conner

Chemistry teacher

Feat: “I bought a new bicycle, and I have been taking little rides around my neighborhood every day. The rides are just 30 minutes to an hour, but it has been a wonderful way to get some air and exercise.”

Flaw: “I have been binge-watching Netflix. I turn on the television just to have a little noise in the house during the day.”

Finding: “A rediscovery of my love of baking. There is something very meditative about baking. I’ve made many loaves of bread, cookies and brownies. I’m looking forward to doing more — baking is chemistry, after all, so what’s not to love?”

Lee Thomsen

Head of school

Feat: “I’ve been regularly doing The New York Times’ seven-minute workout. It’s a high-intensity workout with 30-second intervals of exercise and 10 seconds of rest. It’s designed to get your heart rate up to an effective level for a workout but only takes seven minutes.”

Flaw: “Eating too much ice cream. My favorite flavor is sea salt caramel gelato.”

Finding: “With my shortened attention span, reading novels of 150 pages or fewer enables me to get the satisfaction of a longer work while not having to invest a huge amount of time. Right now I’m reading ‘Who Will Run the Frog Hospital,’ by Lorrie Moore.”

Anu Krishnan

Senior

Feat: “Productivity-wise, I have been finishing my work early in the day. Then fun-wise, I color and read a lot.”

Flaw: “I’ve been staying up pretty late — 11:00 to 11:30 most nights — but not sleeping in.”

Finding: “I really like reading memoirs! I have read ‘Educated’ by Tara Westover, ‘Being Mortal’ by Atul Gawande and ‘When Breath Becomes Air’ by Paul Kalanithi. I also read mysteries and classics.”

Carter Joost

Junior

Feat: “A daily run. I usually go at around 6:30 in the evening. I added it to my exercise routine for a Boy Scout requirement and have been enjoying it ever since.”

Flaw: “Sleeping in. I sleep until around 8-8:30. I used to wake up at 6:30.”

Finding: “I found out that spiders and other silk producers evolved keratin separately from vertebrates. It’s important because it highlights the diversity of uses keratin has. I like to research tangents like this one, and being in quarantine has given me more of an opportunity to do so.”

Zola Grey

Sophomore

Feat: “I run around my neighborhood every day. I started running in sixth grade but stopped when I came to high school.”

Flaw: “Eating a bunch.”

Finding: “I can bake now. I like to bake cookies and cakes, and I used to be horrible at baking, but now I’ve got the hang of it. Also, ‘Outer Banks’ is my obsession.”

Emily Cook

Freshman

Feat: “Using my computer and learning tricks and hacks, like setting up the school computer to better play games. I’m just playing around with it. It’s fun.”

Flaw: “Watching a lot of TV. I’ve been watching ‘Legacies’ (on The CW) and ‘Outer Banks’ on Netflix.”

Finding: “I found a lot of good movies and shows, such as ‘6 Underground,’ ‘Saving Hope’ and ‘Grey’s Anatomy.’ Also, I’ve figured out how to work electronics better.”

Feats and Flaws Findings

Inspired by the San Francisco Chronicle, the Octagon asked administrators, teachers and students about their best and worst habits picked up during the quarantine as well as their best discoveries.

Patricia Portillo

Spanish teacher

Feat: “As soon as I’m feeling anxiety about being indoors for so long, I go outside and start gardening. I have some orchids indoors as well.”

Flaw: “Snacking. I have three college students in the house. While they were at college, there were hardly any sweets at home. Now that they’re here and have a little bit more time on their hands, they’re baking a lot more. Some of the stuff they’re making — brownies, bagels, cinnamon rolls, peanut butter squares and English muffins — is really good!”

Finding: “I started doing Sudoku puzzles about three months ago and found them helpful to keep my mind away from everything. Now I do at least one puzzle per day, usually before I go to sleep. It gives me a sense of accomplishment. You want to have positive feelings amid the uncertainty of the times we are living!”