

# El Gato

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL

20 HIGH SCHOOL CT • LOS GATOS • CALIFORNIA • 95030 • FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2018 • WWW.ELGATONNEWS.COM

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## Fantasy of Lights celebrates 20th year

by Alis Patterson  
Media Production Editor

For many, the annual Fantasy of Lights at Vasona Lake County Park is an incredible holiday tradition. The one and a half mile installment features massive displays of light and color designed to celebrate the holiday season. This year, the Santa Clara County Department of Parks and Recreation commemorates the 20th anniversary of putting on this event. To celebrate, every 20th car that passes through receives a commemorative gift.

The path weaves through Vasona Park and provides a radio channel for attendees to listen to as they enjoy the drive. To provide extra fun for both kids and adults, the park rangers pass out glasses that distort the lights for the passengers in the car. The glasses either make Christmas trees around the lights or create a kaleidoscope effect. Sadly, the rangers are no longer passing out candy canes at the end of the drive, as they did in previous years. The event includes many classic light displays, while continuing to innovate with new designs. Fans will recognize the iconic basketball-playing Santa, a ginormous pirate ship, and a dinosaur section complete with sound effects.



HO HO HO: Santa Claus makes a special appearance in the display of lights.

People hoping to attend can purchase tickets on the event's website and reserve a spot, as tickets are not sold at the gate. In addition, the event will not be cancelled for any weather related reasons. Even though the park has signs around the path that warn guests about leaving their cars, it is not uncommon to see kids peeking through the sunroofs of their families' SUVs. This practice has not yet caused any accidents and allows kids to enjoy an even more immersive experience. Also, as cars enter the park, rangers remind them to turn off their headlights as to not take away from the visibility of the displays.

The Fantasy of Lights creates a mind-boggling, explosive display made up of thousands of brilliantly-displayed lights. Many people look back on this wonderful event with fond memories, even as children are now creating these memories for themselves. This event represents an iconic part of the holiday season in Los Gatos, as it continues to dazzle attendees even after 20 years. (Sources: County of Santa Clara)



DRIVE BY: A bright sign welcomes visitors as they drive into Vasona Park.

The event does generate a lot of traffic around the park. The drive is open from 6 to 10PM and runs from Nov. 21 to Dec. 30. During these hours, there is likely traffic on Blossom Hill Road near University Avenue and any surrounding streets. The traffic is typically manageable right as the Fantasy of Lights initially opens at 6PM, yet gradually increases as the night progresses. In addition, as Christmas and other holidays draw closer, traffic during operating hours will increase. The park recommends planning extra time to account for the long wait in line, as they do not offer refunds for those who miss their time slot.

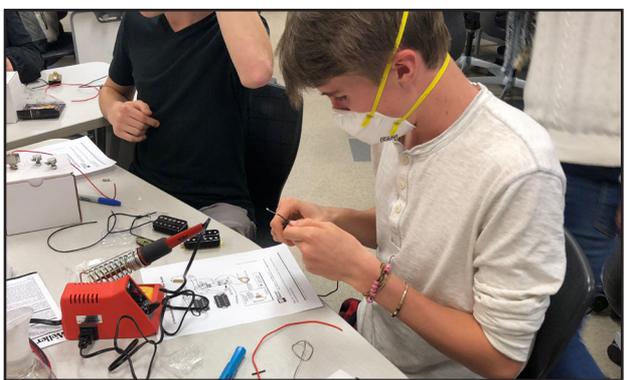


LIGHT IT UP: Festive light-up flowers offer a beautiful sight to park visitors.

## Students construct homemade guitars

by Erin Grasty and Madeline King  
Editor-in-Chief and News Editor

As a project for teacher Rachel Peters' New Tech Physics class, every year students construct some sort of homemade instrument to demonstrate their understanding of the physics behind sound waves and music. Over the summer, Peters was accepted into a STEM guitar workshop in San Francisco, where she learned how to construct an electric guitar. It was a week-long program with twelve other teachers from around the country, who discussed how to incorporate what they learned into their own classes. After the program concluded, Peters decided to offer the opportunity of building an electric guitar to her students.



IT'S ELECTRIC: Ross wears protective face gear while wiring his instrument.

At the end of October, juniors Gabe Barhydt, Peter Lagemann, Peter Ryce, Sam Ross, Collin Colson, Ava Gangi, Dominic Bernasconi, Travis Ray, Liam Hoole, and Evan Pratt signed up for Peters' course, paying a 150 dollar starting fee for materials. These students meet after school every Monday, Thursday, and occasionally during the weekend in Peters' classroom to sand, drill, and paint their instruments for hours. "The best part is how hands-on we are and just the independence," said Barhydt.



ROCK N' ROLL: Lagemann and others use various methods to decorate their guitars.

Using luthier tools, or mechanical tools specific to building a guitar, the students are building their instruments from scratch. They first shaped the body of the guitar by sanding down the wood and altered the shape of the neck using a bandsaw. "95% was sanding it, and that part was rough. But I'm really proud of it now," said Lagemann. Once the body of the guitar was the ideal size and shape, students had the option of staining, hand-painting, or swirl-painting the guitar. Swirl-painting involves priming the guitar with a white base and dipping it in a bucket of water with paint floating at the surface. The paint then sticks to the guitar, creating a colorful design.

To finish the assembly of the guitars, each of the students had to use advanced tools to put frets in the fretboard. They learned soldering and wiring techniques to perfect the internal mechanics of the instrument and ensure that sound would be amplified once the guitar was strung, tuned, and played.

Though not all of the students know how to play guitar, the experience of building their own instrument has fostered their desire to learn.

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