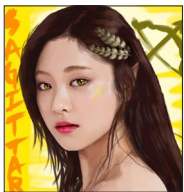
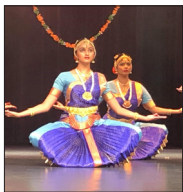


Reporters discuss their strangest superstitions and beliefs.



Students explore art in a STEM-focused school environment.



Cultural activities connect students to heritage.

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Saratoga, CA
Permit No. 41



THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

Friday, December 13, 2019

Saratoga High SchoolSaratoga, CA

saratogafalcon.org

Vol. 60, No. 6

Applying to 30+ colleges no longer unheard of

BY SelenaLiu & KevinSze

After most early-decision and early-action college deadlines came and went on Nov. 1, many seniors are now halfway complete with the college application process and are finishing college essays for their regular decision schools.

Senior Prosper Chiu, who is applying to 14 colleges in total, including the combined University of California application, says he has been much less busy writing essays after submitting all his early-decision and early-action applications.

“Right now my workload is not that much, since I have fewer colleges on my plate. I mainly just have UCs and four other colleges to complete,” Chiu said. “Personally, this semester, I don’t think I had that stressful of a time compared to other students, mainly because I finished most of my applications in the summer.”

According to a Facebook poll

>> **COLLEGE** on pg. 4

UPHILL BATTLE

“IT’S LETTING PARENTS KNOW, ‘I KNOW YOU WERE GREAT AT PHYSICS, BUT IT DOESN’T NECESSARILY MEAN THAT AP PHYSICS IS THE RIGHT CLASS FOR YOUR CHILD.’”

— GUIDANCE COUNSELOR ALINNA SATAKE



ACADEMIC OVERREACHING LEADS TO WIDE-RANGING PROBLEMS

BY PrestonFu & JeanetteZhou

On Aug. 15, the first day of school, sophomore Ashlyn Pham was excited to find out that many of her friends were in her first-period Algebra 2 class with teacher Kristen Hamilton, which at that point had fewer than 20 students.

Over the next few weeks, two new students joined after dropping their far more challenging Algebra 2 Honors. One month later, 10 more students also joined after dropping their honors class just before the school’s drop deadline. Starting in mid-September, the class had roughly doubled in size and had an entirely different dynamic than on the first day of school.

Pham noticed the transition for the new students seemed a little rough, since they had a lot of work to catch up on. She also saw that the increase of kids in the class made it tougher for Hamilton to teach the way she had with fewer students in the class.

“Once the class grew, I didn’t get as much of the teacher’s attention,” Pham said. “I liked it more with the smaller class

since we had more time to ask questions.”

Out of 1,134 schedule change occurrences in the first six weeks of school this year, 146 students replaced an Honors or AP class with a regular class, according to registrar Robert Wise.

This left guidance counselors scrambling: They needed to rearrange individual students’ schedules, stuffing them into nearly full regular classes as quickly as possible.

Because of the school’s open-access policy, students have the freedom to take almost advanced, grade-level classes they want, even if their former teachers recommend they avoid an Honors or AP class.

In theory, this can benefit students in allowing them to take harder classes and expand their horizons.

But, the policy sometimes results in students overestimating their own abilities and not observing the consequences of changing class levels — consequences that trickle down to the entire school.

>> **OVERREACHING** on pg. 3

GRAPHIC BY ROHAN KUMAR AND AMANDA ZHU

Mosh madness: admin combats aggressive clustering at dances

BY SofiaJones & KavitaSundaram

Last Saturday, about 560 students walked into the Large Gym and were greeted with decorations that included oversized white curtains, chandeliers, flashing lights and gold and white couches for the Roaring 20s themed Winter Formal. A photo booth with a silver sparkly backdrop provided students with on-theme photo opportunities.

However, the fun and casual atmosphere soon became more chaotic as the music started play-

ing. Eventually the dozens on the dance floor began moshing even though administrators have banned it last year.

Moshing is an aggressive style of dance where participants push or slam into each other. It usually happens in the center of a crowd. Although deeply discouraged by the administration, it has occurred numerous times in on-campus dances, despite the physical harm it can cause.

The very first moshing incident that sparked turmoil



Torrens

>> **MOSHING** on pg. 4

Finals schedule altered to meet learning minutes

BY AlekhyaVadlakonda & MichaelWong

Students will be spending more time on campus next week during finals as well as during spring semester finals because of the district’s concerns over Saratoga High and Los Gatos High not meeting the state-mandated number of instructional minutes for the year.

For Monday’s schedule, classes that were originally 25 minutes have been extended to 33 minutes. In addition, there is now a 40-minute tutorial between morning finals Tuesday through Thursday.

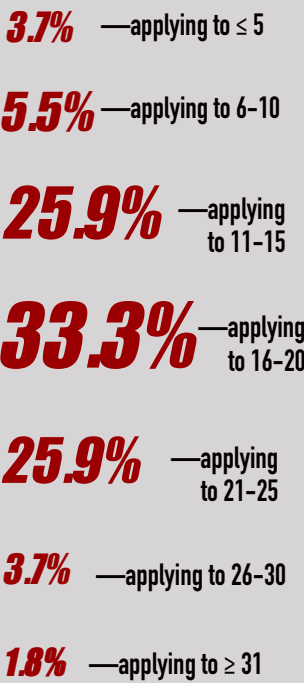
The revised finals week schedule slots the period six final on Monday from 1:25-3:25 p.m.

For Tuesday to Thursday, the first final of the day will be from 8:15-10:15 a.m., tutorial from 10:15-10:55 a.m. and the second final from 11-1 p.m. — 25 minutes later than the original schedule called for.

Though students have already adjusted to new tutorial policies introduced at the beginning of the year to ensure more instructional minutes, district and school staff

>> **SCHEDULE** on pg. 2

How many colleges are class of 2020 seniors applying to?



ACCORDING TO A FACEBOOK POLL OF 53 RESPONDENTS

REVISED FALL FINALS SCHEDULE

Monday

All periods are 33 minutes long
Period 6 Final
1:25-3:25

Wednesday

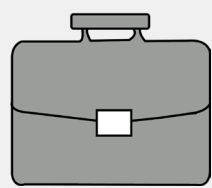
Period 2 Final
8:15-10:15
Period 4 Final
11:00-1:00

Tuesday

Period 5 Final
8:15-10:15
Period 7 Final
11:00-1:00

Thursday

Period 1 Final
8:15-10:15
Period 3 Final
11:00-1:00



newsbriefs

2018-19 Falcon wins Crown Award from CSPA

The Columbia Scholastic Press Association will be presenting last year's newspaper staff with the prestigious Crown Award at its 96th annual Scholastic Convention on March 20. The award recognizes top student publications across the nation and is bestowed based on overall quality in head-to-head comparisons. Crown Judges — experienced journalism advisers and media professionals — gather to judge publication characteristics such as design, photography, concept, coverage and writing.

The Falcon has been announced as one of the 97 news finalists for the award and will be presented with either the Gold or Silver Crown Award. It is one of 59 publications selected in the print and hybrid publication category.

This is the first time the Falcon has won in this category; in the past, it has only won as a pure print publication.

Journalism adviser Mike Tyler and last year's staff members are invited to attend the award ceremony at Columbia University, and the three-day convention preceding it. More information can be found at <https://cspa.columbia.edu>.

—Howard Tang

Lip Dub postponed, surprise winter rally today

The Christmas-themed Lip Dub, originally scheduled for Dec. 6, has been pushed back to next semester during April or May because of the rainy weather. In its place, the rally commission is holding a previously unplanned a holiday rally on Dec. 13.

Senior commissioners Risa Carter and Mihir Bettadapur oversaw the planning of the unexpected rally.

“We planned the surprise rally just like any other rally, but just on a tighter schedule because of last-minute complications,” Bettadapur said.

Unlike past years, the rally will not extend past tutorial because of instructional minutes requirements. The theme is a twist on the movie “How the Grinch Stole Christmas,” and include games such as hamster ball, snowball toss and tug of war between teachers and students.

—Serena Li and Anjali Nuggehalli

60 years of The Falcon

From the archives: For its 60th year The Falcon is presenting a series of stories reflecting on some of the most interesting moments of the school's history. This issue's story is about loosening the dress code in 1969:

After constant disagreements among the administration, students and parents, the dress code was changed to allow for more freedom in attire for students in 1969.

Following the loosened restrictions, the school permitted boys to wear previously banned items such as Bermuda shorts and girls to wear ones such as culottes and pant dresses. They also let girls wear slacks to sports games on a trial basis. Even with the loosened dress code, jeans were still prohibited.

Later in the year, students still complained that the dress code was too strict. In April, the student council formed a dress code committee to write a new dress code. They considered questions such as whether a person's individuality should be considered for their attire and whether apparel influences classroom behavior.

In September 1969, the school board voted to suspend the dress code for a trial period after more than 50 percent of the student body signed a petition on their dissatisfaction with the dress code, but principal Vernon Trimble said he would consider the proposal.

Stories regarding this incident originally appeared in an article by Lujean Kiefer for the Sept. 25, 1968, Falcon issue, as well as in an article by Jefferson Flowers for the April 11, 1969 issue and in an article by Renee Lassabatero for the Sept. 26, 1969 issue.

falcononline

www.saratogafalcon.org



@saratogafalcon



@saratogafalcon

picturethis



FALCON // SEAN OH

MAGNIFIQUE! | French teacher Elaine Haggerty hands sophomore Christopher Okuno a Triple E Award on Dec. 10. Among others, junior Juan Vintimilla and sophomore Giulio Morini-Bianzino were awarded.

Giving Tree tradition continues

by SamanthaYee

From Nov. 11 to Dec. 5, the office was decorated with a Christmas tree, lights and cards in the shape of presents that hung like ornaments. Dozens of gifts like board games and action figures were arranged around the tree.

A closer look at the cards on the tree revealed that this was part of the Holiday Wish Drive program.

The Family Giving Tree nonprofit organization is dedicated to giving to families and children living in poverty by way of help from Bay Area schools to inspire “values of kindness, philanthropy and volunteerism in the community,” according to the Family Giving Tree website.

The Class of 2021 has been leading the Family Giving Tree program since their freshman year. The Christmas tree in the school office is hung with cards called “tags” that have the name of a student or child and the toy they have requested written on them.

Students contribute to the program's success by taking tags off the tree, buying the corresponding toy, attaching the tag to the toy and placing the gift under the tree with a new toothbrush attached to it.

“The junior class is committed to making sure families in a broader community have a wonderful Christmas or holiday season,” assistant principal Brian Safine said.

“They realize that the Saratoga community has great resources, so my belief is that we can share those resources to make the holiday season in other families brighter.”

“My belief is that we can share those resources to make the holiday season in other families brighter.”

VICE PRINCIPAL Brian Safine

In past years, former service learning coordinator Tim Gallagher helped guide the project, but after Gallagher took a different job at another high school, former principal Paul Robinson has stepped in this year to fill in for Gallagher's position. The junior class office has also taken on more of a role in the organization of the program, setting up the Christmas tree in the office and leading the advertising for the program, when they had primarily worked on the marketing for the event in the past.

“Mr. Robinson is still testing out the waters, so then we're taking more of the responsibility of

actually contacting Family Giving Tree,” junior class president Cynthia Zhang said. “It's a little bit different this year for us.”

Since Gallagher left, the juniors had to also account for communicating with elementary schools for spreading awareness of Family Giving Tree.

On Nov. 18, a group of juniors visited Argonaut, Foothill and Saratoga elementary schools to deliver tags for families there to take charge of. They spoke at an Argonaut assembly about Family Giving Tree and delivered 25 tags to the office to be advertised, so students who wanted to donate a gift could pick tags up.

“The Holiday Drive not only helps out less fortunate families in providing a Christmas gift, but it also gives students an opportunity to help out during the holidays,” Zhang said.

In 2018, more than 650 Bay Area nonprofit establishments and schools helped the toy drive fulfill almost 78,000 holiday wish lists, contributing more than 40,000 backpacks and supplies.

Family Giving Tree remains the largest gift and backpack donation organization in California. This year, over 250 gifts were delivered in the district.

“It's really a tribute to the generosity of the whole community from leadership,” Safine said. ♦

in his email to faculty and staff.

Louie promises that the administration will work with students and provide leniency to ensure students are not adversely affected by the second finals sessions crossing through lunchtime. The long-held tradition of PTSO hosting Food for Finals during the tutorial will likely be continued, allowing students to both study and refuel during the 45-minute intermission.

“Those who still want to study before a test will have an opportunity to do so, and those who want to get something to eat can do that too,” Louie said. “We are not going to be super strict about the policy in general and I really hope that PTSO is able to make Food for Finals still happen.”

In addition, while the finals schedule will apply for both first and second semesters, Louie noted that a new schedule, which is currently being discussed by a smaller committee, will likely be finalized next semester to go into effect the following school year. Among other goals, it intends to solve the instructional minutes issue that has caused the problems this year. ♦

schedule changes to avoid potential consequences; the CDE stipulates that school funding will be removed proportionally to the number of grade levels with insufficient learning time multiplied by the percentage of missing instructional minutes.

The new schedule intends to solve the instructional minutes issue that has caused the problems this year.

On Dec. 5, Grove finalized the decision with a district-wide notification that contained the updated finals schedule, explaining the reason behind the change.

“In the new finals schedule, we accumulate enough instructional minutes to meet our annual minimum by adding 50 instructional minutes to the Monday schedule and 25 instructional minutes to the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday schedules,” Grove said

Maintenance, green team to start composting

by CiciXu

The two gray trash cans behind the science building are not regular trash bins, but instead are the school's first two compost bins. Eventually they will be put into the quad and used in an effort to reduce waste on campus. The Green Team environmental club, new maintenance supervisor Paul Weir and administrators are working to make composting a part of the school's culture. The project could launch as early as the end of December. Composting, while common for many households in the Bay Area, is rare at schools, where thousands of pounds of compostable material goes into the trash each year.

“I don't think there are any high schools around here that are composting, so we would be one of the first ones,” Weir said. “We'd be the leaders.”

West Valley Collection & Recycling, which is the main provider of debris boxes for the cities of Campbell, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno and Saratoga, agreed to offer a free service to support the compost program, which will be considered an extended branch of recycling. They are estimating that 60 to 65 percent of waste that are going to landfill right now could be composted.

Composting allows for the fertilization of

soil through the decay of organic materials like food waste. The resulting nutrient-rich soil can be sold to the landscape industry or used gardening around campus. Items that can be composted on campus include fruit peels, cores, dead plants, pasta and other wasted food resulting from lunches.

Weir and the Green Team envision this project to be organized and run by students — something Weir calls “student-mentored.”

“When I say mentor, I've never seen a recycling program really be successful without somebody owning it and fostering it like a garden, tending, keeping attention and making it seem important to get people to participate,” Weir said. “If you just put bins out there that are marked trash and recycling, they're both going to be overflowing with trash.”

Green Team members say they are willing to take charge of this project and make sure it runs smoothly, hoping to create a more environmentally stable campus in doing so. Green Team members and Weir both admit that educating people about how and what to compost is the hardest thing. They attribute the lack of motivation from both students and adults to the effects of composting not being immediately visible to them.



Weir



SOURCE: planetforward.org

“By implementing compost in more areas, we can take out a lot of that trash and turn it back into fertilizer and give it back to the earth as opposed to letting it rot and pollute our atmosphere,” Green Team vice president junior Riya Jain said. “We do have so many wildfires in California now and the air quality sometimes is really bad. Even if the consequences aren't global, they can still affect individual people.”

One reason composting is rarely done in high schools is the lack of support from the students and the companies operating the local garbage collection programs.

Both Jain and Weir acknowledged a

concern that composting on campus would not cause a big change to the surrounding environment, but it shows progress and a promising future in building a greener community. According to GreenMatters, compost can help reduce methane, a greenhouse gas that is emitted during the process of adding to landfills. Methane is a prime contributor to climate change.

“It would just take an extra couple seconds to consciously dispose of your waste in the appropriate bin, and it would be something we're going to struggle with for a little while, but I definitely think it's achievable,” Jain said. ♦

OVERREACHING

continued from pg. 1

“In the beginning, teachers try to establish the foundation for their class, so students have to hit the ground running when they come into class late,” Chemistry Honors and AP Biology teacher Cheryl Lenz said.

Lenz noted her disapproval of the current system in which grades from higher-level classes do not move with the student as they change to a lower course. Students have the chance of a fresh start in a lower-level class, but it also incentivizes overreaching for classes that students aren't ready for. She feels that they should still be held accountable for work they did in those first three weeks.

Teachers of incoming students can either have them make up work they've missed in the beginning of the school year, but they're usually selective about it.

Another problem is that the late schedule changes have become so rampant that there are no lower-level classes for students to

switch into.

“When students don't listen to their teacher's recommendation, biting off more than they can chew, we can't always change their schedule if the class they want to switch into is full,” guidance counselor Alina Satake said.

Although students can drop whenever they want to until the third week of most classes, math classes had a later drop deadline of four weeks this year for the first time.

The most dropped class this year was Algebra 2 Honors, with 55 students switching into the regular Algebra 2 class partway through the first six weeks. This class is the first honors math course students can take after completing Geometry, causing students to overshoot and overestimate their abilities.

One of those students making this decision four weeks into the school year was sophomore Grace Hsu. She decided she would rather focus on dance and Chemistry Honors than mathematics.

“It was difficult to adjust at first because I had to get used to a new classroom with new people,” Hsu said.

togatalks

Do you wish you had taken fewer advanced classes this year?

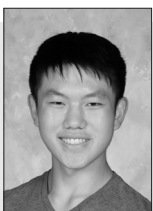
“My advanced classes were more difficult than I first anticipated, but I don't regret it.”

sophomore Isabella Lee



“At times I did, but I feel like I'd regret not pushing myself to put in the work and succeed.”

senior Brian Zhu



“I do because I wish I had more time to do things other than studying such as extracurriculars.”

junior William Yin



Read Chinese On Your Own

Pinyin Reader
reader.ponddy.com

- Auto add pinyin, audios, dictionary, and learning support tools to ANY Chinese text
- Library of over 1000 learning modules covering all topics in both traditional and simplified Chinese

FREE SignUp

Ponddy Education also offers:
All-level Online Chinese Course, Credit-eligible AP Chinese Course, Custom Learning Solution, etc.

Ponddy
www.ponddy.ai

The Jay Koo Academy

EXPERT TEST PREP AND COLLEGE ADMISSIONS CONSULTING

Comprehensive Prep for the March SAT

- January 21 ~ March 10, 2020
- Tuesday Evenings and Saturday Afternoons

FREE SEMINAR:

Thinking ahead about College Admissions

- Sunday, January 19, 2020; 10am~12noon
- SAT/ACT, Course Selection, Role of ECAs

Please refer to the website for details.

408-712-5274

www.jaykooacademy.com • info@jaykooacademy.com
12280 Saratoga-Sunnyvale Rd., Suite 201, Saratoga, CA 95070

MOSHING

continued from pg. 1

was at last year's Winter Formal, when two students were injured from getting bounced around and being jumped on in mosh pits.

After the DJ played "Mo Bamba" by Sheck Wes, the rowdiness caused someone to end up with a concussion and others to break their glasses.

"People get pushed into dangerous situations without their consent and we don't want anyone getting hurt," senior dance commission member Lillian Wang said.

After this, moshing was banned by the administration, along with songs like "Mo Bamba" that cause students to mosh.

"Students are warned not to mosh, and if they continue, we will kick them out of the dance," assistant principal Matt Torrens said.

Even with this policy, though, moshing happened during a majority of popular, upbeat songs last Saturday, including "Havana" by Camila Cabello.

One measure the school has taken to



prevent moshing is asking DJs to turn down the music when students mosh to prevent it from getting out of control.

At formal, the DJ would occasionally

pause the music to remind students to behave themselves.

He even cut off a song and threatened to only play slow songs if students did not stop

moshing.

Along with this, administrators and other chaperones have stationed at dances to prevent moshing if they see it.

Torrens and assistant principal Brian Safine stood off to the side and watched students dance, and would intervene when students started acting rowdy.

But students said observers can't always see what is happening on the dark dance floor.

"It's hard to differentiate between students jumping up and down or students jumping into each other," Wang said.

Because of this, the dance commission is exploring preventative measures such as having a code of conduct form required for every dance, one that spells out the consequences of moshing.

Students who do mosh will face repercussions that include detention and being kicked out of dances.

"Even though a lot of people find moshing fun, it is dangerous," senior dance commission member Ashleigh Abe said.

"We're just looking after the safety of everyone." ♦

‘Jack-of-all-trades’ Jarrett takes on new position

FORMER SUBSTITUTE TEACHER'S CONNECTION WITH STUDENTS AIDS HER IN ROLE AS CAMPUS SUPERVISOR

BY Neeti **Badve**
& Amanda **Zhu**

It requires many different roles and positions to keep a campus running.

Now campus supervisor Helen Jarrett has had experience in many of these roles, including being a school dance chaperone, a substitute teacher, a food coordinator for campus events, a club advisor for Bombay in the Bay, a LINK Crew director and most recently, campus supervisor, one of the biggest roles she has had to take on.

“It sounds super cheesy, but I really just want to be the reason that someone’s day isn’t so bad.”

CAMPUS SUPERVISOR Helen Jarrett

Jarrett's great interest in school activities stems from her being a parent in the community. Her daughter, senior Alena Jarrett, has allowed her to become more involved in campus life and know more students.

Though she admits that the role of campus supervisor seems unexpected for her to take on, as it requires disciplinary action, Jarrett said that principal Greg Louie thought it would be a good transition because many students already know her, a sentiment her co-supervisor Mark Hernan-

dez agrees with.

"It's a good thing that she knows the kids and the school, and she knows a lot of the policies, so she is picking up really quick," Hernandez said. "It's great having her; she's a good addition to the staff here."

This new transition has presented some challenges for Jarrett because students traditionally see her in a substitute teacher role rather than a disciplinary one, and she herself finds disciplining students to be very tough.

She is careful and cautious about what words to use and how to approach a situation because she doesn't want students leaving her thinking that they are bad people.

"I don't want anyone to ever feel like they're a bad person because they made a bad choice or bad decision in that moment," Jarrett said. "I just want them to learn from their mistakes and know that life goes on and not to dwell on it. All I want to do is hug everyone, and I can't do that."

Despite this challenge, Jarrett enjoys her new role on campus as she likes seeing students in their different functions. She finds that they enable her to build trust between herself and students.

"It's a busy, stressful world and I know everyone knows me for being very goofy and smiley," Jarrett said. "It sounds super cheesy, but I really just want to be the reason that someone's day isn't so bad."

Jarrett hopes that students know that for whatever reason, they can come to her to talk or to be cheered up. She does not like seeing everyone so stressed, and she finds



Campus supervisor Helen Jarrett has easily transitioned into her new role because she has been a constant presence on campus as a substitute teacher and an involved parent.

that her job as campus supervisor is a good role to be able to make days easier for students.

Hernandez believes that Jarrett's care for students is what makes her so fit for the job.

"She brings knowledge — if a student needs something she knows exactly how to help them with whatever they need help with and help them feel better at the end of the day," Hernandez said. "That's something you can't teach and that's probably the best thing about her."

While Jarrett is still a substitute teacher, she would help fill in anywhere from the classrooms or the office. Currently, she is even filling in for Anna Ybarra as the Ac-

tivities Office secretary as Ybarra is out on a medical leave. Jarrett credits this to her inclination to want to help fix everything.

"I think I'm the walking version of a jack-of-all-trades," Jarrett said. "If there's a void somewhere and I can help, I just fill in where everyone needs."

Although she has had experience in many roles, Jarrett does not have a favorite. She says that regardless of the role that she is in, she is still walking around on campus and being herself.

"I think every role is fun," Jarrett said. "I just tend to be very much in the moment of whatever role I'm in and I'll still be crazy — me." ♦

togatalks

What is your favorite memory with Ms. Jarrett?

"She was really nice and helpful when I was getting my parking permit."



junior Wilson Fung

"In elementary, she read a book called 'Dot' to us and we did an art activity."



junior Dora Hu

"She was recovering from surgery, but she helped me pilot the mindfulness program."



Wellness coord. Marina Barnes

COLLEGE

continued from pg. 1

of 53 respondents, this year's seniors are applying to an average of 18 schools, including combined application schools counted individually.

One person applying to a number of schools on the larger side of the spectrum is senior Chris Feng, who is applying to a total of 33 colleges, including UC schools.

Feng, who is applying to many private universities in the U.S. News top 20 colleges list, as well as many British universities, has been on a tight essay-writing schedule for most of the semester, writing essays for an average of two schools per week.

He said that his decision to apply to so many schools was largely inspired by his college counselor.

"My college counselor convinced me that if I apply to every single top 20 school, the probability of getting rejected by all of them is pretty small," Feng said. "I would want to attend all the colleges I applied to if I got in, so I thought I would just give it a shot to apply to all of them."

However, Feng said that his workload this semester has been "pretty terrible," and he notes how hard it is to balance writing essays with maintaining his grades for first semester.

Senior Cameron Chow is on the opposite side of the application spectrum, choosing to only apply to three colleges this semester,

including combined applications and one private school. Chow said that he is applying to very few schools mostly because of financial reasons.

“The probability of getting rejected by all top 20 schools is pretty small.”

SENIOR Cameron Chow



"Application fees and school tuition are both expensive.

The schools I'm applying to are mainly safeties, so if I do get in, I'm pretty sure I'm going to get a big scholarship," Chow said. "I also didn't apply to many colleges because I'd be applying to a lot of schools that I didn't want to go to anyway."

Even though Chow, Feng and Chiu have all approached the college application process in different ways, all three of them feel that the semester has become less stressful now that they have submitted their early applications. Most colleges have their regular decision deadlines on Jan. 1.

"Writing the essays was definitely the most challenging part of the whole process," Feng said. "But now that most of first semester has passed, I'm only looking forward to the future." ♦

Sophomores create Tickbird app, compete in hackathon

BY Virraj**Reddi**

Sophomore Vignav Ramesh blearily looked down at the rows of multicolored code.

It was 2 a.m., and his group had only seven hours left to perfect their final projects. With the pressing deadline, they began frantically debugging their code and bouncing ideas between themselves.

Ramesh, along with sophomores Rohan Chakravarthi and Ayaan Haque, participated in the Omnihacks hackathon in San Francisco on Sept. 22 among 35 teams and 130 competitors.

The three designed Tickbird, a text-to-speech app allowing visually impaired people to understand prescriptions from their doctors.

Tickbird, named after birds that guide rhinoceros through the wild, was inspired by Ramesh's uncle, who is rapidly losing his vision.

"Watching him struggle with everyday actions that we all take for granted, I was concerned about his vision's impact during more important situations such as understanding prescriptions from his doctor or pharmacy," Ramesh said.

Through research, the group found the problem stretched far wider than they initially believed.

Only 14 percent of pharmacies and 1 percent of doctors adjust their prescription treatments to accommodate visual impairments,

drastically increasing the chances of significant mistakes such as overdosing.

The group went to work making plans for the app, first placing themselves in the shoes of Ramesh's uncle.

They envisioned how their app could best aid his lifestyle and needs.

The group built a user profile page, a prescription scanning page and a page displaying a user's past prescriptions.

Users enter their personal information into a shared database, and the prescription scanning page allows them to translate a picture of any prescription into text.

Users can then hear their past prescriptions read aloud, bypassing any visual impairments risking prescription misuse.

With their app design in place, the group traveled to San Francisco to attend Omnihacks, where

they had 24 hours to build their design from scratch.

The team worked tirelessly, taking breaks only to eat and sleep on the floor in sleeping bags.

Haque found teamwork an especially important factor while designing the app, especially during crunch time.

The team divided up the tasks and worked side by side, collaborating to connect their respective segments of the app together.

"Teamwork made us much



Courtesy of VIGNAV RAMESH

Sophomores Vignav Ramesh, Rohan Chakravarthi and Ayaan Haque present their new text-to-speech app Tickbird at the Omnihacks hackathon in San Francisco on Sept. 22, which hosted 35 teams and 130 competitors.

more efficient," Haque said. "We tailored each part of our app to the strengths that the three of us each have."

Tickbird placed top 10 overall in the hackathon, also ranking as the second-best mobile app among over 35 teams.

The hackathon experience provided the team with a closer look at the burgeoning fields of artificial

intelligence and machine learning.

"A lot of other successful teams used artificial intelligence/machine learning in applications regarding computer vision and algorithmic problem-solving, which was really interesting and insightful," Ramesh said.

The team plans to continue building upon their current app, starting with adding a smart pro-

file feature allowing users to find locations with their specific prescription. They also plan to compete in more hackathons in the future.

"Who knows?" Haque said. "We're still editing and we think that this same app can be used for a lot of things, maybe even posted on the App Store or given to doctors." ♦

Soundings to print fall edition; ASB grant and fundraiser help pay costs

BY Andrew**Lee**

Soundings, the school's student art and literary magazine, has always printed one issue in the spring of every year, provided there are enough journalism students volunteering to run the magazine.

This year, an ambitious Soundings staff has decided to print an issue in the winter as well.

"Soundings only happens if there's a passionate group of journalism students to make it happen," senior Soundings staffer Anishi Patel said. "This year, we're lucky enough to work with Ms. Keys and the Creative Writing class, and our team has pushed so hard to make this extra print issue happen."

Patel and junior Manasi Garg, the two returning members of the 2018-19 Soundings team, have been joined by seniors Mathew Luo, Alex Wang and Brandon Wang and junior Oliver Ye. The journalism budget doesn't cover Soundings' additional print issue, so the six-person team was forced to gather their own funds.

On Nov. 25, the staff hosted a boba fundraiser, which didn't pull in as much as the team had hoped. So, they also applied for a \$420 ASB grant, which would cover the cost of printing 200 issues of the magazine.

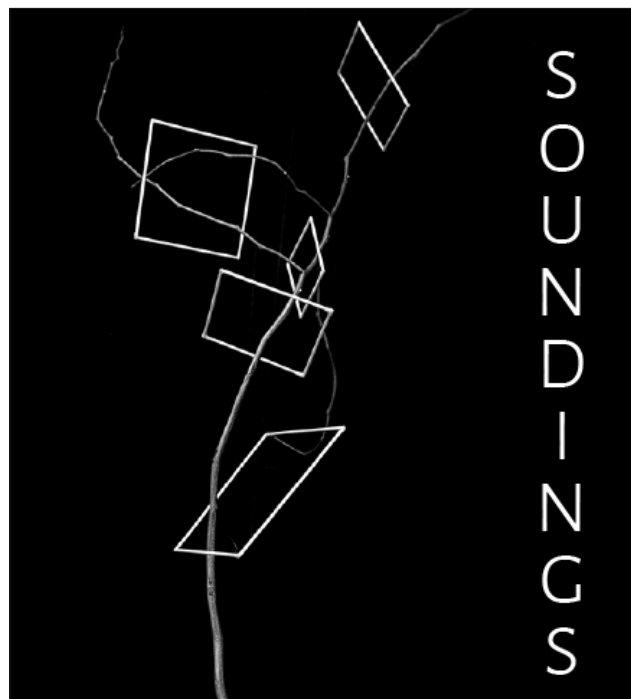
"The fundraiser was hectic and didn't come close to meeting the cost of printing the magazine," Garg said. "Two-hundred issues isn't a lot, but it's all we can afford at this point."

everyone to submit again in the spring, when the print issue will be 10 pages longer.

Written pieces were accepted after an anonymous vote by the Creative Writing class, which will continue to act as an advisory board for Soundings in the future. Before the spring issue, Patel and Garg have more plans to improve the magazine.

“Moving forward, we hope to get some underclassmen on the staff for next semester’s issue.”

JUNIOR Manasi Garg



Courtesy of SOUNDINGS

The cover of the 2019 fall Soundings depicts abstract art.

Despite the challenges, the staff insisted upon publishing and printing an issue in the winter.

The winter issue will mark Soundings' second year of bi-annual publication, since a winter issue was published online last year.

"People deserve to see their creative work in print," Patel said. "An online issue is an accomplishment, but it doesn't reach the same audience. We received so many amazing submissions that it would be a shame to not print this issue."

The team received over 20 pieces of art, over 30 written submissions and over 40 photos.

In order to create a 20-page issue, many submissions were rejected, but the team encourages

In addition to potentially recruiting art classes to advise on art and photography submissions, Patel and Garg want to further legitimize Soundings within the journalism program.

"Moving forward, we hope to get some underclassmen on the staff for next semester's issue. We are currently all upperclassmen and we hope that Soundings will become a regular publication with sustained interest," Garg said.

The team is also considering adding a hierarchy of roles to garner interest from other journalism students, but a six-member staff makes creating positions difficult.

The team is also looking into streamlining the publication process, since the majority of the work tends to happen close to the end of the semester.

"I found a printer that would have drastically reduced our printing costs, but we produced the magazine too late to make their shipping costs justifiable," Patel said.

"It's a volunteer process, so it's hard to set deadlines and get things done, but we'll be working on that next issue." ♦

Comedy Sportz performs show

BY Edwin**Chen**
& Anjali**Nuggehalli**

Even as cast of the fall play "Sense and Sensibility" took their last bows on Nov. 23, the drama department is still bustling with activity.

Comedy Sportz, a club based on improv games, performed their holiday-themed show on Dec. 6 at 7:30 p.m. in the Thermond Drama Center. The 12 member Comedy Sportz team has put on two shows this year, each focused on a unique theme.

The goal of the productions are to improvise comedy scenes based on a theme or audience suggestions. Each show is unique because of the different audience suggestions and different games they play.

Senior Ritika Kuppam has been an active participant in the club since freshman year and is grateful for the support.

"I love how collaborative Comedy Sportz is," she said. "A teammate could make a really bad joke, but it doesn't matter because everything is based on trust and having each others' backs."

Unlike other school clubs, Comedy Sportz has cuts. Out of the 10 people who tried out this year, only two were brought onto the existing team.

To prepare for upcoming shows, Comedy Sportz holds practices every Friday during lunch in the Thermond Drama Center. During the week of their show, the club practices every day. Junior Stephen Ludwig found that Comedy Sportz has greatly improved his acting skills, and has encouraged him to continue acting as a hobby in college.

"My favorite thing about Comedy Sportz is that I can think on my feet and it has done wonders for my creativity," Ludwig said.

According to Kuppam, the turnout was higher than previous shows, and the team improvised well together.

"We were a little nervous leading up to the performance but we really pulled through," Kuppam said, "and that was a great moment." ♦

FOURTHPERIOD
STAFFPOLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published 12 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070. Views expressed in The Saratoga Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

MISSIONSTATEMENT

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

LETTERSTO THE EDITOR

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

Editors-in-Chief
Connie Liang
Anishi Patel

Associate Editor
Andrew Lee

News Editor
Alex Wang

Opinion Editor
Mathew Luo

Associate Opinion Editor
Kevin Sze

Sports Editors
Justin Guo
Selena Liu

Lifestyles Editors
Eileen Bui
Sofia Jones

Entertainment Editors
Sandhya Sundaram
Samantha Yee

In-Depth Editors
Neeti Badve
Christine Zhang

School Scope Editors
Rohan Kumar
Alekhya Vadlakonda

Multimedia/Social Media Editors
Annissa Mu
Krithi Sankar

Backpage Editor
Howard Tang

Head Copy Editors
Edwin Chen
Michael Wong

Head Photographer
Jun Lee

Graphics Team Leader
Amanda Zhu

Web Team/App Development
Sean Oh
Aaria Thomas

Business/Ad Manager
Marisa Kingsley

Adviser
Mike Tyler

Reporters
Vicky Bai
Preston Fu
Jonathan Li
Serena Li
Nicole Lu
Anjali Nugehalli
Viraaj Reddi
Libi Shoshani
Kavita Sundaram
Cici Xu
Bill Yuan
JoAnn Zhang
Jeanette Zhou

Printed by Folger Graphics
in Hayward, Calif.



California must change donation law to keep school programs functioning

Since 1879, California has guaranteed its students a free education under its constitution. For low-income students, removing economic barriers and providing all students with the opportunity to partake in different clubs and activities is important to ensure equality and opportunity.

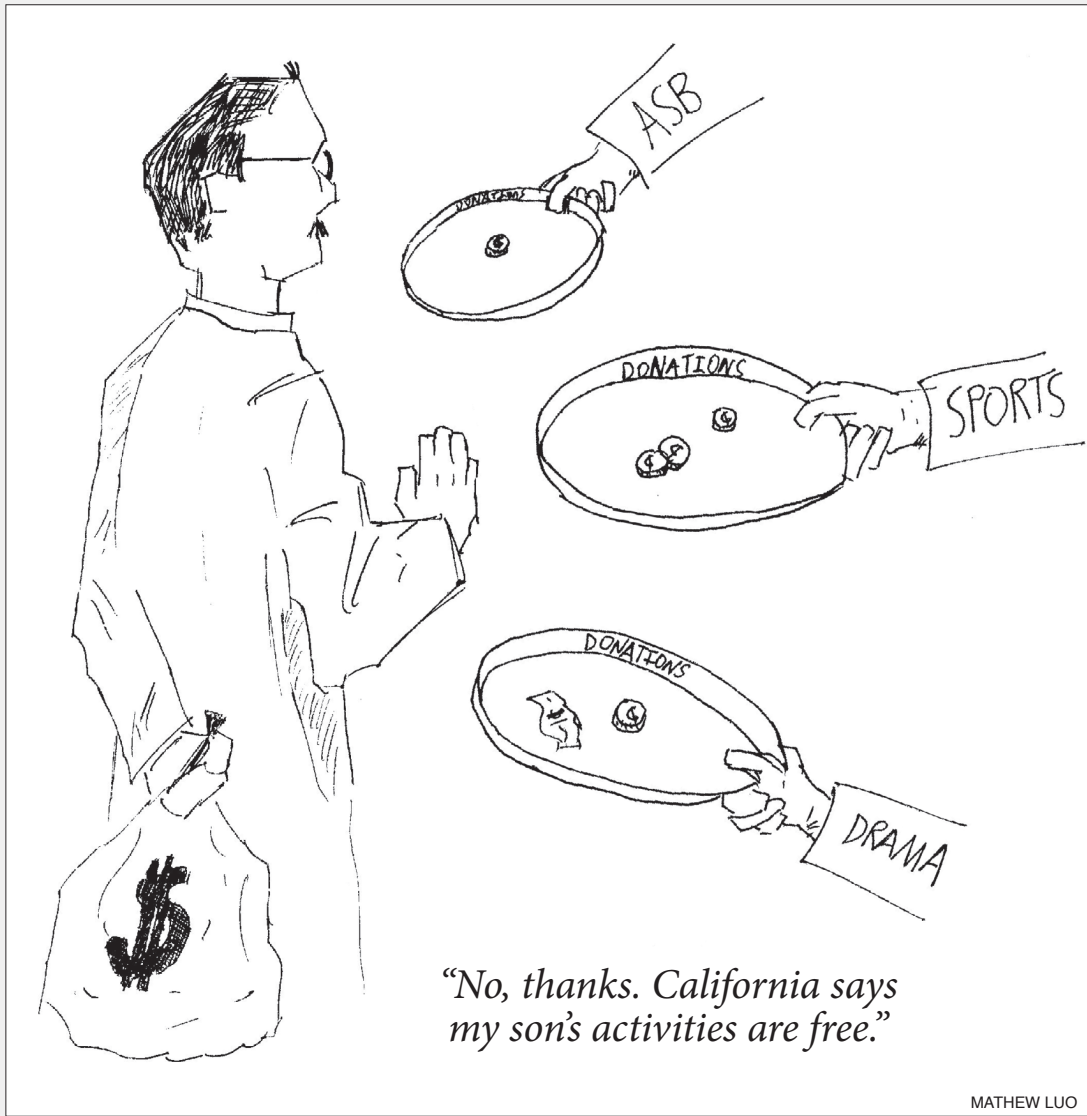
With the goal of providing a fair education to all, extracurriculars are an inherent component to a good education, and the 1984 Hartzell v. Connell case reaffirmed the fact that schools cannot require payments for pursuits such as sports and music. Demanding a fee on after-school activities effectively sets a premium on the attainability of such enrichments, putting underprivileged students at a disadvantage.

However, in high-income areas like Saratoga, where the median income is at least double that of the California average, these principles cause more harm than good. Too many parents misuse this law to avoid paying their fair share, sometimes leaving programs struggling.

No amount of pandering to parents can rectify the funding problems that have become common in activities such as sports or speech and debate year after year. In fact, if trends toward lower rates of donations continue, teams and groups will partake in fewer competitions and have reduced access to resources such as bus transportation for sports teams and clinicians for musicians.

As a result, students and parents are constantly bombarded with fundraisers and pleas for donations that are mostly ineffective. Many programs from music to ASB continue to lack funding, in part due to the inundation of donation requests.

While protecting low-income students is the foremost priority, coming at the expense of the extracurriculars themselves would render such equitable actions meaningless. Fair access means nothing if there are no programs. It makes sense for the state to re-



MATHEW LUO

lent on the constraints and allow some districts in wealthy areas to reform the structure of donations for extracurricular activities.

A better model for schools like Saratoga High would allow schools to invite specific students who require aid to apply for it and compel all others to pay mandatory fees in order to participate in sports and other extracurriculars.

This way, the few disadvantaged students are still afforded the opportunity to participate, but programs can still function properly without the constant begging and threatening of canceling activities, which has become common rhetoric in the process of drumming up dona-

tions.

Still, such solutions have their own pitfalls, such as decreased participation. Having to demonstrate financial need or face the monetary requirements may cause students to quit clubs and activities, affecting their popularity and its year-to-year continuation.

Balancing the goals of ex-

panding access and maintaining extracurricular programs is a challenging problem, and there are no perfect solutions on the horizon.

But until one appears, the only thing that keeps vital programs functioning is a moral obligation that an increasing number of parents are sadly overlooking. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief
Connie Liang
Anishi Patel

Opinion Leaders
Mathew Luo
Kevin Sze

Writer
Michael Wong

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 22-2 in support of this article.

Teachers should turn to electronic alternatives in lieu of paper materials

BY KavitaSundaram

Schools use a lot of paper for notes, homework, tests, quizzes and pretty much everything else.

With resources like Canvas and Google Drive, it's not unreasonable for teachers to make more digital copies of things instead of paper ones.

Granted, some materials like notes and homework can be a lot more effective as physical copies. Other tests and exams are more foolproof as paper copies. However, for articles, rubrics, and study guides, items that appear abundantly in students' binders and often go without being used, digital copies are a cheaper and more eco-

friendly alternative.

As just one example among many possible ones, world history teacher Jerry Sheehy distributes well over 200 sheets of printed paper to each student each semester. With paper costing approximately \$0.013 per page, 25 students in each class and five classes adds up to a grand total of \$325 worth of paper used in one history class.

While this might not seem like a lot, this is the cost of only one class. Most students have around six different classes to boot. Along with this, the cost does build up over time, taking away from other expenses.

Aside from cost, the bigger issue is the lack of consciousness

when it comes to paper use, and even recycling doesn't rectify the wastage.

When it comes to paper use, even recycling doesn't rectify the wastage.

According to an article by Post-consumers, less than two-thirds of material meant to be recycled is actually recycled.

This is because of cost, impurities in the substances and mislabeled items. Nor can all papers

with ink be recycled. Papers with pigment-based ink can be recycled, but those with dye-based ink, the ink that most printers tend to use, cannot be recycled. The same holds true for paper with impurities such as adhesives and lamination.

So even for teachers who think recycling is their saving grace, it's not. The prospect of reusing might seem like a perfect solution, but most of the time, that is not what it's cut out to be.

A simpler solution would be for teachers to begin using online resources more instead of printing out endless supplies of paper, ultimately saving both waste and money. ♦

Rejection? More like self-affection!

WHY GIRLS SHOULD ASK GUYS OUT

BY JoannZhang

For hundreds of years, traditional masculinity has diminished the individuality of both men and women.

Confining gender roles have given way to expectations that men be unwaveringly macho and women meek and subservient.

Shooting your shot, or asking someone out, for example, is traditionally done by men, as they are the ones to "take charge."

But it's 2019, and mostly Boomers still adhere to traditional gender roles.

So I say, girls, shoot your shot. Take charge.

If you want that absolute snack in fourth-period newspaper, you have to swipe him.

According to the Swipe Life article "Why aren't more women asking guys out?" a survey found that 90 percent of men support women making the first move, but only 15 percent of women shoot their shot first.

For most girls, fear of rejection holds us back.

But honestly? Rejection is more liberating than painful.

For example, during the winter break of 2018, I met a cute boy from San Diego during a volunteering trip to Nepal.

By the last day of the week long trip, I was completely smitten.

It was clear that he wasn't about to ask me out, so I de-

cided to take matters into my own hands.

After some bathroom rehearsal, I waited patiently by his flight gate as the passengers trickled into the plane.

But just as boarding was about to end, he sprinted from the depths of the Burger King store with a greasy bag and passport in hand.

One fleeting wave later, and he was gone.

The whole situation made me question whether or not to shoot my shot, but two nights after arriving home, I texted him and told him.

In what he would later tell our friend was an "oof" moment, he replied with "Thanks! I hope I see you again too :P"

Obviously, I was upset.

After a few hours, though, not only did I feel freed from the "what if?" feeling that usually followed my crushes, I felt confident and assertive.

So what if some boy who almost missed his flight for Burger King didn't like me?

I shot my shot, and I was proud of it.

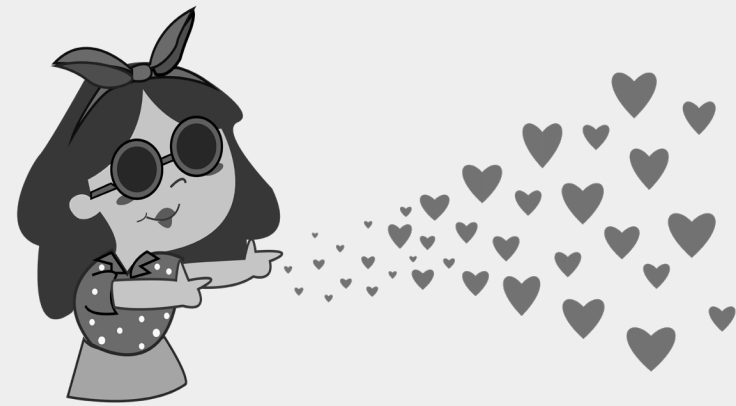
So, gals, we're halfway through winter and you have no one to watch "Last Christmas" with.

Could it be because you haven't shot your shot?

Could it be out of fear of something that hurts momentarily but leaves a lasting impression of power, pride and independence?

Yes, it is.

Go shoot your shot. ♦



GRAPHIC BY JEANETTE ZHOU

Teachers deserve credit for academic achievement

BY NicoleLu

"It's really sad that almost no one knows one of the best teachers at Saratoga High," a Toga Confessions post read. "Mrs. Shank is so incredibly sweet and genuine toward her students. She is not just a great teacher based on her personality and generosity but she is great at teaching! All her students love her so much and she is honestly one of the best teachers."

Shank is one of many teachers in Saratoga High who have had a positive influence on their students. By the time you graduate from high school, around 24 teachers will have crossed your path. From your relative naivety as a freshman to your late nights

as a junior and your tumultuous college application journey in senior year, they've been with you through everything.

By the time you graduate from high school, around 24 teachers will have crossed your path.

They're the ones who encourage and motivate you to reach your highest potential in academics and beyond. — everything from a stellar GPA to involvement in extracurriculars to encouraging the

Where's the spirit?

SARATOGANS' CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS FALL SHORT AS CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS IN U.S. CONTINUE TO EXPAND

BY PrestonFu

Just four or five years ago, Christmas lights and decorative icicles hung from the roofs of every house in the Saratoga Legends neighborhood just across the street from Saratoga High.

Yet during last year's holiday season, only three or four of these 14 households continued this long-lasting tradition. Decorations in downtown are also starting to decrease in quantity and quality. Holiday spirit is declining, and none of us are better off because of it.

It isn't all that hard to combat the problem; just install a few lights or a nice winter wreath.

After all, holidays in general are still thriving in the U.S. Even away from their home country, many Indian-American immigrants still continue to proudly celebrate their festival of lights, Diwali. In doing so, they have developed a sense of unity and friendship within the ethnic community.

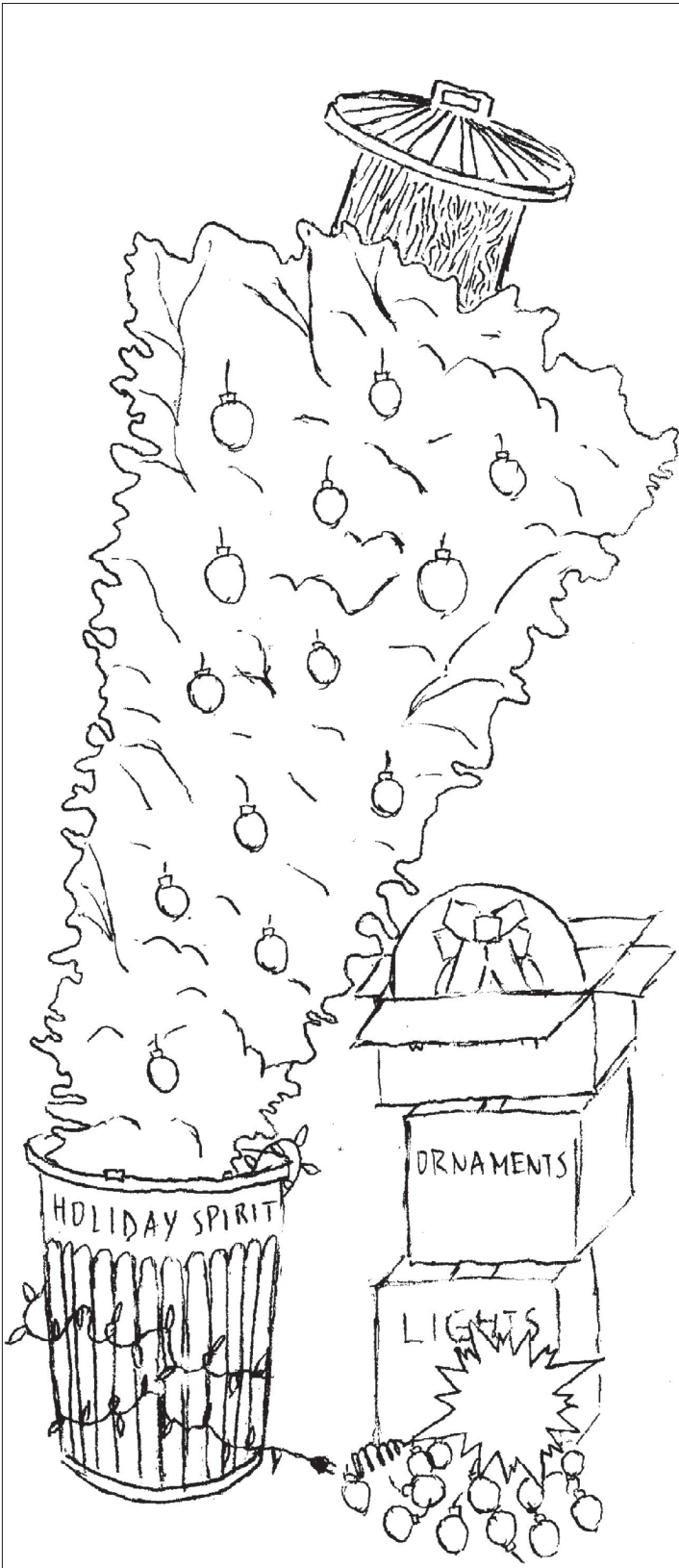
In fact, the scale of their celebration has grown so rapidly that popular travel locations such as Disneyland, Times Square and even the White House are drowned in these bright October festivities each year. And it will only grow in the coming years as this group increases its presence in the U.S.

The popularity of Chinese New Year, too, has increased greatly in the U.S. In 2018, former Gov. Jerry Brown even declared it an official holiday. Due to China's growing local and global influence, Saratogans have become more curious about foreign cultures and holidays and less about what they had grown up celebrating.

Meanwhile, Los Gatos, which has fewer Indian and Chinese residents than Saratoga, is still adorned with festive Christmas lights and sported Halloween props in October.

All of this is in contrast to Saratoga, which seem to become more dead each holiday season, based on houses' exterior decorations.

Resisting this decline is not much work for any one person. Put a Christmas tree up in your home and invite some friends over. Make a warm, rich cup of hot chocolate and play some holiday music. Above all, just say no to the bah humbug spirit. ♦



PRESTON FU

"Bah humbug"

BDTW got me involved in my community

Cici Xu



"Step inside the circle if ..."

The gym was in complete silence. I could hear only footsteps. I could see people's backs moving away from me, tears rolling down cheeks and the determination to be their true selves in eyes filled with memories.

It was good to know that I was not alone when I stepped inside the circle, noticing people who have been through the same thing that I have.

Breaking Down the Walls was a series of activities organized in late October 2018 to connect students in a more profound way by creating a safe atmosphere to let students communicate and interact with each other.

The most impactful of the activities was the Step Into the Circle activity, where people share their struggles and their insecurities with the act of simply stepping forward to various prompts.

I was shaken by the complexity of my

emotions as the questions progressed from easy to hard.

"Step inside the circle if you've ever felt depressed or hopeless."

I stepped in fearlessly along with dozens of others.

The continuous switching of roles of being a participant, who stepped into the circle, and an observer, looking at the people in the middle of the circle, provided me an opportunity to reflect and examine myself and the challenges that I wanted to avoid for the years to come.

When I was an observer, I spent time concentrating on others. I felt for others. I searched for others.

When I saw that people suffered through greater struggles than I did, I no longer thought about myself, but rather I empathized with the participants.

I got to know people's personal backgrounds and beliefs. I suddenly started to understand why some look shy all the time, why some people seem depressed and fearful.

Trust and friendship are both based on the understanding of one another. This event successfully drew us closer as a group.

Admittedly, that day of sharing — only

one day — cannot make a significant change in our school environment, but change is possible.

I moved to Saratoga two years ago from China. I was a complete stranger to the culture and the people growing up here. Sometimes, I felt people stared at me like I did not belong. I was kind of depressed and anxious back then.

People started to wave at me after Breaking Down the Walls and those little gestures always make my day.

I blamed myself for not knowing how to speak and write fluent English, for not being open to people and seeming to always be the one who destroys the joyful atmosphere. I was shy and hoped people would understand me better so I could get the chance to understand them.

This event was the chance I was hoping for a really long time to get involved in this community.

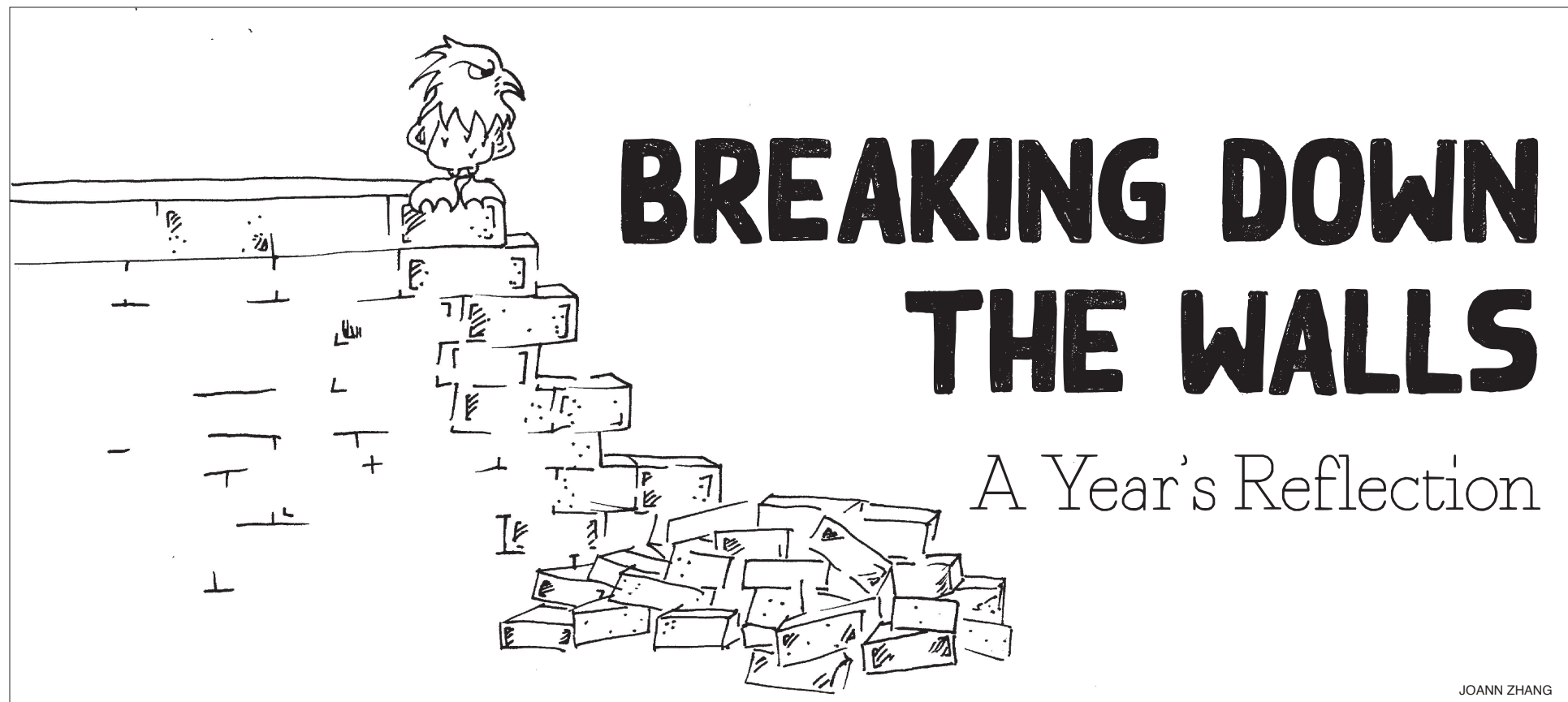
This Step Into the Circle activity helped me get to know more people and to gain confidence, and to know that I am not and will never be alone.

People started to wave at me after Breaking Down the Walls and those little gestures always make my day.

Breaking Down the Walls is not meant to change everybody. It might not benefit everyone, but will for sure help those who desperately need it. If you think it is a waste of time, just enjoy the fact that you are not having class that day and respect the ones who need it because I am almost confident in the fact that there are many others who felt the same way I did.

The people who need these types of activities are often the ones who are afraid or too shy to speak up, like myself back then. Not everyone has the courage to actively seek help or opportunities to get involved in the school community.

When you get a broad understanding of the people around you, knowing that things that did not happen to you have happened to others, you will pay more respect to them. If you are willing to observe, think and reflect, you will ultimately approach life in a more unbiased and open way. ♦



BDTW had few lasting impacts on students

Christine Zhang



At the Breaking Down the Walls (BDTW) event last year, I watched as some of my closest friends shed tears and admitted to their personal issues. But now, talk of these topics has died down, and the school has returned to its status quo.

The week-long BDTW event took place from Oct. 22 to Oct. 26 last school year — on Monday, moderator Dean Whellams introduced students to BDTW, and on Tuesday through Friday, freshmen, sophomores and juniors were split into four groups to participate in activities designed to foster a more close-knit school community. Before lunch, students were randomly paired up for bonding exercises such as creating handshakes with each other, and after lunch, Whellams administered a Cross the Line activity in which students silently confessed struggles such as eating disorders and self-harm.

Despite strong, positive initial reactions to BDTW, the event's effects have clearly died down over the past year. Since the

event only happened for one week — in reality, only one day for each person — there was no potential for BDTW to truly break down the emotional walls at our school in a long-lasting fashion.

The awkwardness that accompanied some of the activities in BDTW contributed to its lack of significance.

Since some of the activities in BDTW were more uncomfortable than engaging, I was unable to truly immerse myself in the experience.

For instance, the bonding activities before lunch not only included creating a handshake with a random partner, but also taking turns sitting on each other's legs. I was completely fine with doing a handshake, but there is almost nothing more uncomfortable than sitting on a near-stranger's thigh for a solid 30 seconds. My partner and I minimized the area of physical contact as much as possible, and even though he is in one of my classes this year, we haven't talked since then.

I also felt that the Cross the Line activity provided uncomfortable exposure.

Whenever one of Whellams's statements applied to me and I crossed the line, I could feel my face burning as others watched me walk. As much as I wanted to, I didn't have the same emotional experience that my

friends had when they participated in the activity.

To lessen the awkwardness, students should have had some say in who they experienced BDTW with. Instead of dividing students into four groups for four different days based on last names, administrators should have allowed students to first form small groups with their friends and then combine these small groups into larger ones for each day of the event.

Despite strong, positive initial reactions to BDTW, the event's effects have clearly died down over the past year.

This way, although students would still meet others they don't normally talk to during the morning partner activities, they would feel more comfortable around their friends for the more sensitive Cross the Line.

Nevertheless, BDTW was effective in uniting the school for a few days. Right after the event ended for me, my peers immediately asked me what I thought of the activi-

ties — it seemed that most of my classmates treasured the experience they had and wanted to talk more about BDTW.

Personally, I would say I felt the event's impact for a day or two. Some of my friends told me about what they learned from BDTW, and I made sure to be empathetic while listening to them, but after they stopped mentioning BDTW, it left my mind as well.

Likewise for the rest of the school, the event's effects soon began to subside as students fell back into the routine of school. With no repetition of BDTW or any similar program, students inevitably turned their focus back to their schoolwork, sports and other extracurriculars, preventing any long-term effects of BDTW.

Instead of a one-time event like BDTW, the school should hold more Club Fair-type activities where clubs, sports teams and other school programs encourage students to join their ranks. These events would provide repeated and effective chances for underclassmen and upperclassmen to bond, as some of students' strongest friendships are formed through clubs or similar activities. Since students would become members of these programs, these newly forged bonds would last for far longer than those created by BDTW. ♦



The golf outfit that gives me gold

e-size money

Kevin Sze



If you follow me on Instagram, you'll notice that I'm wearing the exact same outfit in all of my golf photos.

A light blue shirt with three gray stripes on the left shoulder, a white Adidas belt, gray shorts and a white Titleist hat.

Before you decide to judge me, I'll defend myself by saying that there's a good reason for this.

Every picture that's on my Instagram feed is after the final round of a golf tournament. This past summer, I've worn the exact same outfit in the final round of tournaments for good luck.

I just need to find that new lucky outfit, and victory will be inevitable.

To start the summer, I qualified for the 72nd United States Junior Amateur tournament — regarded as the most prestigious event in junior golf — in that outfit. Shortly after, I won my first American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) Open event in that outfit.

It became clear to me that that specific outfit was the obvious reason for my success.

Sure, I spent hundreds of hours practicing, but it seemed that the outfit carried some good mojo, so I decided to stick with it for every final round for the rest of the summer.

I started playing competitive

golf at age 8, and have developed some strange superstitions since.

When I get out of bed in the morning before a round, I always make sure my right foot touches the ground before my left foot. My theory is that I always need to start on the "right" foot.

Furthermore, I play the Titleist ProV1x golf ball. Each dozen balls are marked one to four, with three of each number. Usually, I'll play balls marked with a one in competitive rounds because I want to finish number one, but over the years, I've won tournaments with balls marked otherwise, so I've been a little more lenient with that superstition.

In addition, I'll mark every ball with my initials in red Sharpie between the Titleist logo and the number. The Sharpie has to be red, because under par scores are always marked in red on scoreboards.

Lastly, right before I tee off, I'll give my mom a hug and my dad a fist bump. I'm a big believer in karma, so I figure if I show my parents some love, then maybe I'll be a little luckier on the golf course that day.

Throughout the years, I've switched out lucky outfits as they seemed to lose their luck, which brings me back to my light blue shirt, white Adidas belt, gray shorts and white Titleist hat combination. I think it's time for a change.

In my last event of the summer, I wore my good luck outfit for the final round.

I ended up playing poorly and finished fourth.

It's obvious to me that I don't need to practice any harder. I just need to find that new lucky outfit, and victory will be inevitable.

By the way, I'm taking suggestions. Shoot me a DM on Instagram: @kevinszee. ♦

Why I never clip my nails at night

terrib-lee scared

Andrew Lee



It was just a normal night five years ago. I held my hand over the trash can, holding a nail clipper in my right, ready to clip away at some long fingernails that had been bothering me all week. Half asleep, I positioned the right side of my left thumbnail in between the clamp of the clipper. Snip.

"You shouldn't ever cut your nails at night," the deep, grumbling voice of my father said. "If you do, that means your parents are going to die."

His words worried me, so I didn't finish the job and ended up going to sleep with a half-cut

thumbnail. I don't consider myself to be superstitious, but clipping my nails after dark has become something I never ever do.

According to my dad, this is a thing in Korea. Maybe it's because I was too tired that night to question the superstition or was too lazy to bring it up the next morning, but I just decided to believe it. I never questioned the logic of this superstition until I sat down to write this story. So, I did some research and here is what I found.

According to soranews24.com, the superstition originated in Japan. The superstition goes as follows: "You should not clip your nails at night. Because if you do, you won't be with your parents when they die."

It's believed that you will not be with your parents when they die because of your premature death, as being dead makes it un-

likely you'll be with your parents.

The website theorizes that this superstition derived from the fact that in ancient Japan, many had to use blades to cut their nails. Using a blade on your own body in the dark was dangerous, so the act may have suggested taking one's own life.

So, I guess my dad's superstition is partially incorrect. Nonetheless, his version is the one I have believed in and will be the one I continue to follow.

Not clipping my nails sometimes is a problem because I often don't find the time or am too lazy to do the simple yet very easily procrastinated task in the morning or after school. Consequently, my nails sometimes get too long.

It gets gross, but I can't help it. I believe in this irrational superstition: I'd like to keep my parents alive. ♦

A broken jade bracelet with bad luck

happi-li serene(a)

Serena Li



My family and I were traveling in Hong Kong a few years ago when my jade bracelet broke. It slipped off my wrist as I tried to take it off, and it hit the nightstand and fell on the floor.

When I looked down, the bracelet lay lifelessly on the floor, shattered into four pieces.

I gathered the pieces and showed them to my mom.

"Aiya, four pieces," my mom said. "That's very unlucky."

In China, the number four is considered unlucky because of its similarity in pronunciation with the character that means death. My mom decided that it was up

to her to wash away my bad luck.

My mom consulted her best friend, a person very familiar with superstition, about my situation. After a rigorous 10-minute call, she learned how to fix my misfortune. No matter how much I resisted, she insisted on informing me of the necessary steps to take in order to get rid of my bad luck.

First, I had to find four sources of moving water, such as a river, because moving water will flow bad luck far away. Next, I had to throw the pieces of the bracelet in those waters.

My mom and dad spent an hour brainstorming the possible rivers we could go to. Finally, we decided on the Victoria Har-

bour in Hong Kong, the Qian Tang River and Fu Chun River in Hangzhou and a small stream that we knew we were going to pass by in Taipei.

We went to each of those rivers and threw a piece of the broken jade in there. My mom made sure I flung my wrist as hard as I could so the bad luck would be far away.

It was annoying to mess up our plans, but my mom said anything was worth the trouble as long as it could get rid of my bad luck.

I'm not a firm believer in superstitions like my parents, but I enjoyed the process because it showed me a part of the culture that I'm not familiar with. If my daughter's jade bracelet breaks, I will take her to rivers and show her a part of her culture. ♦

A pro's holiday gift-giving guide for the clueless

i've got to guo

Justin Guo



For some of you casuals out there, gift giving might seem like a daunting task. But fear not, because it's a part of my duty as a godsend gift giver to help out those in need.

Pets: Buying someone a pet as an anticipated gift is the classiest thing you could do. The benefits of doing so are threefold: it provides your recipient with company for when you're not there, emphasizes the im-

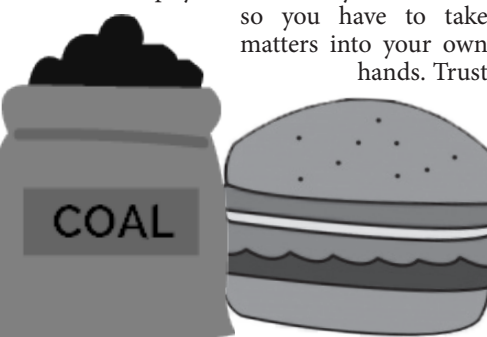
portance of responsibility and managing expectations and most importantly, serves as the crowning establishment of your relationship with the recipient.

Pushing this responsibility onto someone may be off-putting to some, but it's the most effective way to truly nail the element of surprise in your gift.

Therefore, I highly recommend giving people you barely know pets. That random guy you brushed past in the hall-

way? Buy him a satanic leaf tailed gecko as this year's season's greetings—you'll really get to know him now.

Coal: Santa's a busy man; you can't rely on him to aptly vibecheck all your enemies, so you have to take matters into your own hands. Trust



me, it's not as bad as it sounds. Sliding down the chimney in a degenerate Santa costume isn't the hard part (you'll get used to it); it's navigating the house and putting coal in the stockings after chugging down several glasses of milk that can lead to several complications.

Food: Everybody loves food. Therefore, if you really want your recipient to appreciate your culinary familiarity, you have to shake up their expectations. Boba? In-N-Out? That's way too basic.

Prepare a delicious three-course meal comprising of century eggs, monkey brains, and wasp crackers. It'll be a truly once in a lifetime experience, I'm sure of it. ♦



Hacking our way to frozen victory

bad(ve), not ama-zhang

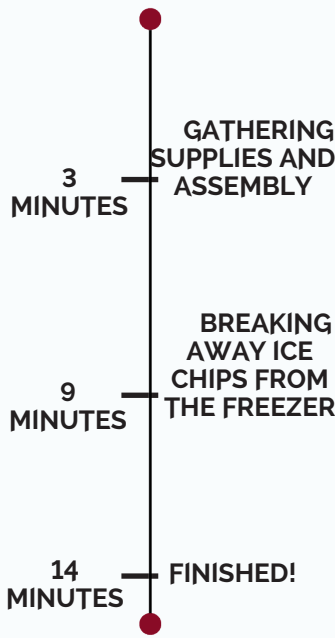
Neeti Badve and Christine Zhang

There we were, sitting in Neeti's room and scrolling through YouTube videos when suddenly we both realized we were craving ice cream. What better way to simultaneously satisfy our hunger and complete our newspaper story than to make ice cream in five minutes?

Luckily, the YouTube channel "5-Minute Crafts KIDS" came to our rescue with a homemade ice cream hack, and we had all

the ingredients! We dashed to the kitchen and grabbed the milk, cream, vanilla extract, sugar, salt, two Ziploc bags and ice. Here's how it worked: One Ziploc bag with all the mixed ice cream ingredients was placed inside the other Ziploc bag with a salt and ice concoction and then shaken vigorously for five minutes. The first problem was that the entire process was clearly going to take longer than five minutes. 5-Minute Crafts KIDS had clickbaited us into watching their deceptive video! We felt scammed. The next problem was the ice. We managed to blend all our ice cream ingredients with no issues, but the ice was another story. We knelt by Neeti's freezer, our hands frozen and in pain, desperately trying to break apart a block of ice into the chips that we

needed. After a solid six minutes of hand torture, we finally had enough ice to shake our vanilla milk into ice cream. Don't ask us why shaking ice and salt freezes a liquid into a solid. Our AP Chemistry test two days ago on phase changes traumatized us too much to be able to comprehend this colligative property. Five more minutes of hand-freezing later, we were surprised to find chunky but solid ice cream in the Ziploc. But how did it taste? We were actually impressed by our ice cream because it tasted pretty good for a 14-minute creation. But as tasty as it was, it quickly melted into a depressing puddle of milk. So much for our new Food Network show. ♦



Hot-glue popsicle card becomes hot mess

zhu-min the wong way

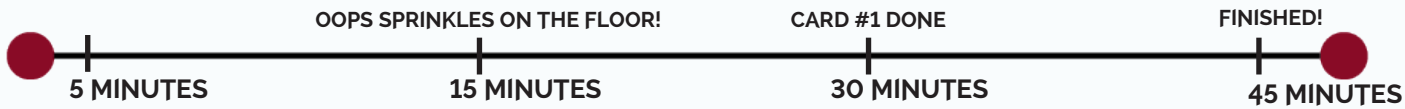
Amanda Zhu and Michael Wong

It's been all over YouTube recently — the quick and ingenious use of different household materials to create new things. Amanda: Because my birthday and Michael's half-birthday are coming up, we wanted to get something for ourselves. After all, we have to look after ourselves, otherwise no one else will. Michael: We actually procrastinated too long, so we didn't have enough time to buy anything good. Instead, we settled for the

next best thing: a card. Amanda: But who wants to spend \$1.99 at Target for a birthday card that could be (theoretically) easily made at home? Not us! So, we decided to do one of those 5-Minute Crafts videos that we always come across online. Michael: We tried to make a card with a sprinkle-covered popsicle on the front. To do this, we needed a piece of paper, hot glue, a popsicle stick and sprinkles. Amanda: The concept seemed easy enough: glue the popsicle stick to the paper, draw the shape of the popsicle with hot glue and finally, throw sprinkles on top — all within five minutes. Michael: We faced our first problem when we began using the hot glue gun as a crayon. When Amanda lifted the glue gun, the glue wouldn't come out because she tried too soon. She got impatient and set

the gun down on the table without thinking (as always), with the nozzle right on my hand. Unfortunately, it was pretty warm. Amanda: Luckily, Michael is "very strong" and claims to "not feel pain," though that is very questionable. Regardless, our next challenge came with the sprinkles. Because we were trying to meet the 5-minute deadline (we were already 10 minutes over time), Michael mindlessly grabbed the sprinkles and threw them onto the hot glue on the card the way the woman in the video had done. Michael: Oops. The sprinkles got all over her table and floor, and we had to excommunicate her dog so he did not get food poisoning. Amanda: A half-hour in, we finally finished cleaning up, our glue dried and our card was complete. Despite some sprinkles randomly flaking off, our card looked very

similar to the one in the video, with a shape that resembled a popsicle on the front. Michael: Naturally, we did it all over again so each of us could get one! By the time we completed the craft, cleaned up and waited for the glue to dry, we were much closer to the one-hour mark than the 5-minute target. Amanda: Without Michael, I might've actually met the five-minute deadline. Michael: Umm, I'm the one who brought the artistic talent here. You couldn't tell what the object on the front was before I reshaped it. Amanda: I literally made the whole thing. You warmed up the glue. OK, maybe we just aren't as talented as the people who make the 5-Minute Craft videos, but despite our burned hands and dirtied tables, at least we now have birthday gifts for each other! ♦



Gucci flip flops? More like Glue-cci flip flops!

jo ama-zhang

Joann Zhang

As rappers Bhad Bhabie and Lil Yachty would tell you, Gucci flip flops are a hypebeast or an insta baddie must. However, some of us aspiring flexers don't have \$210 to blow on Gucci's iconic tricolor Web Slide Sandal. But fear not, broke flexers: 5-minute Crafts has a solution. In their video "Hot Glue Gun Hacks You Must Know!," they provide a budget-friendly "dupe" for Gucci slides: hot glue slides. They begin by tracing the shape of a flip flop sole onto parchment paper, and then outlining that with hot glue and cross-hatching it in the middle to form the sole of the slide. They then outline and cross-hatch a rectangle piece to serve as the band of the slide. Once the pieces are dried, the disembodied arms glue the strap between two sandwiched soles to keep the whole thing in place.

I set out to re-create this semi-transparent monstrosity, and fared pretty well until I realized that as I was too broke to afford a whole lot of hot glue sticks. Unfortunately, I had to settle for gluing the strap straight onto one strip of sole rather than two sandwiched soles. The strap refused to conform to the arch of slides' straps, so I put a book on top of the strap to keep it in place while drying. Once dry, these bad boys were ready for a spin around the neighborhood. Sadly, I hit turbulence before I left the house. I had made the strap too small, and it felt like a corset for my feet. I shuffled outside in pain. Once again, I ran into trouble: The lumpiness of the sole hurt to walk on, and the slides were annoyingly flappy and flimsy, like flaccid cardboard. I made it down my driveway before deciding to spare my feet and taking the Glucci slides off. A whopping three days of shoemaking and countless sticks of hot glue later, I can safely say that my handcrafted Glucci slides, while cheap and unique, offer a uniquely horrible walking experience and no hypebeast-ly confidence. I would not recommend making these shoes. They earn a 0/10 for quality and style. Even if you can't afford real Gucci slides, I'm guessing it's better to walk barefoot. It's probably more comfortable than the Glucci slides. ♦



OUTSIDE THE LINES

ART STUDENTS PURSUE THEIR PASSIONS IN A STEM-FOCUSED SCHOOL

by SerenaLi
& JeanetteZhou

By age 5, sophomore Shani Chiu had already decided to pursue art.

As far back as Chiu can recall, she remembers following and watching her older brother, then 15, sketch a new masterpiece each week.

She decided to follow in her brother's footsteps.

Chiu, who is considering a major in design, has felt no pressure regarding her decision to focus on art.

"I've been focused on what I plan to do for a long time, so I didn't even realize that our school had an emphasis on STEM," Chiu said. "I've known that I wanted to major in art ever since I was young because it was the only thing I could really see myself doing in the future."

For her part, sophomore Anica Liu, who is interested in majoring in art, described her experience as an art student at Saratoga High as a "tough road."

Liu started her art journey when she received compliments on her natural artistic skills, which prompted her to take art classes and delve deep into the subject. Currently, Liu runs an art account on Instagram, @ayunliu04, where she posts her art and completes anime-style commissions.

Liu believes choosing to focus on art is difficult partly due to a lack of resources.

"Very few people consider pursuing art in the long run, so there are not many people to ask for advice," Liu said. "I wish there were a variety of art programs because it would really help art students. We would be able to experiment with different styles of art within the reach of our own school."



Courtesy of SHANI CHIU

According to course selection charts for Saratoga and Los Gatos, Los Gatos, with more than 2,000 students, offers 49 courses for visual, performing and applied arts, including courses like Graphic Design and Fashion Design, while Saratoga, with 1,350 students, offers 38 courses.

"Art left such an enormous impact on my life that I would not be the same person without it"

SOPHOMORE Stone Motooka



Art teacher Diana Vanry is also concerned with the survival of a robust arts curriculum, stating that one of her biggest concerns is losing students to other classes on campus.

"There will always be students who are artistically talented and want to take art classes at school," Vanry said. "At Saratoga, we owe it to students to have these classes available to them, and I owe it to them to make certain that they are well prepared for post secondary education in art."

Sophomore Stone Motooka, who plans to major in design, also believes that a lack of popularity for art classes results in an underfunded art department. "There

is a lack of quality mainly because of the budget Mrs. Vanry and the whole art department gets," Motooka said. "While I don't know of any serious problems, if I ask for some art-related materials, she will have to order it specifically for me and possibly other art students."

While Vanry doesn't know the exact budget breakdown, she agrees that a lack of funding can make it difficult for students to pursue art, since art materials are often very expensive.

"This year, the allotment that I received for art and ceramics is more than it has been in past years," Vanry said. "But it's not enough."

Vanry explained that the majority of her budget for supplies comes from parent donations, which are often unpredictable.

Another difficulty many art students face is pressure from their peers and parents against their decision to study art.

"Because most people around me are STEM-oriented, I feel like I automatically can't be successful in life without being a STEM major," Liu said. "My parents think that I can't financially support myself with just an art degree."

Like Liu, many students majoring in art often have financial concerns, with many familiar to the term "starving artist." Published on Artsedge, a program run by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, an article titled "Busted: The Myth of the Starving Artist," covers a nationwide study of art graduates.

The study, which was conducted with more than 13,000 students across 40 states

and in over 150 universities, has shown that 92 percent of art graduates who want to work are currently employed, with 81 percent saying that they were employed very soon after graduating; nonetheless, the article also mentions that 57 percent of art alumni have two jobs to support themselves.

Motooka has not received negative reactions from his family and friends regarding his decision to major in design.

"I feel like there isn't that much pressure because my parents do think that I could get into an art school and have a career in art," Motooka said. "I haven't really had anyone tell me that I shouldn't be doing art, so I feel pretty comfortable with my decision."

Even with the emphasis on STEM here, Vanry said that she has not seen a stigma around art, stating that students are often praised by their peers for their talent.

Even so, students tell her they don't take the art classes they want to take because parents demand that they take more STEM classes.

"As a parent, I do understand this," she said. "However, what I have found over the years is that it is important for students to find balance."

Vanry said art not only improves students' chances of getting into colleges, but also it expresses emotions in a way that other forms of communication cannot.

"I was not as smart as everyone else and was always distracted, but when I was introduced to art, it just clicked for me," Motooka said. "I used art as a medium to speak up about something and portray my emotions. Art left such an enormous impact on my life that I would not be the same person without it." ♦



Courtesy of ANICA LIU

Tiffany Chen: SENIOR APPLIES TO COLLEGE AS ANIMATION MAJOR TO BROADEN ARTISTIC PERSPECTIVE

by SelenaLiu
& KrithiSankar

Growing up, senior Tiffany Chen always found one aspect of art especially compelling. When she was young, she'd often ask her mother to draw pictures for her, and having come from a family of artists on her father's side, she saw art as a viable career option. With this artistic influence and childhood passion in mind, she began seriously contemplating a college major in art — animation.

"In MAP there was so much you could think about for creativity, so I was able to integrate art into digital projects."

SENIOR Tiffany Chen

The application process for art and design majors involves crafting an art portfolio throughout high school, meeting earlier deadlines for many schools and submitting their portfolios on an entirely different platform. Chen is currently forming her art portfolios for art and design universities like Carnegie Mellon University, Pratt Institute, ArtCenter College of Design and the University of Southern California, to name a few.

Chen notes that the art school college application process is "a lot to prepare for," since

each school requires a different number of artwork pieces and some schools require pieces specific to a certain major.

"It's definitely a learning process. Before submitting, you have to come up with different ways to sell yourself to the colleges," Chen said. "You have to put your artwork in the right order and make sure to put the good ones first, and then you have to give a description for your artwork too."

Chen said that her best work was a piece for her Rhode Island School of Design portfolio, which required that she make a piece of art out of a portion of the natural world. Chen painted a chicken in her piece, surrounding it with eggshells and small chicks. Then, she painted a background collage of magazines behind the chicken. Chen said that her RISD piece conveys how civilization affects the freedom of animals like chickens, and how rare it is to find cage-free chickens in our modern world.

Chen has been creating her own selection of artwork since the beginning of junior year, after attending the California State Summer School for the Arts (CSSSA), a month-long summer program designed for students interested in multiple areas of visual art, including animation, dance, film, music, theater and writing.

"Everyone at CSSSA was very unique and original, which was mind-boggling," Chen said. "People had different interests and experi-

mented with different things. Some artists, for example, even used water bottles to paint. In general, there wasn't really a category of artists; it was just art."

While she has participated in the school's art program, Chen said she chose animation as her major mainly because her art teacher outside of school, a former Disney character design artist, inspired her to do so. She also attributes her decision to her participation in the school's Media Arts Program (MAP). MAP includes more creative projects within a normal English and history curriculum that expose students to multiple visual art skills, such as animation and video editing.

"MAP had a big role in influencing my interest in art because in MAP there was so much you could think about for creativity, so I was able to integrate art into digital projects, which was very interdisciplinary," Chen said. "Shenzhen, where I moved from two years ago, is always raining, so the plants that grow there are mostly tropical, but here in California, because it's dry, there are many plants that I haven't seen before," Hu said. "So my curiosity drives me to take inspirations from there."

Hu started exploring her passion for art at a private elementary school in China at age 7.

Hu started exploring her passion for art at a private elementary school in China at age 7.



CSSSA CALIFORNIA STATE SUMMER SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

Courtesy of CSSSA.CA.GOV

Tiffany Huang: JUNIOR CULTIVATES INTEREST IN ART THROUGH DRAWING AND DESIGN

by ChristineZhang

It was nearing 2 a.m. at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) one day last summer. Stressed and tired, junior Tiffany Huang, a participant in RISD's six-week summer program, finally wrapped up her work on her Drawing Foundations final project, a 6-foot collage made with charcoal and ink.

The piece depicted how first-world individuals turn their backs on third-world circumstances as represented by six figures pulling each other downwards while a lone figure stands aside, texting. As Huang headed to sleep, she was left with a distinct feeling of contentment.

"It was really satisfying for me to look back on a project that I made after working for a few days straight," Huang said. "I could recognize that I actually did something I was proud of."

Huang has participated in classes and summer programs to develop her interest in art from a young age. That love has never diminished as she has grown older.

"I think most kids like drawing at a young age, and then they get to school and they hate it," Huang said. "But I was always pretty interested in drawing."

Before the academic stress and workload of junior year, Huang went to her art studio for one and a half hours each week. Now, she uses the Adobe Suite software on her computer at home for her design projects, which she generally finishes over a few weeks of on-and-off work. One of her recent designs is an album package using surrealist styles.

Currently, Huang likes drawing, painting, graphic design and especially charcoal work. She also harbors an interest in photography, but she has not officially "learned" photography and plans to keep it as a recre-

ational hobby.

Her art now primarily focuses on human figures, which Huang attributes to her background in ballet.

"As a ballerina, I'm interested in the lines I'm making with my body, so I like drawing people," she said. "I really enjoyed figure drawing at RISD — my professor told us that the human body had almost every single drawing problem we could encounter, so it's also a good place to learn from."

"I think it's important to understand that our purpose as artists is to convey ideas in our current culture."

JUNIOR Tiffany Huang

At RISD, Huang went to class from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on most days with a one-hour lunch break at noon. After class, she would return to her dorm room and work on her projects until past midnight.

"It definitely helped my time management and pushed me in terms of my stamina and motivation," she said. "It was pretty stressful but I don't remember being on the verge of having a breakdown or anything like that."

This school year, Huang is taking Graphic Design at Mission College. As for her Saratoga High schedule, Huang opted to take both AP Art History and AP Music Theory and she is working as a design editor on the yearbook staff, leaving no room for any science classes in her schedule — a rare choice at a STEM-leaning school.

Huang has wanted to learn art history for

years, and she said she was very lucky that the school decided to offer AP Art History during her junior year. She considers art history essential to the creation of modern art.

"If you don't understand where ideas came from, then you can't really create more art in the future," Huang said. "I think it's also important to understand that our purpose as artists is to convey ideas in our current culture so that people in the future can understand what was going on during our time."

Huang draws inspiration from literature and other artists who present interesting philosophical ideas or change her perspective on humankind. For instance, Huang created an animation on slavery after she watched the movie "12 Years a Slave" in her English class, which exposed her to the reality of slavery. She said she generally works best when she is creating a form of emotional artwork.

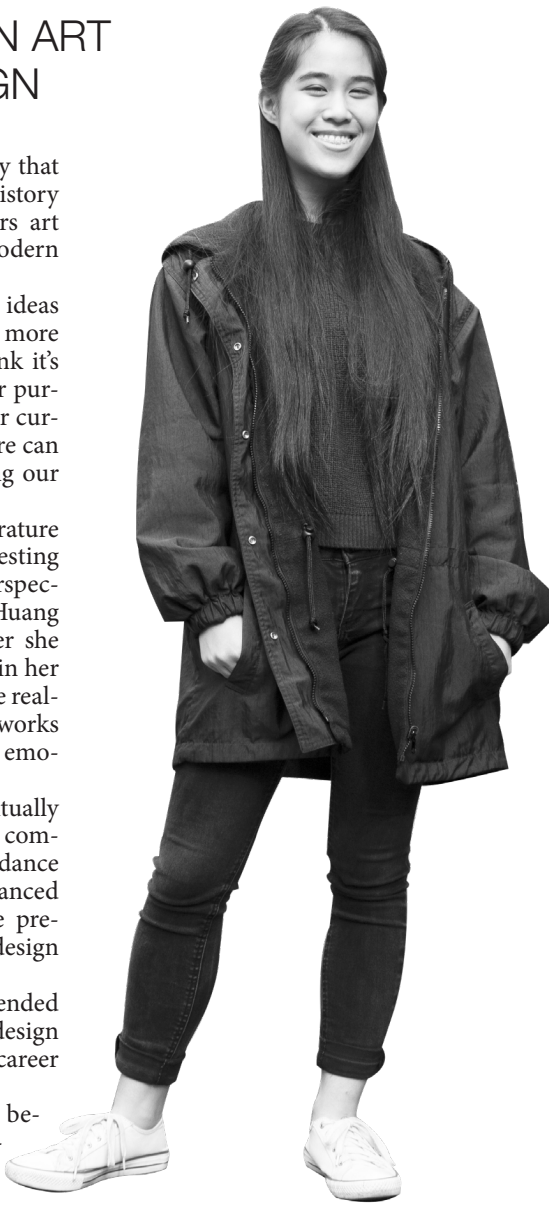
In the future, Huang hopes to eventually work on a music video set, as it would combine her passions for art, music and dance — Huang has played the piano and danced ballet alongside her art classes since preschool. She plans to major in graphic design and/or sound art in college.

This past summer, Huang attended RISD's summer program for interior design but does not see herself with a future career in the field.

"I studied interior design at RISD because it was a possibility I was thinking about, but I don't think I'm going to go into it," Huang said. "It's more like a backup at this point."

Still, Huang gained valuable insights about herself from her intensive experience at RISD.

"I never realized how hard and how



long I can work when it comes to art," she said. "Even when I get tired, I work hard and push myself because I genuinely enjoy what I do." ♦

Tina Hu: NATURE-LOVING SOPHOMORE INCORPORATES HOMEMADE CLAY AND PIGMENTS INTO HER CERAMICS PIECES

by VickyBai
& CiciXu

Water dripped down the leaves into a mud-filled wooden basket that sophomore Tina Hu had dug with her own hands near a river in her hometown: Shenzhen, China. She dipped her hands inside the wooden basket, scooped up a handful of wet soil that had been soaked in water for days and placed it on a table, waiting for it to dry.

She then pressed and rubbed gently, molding the clay silhouette of an animal inspired by those on her family's farm.

Hu's unique approach to art involves working directly with natural elements.

"To me, art and nature are always connected and intertwined in some way," Hu said.

In soil art, a medium she discovered online, she uses only soil as pigment to draw on a canvas. Hu has tried to create different pigments made of natural materials.

Besides soil, she also learned to create pigments with various kinds of fruit. Hu's curiosity in making her own materials has allowed her to explore her home village and the mountains surrounding her in China.

"Shenzhen, where I moved from two years ago, is always raining, so the plants that grow there are mostly tropical, but here in California, because it's dry, there are many plants that I haven't seen before," Hu said. "So my curiosity drives me to take inspirations from there."

Hu started exploring her passion for art at a private elementary school in China at age 7.

"I started to appreciate nature when I was really little, but no one really taught me how to do art until the start of elementary school, when four of the classes were taught in nature," Hu said.

In China, Hu took a variety of art classes, including ones in hand-crafts like ceramics, origami and wood carving.

At home, Hu's family is very supportive of her passion for art, allowing her to spend hours and hours creating art. Hu said that creativity, imagination and happiness are valued more than anything else in her family.

"I've tried and explored a range of different types of art styles to find out what I truly enjoy the most," Hu said.

Hu's love for art was inspired by her grandfather, also an artist.

"My grandpa does a variety of hand crafts, and he often creates intricate designs that are used to decorate my house," Hu said. "I just want to do the same thing and follow in his footsteps because I feel like it'll be fun and imaginative."

Hu is currently enrolled in Art 2 and Ceramics 2. Even her teachers notice her different approach compared to other students who grew up in Saratoga.

"Tina is a very kind, quiet and humble student. Her voice comes through in her art," art and ceramics teacher Diana Vanry said. "I couldn't believe the quality of the pieces that she

created. She took every project that I presented to the class to a higher level."

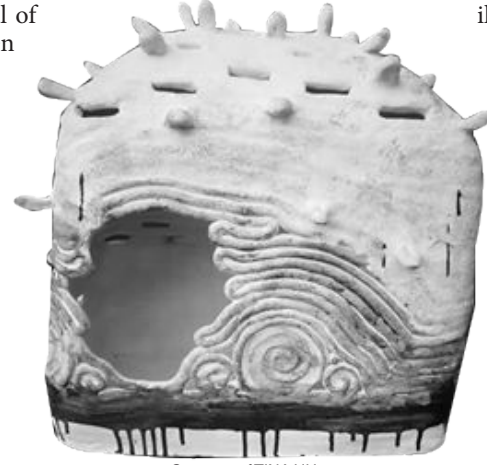
In China, Hu used to make most of her artwork directly from nature; here in Saratoga, this complex preparation process of picking plants to create the exact color pigment she wanted or to make clay herself proved unnecessary because the art classes provide all of the materials necessary for her art.

Hu also noticed that in Saratoga, each class focuses on a specific type of art, but in China, students explore different types of art in different classes instead of focusing on a specific type.

"I was able to create whatever type of project that popped up in my mind, and the specialized teacher would help me develop my ideas into actual products," Hu said. "The classes were more open to each student's individual interest."

Although Hu has not decided whether she will major in art in college, she will continue fulfilling her passion for art throughout high school.

"I believe that it is not necessary to take art classes to continue being an artist because sometimes you can just get inspiration from anything," Hu said. "You can freestyle and express yourself however you choose to." ♦



Courtesy of TINA HU



Courtesy of TINA HU

REPORTERS RECALL THE BEST AND WORST PARTS OF POPULAR REALITY SHOWS

‘KUWTK’ full of unrelatable, excessive drama and whining

KARDASHIAN LIFESTYLE HIGHLIGHTS RICH PEOPLE PROBLEMS: EXPENSIVE EARRINGS AND PETTY RELATIONSHIP COMPLAINTS

BY KevinSize & AlexWang

“Oh my god, I’m gonna cry! My diamond earrings! It’s not funny, that’s literally \$75,000!”

We couldn’t help but burst out laughing at Kim Kardashian’s whiny voice. Her then-boyfriend basketball player Kris Humphries had thrown her into a pool, and somehow her diamond earrings had fallen off.

If we were Kardashian, we would probably cry too. At the same time, we would never be vain enough to wear anything worth even close to \$75,000 near any body of water. Also, we could never afford anything close to that price.

Twenty minutes earlier, we prepared some microwaveable popcorn and two Cokes and popped down on Kevin’s couch to begin our first episode of “Keeping Up with the Kardashians.”

The show airs on E!, a cable channel owned by NBCUniversal. Since Kevin doesn’t watch much

television, we realized we didn’t even have that cable channel.

Instead we went to Prime Video, an on demand service that is developed and owned by Amazon. On Prime Video, we could select which episodes we wanted to buy.

There were way too many seasons and episodes (17 and 247 respectively) to watch, so we decided to Google the most popular ones and start there.

Season 6 Episode 12 is where we began. Titled “Trouble in Paradise,” the episode took us through the Kardashian’s trip in Bora Bora. The whole episode is them complaining about how miserable their lives are because of their relationship issues. They complain so much, it’s like they don’t even realize they’re in beautiful Bora Bora using \$100 bills as tissue paper.

The highlight of the show, and probably why it’s so popular, is Kim Kardashian’s “ugly cry.”

After she loses her earrings — that we repeat, are worth \$75,000 — her smile immediately disappears, and her face contorts as she

begins to cry.

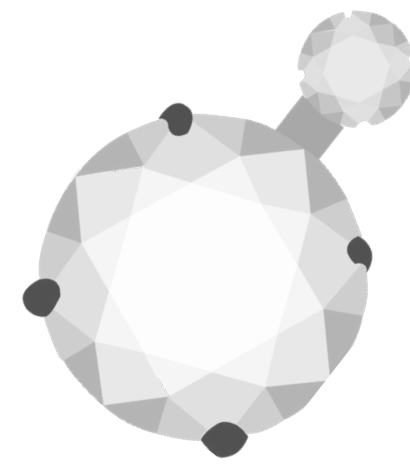
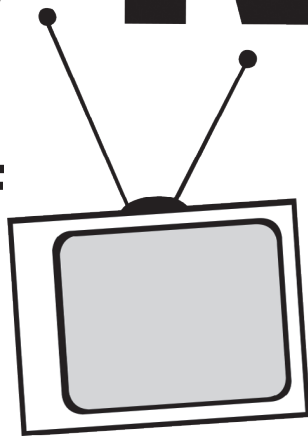
We both saw Humphries’ face when this happened, and we laughed even harder because his smile disappeared, replaced with an “Oh my God, I’ve messed up horribly” look.

We stopped watching after this one episode. It wasn’t really enjoyable. It was funny because of how silly the Kardashians acted, but it almost felt like we were invading their household and meddling in their personal business.

In addition, none of it was relatable. All their problems were stupid, and they cried over nothing.

Perhaps pretending to live in a fantasy world in which you can afford earrings worth a luxury car is a great way to escape the monotony of daily life. For us, it was ridiculous.

In our opinion, the show is at best, a great way to learn about plastic surgery, binge drinking, excessive whining and rampant materialism. We give it a generous 0.75/5. ♦



‘The Bachelor’ is a mix of fun and trash

BY SofiaJones

Thirty women stand in rows, waiting anxiously and praying that the bachelor will call their name so they can receive a rose and remain on the show. Getting a rose opens up so many possibilities: stardom, the opportunity to become the next Bachelorette, gaining influencer status and possibly a husband.

“The Bachelor” is an ABC show that has been running since 2002. The premise of the show is that 30 women compete to win the hand of one man through a series of one-on-one dates, trips and group hangouts.

While on the show, all of the women stay in the same house, and although they cannot access their phones or the internet, they are provided with a LOT of alcohol to keep things interesting.

Many people fault the show for being too fake and scripted; it can seem as if many of the women are not looking for love, but rather for a chance to be famous. However, this does not detract from the value of the show. It actually makes

things more interesting.

I don’t care if two contestants create fake drama in hopes of furthering themselves along the show. I just hope they make it interesting. One of the great things about “The Bachelor” is that its mindless content provides me with a break from external stress. As long as you treat the “reality” part of reality TV with discretion, you can sit back and enjoy the constant dumb drama.

It’s also a great show to watch with friends. Each new season is like March Madness for people who hate sports; scoreboards and bets can be made on which contestants might make it to the end.

I always discuss with a friend which contestants I love or hate after a new episode drops. With constant backstabbing and declarations of love, “The Bachelor” provides new things to discuss each week.

The show may not be the most intellectually stimulating one ever created, but at least you’ll feel better about your own love life — or lack thereof — after watching the hot mess unfold. ♦

RHOC: Wealthy women who shop and fight 24/7

BY AnjaliNuggehalli

First off, I’d like to point out that I am aware that “Real Housewives of Orange County” (RHOC) is a trashy show. There’s nothing wholesome about tipsy women throwing their wine glasses at each other because Kelly told Vicki that she looks like a pig.

However, there’s something to be said about the whole show being so ridiculous that you can’t help but excitedly wait for each weekly episode premiere (Tuesdays at 8 p.m., FYI).

I first got hooked on RHOC channel surfing on the TV in my hotel room during a soccer trip. When I saw a bunch of women in awful hair extensions going on a Rodeo Drive shopping spree on Bravo TV, I was intrigued. They appeared to have an infinite credit card limit and they engaged in retail therapy every day.

Along with an incessant (and somewhat concerning) amount of shopping from the RHOC cast,

you can expect to see girls’ trips from luxurious destinations such as Cabo and Ireland. No matter where they are, drama is everywhere. The show lacks a lot of things, such as a comprehensive plot, but there’s never a shortage of screaming arguments and tears over literally nothing.

When I began to watch episodes consecutively, I got to know the characters, and even formed opinions about them.

For example, I know that Kelly is always one to start trouble — she went to anger management classes a few years ago — and that although Tamara claims that she stays out of drama, she is the ultimate pot-stirrer.

While RHOC isn’t a show that makes you feel like an intellectual (in fact, you’ll probably lose a few brain cells while watching it), it’s a fun show to watch when you’re looking for a few laughs and spicy drama. Just like most reality shows, however, watch RHOC at your own risk — it’s addictive. ♦



PRINTED BOOKS STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

Although fewer high school students find time to read books, they continue to read through mobile devices

BY VickyBai & NicoleLu

Two libraries, two vastly different environments.

While the Saratoga Public Library has a generally quiet and peaceful atmosphere, the high school library is sometimes almost the exact opposite. The bookstacks tucked into the left side of the room remain untouched,

while more and more students hurry toward the computers and study tables to finish homework and catch up with friends during tutorials. With so many library books left untouched, the problem of how many people actually read arise.

According to the Washington Post, in 2015, 43 percent of adults read at least one work of literature in the previous year. This is the lowest percentage so far since the National Education Association (NEA) surveys started tracking reading and arts participation in 1982, when the literature reading rate was 57 percent.

These findings are also reflected in recent studies by researchers Jean Twenge, Gabrielle Martin and Brian Spitzberg of San Diego State University.

“When you get past a certain age, you realize you’re not special like Harry Potter or Percy Jackson.”

SOPHOMORE Selina Chen

Statistics published in the study of “Trends in U.S. Adolescents’ Media Use, 1976-2016” and re-stated in the magazine The Conversation, show that in 1980, 60 percent of 12th graders said that they had read a book, newspaper or magazine that was not assigned for school every day. By 2016, only 16 percent did — a huge drop, even though the book, newspaper or magazine could be read on a digital device.

togatalks

What was the last book you read that wasn’t for school?

The Saratoga High library, arguably known as a social center where less and less students read, seems to be a point of evidence for the researchers’ findings.

“I just don’t have time to read because of school and extracurriculars,” junior Elyse Hulme said.

have previously used just for books,” Thermond said.

For teachers who grew up in an age when tech devices such as phones and laptops were not central to the culture, seeing students reading less has generated mixed emotions regarding the use of social media.

“Reading for me was such an important experience in so many ways,” Thermond said. “I am extremely attached to my printed books, and often just picking up an old favorite gives me a sense of comfort and peace that I really can’t justify. I always felt that time I spent reading was worth it.”

As homework increases at each grade level, freshmen who read for pleasure sometimes become sophomores who struggle to find time for it.

“As of now, I don’t check out physical books anymore,” sophomore Selina Chen said. “Even if I read it’s mostly during the summer and holidays, and I usually download books online.”

Chen, an avid reader, used to read a book every two days last summer. Despite wanting to continue reading, the piling schoolwork and extracurriculars have made it increasingly hard for her to do so.

Hulme has also struggled to find time for reading.

“If I had time to, I would probably read more,” Hulme said. “I’m just super busy.”

Chen also highlighted an interesting phenomenon she discussed with one of her friends.

“When you’re little, you believe in the fantasies, and you always want to be told that you’re special like Percy Jackson and Harry Potter,” Chen said. “But when you get past a certain year you just get tired

and realize you’re not special in the way of those characters.”

While high school students may seem to read fewer books for pleasure because the demands on their time, the school library is not experiencing a decrease in the number of books checked for personal enjoyment out just yet. Head librarian Kevin Heyman said the number of library books has been more or less the same since he started working at the school in 2012, with around 1,400 books to 2,200 in circulation a year. So far this year, the library has checked out 694 books.

However, Heyman acknowledges the current circumstance regarding print books.

“People choose what to do with their time,” Heyman said. “Social media consumes a good deal of some people’s days. These folks don’t have time to read.”

Meanwhile, Mike Eitner, a community librarian at Saratoga Library for almost three years, has actually seen an increase of adult book checkouts in the past five years.

Eitner looks at reading from a broader perspective; although he wants people to read more, he acknowledges that reading takes forms that are not represented in the NEA survey,

which only reported the percentage of adults who read at least one novel, poem or play in the previous year.

“All reading is good reading,” Eitner said. “People read the news on their phone. This

type of reading is not captured in the NEA survey. In my opinion, this is a very narrow view of reading.”

“We want to make sure students have the skills to be thoughtful and critical of media, not just the written word.”

TEACHER Sarah Thermond

Both the English and Media Arts Program curriculums have addressed this shift away from traditional print by reassessing curricular texts. In order to make the reading list more relevant to students’ lives, teachers have made an effort to include more modern texts in their curriculum, as well as literature by female and non-white authors.

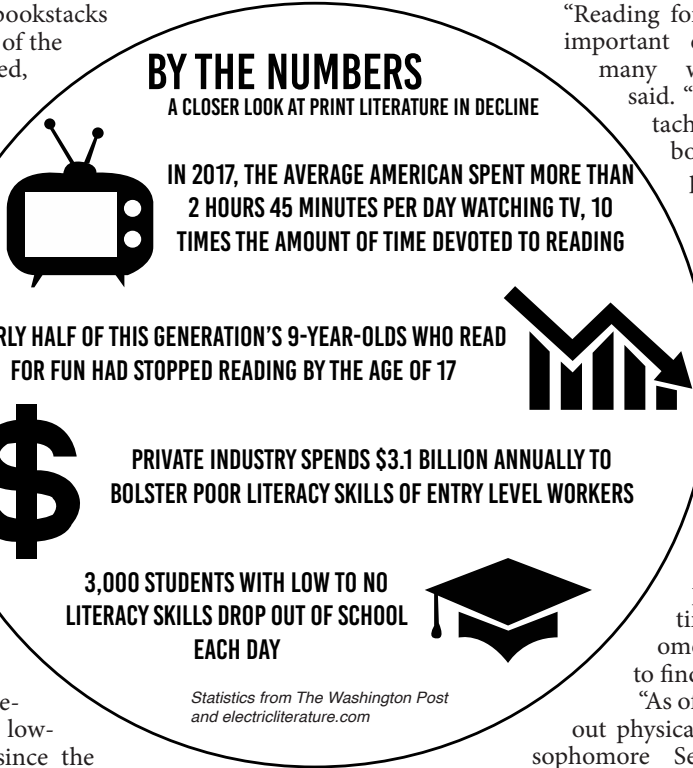
With this long-term curriculum change comes a big push toward media literacy as well. Thermond explains this advancement with the fact that even non-MAP English classes are incorporating the analysis of artwork, videos or songs as part of the literacy they’re trying to teach students.

“So many students are choosing to spend their free time with that kind of media, and we want to make sure they have the skills to be thoughtful and critical of it, not just of the written word,” Thermond said.

Despite the turn toward technology for literature consumption, several students, even though they may not be able to read as much as they did in younger grades, continue to find ways to connect with print books.

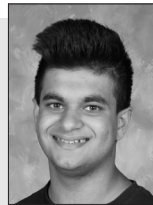
“I have a bunch of downloaded book files sitting on my computer desktop waiting to be read. I try to read as much as I can during short gaps between activities and in the car,” Chen said.

“I am always looking for ways to read more.” ♦



ALL GRAPHICS BY NEETI BADVE

“I just read ‘Freakonomics’ by a UChicago professor about the American economy.”



junior Proby Shandilya

“I read ‘The Kite Runner’ this summer, but I didn’t know we’d read it in school.”



sophomore Rashmi Edamula

“A few months ago I read ‘The White Tiger’ by Aravind Adiga about India’s class struggles.”



junior Nikhil Nair

How useful are school subjects in real life?

CURRENT STUDENTS AND ALUMNA REFLECT ON COURSE SELECTION AND APPLICABILITY OF CLASS MATERIAL

BY AariaThomas & JeanetteZhou

Junior Irith Katiyar remembers how he struggled to decipher the challenging language of William Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar" in his English class last year. He had a hard time deciphering the metaphors, similes and allusions peppered throughout the passages.

He also struggled to see how understanding writing from 400 years ago would help him in his future career.

Katiyar's problems seeing the relevance of some subjects are hardly new; students have complained about subjects such as Latin and algebra for decades and specialize their schedules to avoid subjects they don't like in favor of ones they see as more linked to their futures.

In Katiyar's case, STEM classes like PreCalculus Honors, AP Biology and AP Chemistry are the ones that dominate his transcript.

"I don't think that English or history would have much of a benefit for a STEM major," Katiyar said. "I'm better at science than English or history, and I think that I should take harder classes in subjects I'm better at and that I'm interested in."

Katiyar plans to major in computer science and minor in another science, so he has chosen to double up on his science courses, taking both AP Chemistry and AP Biology this year.

"If you like these areas that you're specializing in, it's good because you can dive

deep and see if you really like this and then you get to focus more on that," Katiyar said.

Katiyar first discovered that he enjoyed computer science when he was in middle school during a coding activity. When he got to high school and could choose what courses he would take he began specializing his schedule to reflect his interest.

There may be evidence to support Katiyar's position that students would do better if they focused on subjects that interest them.

According to a poll done by Gallup that covered over 500,000 students in 1,700 schools,

only 4 in 10 high school students say they feel engaged in school, which the article attributed to too much of a focus on following curriculum and not taking student interests into account.

Junior Tiffany Huang has also narrowed her schedule to focus on fields she is interested in this year. With AP Art History, AP Music Theory and year-book filling up her schedule, Huang is taking no science classes this year.

"The most prominent thing is that I don't have any time in my schedule with seven courseload-heavy classes," Huang said. "But I'm also just not really interested in science because STEM is not something that I would want to go into."

Huang, who is considering a major in graphic design or sound art, believes that students should be well rounded; although she doesn't take science classes this year, she plans on taking AP Physics next year.

Geometry, Precalculus Hon-

ors and Sequential Math 1 teacher Savita Agrawal also thinks that students should be well rounded in the courses they take because math classes are important for STEM and humanities. She states that although the math concepts may not always be applicable, the skills that are used to solve problems are.

"It's more about how you build strategies to solve problems and how you face challenges."

TEACHER Savita Agrawal

"Unless you are going into machine learning or artificial intelligence, it's not about knowing the formulas and derivations because, nowadays, you can Google those things," Agrawal said. "It's more about how you approach the problem, how you're building strategies to solve the problem, how you face challenges and how you keep trying and trying. I think all those skills really help you be successful in any environment later in life."

Class of 2018 alumna Elicia Ye, currently a computer science major at UC Berkeley, is applying the concepts she learned in high school math to the field she went into.

"I was pretty surprised that Precalculus helps with my major," Ye said. "Matrices, vectors, probability, polynomials and everything I did in Mr. Yi's class the entire year is single-handedly saving me in the classes for my major."

While Ye finds many of her high school classes beneficial for her classes at Berkeley, she believes high school students choose courses based on what they think will look best on their college applications, rather than their personal interests.

"I think we choose our classes

by filtering out non-APs and Honors first instead of looking at the subjects first," Ye said. "In high school, it was more stacking up classes that looked good for applications. Both are motivations, but one is intrinsic and the other extrinsic."

According to registrar Robert Wise, there are currently 1,428 enrollments of Saratoga High students in AP courses, which is significantly more than, according to College Board, the California state average of about 214 enrollments per high school.

Ye, who originally planned on majoring in media studies, thinks that if high school students specialize, they should know exactly what their goal is and why they find it meaningful.

"I distinctly remember talking to Mrs. Satake about switching out of AP Physics and AP Computer Science because I thought I was sure that I would not do engineering," Ye said. While Ye has graduated high school, she still finds that in college, the peer pressure of taking certain classes, whether they are helpful or not, still exists, although in a slightly different context.

"I still feel pressured to take classes that I'm not necessarily interested in because either my friends are taking them or they are supposedly useful for a sector in the industry or for a specific area in research," Ye said.

For senior Jason Hong, two extracurricular activities — History Bowl and Quiz Bowl — have been hugely influential.

"My favorite part of Quiz Bowl and History Bowl is getting exposed to and learning new things in academic fields that I probably wouldn't have heard of otherwise," Hong said. "It's really important for people of this day and age to be educated about a variety of subjects so that we can make educated decisions."

Hong, who joined both History Bowl and Quiz Bowl in his freshman year, loved how he could answer questions with the trivia he knew.

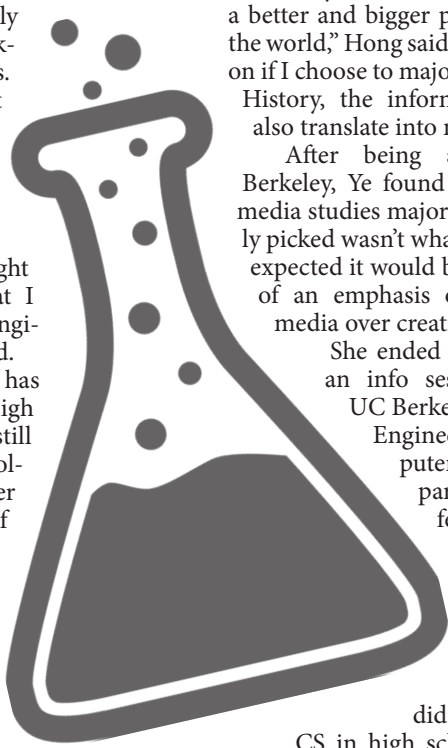
"Even if I go into a STEM-related career, the information I learn in History Bowl will help me gain a better and bigger perspective of the world," Hong said. "Depending on if I choose to major in STEM or History, the information could also translate into my major."

After being admitted to Berkeley, Ye found out that the media studies major she originally picked wasn't what she was expected it would be, with more of an emphasis on analyzing media over creating it.

She ended up attending an info session in the UC Berkeley Electrical Engineering Computer Science department, and felt like it was something she could consider as a major.

"Even though I didn't take AP

CS in high school or have previous programming experiences, I thought I would feel challenged academically and personally in exploring the field," Ye said. "There is a part of me still wants to be an investigative reporter, but college is a time to try out new things and push yourself." ♦



Wrestling practices to tackle weakness in form

TEAM CONCENTRATES MORE ON DEVELOPING PROPER BASIC TECHNIQUES RATHER THAN CONDITIONING

BY NicoleLu & CiciXu

Connected to the side of the Large Gym and secluded from the center of the school is the school's wrestling room. A tattered poster hangs from the doorway, its bright colors advertising the open mat wrestling program. Loud music blasts from the speakers behind the door where a select group of athletes train every weekday during the winter season.

"I am feeling pretty good for the people that we have now, and I am hopeful for the younger kids."

SENIOR Kole Tippetts

The wrestling team is focusing on learning more basic techniques this year com-

pared to last year, when conditioning was the bigger focus.

Senior varsity wrestler Nico Sabato said the team didn't always have proper form and technique when they got into matches. "This year, we are starting off basically from scratch."

In order to continue facilitating this new approach, coach Taylor Wilson is making the veterans on the team work with the rookies so that they can get a good understanding of the sport quickly, according to senior wrestling captain Robbie Bilic.

The team's first practice meet was held in the Half Moon Bay High School gym on Dec. 7 against a variety of different schools. Bilic placed 6th at 170lb, Sabato placed as a consolation prize B champion at 152lb and senior Kole Tippetts also placed 8th at 152lb.

Though the newer wrestlers struggled in their matches, Bilic holds out hope for future tournaments, stating that he has "a good feeling about the team because we



FALCON // NICOLE LU

Junior Alexander Kim performs a maneuver on freshman Soham Bham during practice. The team will wrestle next at the Webber Lawson Tournament on Dec. 14 at Fremont High.

have plenty of people."

A typical practice lasts for around two hours.

The team starts with a 20 minute warm-up before stretching in a circle around the captains in the middle, who lead the team.

The team usually goes over some old moves first, then a new one or different variations of an old one.

They practice drills and do some live sessions before ending the prac-

tices with some warmdowns.

Despite the changing training schedule, Tippetts has confidence in their gradual improvement.

"I am feeling pretty good for the people that we have now, and I am hopeful for the younger kids," Tippetts said. "It was really beneficial to have wrestlers who made it into who helped us a lot with our technique. Now, hopefully we can teach the younger kids and have relatively good results this year." ♦



Sabato

GIRLS' SOCCER

Key junior forward tears ACL, out for season

BY AnjaliNuggehalli & KavitaSundaram

With tryouts complete on Nov. 29, the girls' soccer team is looking forward to an exciting and eventful season.

The team faced a daunting challenge this year, with the loss of two of their key center backs, alumna Sasha Pickard as well as junior Michelle Lim, who now plays for an outside team that doesn't allow her to play high school soccer.

However, the abundance of new, experienced players compensated for the loss of these two key players. The team had 40 girls try out, and gained three key additions: freshman Gabi Golko, freshman Aleks Verga and freshman Jalyn Harrigan.

Along with this, returning players sophomore Lauren Yarrington, senior Ananya Krishnan and senior Adrienne Chan play important roles in the team and help the girls collectively be more successful. With new key additions and returning players, coach Ben Maxwell hopes for a favorable season.

However, the team was once more faced with a challenge when junior outside forward Leila Chaudhry tore her ACL and meniscus during a practice, sidelining her for the season.

"I went to go poke the ball, but I planted my foot weirdly," Chaudhry said. "I felt my whole right knee crack and couldn't move at all."

After getting an MRI, doctors told Chaudhry that she tore her entire ACL. A week after the diagnosis, Chaudhry had reconstructive surgery.

"I felt more excited than nervous going into surgery," Chaudhry said. "My surgeon's done a lot of surgeries on my teammates so he's really highly regarded. I just want to be independent again."

Chaudhry will be on crutches for three weeks after her surgery, which happened on Dec. 5, and she will have to wait six more weeks before being able to drive or play any sort of non-contact soccer. Meanwhile, she is vigilant with her physical therapy, knowing that it will

quicken her recovery.

"I'm doing a lot of quad strengthening exercises because you're supposed to lose 90 percent of your entire leg muscle after surgery," Chaudhry said. "I'm just trying to get back on the field as soon as possible."

Despite her injury, Chaudhry continues to support both her club and high school teammates. Although Chaudhry admits it's hard to see her team play without her, she refuses to let her injury drag her down.

"I've accepted that it is what it is, and I have to keep moving forward," Chaudhry said. "I'm learning to appreciate my family and friends, as well as all the opportunities I've been given to recover."

Meanwhile, the girls varsity soccer team is focusing on improving their defense and building off last year's winning season.

"I think we can make CCS again if we fix our defense because we still have really good offense and an amazing goalie," senior outside forward Neda Riazat said.

In addition to the strong offense and defense, the team built great connections from last year, which will assist them in getting a head start for the season.

"Soccer helped me build connections with people I wouldn't have otherwise known, and I think that really helped our team work better together," sophomore center mid Lauren Yarrington said.

The team will have its first game on Jan. 8. Until then, they are continuing to work on defense and on developing their style of playing, along with competing in pre-season games.

On Dec. 8, the team had its first preseason game against Burlingame high school, losing 1-0. The team played Christopher on Dec. 11, Scotts Valley on Dec. 13, and will play Prospect on Dec. 15.

With the league season coming up in January, the team hopes to be competitive.

"We're always swimming against the current because we don't have as many players here as other schools have," said Maxwell. "We're playing some really strong schools in the top division, but if we manage to finish around the middle of the pack we'll have a great year." ♦



Chaudhry

Online courses gain popularity among students

BY PrestonFu & KrithiSankar

Recently, online school programs provided by prestigious universities and for-profit education companies alike have grown in approval among undergraduate university students, according to the Babson Survey Education Group. This past year, the number of higher education students in the U.S. has increased by over 330,000, or 5.6 percent, exceeding the increases seen over the last three years.

This trend is also happening here; online courses account for nearly 10 percent of out-of-district classes taken by students, according to registrar Robert Wise.

Online classes have also doubled in popularity among SHS students since the 2011-12 school year.

This figure has grown on a national scale as well. According to Education Week, K-12 students took a total of roughly 4.5 million supplemental online courses in the 2014-15 school year, compared to just 317,000 in 2002-03.

While some Saratoga students choose an online course to remediate a class previously taken or to fulfill a credit for graduation such as Visual Performing Arts, others choose to take on additional work in a subject of interest, Wise said.

Along with retaking the first semester of Algebra 2, senior Ananya Krishnan is taking AP World History online. Krishnan has always had a passion for world history, and despite already having taken the SAT subject test, she is interested in learning more.

Krishnan has enjoyed her experience thus far, mainly because the self-paced nature of her class gives her some more breathing room when she is having an exceptionally busy day or week. Additionally, Krishnan has been able to develop personal motivation from taking these online courses.

"Because it's online, there's no one telling you a due date, so you have to motivate yourself to do it," Krishnan said. "It's a good life skill to be able to tell your-

self, 'I need to do this, so I'm going to do it.'"

Senior Lauren Hansen found similar benefits when she took a geometry course online through K12, an organization based in the East Coast, during her freshman year. Despite her tendency to procrastinate because of the block schedule, Hansen was forced to improve her work habits, managing her time more efficiently so that she could submit all assignments by 12 a.m. EST, or equivalently 9 p.m. PST.

Hansen's situation took a rough turn when she suffered a concussion midway through the volleyball season.

Consequently, she fell 23 assignments behind. Because she couldn't talk to the teacher face-to-face and explain her situation, she was forced to plow through all of the material, making up all of the

work she missed during her absence.

Although Hansen said she did not have the greatest experience with online courses, she acknowledges their impact on personal development, both in the classroom and in the long run.

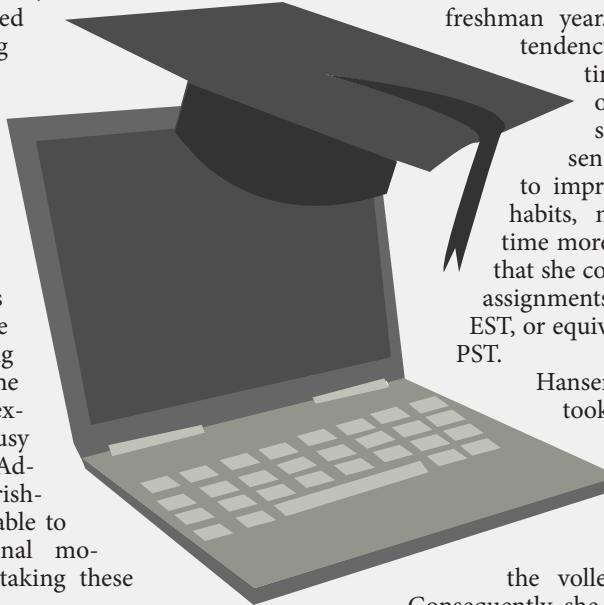
"Despite not being able to ask anyone for help, online classes really helped me mature and solidify my understanding of the material," Hansen said.

Another area that heavily uses online education is the school's special education program. Students have the chance to use Cyber High, which helps students recover credits in order to graduate from high school. Teachers Brian Elliott, Lauren Taylor, Clare Rieber and Danny Wallace are involved with its use.

"It's a great tool for students because it really benefits the ones that are struggling," Wallace said. "The teachers have a lot of control over it so it's a lot easier for us too."

While there are many reasons students take online courses, overall there is an upward trend in the number of students who take online courses while also attending a traditional high school.

The projected number of online courses taken by Saratoga High students for the next couple of years range from 90 to 100 online courses each year overall, according to Wise. ♦



Dancers struggle to juggle academics and practice

BY Jeanette**Zhou**

At age 3, senior Kaitlyn Thompson's parents placed her in a ballet and tap combo class at Atlas School of Dance after seeing her natural affinity toward dance. Thompson has been dancing ever since.

"I love that dance has become my creative and emotional outlet," Thompson said. "If I'm having a bad day at school, it disappears the moment I walk into the studio because all that matters is right there in front of me."

Additionally, as a captain of the school's dance team, Thompson dances from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday through Thursday throughout the year, performing with the team at home football and basketball games and rallies. During competition season, the schedule gets more intense with Saturday practices and full-day conventions.

"It's definitely a team that you have to love, and you have to love what you are doing, or else there's no way you could do it," Thompson said.

Although Thompson is currently on the school's dance team, she has also danced for 13 years at Atlas School of Dance, during which she was on their competitive dance team until eighth grade; however, she finds dance competitions more difficult now than when she competed with Atlas.

"High school dance competitions require more team union, practice and cleanliness," Thompson said. "As you get older and better, so does your competition, and with everyone being really good, the stakes are higher and it requires more effort and dedication to place well at competitions."

Sophomore Jordan Shyh is an assistant captain for the dance team. She also started her dance career at a Bay Area dance studio, Dance Academy USA (DAU), where she

took a ballet class at age 4. Throughout her time at DAU, Shyh's passion for dance grew as she branched out to other styles.

While Shyh joined the school's dance team this year, she spent seven years as a part of DAUPC, the competitive team for Dance Academy USA, and struggled at times to manage dance and schoolwork.

"Especially since I go to Saratoga High, the pressure and expectations are really high," Shyh said. "I'm the type of person who doesn't like to fail at anything, which makes it really easy for me to burn out. While school is my priority, dance is a really close second, so it gets hard to choose between them."

Although Shyh still acknowledges the impact DAU has had on her dance career, Shyh believes that it was the right choice for her to join the school's dance team, which, though rigorous, requires fewer hours than DAU.

"I really enjoyed the focus on technique and movement at DAU," Shyh said. "Although on dance team we still work on technique, it's a lot more team based and it's a lot more fun being involved in school activities and school spirit. Practices are hard, but they are also so fun because everyone feels so comfortable with each other."

Despite the difficulty Shyh says that she faces while balancing her schoolwork and her dance life, she believes that it is worth the struggle.

Sophomore Brook Chuang has also had difficulty balancing her dance and school life; however, instead of one competition season, Chuang has an intense schedule year round, preparing for different shows. At Chuang's studio, Los Gatos Ballet, she currently dances about 24 hours a week preparing for her role as Clara in holiday classic, "The Nutcracker."



Thompson



Courtesy of BROOK CHUANG

Sophomore Brook Chuang practices pointe as she prepares for her dance studio's production of the holiday classic "The Nutcracker."

"I never seriously thought dance could be a potential career because I was surrounded by people who were studying to go to schools like Harvard," Lee said. "It was really hard on my mental health until I realized I needed to let go of the judgement I felt from others for wanting to be an artist."

Lee decided to become a professional dancer early in high school after working with many different mentors and choreographers that showed her how happy people can be when they are passionate about what they do.

"I was so lucky to have gone to Dance Academy USA because it was always my second, and sometimes my first, home," Lee said. "I am still in touch with my team back home and the others who graduated my year as well. Although we live in different places now, dance friends are forever friends." ♦

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Team rebuilds chemistry

BY Jonathan**Li**
& Viraj**Reddi**

With five minutes left in the third quarter against rival Los Gatos last Friday at home, the Falcons led 44-38 following a crossover 3-pointer from junior point guard Tyler Chu. The crowd roared, but the lead didn't last. The Falcons fell 63-58.

The leading scorers were Chu with 19 points and senior forward Leo Cao and junior guard Cameron King each with 14 points, but they lost primarily because they were out rebounded on both ends of the court, giving up 22 second-chance points.

Falcon coach Patrick Judge is trying to find a winning formula as the preseason progresses in December.

Besides the loss to the Wildcats, the Falcons sustained two other losses: against Silver Creek 66-55 on Nov. 27 and Branham 59-50 on Nov. 30. Upcoming games include ones against Westmont on Dec. 11, Pioneer on Dec. 14 and James Lick on Dec. 17. The team's preseason record stands at 0-3 as of Dec. 9.

"It's obvious the biggest thing missing is chemistry," sophomore center Giulio Morini Bianzino said. "We've never played together before, and that's something we'll have to work on throughout the season."

With only six players having prior varsity experience, the vast majority of the team is facing tougher competition than they have in the past. Despite the improved competition, junior guard Isaac Sun — in his first year on varsity — says the adjustment has been manageable.

"Everyone's taller and stronger than on JV, but our team practices so much that it doesn't matter," Sun said. "The competition's not bad. As long as we play within our coach's system we'll always win."

Junior guard Cameron King noted that

despite the lack of experience and the loss of seniors, the team will be successful due to their players' skills and work ethic. King believes their dedication and frequent practices have accelerated their team chemistry.

"It's definitely been a grind," King said. "Practices have been around three hours every day and it's been tiring, but we've definitely gotten a lot better."

Bianzino also believes the team's success will come down to their mentality.

"Why not rebuild and compete at the same time?"

SOPHOMORE Giulio Morini-Bianzino

"We had a practice recently, and we had a talk about how we wanted to play more fun instead of trying to win," Bianzino said. "We want to get our spark back and just have fun with it."

With the team's tallest player being Bianzino at 6'4," the team is undersized compared to most of the competition. Against bigger teams, the Falcons compensate for their lack of height and size by playing fast and scoring in transition.

"We play to our strengths, which are speed and shooting," Bianzino said. "Instead of posting up, we'll play a lot of fast breaks." Though the team always aims to compete, Bianzino believes the year is a rebuilding effort. Given that the team has seven juniors and four underclassmen, Bianzino is confident the Falcons will begin winning again soon.

"It's definitely a rebuilding year, but we're still going to go for CCS," Bianzino said. "Why not both rebuild and compete at the same time?" ♦

Students connect to heritage through cultural sports

BY Serena**Li**
& Cici**Ku**

With butterflies in her stomach, sophomore Ishanya Hebbalae stood in front of the Cupertino Library with her Bharatanatyam dance group and tried to run through the dance one more time. The music started playing, but Hebbalae suddenly forgot her part in the dance.

Hebbalae tried to calm herself and focus on the music that was playing. As the song continued, she found her rhythm, finishing the classical Indian dance gracefully.

Two weeks later, senior Prosper Chiu stood firmly on the mat alone, swinging his broadswords with determination. He struck his sword in the air and finished his performance proudly.

To many people around the world, these performances wouldn't qualify as true sports. But for people like Hebbalae and Chiu, the definition of sports is broader, often representing family or cultural traditions.

Cultural sports like martial arts in East Asia or Bharatanatyam dance in South India all date back to the Middle Ages.

Hebbalae started practicing the Bharatanatyam dance when she was 5. Bharatanatyam is a style of dance predominantly from the southern Tamil Nadu and Karnataka regions of India.

"The dance is a forefront genre in India. It has religious themes, and it actually influenced many other classical dances in India,"

Hebbalae said.

As a U.S. resident, Hebbalae sees the dance as a way to stay close to her culture.

"I started these dance lessons because Bharatanatyam is very close to my culture as a South Indian," Hebbalae said. "It's a way to keep connections."

However, Hebbalae expressed that there are challenges in practicing cultural dance here.

People have trouble understanding the true meaning behind the dance.

"The dance is very dignified, and it usually tells a story," Hebbalae said. "There aren't many people who really understand and can convey these correctly."

Hebbalae said that from learning this dance, she learned a little bit more about her culture and the important musicians and writers of India.

Similarly, influenced by his family tradition, and wanting to connect with his roots, Chiu practices martial arts.

"My dad is really into Tai Chi, so he wanted me to do some type of cultural sport," Chiu said. "This is like the one Asian thing I do other than eating Asian food and speaking to my parents."

Chiu focuses on performance-based martial arts — dual broadswords — rather than action Kung Fu. He has also performed in many stadiums for showcases and endured many hardships from his endless hours of practice. Like Hebbalae, one of the hardships for Chiu is that people have a misconception about what martial arts is.



Courtesy of ISHANYA HEBBALAE

Sophomore Ishanya Hebbalae performs a traditional Bharatanatyam dance at the Cupertino Library. Hebbalae began learning Bharatanatyam at age 5 to stay connected with her roots.

"I learned a lot of discipline, since my coach is really strict. If I was late, I would need to do 100 push-ups."

SENIOR Prosper Chiu

"When people think of martial arts, they think of fighting people with weapons and killing others," Chiu said. "We do have weapons, mine is the sword. But when my friends saw what I actually did, as if I

was just waving around the bendy swords, they're like 'that's kind of lame.'"

Chiu admits that despite the challenges he's faced, martial arts makes him a more mature person, and he gives him life skill that he feels are useful. Chiu will continue doing this sport in the future.

"I learned a lot of discipline, since my coach is really strict," Chiu said. "If I was late, I would need to do 100 pushups for that."

Hebbalae and Chiu both feel a strong sense of pride in their own culture carried out by their traditional sports.

"No matter how far away you are," Hebbalae said, "culture never dies." ♦

Badminton star hopes to reach Olympic level

BY Lih**Shoshani**
& Joann**Zhang**

In August, sophomore Adrian Mar went to Russia to compete in the 2019 Badminton World Federation (BWF) World Junior Championships (WJC) in Kazan, Russia, after winning the regional trials in Livermore.

To earn a spot in the competition, players had to win one of the three events — doubles, mixed and singles.

Competing in doubles and mixed, Mar advanced in the mixed event and made it to finals. In both mixed and boys' doubles, Mar placed first with partners, respectively, Mills High sophomores Kalea Sheung and Richard Wang.

Mar was younger than the other players at the WJC, and unfortunately lost in the first round.

"It was a great experience being able to play against older players from around the world," Mar said.

After the WJC, Mar sparred with opponents for fun to make new friends and learn from high-level players. Next year, he hopes to do better at the WJC after more training.

Mar first became interested in the sport when, at the age of 7, he tagged along with his mother to open gyms for fun. The game's intensity and complexity intrigued Mar, and he decided to pursue badminton competitively.

"I love the competition, even if I lose," Mar said. "It's always a good experience to play against a skilled opponent."

After playing the sport for eight years, his competitive nature has paid off in success in the sport.

Last February, Mar competed in the Northwest Open Regional Championships with his usual tournament partners, Monta Vista High junior Aaron Low and Mission San Jose High sophomore Emily Han, winning 10 out of 11 matches.

In August, he flew to Japan to compete in the Shonai Invitational, where he won all three matches. Later on, in that same

month at a tournament in Mukilteo, U.S., Mar played in the Harbour Pointe Open Regional Championships, winning eight out of 11 matches.

To further his skills, Mar travels to various parts of Asia, where badminton is a much more prevalent sport. While there, he trains with international coaches. He enjoys practicing in different countries because seeing other players helps him improve. In addition to coach-run practices, Mar conditions on his own time with weightlifting.

The sport's extreme commitment has left Mar with less time to finish school work; his hectic schedule occasionally stresses him out. Mar practices three hours a day, not including conditioning, and tournaments outside of the state and

country often cause him to miss school: for the WJC, Mar missed a week of school to travel to Russia. His love for the sport, however, makes the sacrifice worth it.

"I love badminton because each match is a new and fun experience," Mar said. "The community is full of passionate badminton players who also want to win, making the competition even harder."

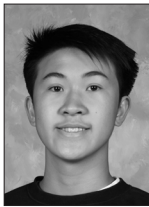
Badminton has also connected Mar to friends around the world and within school. When playing for the school team last year, he played doubles with junior Ryan Hsiao.

"He was a great friend on and off the court," Hsiao said. "He always seemed relaxed, which helped us both play better, since there was less pressure."

Mar will be playing for the school team this year too, with Hsiao as his doubles partner, and is hoping to have fun by helping his teammates get better throughout the season.

Looking forward, Mar aims to one day compete in the Olympics if he can continue to improve his skills.

"I haven't accomplished everything I want to do yet," Mar said. "There's a lot more I can do in the sport, and it's my biggest passion." ♦



Mar



Kevin Sze

OK, I was wrong. Very wrong. Four issues ago, I foolishly predicted the Warriors would still make a run at the NBA championship this year. If you've followed the NBA at all so far, you probably know that this is looking about as likely as getting struck by lightning.

In the first possession of the 2019-2020 season in the new Chase Center in San Francisco, point guard Stephen Curry launched a 3-pointer from 40 feet.

And completely airballed.

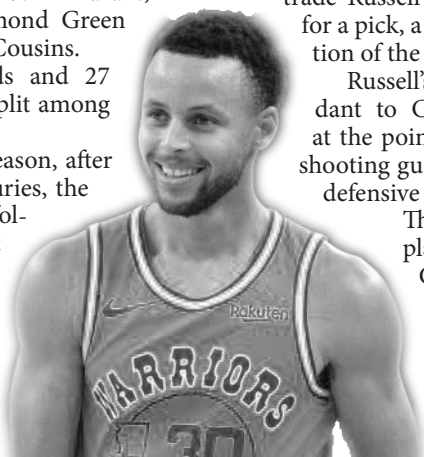
The shot was symbolic of the Warriors' performance so far this year as they sit at a league-worst 5-20 record as of Dec. 9.

Curry suffered a broken hand against the surprisingly competent Phoenix Suns team on Oct. 30. Power forward Draymond Green missed multiple games with a finger injury in early November and has been dealing with a heel injury recently. Even their best player, newly acquired All-Star guard D'Angelo Russell has been sidelined by ankle and thumb injuries.

In the 2018-2019 season, the Warriors started the following lineup: point guard Stephen Curry, shooting guard Klay Thompson, small forward Kevin Durant, power forward Draymond Green and center Demarcus Cousins.

Three MVP awards and 27 All-Star appearances split among the five players.

In the 2019-2020 season, after Curry and Green's injuries, the Warriors started the following lineup: point guard D'Angelo Russell, shooting guard Jordan Poole, small forward Glenn Robinson III, power forward Eric Paschall and center Willie



Courtesy of EAST BAY TIMES

snapshots



TALISMAN // RANNA ZAHABI



FALCON // LIHI SHOSHANI



Courtesy of Jun Lee



FALCON // JUN LEE

Senior Ananya Krishnan braces to get pied by US Government and MAP teacher Mike Davey during the Pielooza fundraiser on Dec. 4.

The Symphonic band performs in the McAfee Theater during their Winter Concert on Dec. 5.

Students visit the Letter Writing station during the Relay for Life event on Nov. 26. Event organizers raffled off AirPods, Beats headphones and Hydroflasks.

Junior Jun Lee asks junior Katie Chen to “call [him] maybe” and be his date to the Winter Formal, which was held in the Large Gym on Dec. 7.

MODERN-DAY GULAG

SANTA’S REGIME IS DE-ELFENIZING AND BRUTAL, BUT HOPE ABOUND AS AWARENESS SPREADS AND ATTITUDES CHANGE ACROSS THE WORLD

BY MathewLuo

There is one last robber baron in the North. He goes by Santa Claus, the King of Coal, Saint of Nicholas, Father of Christmas. He steals milk and cookies, charms children, abuses elves and feasts on reindeer meat.

Alabaster Snowball, Santa’s 139th Chief Operating Elf (COE) in the foundry department, is one of several refugees from Santa’s Workshop.

Alabaster used to cast tin men for little boys. He escaped from the Workshop almost 30 years ago in a bobsled pulled by cats and fairies, surviving on a ration of gingerbread and candy canes. He fled through the Siberian tundra, drinking the snow he melted with a stolen blowtorch, rushing past the empty gulags and Soviet work camps (which he said almost reminded him of home).

Alabaster lives in Saratoga now. Every Christmas Eve, he hides in his basement, where his red-green fatigues and little elf hat are still stored. His hair, once well-trimmed, is now a mop of grey and white. He stands 4-3 and speaks in a thick Irish accent two octaves higher than the human vocal register.

“Santa looks like any big jolly bloke,” Alabaster told me in hushed tones over a Candy-cane Mocha at Starbucks recently. “But really, he’s got a heart darker than the coal in naughty children’s stockings.”

While the rest of civilization has climbed out of the pits of feudalism and slavery, Santa has continued to abuse the rights of his labor force through wage slavery and coercion.

Elves, young and old, labor 80 hours a week, 52 weeks a year. Some make toys; some spy on kids; some pamper Santa; some run operations and management. Santa pays them in IOU slips, which are redeemable for candy canes and eggnog in Santa’s retail store — Elves, Shelves and Jolly Consumables.

A recent exposé secretly funded

by the UN Commission on Human Rights has found that Santa employs a Gestapo, informants and Troll strike-breakers. There’s no free speech at the North Pole. The sole newspaper, “The Naughty List,” is overseen by Mrs. Claus, Santa’s head of propaganda.

Santa’s reindeer are worked to death; Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer XVI collapsed from exhaustion when hauling Santa back to the North Pole after his triple bypass surgery.

Alabaster himself attempted in vain to secure better conditions for his staff during his tenure as COE.

“Once, I tried to get Pepper Peppermint [an assistant foundry worker] maternity leave so she could take care of her elflings,” Alabaster said. “The Big Guy stomped down, gave a hearty laugh, tore up her contract, confiscated her earnings and deported her by reindeer sled the next morning. She might’ve frozen to death if we didn’t sneak her some Barbie Sweaters and some extra-strength eggnog.”

“Santa’s heart is darker than the coal in naughty kids’ stockings.”



REFUGEE Alabaster Snowball

Worse, Santa’s many acts of cruelty are varied and wanton.

On Christmas day in 1911, Santa invited Carnegie and Rockefeller to the North Pole to go muskox hunting. Riding on Vanderbilt’s new steam locomotives, black coal smoke pumping into the white snow, wielding toy BB guns and decorative sabers, the three mercilessly slaughtered over 2000 muskoxen in a day the elves dubbed “The Massive Muskox Massacre.”

Alabaster’s great-grandpa Bushy Evergreen was outed in “The Naughty List” as a dissenter after he spoke out

against Santa’s actions that day. Evergreen died a week later, purportedly falling out of a bobsled into an icy crevasse. His seatbelt was found to be faulty. There were no eyewitnesses.

But things are starting to change. Whistleblowers are beginning to turn popular opinion against Santa, and children around the world are bravely starting to un-believe in Santa’s jolly facade.

“Even small acts of defiance help,” Alabaster said. “Santa’s allergic to peanuts, so a kid two blocks down from where I live mixed some of his mom’s ‘Essence of Peanut’ perfume into Santa’s milk last year.”

Even Mother Nature is helping defy Santa by melting the polar ice caps. If worst comes to worst, Santa’s northern demesne will still be nothing but a giant puddle in 200 years.

There is hope.

History has proven that Santa’s regime can evolve. Only 800 years ago, Santa was a brutal Mongolion Warlord who conquered half the Northern Hemisphere, dropping through tent flaps to deliver miniature Genghis Khans to children on Christmas Eve. In 1400, Santa returned his conquered lands upon the urgings of several European kings, becoming a feudal lord and renaming himself “The Saint of Nicholas.” In 1700, following the march of capitalism, Santa rebranded himself into the robber baron of today.

Things are even changing in the heart of Santa’s Workshop. The underground resistance movement Elves Live Free (ELF) is growing stronger as elves garner more sympathy worldwide, and the Internet has helped them disseminate their writings with less fear of Santan oversight, deemed “watchful and responsible care.”

Alabaster himself belonged to the Maoist-Marxist faction of ELF before fleeing the Workshop.

“Elves of the world, unite!” Alabaster shouted, quoting Marx. “We have nothing to lose but our chains!” ♦



ALL GRAPHICS BY HOWARD TANG AND JOANN ZHANG