

El Gato

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL

Los Gatos hosts yearly holiday parade

by Hayley Strahs
News Editor

On Dec. 7, Los Gatos hosted its 68th Annual Holiday Parade through downtown. Featuring 167 different community groups, thousands of local residents set up chairs along the route to watch this beloved Bay Area tradition. Police blocked off parts of N. Santa Cruz Avenue, Main Street, and certain offshoot streets to secure the parade route and the staging area for participants.

The Los Gatos Youth Park's 2024 Youth Citizens of the Year, freshman **Olivia Bernholz**, sophomore **Grace Murray**, and juniors **Bradley Hager** and **Johann Jacob**, ceremoniously kicked off the parade, with The Boy Scouts of America Troop 539 and Grand Marshall Jim Barth following close behind. In addition, the parade doubled as a competition for local middle school and high school marching bands. Subject to the determination of the Pacific Coast Judging Association, top-scoring bands received various cash prizes and trophies.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS: Four dressed-up parade spectators smile for a picture.

Multiple organizations within the Town of Los Gatos participated in the spectacle, including the Town Council, Fire and Police Departments, and the Chamber of Commerce. Many service groups with youth offshoots also marched, including the Rotary Club, Knights of Columbus, Kiwanis, and Lions Club. In addition, the cheer team and marching band both represented LGHS during the parade. Freshman band member **Rylan Calhoun** undeniably enjoyed the parade this year, fondly remarking how "it wasn't raining during the parade for the first [time in] three years."



CHOO CHOO: The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad drives through the parade.

Nearby dance groups such as West Valley Dance Company, Los Gatos Ballet, and The Dance Company of Los Gatos performed various routines along the parade route, leaving spectacular impressions on passersby. Adding to the spectacle, the Los Gatos Rowing Club float stood out due to its large number of members and massive size. Other club sports teams from Los Gatos-Cupertino-Saratoga Girls' Fastpitch Softball, Branham Hills Girls' Softball, and Los Gatos-Saratoga Recreation Competitive Cheer also took part. New to the parade this year were carolers from Children's Musical Theater San Jose.

Groups from Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and YMCA Adventure Guides made up sixteen units, about ten percent of the parade. Former Adventure Guide and current junior **Alexis Dorn** observed, "It's super cool seeing [YMCA Adventure Guides] in the parade and remembering [my experiences]." Overall, Dorn described the parade's general essence as "spirited, happy, [and] joyful."

The parade came to a close with a visit from Santa and his sleigh. In hours succeeding the event, closed downtown streets reopened, and the town of Los Gatos was back to its normal busyness by mid-afternoon. Community participants and viewers left the parade feeling both satisfied and full of holiday cheer. (Source: LGS Recreation)

Beloved Steamer's Grillhouse closes

by Britt Melinauskas
Sports Editor

After 45 years of daily meals, celebrations, anniversaries, and lasting memories, Los Gatos's Steamer's Grillhouse at 31 University Avenue will open its doors for the final time on Dec. 24, 2024.



FINE DINING: The inside of Steamer's Grillhouse has a welcoming ambiance.

The owner of Steamer's, Paul Matulich, opened his restaurant on Aug. 17, 1979, alongside his brother and sister, Mark Matulich and Linda Matulich. Paul explained in an interview, "I was the cook, the chef, and my brother was doing the oyster bar. My sister was at a wine bar. This decision was not made lightly, and while it marks the end of an era, we want to take this moment to celebrate everything Steamer's has meant to our family and this wonderful community."

At 75 years old, Paul Matulich's physical health issues have progressed, and he is unsure whether or not he will be able to reopen another restaurant. Yet he has remained optimistic about the future possibilities of reviving Steamer's: "Maybe we'll rise again," he said. With hope for the opportunities, he has viewed similar, smaller spaces in Los Gatos that could be more practical to operate. He envisions a potential return to the local community where he may continue serving loyal customers and bring back the charm and atmosphere of Steamer's.

Matulich has received an overwhelming influx of heartfelt messages from many steadfast customers who have shared their milestones and special memories at the restaurant. For countless customers, the restaurant has been a cherished spot for meals and life's milestone celebrations. Each message is a testament to Steamer's lasting impact on their lives, reinforcing its place in their hearts as a beloved gathering spot for important events.

As Matulich explained, the primary factors behind Steamer's impending closure are the fluctuating costs driven by post-pandemic inflation and the exorbitant expenses of operating a 6,000-square-foot restaurant. He said, "You're trying to keep the prices in line but you've got costs that are spiraling." Matulich's restaurant has tried to prevent raising prices throughout times of inflation. However, prices in the last several months have needed to increase to cover Steamer's expenses. Steamer's became an LG institution because of the family environment and overall efficient and welcoming service. Nevertheless, the building lease was due for renewal by the end of 2024, at which point the terms were altered, requiring an expensive remodel and binding the Matulich family to an additional five-year commitment under the lease.

Paul, Mark, and Linda Matulich leave the monumental Steamer's Grillhouse legacy with warm words of affection: "As we prepare to say goodbye, we invite you to join us in these final weeks to celebrate the legacy of Steamer's. Together, let's raise a toast to the memories, the milestones, and the incredible journey we've shared." (Sources: FOX 2 KTVU, NBC, San Francisco Chronicle)



GRAND INVITATION: Iconic "The Grillhouse" sign characterizes its entrance.

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New fantastical bookstore prepares for the holidays

by **Kloe Adams**
Editorial Editor

A childhood dream turned reality, new bookstore Beyond Text exemplifies Tanya (Tatiana) Sedneva's passion, books. Sedneva opened Beyond Text in April 2024 after always wanting to have her own library. Beyond Text is located downtown Los Gatos on North Santa Cruz Avenue. As a kid, Sedneva loved reading but could not get her hands on enough books to fuel her love. Until recently, Beyond Text would have never been a reality; however, unfortunate lay-offs in her former field as a software developer left her questioning what she wanted to do. Running her own business seemed like an impossibility, but with the encouragement of her family, Sedneva decided to take initiative. Sedneva recalled when her son "googled an article, Ten Steps on how to Open a Bookstore, and it was a mind-blowing moment." She noted, "Help is there, you just have to ask."

Beyond Text stocks a variety of genres including bestsellers, coffee-table books, and illustrated encyclopedias. Sedneva emphasized the importance of promoting not only useful books but eclectic ones as well to ensure there is something for everyone. For her younger audiences, she makes sure to incorporate educational resources for middle schoolers, novels that are part of the high school curriculum, and fun graphic novels. In addition to books, Sedneva also sells board games that are fun for all ages. Sedneva accentuates her products through eye-catching



BOOK IN HAND: Sedneva smiles inside her shop with a book in her hands.

and whimsical displays. For the holiday season, Beyond Text features Christmas trees, bright presents, and ornaments. Most significant is a mural Sedneva created herself which features book pages and festive garland intertwined. She makes sure Beyond Text is not just a place that has books but an environment that fosters warmth and creativity.

A large part of Beyond Text is the community it promotes. Sedneva works to offer a platform for authors and creators to share their work. Through community events such as in-person games, author meetings, and artistic workshops, Sedneva provides opportunities for the community to come together and connect through shared passions. On Dec.

7, Sedneva welcomed author Ellen Kirschman to discuss and sign her new book *Call Me Carmela*. For the more artistically inclined, on Dec. 14, Sedneva is hosting a Christmas art workshop featuring food and drinks. Sedneva voiced the profound effect the community has had on Beyond Text through attending and encouraging events.

While Sedneva acknowledges that there are both ups and downs in owning a bookstore, she would not trade it for the world. "It's a dream for me. I always wanted to have a bookstore, but I was also trying to find my place in the world and people to share my love of books with. It's beautiful and I think I have done exactly that." (Source: Los Gatos)



WELCOME IN: The front of Beyond Text is decorated for the holiday time.

TOM: Yanowsky promotes his students' passions and growth

by **Nelson Kramer and Annabelle Pan**
Humor and Graphics Editors

Completing his 30th year as a teacher, **Mark Yanowsky** instructs six different courses and inspires his students in both their artistic and life journeys.

Yanowsky began his career as a social studies teacher and taught a variety of history classes but switched to instructing art after eight years. He now teaches Art 2, 3, and 4, along with Studio Art, Portfolio Development, and Multimedia Journalism. Yanowsky's art skills are "totally self-taught," but, as he said, "I got more serious about it once I started teaching it." In his spare time, he makes oil paintings on repurposed wood, creating seascapes and occasionally dinosaurs. He focuses his art on the concept of time passing and reclaiming memories.

Yanowsky majored in Modern Society and Social Thought at UCSC, and he focuses on using social theory to make change in the world, "so it [made] sense to become a teacher," he remarked. He values the idea of "teaching history in a multicultural society," which he says is still his mission, even though he now teaches art classes.

When it comes to his overall style of teaching, Yanowsky focuses on the philosophical and creative aspects of learning. His favorite aspect of being an educator is "working closely with kids to maximize their creativity and really getting into real life stuff." As a long-time



BIG SMILES: Yanowsky strikes a pose with **Osha Maloney's** art piece.

teacher, he has a lot to say about the value of education. When questioned about his own learning experience, he explained, "Education is all about keeping people motivated to learn, how you look at it differently. Whatever it is to stay motivated, stay interested because that's when you get the most learning and the most optimism in the student."

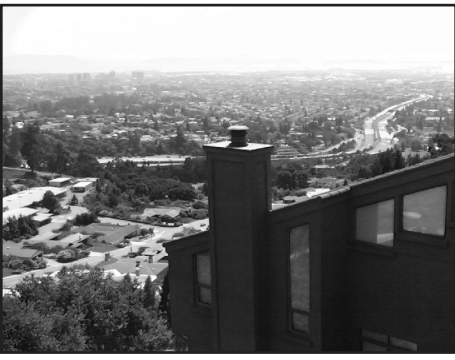
Outside of teaching, Yanowsky enjoys creating his own art, mountain biking, and surfing. His favorite component of surfing culture is that "you're sharing intense moments that can't be described, really...It's an aesthetic, physical, athletic experience... It's intergenerational, too." He also emphasized the remarkable sense of responsibility and camaraderie within the surfing community. Yanowsky described surfers as people who often feel a deep obligation to give back to both their local communities and the environment that sustains their passion, and that is why he is proud to be part of such a community.

Yanowsky's dedication to teaching, creativity, and personal growth has left a lasting impact on his students. Whether he's inspiring young artists in the classroom, riding waves in the ocean, or working on his craft, he embodies the values of lifelong learning and meaningful connection. Yanowsky's journey acts as a reminder of education's power to shape lives and the importance of staying curious, motivated, and engaged in all aspects of life.

Cybertruck causes deaths

by **Chloe Wilson**
Humor Editor

Fewer than 24 hours before Thanksgiving, three people were killed in a Tesla Cybertruck crash. Although four people were in the car, only one victim, Jordan Miller, survived and was hospitalized after a motorist nearby removed him from the vehicle. According to the hospital, Miller is in stable condition since Nov. 30.



SKYLINE: Piedmont is located near Oakland in the East Bay.

The crash took place at around 3:00 AM at Hampton Road and King Avenue in Piedmont, a small community by Oakland. Piedmont Police Chief Jeremy Bowers said that the Piedmont Police Department received an iPhone alert from a passenger in the Cybertruck about a crash. Later, dispatchers responded to a 911 call about the crash. The families of the victims identified all four people involved in the crash to be college-aged and 2023 graduates of Piedmont High School; only Miller, a student at the University of Wisconsin survived. The authorities are still determining the cause of the crash, which was a single-vehicle accident. Authorities found the Tesla crashed into a tree and surrounded with flames, as it appeared to have jumped the curb after going through the oncoming lanes.

Bowers said in a press conference that before the firefighters arrived, police tried to put out the flames with fire extinguishers. Bowers said that speed was most likely a contributing factor, but also included that officials were investigating the

location from which the adults had been driving, as well as the causes. "The investigation is going to take some time, and I don't expect answers soon," Police Captain Chris Monahan added. The vehicle, a Cybertruck, which has been recalled several times by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), will also be investigated as a contributing factor. California Highway Patrol spokesperson Adib Zeid told San Francisco Gate on Monday Dec. 2 that the CHP is probing the accident on behalf of Piedmont's police department.

The three deceased victims were identified as Soren Dixon, Jack Nelson, and Krysta Tsukahara. Dixon was a student at the University of Southern California, Nelson was a sophomore at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and Tsukahara attended the Savannah College of Art and Design.

Near Bayton, Texas, a fatal Cybertruck crash also occurred, making this the second fatal crash recorded since the vehicle has been released. The Tesla Cybertruck has received 21 complaints by various users to the NHTSA, including a stuck accelerator pedal and broken windshield wipers. The Cybertruck has been recalled six times, including on Nov. 5, because a fault in an electric inverter can cause the drive wheels to lose power. Other recalls include trim pieces that can fall off, windshield wipers that can fail, rearview camera images that don't activate immediately after shifting into reverse, and incorrect font size on instrument panel warning lights.

(Sources: AP News, SF Gate, LA Times)



CYBER DISASTER: Cybertrucks have a distinct boxy figure.

Band and Choir perform

by **Hayley Strahs and Owen Fugit**
News Editor and Editor-in-Chief

The Los Gatos High School choirs and bands performed their winter concert on Dec. 3. Multiple choir and band ensembles performed, led by directors **Maricel Riley** and **Ken Nakamoto**, respectively. The musical groups held their joint concert at the McAfee Center at Saratoga High School, where they typically perform. Five choirs performed: the freshman Concert Choir, the upperclassmen Mixed Choir, the upper-register Treble Choir, the A Cappella Club, and the lower register Tenor-Bass Choir. Each group had its own unique set of songs. Classic crowd favorites such as *Let it Snow* mixed with lesser-known songs such as *Exsultate Justi in Domino* came together to deliver an incredible performance for parents and friends alike.



HOHOHO: Mixed Choir dons Santa hats while caroling.

Singers enjoyed the performance for its creativity and holiday spirit. During the Tenor-Bass performance of Billy Joel's *The Longest Time*, three student soloists were featured, sophomore **Liam Swinnerton-Davis**, junior **Nico Deschamps-Beaume**, and junior **Joseph Soria**. The Tenor-Bass performance garnered a thunderous round of applause and set the stage for a round of stellar performances from the subsequent ensembles.

The following week, the choral department also visited RJ Fisher Middle School for a choral exchange, performing songs and talking with interested students about singing in high school. In January, the LGHS Treble Choir and 13 qualifying

choral students will perform at the All-State Honors Choir in Sacramento, followed by a spring concert later in the semester.

Symphonic Band kicked off the second half of the concert with *Rhythm Stand* by Jennifer Higdon, featuring unique rhythm patterns written in a fun swing style. Next, they played Percy Grainger's short yet mighty *Ye Banks and Braes O'Bonnie Doon* and ended their set with *Chasing Sunlight* by composer Cait Nishimura.

After a short transition, the Crescent Ensemble took the stage. As the name suggests, members in this group sit in a crescent shape across the stage. The group, entirely composed of sophomores and upperclassmen, began their set with *Focal Point* by Brian Balmages and *Neoncore* by Jennifer Jolley, both from *Suite Treats*, a collection of five band pieces. Next, they performed Yukiko Nishimura's timely *Under a Winter Sky*, which utilizes volume and speed to simulate a snowy night. Finally, Crescent Ensemble concluded with *Triumphant Fanfare* by Richard Saucedo, which sophomore **Ellenore Hammer** enjoyed because "I got to play tom drums and it was a fun part [to play]."

Finally, the auditioned group, Wind Ensemble, performed their two pieces: *Diamond Tide* by Viet Cuong and the world premiere of *Kingdom* by Ben Horne. Junior **Haley Wong** described the concert as "hectic, loud, super high energy", ending the semester on a powerful note for all involved.



SOUND CHECK: The band prepares for their performance.

The demand for more softball fields in LG grows

by Katie Nelson

Center Editor

Many of us have spent weekends at the baseball fields in Los Gatos, watching siblings with our snack shack goodies or playing in recreational or competitive games. From Little League for young kids to competitive softball club teams for high schoolers, these sports are part of a Los Gatos childhood for a lot of teens. However, for a long time, there has been a disparity regarding the distribution of space for softball and baseball, something that parents and local softball groups are hoping to change soon.

The Inventory of Public Facilities detailed that Los Gatos Little League almost always occupies both Balzer and Blossom Hill baseball fields for an annual fee of a thousand dollars, leaving little availability for other activities, including softball. According to the town record, at Blossom Hill Park, the Little League books the field Monday through Sunday until dusk every day during the spring season and sometimes during the fall season as well. Thus, Little League holds a complete monopoly over these fields, as they reserve them for nearly all daylight hours almost year round. LGCS Fastpitch Softball League also collaborates with local elementary, middle,

and high schools for more field space, but similarly, Little League often exercises control of them as well. Senior **Addison Sorto**, a Los Gatos High School softball player, explained how she has noticed the lack of space throughout her softball career: "Since I was eight, I have noticed far more baseball fields in this town than softball fields" and also explained that her practices "would be cut shorter because we would need to share the field with other teams."

Due to the way in which the town has allocated much of the field time to Little League and the lack of alternative fields, there is a shortage of space for girls' softball. Some parents have argued that the disparity of field space for softball and baseball violates Title IX, which prohibits exclusion or denial of benefits on the basis of sex for any interscholastic, intercollegiate, or intramural athletics.

While Little League is entitled to reserve these times for the baseball fields, many parents have argued for an equal number of softball fields in this town to allow for greater amount of field availability. Slight differences of the field shape and size exist between the sports, prompting people to create fields that can accommodate both games. Yet, this is not always the case in Los Gatos, as

Balzer, Baggerly, and multiple school fields are set up exclusively for baseball.

The Los Gatos Little League website states that the league is not exclusively male. However, the almost all-male environment and the lack of future opportunities for women playing baseball makes it a less ideal option for girls in the area. Although girls have the choice to play Little League, when it comes to a collegiate or professional career, softball is the only option. Thus, the lack of softball facilities in Los Gatos makes it more difficult for female athletes to obtain athletic scholarships than male athletes for baseball.

The shortage of field space has inspired the community to request new softball fields to give girls equal opportunities. While parents and softball leagues have made significant progress by raising awareness, there is still room to improvement. Currently, plans for new fields have been proposed in the LGUSD facility updates of Measure CC. If the board fails to approve the grant in the next few months, a group of parents plans to file a lawsuit under Title IX.

Sorto described how when she was younger, her cousins argued that softball wasn't a sport, backing up their claim with the fact that there were never

fields close to home that they could come watch her play. She concluded, "I truly hope that no girls ever get told that the sport they play isn't a real sport and continue to play because they love it. More fields in this town is a must so girls can have the option to practice when they want to."



GET READY: LGHS softball team practices on campus.

Green Team helps Earth

by Ainsley Northrop

Editor-in-Chief

In its first year as a peer-to-peer group, LGHS' revamped Green Team aims to encourage student and community awareness and involvement in environmental protection. Whether bringing trees into the Los Gatos community, educating underclassmen, or advocating for the environment within the district and city council, this 16-person, student-led group promotes environmental sustainability at every chance.



courtesy K. Cherlopalle

FOUNTAIN: Members urge students to refill water bottles.

Led by LGHS seniors and co-coordinators **Mina Nakamura** and **Kyra Cherlopalle** alongside their advisor, AP Environmental Science and Biology teacher **Amelia DeLaPaz**, the Green Team made the switch from Environmental Outreach Club to a peer-to-peer group at the beginning of this year. Cherlopalle explained, "Becoming a peer-to-peer group was initially a suggestion from Ms. DeLaPaz and [Zasu Mazzaferro]...We [wanted] to have more solid funding and be more established around campus." Now a peer-to-peer group, the Green Team is excited to have increased teacher and administrative support along with a larger platform to affect LGHS and the broader community. Cherlopalle, who has been a member since her sophomore year, reiterated, "It's a foundational year for us, and we're hoping to set up some yearly events that will help

the longevity of the group." Currently, the team meets every Tuesday during lunch to discuss environmental issues and brainstorm ways to promote local sustainability.

One of the group's largest past events is their Tree-Plenish project, where students distributed roughly 1000 fruit trees across the LG community to reduce the high school's environmental damage. Collaborating with Tree-Plenish, a non-profit, Green Team members raised funds from local businesses to give native fruit trees to community members. In the end, the students offset about 15 percent of LGHS' carbon footprint, and they are currently planning a similar event for the upcoming year.

Earlier this semester, the Green Team visited freshman biology classes to discuss sustainability and environmental consciousness. Group member **Ryan Idemoto** explained, "When you talk at the school, you're talking to students, and [they] bring what they get out of environmental awareness towards their home and towards the community... We had to figure out what we wanted to say and make it very interactive...and present stats that really hit hard...so that students wouldn't get bored." To do so, members created a ten-minute presentation for which everyone researched, created, and edited.

For next semester, the Green Team is creating an agenda to educate and involve students in the environment during Earth Week. Current ideas include hosting a Family Feud game with facts and figures to spread awareness, front lawn activities, and an educational panel on sustainability featuring LG Town Council Member and Vice Mayor Rob Moore. Cherlopalle elaborated: "It'll be a way to interact with your local government and learn about politics and environmental legislation. We're trying to cater to more people's interests, whether it's games, panels, or something else."

Come the end of spring semester, the Green Team will hold interviews for new members to replace the current seniors. Cherlopalle concluded, "My personal goal, and that of the seniors, is to set up a good foundation so this peer group can stay on campus for a long time. And eventually, everyone will know that we have a Green Team and that we actually make changes, whether that's with cafeteria utensils, speaking on the announcements, or something else."

LGHS hosts Idea Surge

by Kat Littfin

News Editor

On Nov. 14, the Home and School Club sponsored and hosted an entrepreneurship event in Los Gatos High School's library. With experienced guest speakers and the chance to win a one-thousand-dollar prize, the event was an exciting opportunity for driven students to learn more about what it takes to be an entrepreneur.



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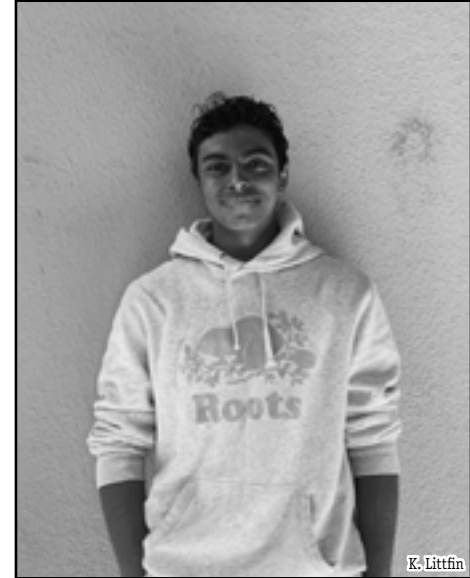
VENUE: The LGHS library is where the event took place.

The event, called Idea Surge, consisted of a conference-like discussion with three successful Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. Junior **Pravin Balasingam**, an officer of the Entrepreneurship Club at Los Gatos, explained, "They did a panel discussion...[and] had an opportunity for questions and told each of their stories. We got to kind of learn what goes on in the mind of an entrepreneur." The speakers relayed their experiences in their fields and advised the young minds of Los Gatos. Balasingam explained how the panelists advised students to "try everything at a young age...especially when you're in high school because when you get older, you don't get the opportunity to try...different things." According to Balasingam, they also discussed the importance of being open mindedness and experimenting with different concepts and ideas.

The speakers at the event included Bret Waters, Scott Kupor, and Aladdin Algaali. Based in Palo

Alto, Waters is a professor of entrepreneurship at Stanford University. He is also a published author of *The Launch Path: Getting from a Startup Idea to a Launch-Ready Venture*. The book, published in 2023, teaches eager entrepreneurs how to efficiently produce and launch their business ideas. Kupor is a managing partner at Andreessen-Horowitz, a venture capitalist company based in Menlo Park. The company has gained seven billion dollars in assets under Kupor's leadership. Algaali is a cofounder of Social Media Spheres, a social media advertising start-up based in San Jose. All speakers were well-qualified and knowledgeable about the business and entrepreneurship scenes in Silicon Valley.

One of the most enticing features of the seminar was the chance to pitch a business idea with the possibility of a one thousand dollar cash prize. Though the competition did not occur during the event, participants were encouraged to submit their business ideas after the gathering. Balasingam discussed his idea, stating that it was "an Eco management business that just kind of popped into my mind" over Thanksgiving break. This opportunity could be a big break for one of the empowered young minds of Los Gatos. As the event undoubtedly garnered plenty of different submissions, the winner of the competition will be announced within the month.



K. Littfin

QUICK SNAPSHOT: Balasingam poses for a portrait.

News-in-Brief: LG holds annual tree lighting and more

Earthquake causes tsunami warning: On Dec. 5, a 7.0 earthquake struck southern Oregon and the Northern California coast. The quake resulted in the issuing of a tsunami warning throughout Northern California that the county revoked a day later. The earthquake hit closest in Humboldt county, about 350 miles north of Los Gatos. Local officials report that there were no deaths in the aftermath of the quake; however, over 10,000 people are without power, and it left local businesses in shambles.

(Sources: BBC, NBC)

- **Jane Wilde**, Public Relations Manager

Coup de Thai faces controversy: Recently, local restaurant Coup de Thai gained unwanted attention when Dr. Harjasleen Walia had a dangerous accident. Walia, a doctor working in San Jose, ordered the restaurant's Dragon Balls, a spicy fried chicken appetizer, and suffered damaging injuries due to the spice of the dish. Walia claims that the Dragon Balls scorched her vocal chords, esophagus, and the inside of her right nostril. In July of last year, Walia sued Coup de Thai for her injuries, seeking compensation for her medical expenses and lost income. In

court, Dr. Kelly Johnson-Arbor discredited Walia's claims that the dish was the sole reason for the injury. Johnson-Arbor stated that the spices in the dish "are not associated with permanent tissue damage." Since the court case, Coup de Thai has continued in full service in Los Gatos and has shown no signs of closure. (Source: SiliconValley.com)

- **Kayla Mitchell**, Media Production Editor

LG holds annual treelighting: On Dec. 6, Los Gatos held one of their most famous holiday traditions, the tree lighting ceremony in the heart of downtown. While lighting the tree is the star of the show, other activities took place at the Town Plaza. Among these activities were a performance by the Fisher Middle School chamber orchestra, a light performance, and story walk. After the tree lighting, the Fisher choir performed, followed by a surprise visit from Santa. This is just one of the many holiday activities Los Gatos hosts, among them being the Christmas parade, where local businesses showcase collections and both dance and choir teams perform. The tree will stay lit for a few days after Christmas. Then it will be retired until the next holiday season.

- **Sam Gruetter**, Opinion Editor



courtesy/flickr

SHINE BRIGHT: Christmas lights illuminate the path through downtown.

- President Biden pardons his son
- Authorites abandon Alaskan rescue

NATIONAL

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Gunman fatally shoots the UnitedHealthcare CEO

By Aliya Koshaliev
Media Production Editor

On Dec. 4, a masked gunman shot and killed UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson outside the Hilton Hotel in Midtown, Manhattan. Thompson was on his way to the company's investor conference when the gunman shot Thomson in the back.

As the investigation continues, the New York Police Department (NYPD), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and police departments in other states search for clues, even outside of New York. Investigators recovered ammunition from the scene with the words "delay," "deny," and "depose," written on the bullets in marker. These words may be related to "Delay, Deny, Defend," a title of a book that censures the ways in which health insurance companies avoid paying patient claims.

As of Dec. 9, the NYPD knows that the shooter arrived in Manhattan ten days before the shooting, arriving on a bus from the southern part of the city, and checked into the HI New York City Hostel. On the day of the shooting, the suspect left the hostel at 5:41 AM. Around 11 minutes later, surveillance footage captured him walking back and forth in front of the New York Hilton Midtown, wearing a distinctive backpack. The gunman shot Thompson near

the side of the hotel at 6:44 AM by approaching him from behind and firing at least three shots with what police think is a pistol with a silencer. NYPD Chief of Detectives Joseph Kenny said, "We're not confirming it's that kind of gun. It could be similar in size and stature, but that also could be a large-caliber handgun."

As Thompson fell and crumpled against the wall, the shooter slowly approached Thompson, pointing the gun at him before walking away. The shooter started to run only when he crossed the street, seemingly fleeing on foot. He then found a bicycle, and witnesses soon spotted him at Central Park. Another security camera captured the gunman exiting Central Park near the American Museum of Natural History around 6:56 AM on the bicycle, but he was missing the backpack. The last confirmed detail is that the gunman hailed a taxi and headed north to a bus terminal near the George Washington Bridge. He arrived around 7:30 AM. From that point on, authorities have no idea where the gunman could have disappeared since the station has routes that stretch to New Jersey, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

On Dec. 6, investigators discovered the backpack the shooter abandoned in Central Park. The NYPD revealed that the backpack contained Monopoly money and a jacket. On Dec. 9, police detained

Luigi Mangione after witnesses noticed he resembled the wanted poster. Police revealed he had a gun that was similar to the alleged murder weapon.

Online court documents led to Mangione being officially charged with one count of second-degree murder, second-degree possession of a forged document, and third-degree criminal possession of a weapon, along with two counts of second-degree criminal possession of a weapon.

(Sources: AP, BBC, NY Times)



SNAPSHOT: UnitedHealthcare office raises its flags to half-mast in mourning.

Coca-Cola releases A.I. ad

By Isabella Langner
People Editor

With the holidays approaching, companies have begun releasing their Christmas-themed commercials. Coca-Cola, traditionally praised for its festive and nostalgic ads, is facing backlash for its three most recent commercials. On Nov. 12, the company released a set of advertisements that paid tribute to its 1995 "Holidays are coming" campaign. This time, however, the commercials were tagged with the disclaimer: "Created by Real Magic A.I."

Each advertisement followed a similar storyline, with bright red Coca-Cola trucks driving through snowy towns at night. Polar bears, reindeer, and people peeked out from behind windows and trees to watch the trucks pass by. At the end, the screen flashed "Real Magic" under the company's name. This tagline has caused uproar across social media sites, as it directly clashed with the disclaimer at the beginning of the videos. The faces used in the videos were based on real actors with their permission, but recreated by A.I. This produced an uncanny look that spilled into the rest of the commercials. The animals and scenery appeared eerie and displeasing, leaving many viewers uncomfortable.

Consumer activists and well-known influencers have taken to social media to protest the use of A.I. in Coca-Cola's advertisements. One user, De'Von Hinton, tweeted on X: "This is legit heartbreaking. Coca-Cola has been the gold standard in branding and advertising for decades." Similarly, Alex Hirsh, animator and creator of the Disney Channel series Gravity Falls, made comments criticizing the brand for not using real artists. Youtube videos with captions shaming Coca-Cola have appeared across the platform.

Despite the controversy, Coca-Cola has stood behind its choice to use A.I. A spokesperson for the brand shared that "Coca-Cola company has celebrated a long history of capturing the magic of holidays in content, film, events, and retail activa-



LIT UP: Coca-Cola holiday ads shine bright in Milan, Italy.

tions for decades around the globe. This year, we crafted films through a collaboration of human storytellers and the power of generative A.I. Coca-Cola will always remain dedicated to creating the highest level of work at the intersection of human creativity and technology." The company was motivated to create the commercials with A.I. for multiple reasons; Pratik Thakar, the vice president of Coca-Cola and its global head of generative A.I., claimed that making advertisements this way is less expensive and takes less time. Thakar believes A.I. is better at making hyper-realistic, fantastical stories, which is why they went in that direction.

Consumers haven't had positive responses to Coca-Cola's explanation. Most see the commercials as an attempt to cut corners to make things cheaper for a multi-billion dollar company. Also, many argue that using A.I. steals the jobs of many artists and creative professionals, and to go further, that A.I. was trained on artists' work without proper credit and payment.

This response has been a familiar trend following A.I.'s injection into more creative spaces worldwide. As A.I. grows, it becomes a more significant issue in schools and workplaces.

(Sources: NBC, NY Times, USA Today)

Biden pardons his son

By Jane Wilde
Public Relations Manager

On Dec. 1, President Biden formally announced his decision to pardon his son Hunter Biden after repeatedly denying intentions to use his executive authority in the interests of his family. Biden justified this, stating, "I believe in the justice system, but as I've wrestled with this, I also believe raw politics has infected the process and led it to a miscarriage of justice. I hope Americans will understand why a father and president would come to this decision." He added that the press was trying to "break" Hunter and insisted that it must end here.

This pardon means Hunter won't be sentenced for his crimes and eliminates all possibility of jail time. Hunter Biden's planned sentencing was on Dec. 12, regarding his conviction on federal gun charges. In addition to his gun charges, Hunter Biden pleaded guilty to federal tax evasion charges in September. CNN released an emailed statement in which Hunter stated, "I will not

subject my family to more pain, more invasions of privacy, and needless embarrassment...I can spare them this, so I've decided to plead guilty." Hunter was looking at facing up to 17 years behind bars; however, the pardon applies to all offenses Hunter committed from Jan.1, 2014, to Dec.1, 2024.

The federal gun charges were a result of Hunter making a false statement following the purchase of a gun relating to the information required to legally own a license for a gun. Additionally, he was charged with possession of a gun by someone who unlawfully used controlled substances. Hunter pleaded guilty to nine federal tax offenses as a result of a four-year scheme he engaged in which he didn't pay 1.4 million dollars in federal taxes from 2016 to 2019. In 2018, he filed false returns which eventually led to his court hearing.

Hunter has an extensive history of substance abuse that he is open about with the public. In 2021, Hunter released a memoir called Beautiful Things detailing his use crack cocaine "every 20 minutes." Biden referenced his son's long history of addiction in his public statement regarding the pardon, similar to Hunter's defense team who argued that Hunter was not using drugs at the time of license purchasing. The prosecutor, on the other hand, claimed Hunter Biden was an addict at the time of purchase and unlawfully abused the protocols of class A misdemeanor laws.

Biden pardoned his son just two months before Trump's return to the White House. Trump responded to Biden's decision with a social media post stating, "Such an abuse and miscarriage of justice!" His post also posed a question to Biden, asking if this pardon would apply to those who stormed the capital on Jan. 6, 2021. The Trump presidential campaign expressed strong views towards the protestors' sentences, with the administration asserting that one of the first changes applied in office will be freeing the convicts.

(Sources: CBS, NY Times)



SPOTTED: President Biden visits his son after the pardon.

The US Supreme Court continues transgender health care case

By Margo Rawlings
Editor-in-Chief

On Dec. 4, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) heard arguments in a historic case regarding a Tennessee ban on transgender health care for minors. The Tennessee government enacted the ban in March 2023, provoking three families and a health care provider to challenge the new law, citing that it violated the 14th Amendment. This ban isn't the first of its kind, with about half of all states having created some level of ban on transgender-affirming care over the past four years. Following the Biden Administration's appeal, the SCOTUS case, United States v. Skrmetti, questions the ban's constitutionality, specifically whether it discriminates against people based on sex.

In hearing the case, the 6-3 conservative court seemed divided along their ideological lines; conservative justices John Roberts Jr. and Brett Kavanaugh suggested that gender-affirming care should be left to the states, and all three liberal justices upheld that the ban discriminated on the basis of sex because it allowed nontransgender minors to use the banned treatments for other reasons.

As the justices heard both arguments, they expressed various concerns with the ban and provided commentary on the case. Justice Elena Kagan questioned Tennessee lawmakers' intent behind the ban, pointing out that the new law implies that young people wanting to transition is wrong. She said, "Sounds to me like we want boys to be boys, and we want girls to be girls." Furthermore, Justice Ketanji Brown



SPEAKING UP: Protesters object to the ongoing transgender Supreme Court case.

Jackson expressed her concern that upholding the ban would essentially violate the Constitution's vow to treat all Americans equally. She noted, "I guess I'm suddenly quite worried about the role of the court questions and the constitutional allocation of authority concerns." In contrast, Justice Samuel Alito, who appeared in favor of sustaining the ban, consistently affirmed that the states should decide whether or not to prevent the use of puberty blockers and hormone therapy, not the courts. He questioned, "Wouldn't this be endless litigation based on determinations by lay judges regarding complicated medical issues?"

The decision in US v. Skrmetti, which experts expect SCOTUS to release by next summer, extends past simply gender-affirming care for youth. Although states are currently debating the most controversial types of health care, other, more commonly accepted types of health

care, may be next. Certain states suggested that they plan to limit access to contraceptives and limit vaccine requirements. Additionally, experts specified HIV care and substance treatment as future potential targets for similar bans. Meredith McNamara, an assistant professor of pediatrics at Yale, said, "We need to pay close attention to this case and how these arguments unfold because we're likely to see similar themes creep up when health care is regulated in other ways with the incoming administration."

(Sources: Reuters, Stat, USA Today, Washington Post)



POSE: The current Supreme Court takes their first official photograph.

A New York court's jury rules in Daniel Penny's favor

by Atharava Pandey
National/World Editor

Daniel Penny, a former Marine, faces a manslaughter trial after being charged with the choking death of a homeless man on a New York City subway last year. The 26-year-old faces charges of criminally negligent homicide in the death of 30-year-old Jordan Neely. Reportedly, Neely was in the subway begging for food and water when Penny grabbed him from behind and choked him down to the train floor. Several minutes of this altercation were filmed on video, becoming crucial pieces of evidence in the case. If convicted, Penny faces up to 15 years in prison. The jury began discussing the case on Dec. 3.



INNOCENT OR GUILTY: Daniel Penny walks into the courthouse.

During closing arguments on Dec. 2, the defense argued that Penny "was justified in the actions he took to protect the other

riders." Defense attorney Steven Raiser continued this argument, saying that Neely was on a collision course and that Penny did what the others could not. The defense also argued that the medical examiner's determination was inaccurate.

On the other hand, prosecutor Darfna Yoran acknowledged that while Penny may have intended to protect fellow passengers, "He just didn't recognize that Jordan Neely's life too needed to be preserved." Her closing argument lasted over three hours and spanned over two days. Yoran also pointed out, "We are here today because the defendant used way too much force for way too long in way too reckless of a manner." The prosecutor's main argument was that self-defense is rarely justified but also said, "This is a hard case. It's hard to find someone guilty of a killing that they didn't intend on." Penny himself said that he was not trying to injure Neely and simply wanted to stop him from hurting anybody else.

While the jury was deliberating the case, Neely's father, Andre Zachary, filed a separate suit against Penny in the New York Supreme Court, accusing him of negligence, assault, and battery. Zachary requested a settlement "in a sum which exceeds the jurisdictional limits of all lower Courts which would otherwise have jurisdiction."

Penny's lawyer Raiser dismissed the suit as a diversion from the main case, saying, "The timing is unfortunate as Danny is awaiting a verdict from the jury where the potential consequences are far greater than any civil suit could threaten." He maintains that this was something that would not distract him, especially since Penny continues to be under immense stress.

On Dec. 9, Daniel Penny was found innocent after the jury deliberated over the case for five days. This verdict stunned many since

people believed that Penny would be convicted of at least one charge. Both sides brought up convincing arguments, but in the end, Penny became a free man.

This court case has been closely followed by New York City residents. Many of these residents have themselves had personal experiences with disorder in the subway. This court case raises broader issues that the people of New York City will be forced to address. (Sources: AP News, CNN, NBC News)



HOUSE OF LAW: A New York courthouse waits for a jury verdict.

Alaskan rescue attempts end

by Quinn Hathaway
National/World Editor

On Dec. 2, the US Coast Guard suspended the search for five Alaskans aboard a small fishing boat. The Coast Guard received a mayday call from the small boat lost off the coast of southeastern Alaska just past midnight on Sunday, Dec. 1. The vessel mysteriously disappeared in the icy waters after being bombarded with hazardous weather conditions, including waves up to six feet high, heavy snow storms, and winds reaching 60 miles per hour.



RESCUE ATTEMPTS: The Coast Guard searches for boat.

The boat, named Wind Walker, carried an estimated five people, although the passenger count has not been confirmed. The Coast Guard released a statement saying that the number "is subject to change pending new information." Names of the missing people have not been released at this time.

The Wind Walker called in to the Coast Guard's Southeast Alaska Sector at about 12:10 AM, report-

ing they were about to capsize. An emergency radio beacon located the vessel south of Point Couverden, in the midst of Alaska's Icy Strait. The sector's watchstanders' calls for more information went unanswered, and officials issued an immediate marine broadcast to deploy search parties.

The first boat to respond to the call was the AMHS Hubbard, a ferry vessel from Station Juneau. Arriving from Air Station Sitka, an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter immediately followed the Hubbard; an on-foot search and rescue crew also deployed from Juneau. The three teams began the search in the early hours of Sunday.

Dangerous weather conditions increased the difficulty of the search, as snow freezing on the water's surface often causes boats to skid and even halt entirely. Hoping to alleviate this issue, the search and rescue teams utilized the Coast Guard Cutter Healy. Petty Officer John Hightower described this tool as the largest and most advanced polar ice cutter in the US. The Healy greatly aided in the efficiency of the search mission, despite the disappointing results.

The pursuit spanned 108 nautical miles and lasted over 24 hours. While vessels discovered seven cold-water immersion suits along with two strobe lights in the search area, they did not find any signs of the overturned boat or its passengers.

Regarding the tragedy, Chief Warrant Officer James Koon, a search and rescue mission coordinator at Coast Guard Sector Southeast Alaska, commented that "[the Coast Guard] stands in sorrow and solidarity with the friends and family of the people we were not able to find over the past 24 hours. Our collective hearts are with the friends and families ... who are experiencing the effects from this loss."

As of Dec. 2, the search was hesitantly called off "pending development of new information."

(Sources: AP News, New York Times, NY Post, USA Today)

Trump selects NASA admin

by Kloe Adams
Editorial Editor

President-elect Donald Trump selected Jared Isaacman as his choice for the next administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Isaacman is the billionaire founder and CEO of the payment processing company Shift4. While Isaacman flew to space twice for commercial SpaceX missions, he has never worked with NASA or in the federal government and has little scientific experience. Trump revealed his nomination for Isaacman through social media on Dec. 4, stating, "Jared will drive NASA's mission of discovery and inspiration, paving the way for groundbreaking achievements in space science, technology, and exploration." On social media site X, Isaacman responded, "I am honored to receive President Trump's @realDonaldTrump nomination to serve as the next Administrator of NASA." Once the nomination is official, it will require Senate confirmation to go into effect.

As an administrator, Isaacman would be responsible for leading the space agency and managing its resources to advance the national vision for space exploration. If his nomination is confirmed, Isaacman will take control at a pivotal time, with key missions planned to help return people to the moon. Isaacman's nomination surprised many, as the first Trump administration did not nominate Jim Bridenstine, the 13th administrator of NASA, until more than seven months after Trump's inauguration. In addition, the incoming administration has yet to set up a transition team for NASA. In comments after a keynote at the Cislunar Security Conference, which took place a couple of hours before Trump's announcement, NASA Associate Administrator Jim Free stated that Trump's agency review team had not arrived yet at the agency or been named, but was expected to be by the end of the week.

Alongside Trump's nomination, Isaacman received significant recognition from other figures. Lori Graver, who served as Deputy Administrator of NASA during the Obama administration, endorsed the selection of Isaacman saying, "Congratulations - you are going to be terrific!" President of the Commercial Space Federation, Dave Cavossa, praised Isaacman's selection: "CSF is 'over the moon' happy to hear of the nomination of fellow commercial space advocate and friend Jared Isaacman for NASA administrator," he told SpaceNews. "At this critical time, as NASA and commercial space become inextricably linked toward the success of our nation's space program and our continued global leadership in space, I cannot imagine a better candidate for this role."

NASA's current administrator is Senator Bill Nelson, who has occupied the role since 2021. Alongside Nelson, Isaacman would be joining administrators who ranged from former astronauts, like himself, to scientists, engineers, military officials, and politicians. (Sources: NBC News, SpaceNews)



SAY CHEESE: Isaacman pauses to smile at the camera.

Police arrest stowaway for illegally boarding a flight to Paris

by Julia Valencia
People Editor

On Nov. 26, 57-year-old Svetlana Dali, a Russian citizen, boarded a flight from New York City to Paris with neither a ticket nor a passport. Upon arrival in Paris, Dali was quickly arrested.



LEGAL MATTERS: The U.S. Courthouse in East District of NY stands tall.

When Dali first arrived at Kennedy International Airport, she attempted to sneak into the security screening line, where she was turned away for not providing a boarding pass. Within ten minutes of her first try, Dali tried to get through security again, but this time, in a separate line for flight crew workers. She was able to blend in successfully with Air Europa and walk past through security. Michael Schneider, her attorney, made sure to point out that she passed "through security,

she went through the magnetometer. So there doesn't appear to be any risk that she smuggled anything onto the plane."

After waiting for an hour and a half, Dali managed to go unnoticed by gate agents and gained access to a fully booked Delta flight. For the duration of the seven-hour flight, Dali remained almost invisible to the flight crew by staying hidden in the plane's bathrooms. It was not until the flight was nearing its end when a flight attendant realized that Dali did not have a seat. When they asked Dali for her boarding pass, she was unable to produce one, which led the flight crew to call in a stowaway to the French government. French law enforcement detained Dali as soon as the Delta plane landed.

From there, she was placed back to the United States, which proved a difficult task. On Nov. 30, she was placed on a Delta flight where she was soon removed before the plane could take off. An aviation official attributed her removal to her disruptive behavior while aboard the plane. A second attempt on Dec. 3 to return her to the US on another Delta flight was at first abandoned, as Delta refused her a seat one of their planes. Reluctantly, that same evening, Delta eventually allowed her on a flight to the US.

When she arrived at federal court in Brooklyn on the afternoon of Dec. 4, she was accompanied by Schneider and a Russian interpreter. Dali appeared to be in pain as she entered the courtroom. Her attorney claimed that during the time that she was detained, Dali believed that

she was poisoned. According to the NY Times, Dali reported that she spent the night vomiting and lost consciousness while being held at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn. Schneider said, "She believes if she stays overnight at the M.D.C. again, her life will be in danger."

If the courts find Dali guilty, she will face a maximum sentence of five years in prison for "secreting aboard a vessel." Although what Dali did was a crime, she also exposed a large security issue and did so without harming others on the plane or the plane itself. (Sources: NBC, NY Times)



PREPARE FOR LANDING: Delta plane begins its descent to the ground.

- S. Korea president faces expulsion
- Georgians protest their government

WORLD

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News-in-Brief: Rebels oust President al-Assad and more

Opening of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris: The Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris had its grand reopening on Dec. 7, five and a half years after it tragically burned down in 2019. The cathedral opened up to the general public on Dec. 9, and large crowds are expected to fill the building for many months and well into the new year. 840 million euros were used in the cathedral's reconstruction, with over 340,000 donors contributing. It took around 2,000 workers to unite and keep the cathedral from collapsing as the fire left its structure in shambles. Though renovations on the exterior are not fully completed, the reopening of the cathedral remains an exciting topic for Parisians and tourists alike.

(Sources: NY Times)

- **Julia Valencia**, *People Editor*

ESA launches fake solar eclipse: On Dec. 5, the European Space Agency (ESA) launched two satellites from India in an effort to create artificial solar eclipses. The eclipses won't be visible from Earth. Instead, the satellites will capture pictures to help scientists study the sun's atmosphere. Specifically, scientists are interested in how the sun's corona, or outer layer, is hotter than the inner surface. The eclipse lasts for six hours and requires extremely precise measurements down to millimeters to ensure that the pictures come out correctly. Since solar eclipses on Earth

only last for a few minutes, ESA's new mission gives scientists extra time to study solar eclipses.

(Sources: AP, Forbes)

- **Rory Zeman**, *Media Production Editor*

China announces ban on exports to the United States: On Dec. 3, China announced a ban on raw mineral exports and technology applications to the United States. This comes one day after the Biden administration placed tighter restrictions on Chinese access to American technology. In a directive, China's Ministry of Commerce said, "In principle, the export of gallium, germanium, antimony, and superhard materials to the United States shall not be permitted," meaning that governments would immediately halt sales if they have dual and civilian uses. Manufacturers use these minerals in semiconductors, bullets, fiber optic cables, electric vehicle batteries, and more.

(Sources: CBS News, New York Times)

- **Aliya Koshaliev**, *Media Production Editor*

Violence continues between rebel groups in Syria: On Nov. 27, Syrian rebels attacked multiple cities in the country in an unexpected resurgence in violence. Most analysts believe the rebel groups, most notably Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), chose this date to attack due to their opposition's weaknesses. HTS and other groups focused on toppling Syria's Russia-backed President Bashar al-Assad since the outbreak

of the ongoing Syrian Civil War. Rebel forces seized Aleppo, as well as cities in other regions, much more quickly than anticipated. Russia's war in Ukraine, alongside the ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon, has sapped the strength of Assad's closest allies, leading to his eventual removal from the country on Dec. 8.

(Sources: NBC, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights)

- **Owen Fugit**, *Editor-in-Chief*



SAY CHEESE: Syrian president Bashar al-Assad smiles for a photo.

President Yoon faces expulsion

by **Katie Borders**

National/World Editor

On Dec. 3, Republic of Korea President Yoon Soek Yeol abruptly declared martial law in an attempt to thwart his domestic political opponents, claiming that they were anti-state and pro-North. The order sent shockwaves across South Korea, outraging both citizens and lawmakers. President Yoon's decree of martial law, a form of government where military rule is implemented and standard civil liberties such as freedom of the media and press are suspended, was the first time martial law was imposed in South Korea since a coup in 1979.

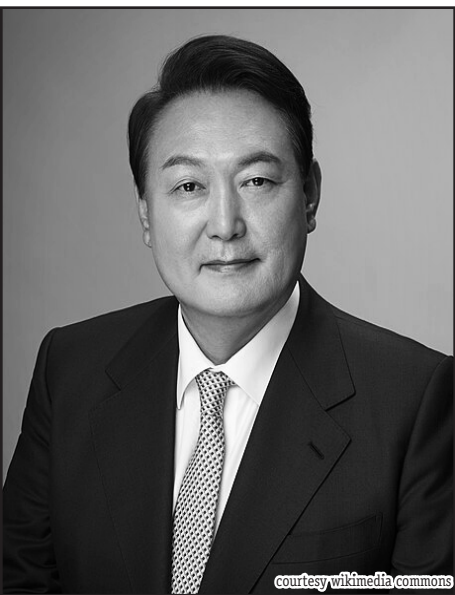
Mere hours later on Wednesday, Dec. 4, President Yoon rescinded the order after the intense backlash from the public and vehement criticism from

lawmakers, quickly pulling back his previously deployed troops sent into the National Assembly to carry out the martial law order. South Korean lawmakers, who immediately gathered to block the order with a parliamentary vote, turned their attention to calling for President Yoon's resignation. The opposition Democratic Party will swiftly begin impeachment proceedings if President Yoon does not step down. President Yoon initially called for martial law amid accusations that the Democratic Party sympathized with North Korea and engaged in other dangerous activities. Yoon backed up his decree with claims that the emergency law would root out pro-North forces and activities.

Furthermore, President Yoon's decree also sparked widespread protests and strikes across the country, in which much of the public called for Yoon's resignation under the slogan "Long Live the Republic of South Korea!" Widespread panic began when law enforcement officials told citizens that under martial law, they could be arrested without necessary warrants. President Yoon's shocking decree additionally ignited concern about the future of democracy within South Korea.

Amid the ongoing impeachment proceedings, President Yoon's political party continues to support him. An additional insurrection investigation against President Yoon was called for and Yoon's prime minister, Kim Yong-hyun, was forced to resign due to his key part in the six-hour-long mayhem that followed Yoon's order for martial law. Choi Byung-hyuk, a popular South Korean ambassador, is set to replace Yong-hyun as prime minister if the impeachment leads to conviction. President Yoon continues to fight attempts to impeach him in the face of the national chaos and threat to democracy that he has provoked.

(Sources: CNN, NBC, Reuters, Washington Post)



SMILE: South Korean president Yoon poses for a photograph.

Australia bans all social media

by **Sam Gruetter**

Opinion Editor

The topic of social media restriction has received significant publicity and attention both inside and outside of the US, with Montana being the first state to ban a social media app in 2023. On Nov. 21, Australia followed suit to a more severe degree, banning all social media platforms for citizens under the age of 16.

The Australian Senate and House of Representatives both passed the bill, with an overwhelming majority of the representatives in support and with the endorsement of the Prime Minister. The law restricts the usage of most popular social media platforms, including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X, and Instagram. The government threatens to penalize companies for not complying with the ban with a 33 million dollar fine. Australia aims to protect its nation's youth with the ban and hopes it will prevent online bullying, identity fraud, and sexual harassment. Senator Maria Kovacic described her support for the bill, saying, "The core focus of this legislation is simple: It demands that social media companies take reasonable steps to identify and remove underage users from their platforms."

Because the law is in its early stages, the government has yet to set strict implementation guidelines, as many methods for age confirmation pose threats to the users' privacy. The vagueness surrounding how the government expects companies to verify their users' age without breaching privacy agreements has led to criticism from many. Voicing the concerns of many critics and skeptics, CNN writer Hilary Whiteman observed, "It's a rushed piece of legislation driven by political maneuvering ahead of a federal election, one that could push children who flout the rules deeper into unregulated areas of the internet."

The legislation is also a double-edged sword in terms of the mental health of Australian teenagers. Supporters cite many cases where teenagers have fallen victim to sextortion traps and online bullying, leading to detrimental mental health effects and even suicide in some cases. However, the ban also deprives many teenagers of their ability to connect with others and develop online communities. Senator David Shoebridge expressed his concern about the ban, remarking, "This policy will hurt vulnerable young people the most, especially in regional communities and especially the LGBTQI community, by cutting them off."

While the ban is likely to have extreme effects on Australia's adolescent population, it is still in its infancy, leaving its long-term impact unknown. Many argue it will positively impact the country, while others fear the government passed it hastily and will result in poor and ineffective implementation.

(Sources: AP News, CNN)



PHONES: Australian teens use many social media apps.

Georgians take to the streets to protest their government

by **Rory Zeman**

Media Production Editor

Georgians took to the streets in eight different cities on Nov. 28 to protest the Georgian government's decision to postpone a prospective European Union (EU) membership. Georgia's parliament justified its hesitation, citing the EU's revolution-inciting remarks about the legitimacy of the Georgian elections this October. The European Union, which had recently categorized Georgia as an EU candidate in its admission process, didn't recognize the Georgian election as legitimate, accentuating irregularities in Georgian election security. Consequently, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze rallied the Parliament to prevent further discussion about Georgia's potential EU spot until 2028.

Immediately following the decision, thousands of protestors took to the streets of major Georgian cities, namely the capital city of Tbilisi. Protestors surrounded government buildings, threw food items at windows, and set off fireworks. The Georgian government responded harshly; police took more than 300 people prisoner, including notable protest organizers such as Nika Gvaramia. Riot-control units used cruel methods: firing tear gas, shooting water

cannons, and even clubbing protestors with batons and shields. Additionally, protest organizations have stated that torture is common for many of the incarcerated activists.



JUSTICE DEMANDED: Georgians protest EU exclusion.

The division between the Georgian people and their government began with Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008. With Russian forces occupying 20 percent of their land and Russian citizens flooding

in to avoid involvement in the Russia-Ukraine war, Georgian citizens seek to detach themselves from Russian influence. A poll by the US non-profit National Democratic Institute affirmed these sentiments, finding that around 80 percent of Georgians support greater ties with Europe and the EU. The root of many of these issues lies with the Georgian Dream Party. Bidzina Ivanishvili, a billionaire who made his fortune in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, founded the party in 2011 to engender greater Russian support in Georgia. The party has held tight control over Georgia's government since 2012 and continues implementing pro-Russian policies, including its recent decision to refrain from EU admission. The Dream Party's continual suppression of both civil liberty and pro-LGBTQ organizations is also a root cause for its unpopularity and the current protests.

Georgia's controversial decisions have drawn global attention, especially from the United States. The US State Department has continuously condemned the police brutality of the Dream Party. However, the US's main concern is potential election fraud and the obstruction of civil liberties in Georgia. State Department spokesperson Matthew

Miller stated, "We reiterate our call to the Georgian government to return to its Euro-Atlantic path, transparently investigate all parliamentary election irregularities, and repeal anti-democratic laws that limit freedoms of assembly and expression." With the protests only seeming to proliferate, there is no certainty as to how the Georgian government will respond and if Western powers may begin to intervene despite high tensions with Russia.

(Sources: BBC, CNN, NY Times, Washington Post)



HUGE PROTESTS: Georgians dispute the government.

GAMES

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- El Gato features a crossword puzzle, connections, and more!

El Gato's December 2024 Winter Games Wonderland!

Christmas Tune!

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
U														X				J							A

O O S
 K N L X V E G D G W K W L O X J W L K W M O L W W K
 A A Y S Y O S
 G U L U R W K A J G M O A O X J W

Decode the message.

Each letter in the phrase has been replaced with a random letter.
Try to decode the message.

L. Panicacci

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you find the 20 differences?



answers on instagram @elgatonews

A. Pan

CONNECTIONS

How to play: Find groups of four that all have something in common

TOYS

COUNTDOWN

PLAY

ELECTRONICS

CAROL

CHILL

TREE

SOLSTICE

CLOTHES

MONEY

SLEEP

FINALS

EVE

HOLIDAYS

MOVIE

TRAVEL

CHRISTMAS : carol, eve, movie, tree
THINGS TO DO DURING BREAK: chill, play, sleep, travel

GIFT IDEAS: electronics, clothes, money, toys
THINGS IN DEC: countdown, holidays, finals, solstice

A. Pan

N. Kramer

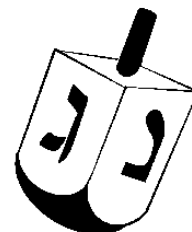
answers: 1.dreidel 2.miracle 3.thyrtim 4.gingerbread 5.jackfrost 6.circles 7.tinsel 8.solstice 9.garland 10.carrots 11.hibernation 12.grinch 13.comet 14.mistletoe 15.candles

Across

2. - What people wish for in Hallmark movies
3. - A sickly kid with a great spirit
6. - An overhead threat that comes with the cold
7. - A traditional German decoration that pairs well with a pine tree
11. - Similar to many animals in the winter, something students want to do after finals
12. - A green resident of Mount Crumpit
14. - A plant you would want to be standing under with your crush.
15. - Items traditionally used in both Hanukkah and Kwanzaa

Down

1. - Similar to a toy spinning top
4. - Sweet, baked Christmas confection often shaped into festive figures
5. - Who brings the first snow of the holiday season
8. - Shortest day, and the longest night of the year
9. - Wreath-like decoration that borders an entry-way
10. - Leave cookies for Santa and what for his Yuletide flyers
13. - An astronomical name for a reindeer



graphics F. Banno, E. Curtis

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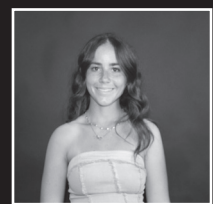
- Mindfully shop for the holidays
- YouTube revolutionized media

OPINION

EL GATO • FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2024 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONWS.COM

Rawlings calls for the US to use ranked voting federally

by Margo Rawlings
Editor-in-Chief



Due to the structure of the American political system, every four years, many Americans feel forced to settle for a Republican or Democratic candidate. The electorate often overlooks third party candidates, dismissing them because of their historically low chances of winning major elections. In fact, as races between the top two presidential candidates become increasingly close, many even discourage third party voting, concerned it will unintentionally help one of the major candidates by siphoning off votes. Having only two feasible candidates in a major election does not encompass the wide range of political beliefs held by Americans, meaning the voting process must be altered in order to represent the entire electorate. To do so, Americans should vote to employ Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for future elections, which allows voters the freedom to support any candidate without feeling they're wasting their vote.

RCV allows voters to vote for multiple politicians, ranking as many candidates as they see fit. It most commonly appears as instant runoff voting (IRV), although there are alternate forms of

RCV. With IRV, voters may list all running candidates on their ballot and then rank all chosen candidates based on their preferences. In the initial count, if one candidate wins 50 percent of the first place votes, they will win the election, but if no one wins a majority, officials reallocate the votes. The candidate with fewest votes is removed, and all voters who chose them as their first choice are assigned to their second choice. This process continues until a candidate passes the required majority of the votes.

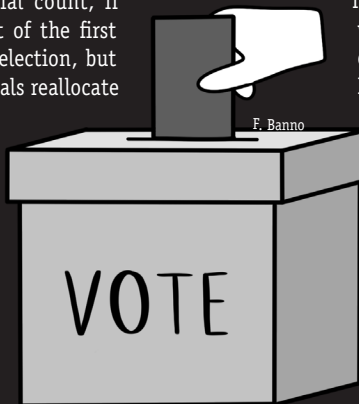
RCV also serves as an efficacious tool during presidential nominations. In Democratic primaries, it would allow votes for candidates under the 15 percent margin to have their ballot count for the next viable nominee. For example, in 2020, more than three million Americans voted for Democratic presidential candidates who dropped out before officials began counting their votes. RCV would allow those votes to be reallocated, which

guarantees that the chosen nominee is an accurate representation of the electorate. This is important because it helps increase the support for a party's candidate and ensure that all votes are considered when choosing the nominee. In the Republican primary, where candidates may win states with as low as 25 percent of the vote, RCV would require a 50 percent threshold to win, ensuring that the nominee is supported by a majority of the party. A candidate who receives less than 50 percent of the vote may not be a true representation of the electorate's views and will result in voters having to settle in later elections.

This voting system would be especially effective in swing states, where candidates win by minimal margins. In the 2024 election, no candidate received 50 percent of the vote in Michigan and Wisconsin, two states crucial to the outcome of the election. With RCV, votes for the last ranked candidate would be redistributed, creating the possibility for a different outcome that is more representative of the state's majority.

Currently, only Maine and Alaska utilize RCV in federal elections, but various US cities use the voting system for local elections. Other states such as Oregon and Nevada recently proposed RCV systems for general elections, and the issue will continue to appear on the ballot for years to come.

(Sources: NPR, NY Times, Washington Post)



Banno rejects consumerism

by Fuyu Banno
Graphics Editor



The holiday season is always bustling with shoppers across the globe, buying Christmas decorations, presents, and cozy clothing for the cold weather. At the same time, those shoppers

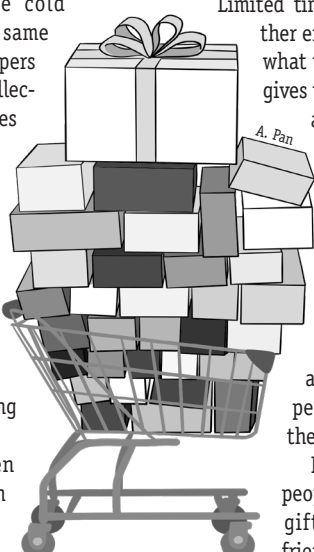
who are adding another pair of Uggs to a collection of many, or more plastic Christmas trees into their shopping carts, are also part of a not-so-festive aspect of shopping: overconsumption. Shopping has never been as wasteful as it currently is. This can be seen through the rise of influencers telling their followers what to buy and the seemingly never ending sales stores promote. Consumers should be aware of the role they are playing in overconsumption and do their part to prevent it from becoming a bigger issue.

Simply put, overconsumption is when people buy and consume more goods than necessary. Not only is buying more than necessary unhealthy for the environment, but it also undermines the value of the goods.

Influencers on social media are a part of the problem when it comes to the recent rise of overconsumption. It has become a commonplace on social media to see influencers go on enormous, almost budgetless, shopping sprees buying everything in sight. Another aspect is "aesthetic" restocks, where they fill up whole cabinets full of snacks or makeup. Not only are the influencers contributing to overconsumption by stocking up on clothes and items that would last them weeks, if not months, it further

encourages their viewers to do the same. With one person involved in overconsumption, it encourages a whole chain of people.

Producers are another significant issue when it comes to overconsumption because, in the end, it's all about how much money they make. Sales and coupons seem the easiest way companies gain profit.



Limited time sales and coupons further encourage consumers to buy what they don't need, because it gives them the illusion that they are saving money. During the winter season, the effects are larger because retail stores around America are participating in holiday deals. Black Friday and Cyber Monday deals started earlier by the year, creating a longer timespan for people to be caught up on the holiday frenzy.

For shopping addicts and people who just want to give gifts to their hundreds of friends, trying to be mindful of their part in overconsumption can be difficult. Yet, just by the choices of gifts or items one is buying can make a difference. For instance, considering the sustainability of a certain item can be a game changer and produce less waste. Let's say you buy a five dollar t-shirt that may start fraying and have to be replaced in a month. Instead, consider buying a twenty dollar shirt that can last for a year. As for gift giving, give family and friends gifts you think can last. At the end of the day, what matters most is the holiday spirit.

Bring back vinyls and CDs

by Nelson Kramer
Humor Editor



Vinyl records revolutionized the way we listen to music. The record press's invention made music easily accessible to the general public. Prior to the technology, people would have to buy the sheet music

and learn the piece themselves or attend a live performance. From a 21st-century perspective, such an effort seems impractical and archaic. Eventually, vinyl went out of style with the invention of CDs; now, of course, nearly everyone streams music digitally. In more recent times, people have revived the trend of collecting vinyl. While many keep solely to their Spotify streaming lifestyle and dismiss vinyl collecting as a hobby for snobs and overzealous audiophiles, they overlook its more profound value, which is the tangible connection and nostalgic authenticity. In an increasingly fast-paced digital world, where consumption is at an all-time high, vinyl and other analog technologies invite us to slow down, reconnect, and experience art on a deeper, more intentional level. While digital streaming is convenient, we need to recognize the full value of vinyl records.

"Overconsumer" is the one word that transversally describes the majority of people nowadays. From doom-scrolling on TikTok to buying clothes from companies that unethically source

their labor, overconsumption has become normalized in our society. In today's digital world, people consume media at rapid rates. In the case of music, people's access to millions of songs has limited their ability to appreciate the actual time, effort, and creativity that goes behind the album releases. Vinyl records provide a more engaging alternative to this habit, as they offer a more deliberate and mindful experience where listeners can genuinely engage with the music. Allowing the vinyl record experience to slow down the time it takes to appreciate the music can foster a deeper



E. Curtis

connection with the artist, and it encourages listeners to actively, rather than passively, engage with the music.

Vinyl is more than an outdated medium for listening to music. For older generations, collecting and listening to vinyl is a hobby that brings them back to a more nostalgic time. For members of the younger generation who collect vinyl, it allows them to connect to modern and classic artists who hold a sense of authenticity with their music and art. For artists, releasing vinyl may be more expensive, but it allows them to reach a generally interested audience through their art, as well as people who intentionally interact with their works.

Listening to music on digital streaming platforms is often more economically friendly than collecting physical music like vinyl or CDs. Still, if you are fortunate enough, I encourage you to try it out. Pick up something from your favorite artist, and then, who knows---maybe you'll be flipping through boxes of music with other enthusiasts. The possibilities for great inspiration through physical music are boundless.

Panicacci argues against Donald Trump's foreign tariffs

by Lucy Panicacci
Editor-in-Chief



US President-elect Donald Trump promised to sign an executive order for a 25 percent tariff on all imports from Mexico and Canada on his first day in office, as well as an additional ten percent added on to current China tariffs. As a critical part of his economic plan, Trump believes these tariffs will boost the US economy, protect manufacturing jobs, and raise tax revenue. However, US companies and consumers stand to suffer more economic detriments than reliefs from Trump's tariff plan.

Taxes on foreign imports will not strengthen domestic manufacturing. At a Wisconsin rally in September, Trump told voters that tariffs were "not going to be a cost to you; it's a cost to another country." However, foreign companies exporting the goods are not the ones who pay tariffs. Rather, the US companies importing the goods do. As a result of US companies paying tariffs on imported goods, the Federal Reserve found that US manufacturers faced higher costs for raw materials during Trump's first-term tariffs: "[Our results suggest that the tariffs have not boosted manufacturing employment or output, even as they increased producer prices." Researchers predict that the incoming tariffs will continue to raise domestic manufacturing costs due to US manufacturers' dependence

on foreign goods. Wolfe Research Center estimates that the tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada could add three thousand dollars, on average, to the price of a car.

When faced with higher manufacturing costs, US businesses will have to decide whether to eat the extra cost, increase prices for consumers, or negotiate for lower prices with exporters. Companies typically choose to increase prices on their products, meaning that American consumers will bear the cost of Trump's tariffs. The Peterson Institute for International Economics says that the incoming tariffs will increase costs by 2.6 thousand dollars per household, while other studies predict costs of up to four thousand dollars. Senior economic adviser for Capital Economics Vicky Redwood noted in her research, "If the costs are passed on, then customers face a choice: continue buying the (now more expen-



A. Pan

sive) import or switch to buying a domestic alternative (which will cost more than the import pre-tariff)." Therefore, Trump's tariffs do not stand to benefit US manufacturers or customers.

Trump's plans to economically aid the American people do not offset the negative impacts of the tariffs. Trump intends to use the revenue from the tariffs to fund his plan to cut taxes for all income levels and eliminate taxes on tips, Social Security benefits, and overtime pay. His goal to extend the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act for the next decade could cost five trillion dollars. According to Goldman Sachs, Trump's tariffs would only generate 300 billion dollars per year — a small amount in comparison to the two trillion dollars income taxes bring in annually. In order for the American people to benefit under Trump's economic policies, the increased consumer prices, due to Trump's tariffs, cause requires a significant, but unlikely, tax cut.

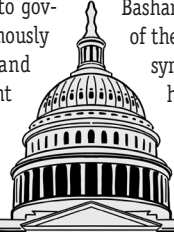
The tariffs Trump plans to enact during his presidency pose many problems, including raised consumer prices, increased inflation, and trade wars. Despite misconceptions, the current US economy holds strong with a low unemployment rate, a growing stock market, and a two percent inflation rate. Trump's tariffs leave the future of the US economy uncertain. (Sources: AP, BBC, CNBC, PBS, Wall Street Journal)

Officials need qualifications

by Kat Littfin
News Editor



On Nov. 5, 2024, Americans voted to re-elect Republican candidate Donald Trump as President of the United States. Since his election, Trump has started assembling his controversial presidential cabinet. Americans have criticized the President-elect's appointments, as many seem unqualified or radical. Trump is not the first president to appoint officials solely based on their political allegiance or affiliation. Despite the historical precedent, members of a presidential cabinet, and government officials in general, should have the appropriate qualifications and experience and be nominated regardless of their political agendas. Simply taking a United States History class will exemplify why appointing friends or underqualified individuals can be damaging. Andrew Jackson, who notably started the tradition of the "spoils system," or appointing political friends to governmental roles, had a cabinet that famously made inconsistent policy decisions and caused internal conflict. Ulysses S. Grant appointed his friend William W. Belknap as Secretary of War. Officials accused Belknap of taking bribes. Individuals also implicated Grant's personal secretary, Orville Babcock, in a corruption scandal dubbed "The Whiskey Ring," as Babcock allegedly tried to cheat the government out of tax revenue on whiskey. The historical consensus: when appointed cabinet members are underqualified, they cause scandal and negatively impact the inner workings of the government as well as Americans' faith in the it.



A. Pan

cal affiliation and allegiance, overlooking their qualifications and actions. Arguably the most controversial pick was Matt Gaetz for Attorney General. A deeply divisive figure even within the Republican party, Gaetz continues to face sex trafficking and drug use charges. A vehement Trump supporter, Gaetz especially supported the insurrection of Jan. 6, 2021, diminishing his credibility among politicians on either side of the political spectrum. Though he has government experience as a former Florida state representative, his unpopularity and legal and ethical violations led to his recent withdrawal from the nomination. Another problematic cabinet choice has been Trump's pick, Linda McMahon, for Secretary of Education. Traditionally, presidents select former teachers, superintendents, or school district leaders for the position, but McMahon has no such experience. Rather, her main experience is the business sector as a founder of the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). Furthermore, Trump chose Tulsi Gabbard as the Director of National Intelligence. Politicians have criticized this choice, as she held talks with the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, a leader often seen as an enemy of the American government. Many fear that her sympathies with enemy countries could sway her national focus.

When hiring individuals for a job anywhere in America, employers scan a list of candidates and evaluate their new employees based on qualifications. In many fields, workers are required to have prior experience, convicted criminals have a hard time finding a job, and employers aren't likely to hire someone who has values that contradict the company's mission. If emulated everywhere else in America, government officials and those who hold the most power in our country should be held to the same standard.

(Sources: History.com, CBS, The Associated Press)

Avoid negative stereotype use

Siyona Singhal
News Editor

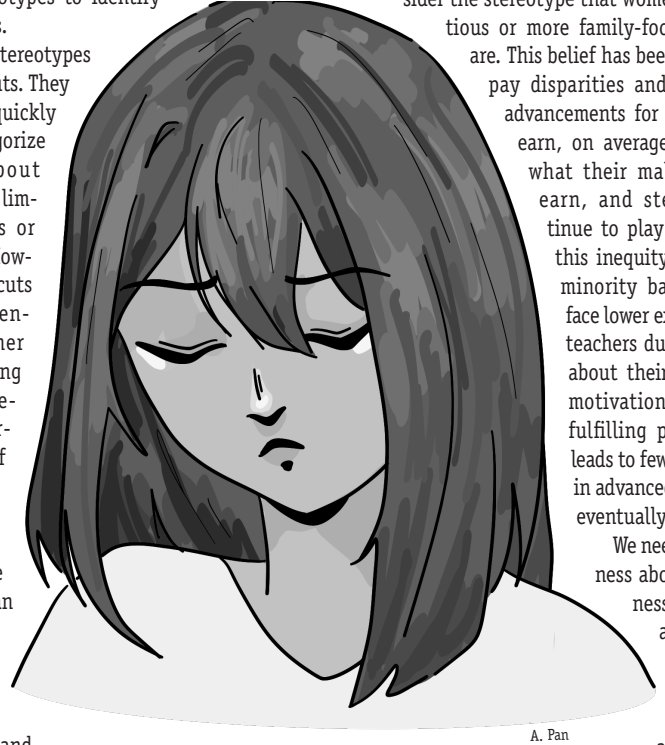


Stereotypes are everywhere. They sneak into movies, media, classrooms, and even casual conversations. On the surface, they might seem harmless—a convenient way to categorize the world—but beneath lies a far more complex and damaging reality. Stereotypes are not just reductive; they are harmful and foster prejudice, stifle individuality, and perpetuate inequality. People need to take action to avoid using stereotypes to identify people and groups.

At their core, stereotypes are mental shortcuts. They help our brains quickly process and categorize information about people based on limited observations or societal norms. However, these shortcuts often rely on generalizations rather than facts, turning people into one-dimensional characters instead of complex individuals. For instance, the stereotype that "all Asians are good at math" can seem benign—or even flattering—but they fail to account for individuality and personal experiences. Worse, such stereotypes create pressures to conform and perpetuate systems of exclusion for those who don't fit the mold.

Stereotypes feed into harmful prejudices by simplifying the world into "us vs. them" narratives. These generalizations often perpetuate false notions about entire groups, leading to fear, mistrust, and discrimination. Racial stereotypes, for example, have contributed to profiling and excessive policing of minority communities, reinforcing systemic injustices. The Pew Research Center conducted a survey in which 63% of respondents said that news about black people is often more negative than it is toward other racial or ethnic groups. Over time, these repeated biases shape societal attitudes, embedding inequality into our collective consciousness.

Stereotypes fuel inequality by reinforcing the structures that keep certain groups at a disadvantage. Consider the stereotype that women are less ambitious or more family-focused than men are. This belief has been used to justify pay disparities and limited career advancements for women. Women earn, on average, 84 percent of what their male counterparts earn, and stereotypes continue to play a major role in this inequity. Students from minority backgrounds may face lower expectations from teachers due to stereotypes about their intelligence or motivation, creating self-fulfilling prophecies. This leads to fewer opportunities in advanced education and, eventually, the workforce. We need to raise awareness about the harmfulness of stereotypes and their negative effect on society. From there, it's about challenging these assumptions and replacing them with genuine curiosity about people as individuals. (Sources: PBS)



A. Pan

Fugit believes teachers should incorporate more Youtube into schools

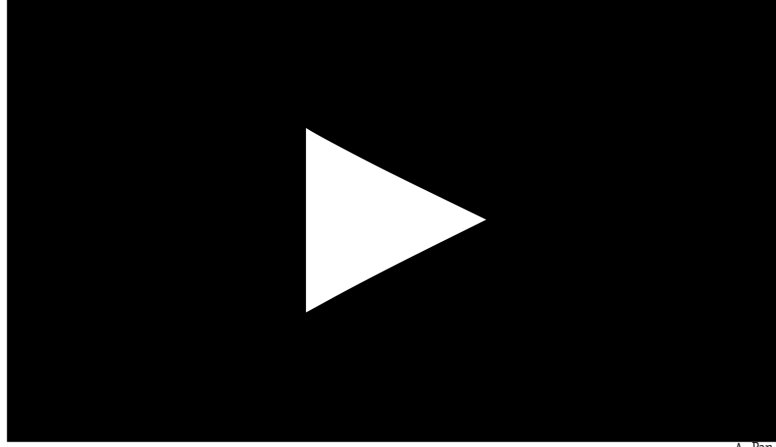
Owen Fugit
Editor-in-Chief



Few inventions in human history carry as much weight as the printing press. Prior to the printing press, highly skilled writers hand-wrote and hand-copied every book and manuscript, making reading an expensive luxury. However, after Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1440, books became cheaper and spread new ideas across the globe faster than ever before. The printing press is one of the pillars of the Renaissance and one of the first examples of modern innovation. Modern society has witnessed the creation of a second printing press, but we fail to give it the recognition it deserves. That second printing press is YouTube. It is responsible for disseminating knowledge cheaply and quickly to the masses.

While it may seem silly at first, think of the similarities. When the first books, aside from the Bible, began rolling off printing presses in Europe, many people turned up their noses in disgust, like Johannes Trithemius, who noted that "the man who ways this printing only tries to conceal his own laziness." Despite the reluctance of some to adopt the press, it caught on quickly,

and within 50 years of its invention, would see more than nine million books printed. Compare this to YouTube, which many people did not understand when the founders first released it. After fewer than 20 years, YouTube sees 720000 hours of content uploaded daily. It is estimated that



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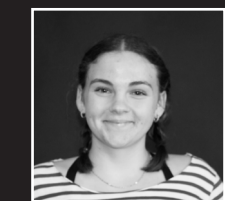
there are four billion videos on YouTube. This is far more than anyone could ever watch, similar to how the nine million books printed in the 50 years after the printing press were more than anyone could ever read.

There were almost no regulations on printing until about 1550 when the world of printing began to form the structures we still see today: printers, writers, and all the regulations they must follow. Before 1550, the various printing process steps, from writing to editing and more, fell on solo European printers. This is not too different from what we see today on YouTube, where solo creators often write, edit, and publish their own videos. However, with the rise of services such as Fiverr, video editing, which is often the most technically challenging part of any creator's process, is beginning to move from regular creators to specialists, just as printing moved from laypeople to specialized, trained printers and publishers.

I believe that students must learn how to find credible sources on sites like EBSCO or JSTOR, YouTube, and Vimeo if we want students to be prepared for the future. With the rise of AI, it is only a matter of time before books become utterly obsolete, as AI will summarize thousands of pages in seconds. To combat this, we must use new mediums, including videos and podcasts, to communicate scholarly ideas in unprecedented ways. Instead of ignoring multimedia, teachers must embrace it and balance old-world readings with new-world videos, podcasts, and images to prepare students for a lifetime of multimedia, not paperbacks. (Sources: Britannica, Everypixel Journal, Frontiers, Google Trends, History, Sage Journals, Wyzowl)

Valencia argues that GPA does not define future success

by Julia Valencia
People Editor



Has a stranger or even an employer ever come up to you and boasted about their perfect GPA or, better yet, asked about yours? At no time has this happened to me. I have never heard a successful CEO, millionaire, or celebrity make connections between the phenomenal grades they received in high school and their current success. High school grades do not matter once you enter the real world.

The public American education system is a network that does not accurately gauge how intelligent someone is. The system relies heavily on standardized testing, which prioritizes uniform benchmarks over diverse ways of thinking. These exams tend to favor a student's test taking or memorization abilities in contrast to their true potential, which becomes reduced to a single looming letter. According to the National Association of Education, the "tests have been instruments of racism and a biased system. Decades of research demonstrate that Black, Latin(o/a/x), and Native students, as well as students from some Asian groups, experience bias from standardized tests administered from early childhood through college." The tests also tend to favor high

income students, making these so-called fair tests more problematic than they initially seem.

This way of approaching teaching also harms students who do not fall into common expectations, including students with learning differences and language barriers. Someone's high school transcript only represents a sliver of their performance during a specific time period, and not a person's overall potential for future success. Grades are just snapshots of a student's academic performance, and by confining kids to a five-grade scale, students are taught that their only value is in correlation with their grade. As they emerge into young adulthood, that enforced idea becomes irrelevant and leaves them lost.

Oftentimes, companies hire for an applicant's skills over scores they obtained throughout their educational journey. "While academic performance is important, employers typically focus more on your skills, experience, and qualifications relevant to the job you are applying for," Career Village points out. Personal expertises like

Networking, critical thinking, and communication are teachable tools in a classroom setting, but they are not represented in the grades students receive. These skills are significantly more effective when developed with hands-on experiences rather than long lectures in classrooms. Real-world experiences hold more teaching value for many students, as every person has an individualized way of absorbing knowledge. Being able to adapt quickly to changing information is another proficiency that students cannot attain in a typical school environment and an ability that students develop over time. High school grades don't measure someone's learning capabilities, and a person's creative talent matters more than a report card. While grades play a role in early scholarly success like applying for colleges, they seldomly play a role in later life accomplishments. Success is ultimately defined by a person's positive contributions to the world, continuous learning, and personal growth, none of which a report card can quantify or qualify. (Sources: NAE, Career Village)

REPORT CARD	
English	A
Biology	-A
AP Euro	A
Culinary	D
Algebra 2	B

F. Banno



Seasons Greetings



greetings from El Gato! 



- Strahs discusses Pressed Juicery
- Kendrick Lamar releases new album

CULTURE

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UNIVERSAL PICTURES RELEASES ADAPTATION OF WICKED

by Nelson Kramer
Humor Editor

When Universal Pictures announced that they were adapting *Wicked*, the iconic Broadway sensation, into a live-action movie, the huge fanbase went into complete panic. After all, *Wicked* is not just any other musical—it is a cultural phenomenon, with a story about two young women who find kinship in their differences. The plot resonates with so many people; it depicts the universal struggle for connection and meaning while also being entertaining. As someone who has spent countless car rides belting out *Defying Gravity* and cried during the Broadway production, I was ecstatic to see the first takes at what would be a mere sliver of the greatness encompassed throughout the entire movie.

Visually, the film pulls out all the stops. From the shimmering streets of the Emerald City to the earthy, enchanted forests of Munchkinland, every frame feels rich and alive. The director, Jon M. Chu, said that they tried to do as little CGI as possible, planting nine-million poppies for the opening scene and building the entire large-scale Emerald City. Along with the scenery, the costume team recreated the original looks

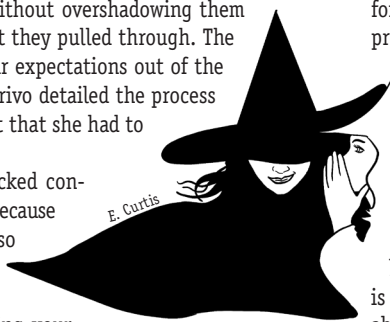
with a bit of flair, as they balanced the magical feeling of *Shizz Academy* with the sophistication of a multi-million dollar movie set. Overall, one of the biggest challenges that the production team faced was including the raw, emotional moments without overshadowing them with impressive visuals, and yet they pulled through. The star-studded cast blew all of our expectations out of the way; in an interview, Cynthia Erivo detailed the process of filming, highlighting the fact that she had to sing while doing her stunts.

The reason the story of *Wicked* connects with a diverse audience is because the audience can interpret it in so many ways, relate to so many different situations, and never lose its message about embracing your differences. In a world where being an outsider can sometimes feel like a social crime, a lot of people feel trapped in their own lives. The Broadway show and movie *Wicked* has proved itself important to the LGBTQ+ community not only because it's a musical but also because it

has an inspirational message of accepting your differences and turning them into your superpower.

Performance-wise, the star-studded cast delivers a stupendous show for two and a half hours. Cynthia Erivo, as Elphaba, provides a powerful, profoundly human portrayal of the misunderstood. Her performance anchors the movie, bringing vulnerability and fire to the role. Ariana Grande's Glinda gives the audience the fun, bubbly, and dopey character that we know and love from the Broadway musical. Grande's performance doesn't aim to outshine Erivo or the original actress Kristin Chenoweth, and yet she still delivers.

This movie was part 1, as the story ended where the Broadway show's intermission would be. The second part will be out in November of next year and promises great things. Chu said, "If movie one is about choices, movie two is about consequences." Many are excited about part two because part one provided them with the expertly done movie they had anticipated for over 12 years. Overall, *Wicked* is a smash hit in theaters, with audiences all over the country amping up to run back to the big screens when the sing-a-long version comes out. (Sources: CNN, The Hollywood Reporter, WRAL News)



Strahs details Pressed Juicery order

by Hayley Strahs
News Editor

The holiday season is upon us, prompting shops and restaurants around the country to unveil their holiday menus. Recently, beloved juice chain Pressed Juicery released their Chocolate Peppermint Sundae Freeze, launching a nationwide surge in Pressed customer traffic. With so many options to choose from, ordering at the popular juice parlor can be difficult for newcomers. To diffuse any purchase-related anxiety, I have compiled an extensive list of what Pressed products I recommend and advise against.

Greens 2 - Apple Lemon Kale Juice: Despite the hippie stereotypes surrounding green juices, Greens 2 features a tasteful blend of flavors unlikely to scare away solid food supremacists who don't see the value of savory drinks. Combining kale—a green juice staple—and the summery apples and lemons establishes a refreshing taste profile without being too earthy like many other green beverages. A perfect introduction to the juice world, Greens 2 is a drink I would absolutely recommend to anyone.

Chocolate Peppermint Sundae Freeze: The famous Chocolate Peppermint Sundae Freeze recently took the internet by storm. You should count yourself lucky if you can get a hold of it, though, since many stores run out of their chocolate freeze base quickly. However, if you can find it in stock, I highly recommend trying this delightful sweet treat. A Pressed Freeze is a dairy-free cold dessert that possesses the

consistency of an icy soft serve. With its classic holiday flavor combination and snowy texture, this freeze is perfect for those wishing to embrace the festive spirit.

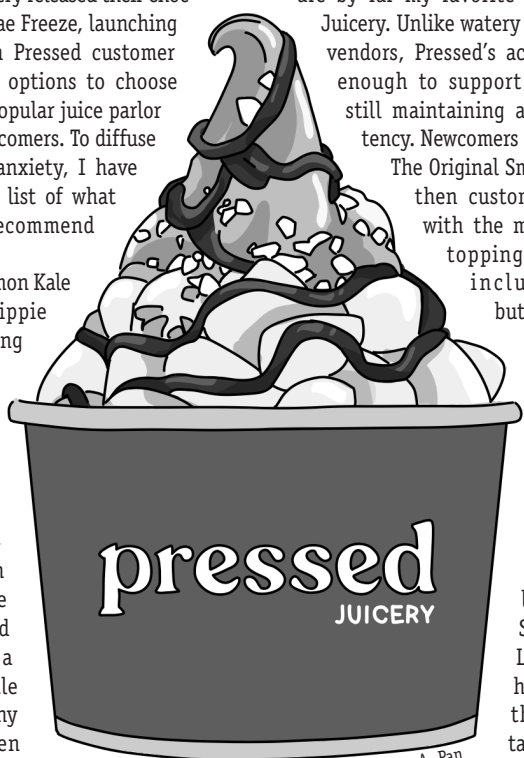
Acai Bowls: Without a doubt, acai bowls are by far my favorite item at Pressed Juicery. Unlike watery bowls from other vendors, Pressed's acai base is thick enough to support toppings while still maintaining a creamy consistency. Newcomers should start with

The Original Smoothie Bowl and then customize their order with the myriad of offered toppings and drizzles, including almond butter and agave.

Strawberry Basil Lemonade: Alas, all good things must come to an end. Unfortunately for Pressed Juicery, this end lies within their Strawberry Basil Lemonade. I had high hopes for the drink before taking the first sip.

If you enjoy strawberry seeds floating freely in your drink along with a disappointing lack of balance among flavors, you will love this concoction. Those absolutely craving lemonade should check out the Mango Turmeric version of the beverage instead of the bottled, pink let-down.

The Pressed Juicery location in downtown Los Gatos stocks all of the above items and more. So, whether you're looking to celebrate the holidays or grab a bowl for lunch, consider stopping by Pressed Juicery.



Mitchell shares holiday wishlist items

by Kayla Mitchell
Media Production Editor

While everyone knows that Christmas is really about family and giving, it's impossible to deny the excitement of opening your gifts on Christmas morning. Therefore, it's essential that by the first day of December, you have assembled your Christmas wishlist for this year's holiday. If you need help making your wishlist, here are some top gifts your loved ones are sure to love!

A gift that needs to be under your tree this season is a camera. Whether it's a Canon digital camera to capture nighttime moments or a Polaroid to give you instant prints, investing in one of these is a sound decision. Cameras are the best way to document your life and, even though parents disagree, we all know camera quality looks better than our phones. A new camera will motivate you to document your time with your family and friends while making your social media more aesthetic.

Christmas is a great time to step up your shoe game and impress your friends when you return from break. Some top choices in the past year include a comfy pair of Uggs, some stylish Adidas, or, if you're going for a more athletic look, a fresh pair of Hoka sneakers. Whether you choose Tasman Uggs, Mini Uggs, or Adidas Spezial Sambas, shoes should be at the top of your list this Christmas.

Another enticing option that has become an immensely popular gift this season is Jellycats. Ranging from small teddy bears to smiling bowls

of oatmeal, Jellycats come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Request your favorite animal or treat to decorate your bedroom and give your bed a comfy vibe. These cute stuffed animals will hold memories and provide an adorable addition to your college dorm. Ask for this gift yourself or give one to a loved one if you're looking for an affordable but endearing purchase.

If you're worried your bedroom will look bland after removing your festive Christmas decorations, ask for some new room decor to keep the sparkling spirit around all year. Maybe you have been needing fresh LED lights for your walls, a new ambiance night light, or a fancy bedspread to tie your color scheme all together. These gifts will give your room a much-needed makeover and set you up for a fresh start to the new year.

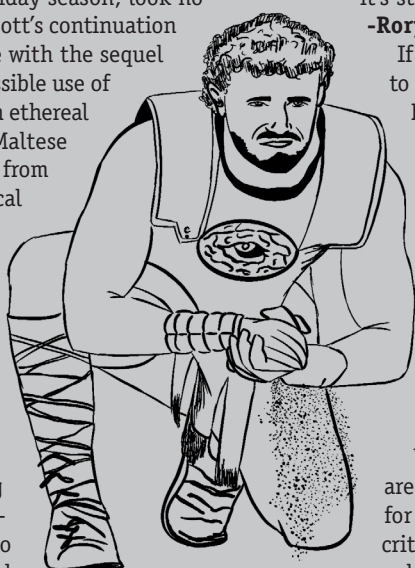
All Christmas wish lists need to have clothes on them. Christmas is an opportunity to ask your parents or family for garments that you have been

eyeing for the past couple of months. Check your carts on your shopping websites because there are definitely clothing items you have been holding out on. If you have been looking at a good quality hoodie or are in need of some basics, Christmas is a perfect time to stock up on a fresh wardrobe before the new year. Dandy Worldwide sweaters, Nike sweats, or some warm clothes for the winter are exceptional choices. Cue the end-of-the-year glow-up!



EL GATO RECOMMENDS: GLADIATOR 2, JELLYCATS, & MORE

If you're looking for a way to kill some time with your visiting relatives this holiday season, look no further. Director Ridley Scott's continuation of the *Gladiator* franchise with the sequel *Gladiator 2* is the best possible use of two and a half hours. From ethereal cinematography on the Maltese coast to passionate acting from acclaimed actors Paul Mescal and Denzel Washington, *Gladiator 2* is nothing short of a masterpiece. Adding to the film's merit, the complex plot surrounding the idealized "Roman Dream," which closely resembles the *American Dream*, makes for a captivating and, in many ways, patriotic plot. If you want to see a film franchise revived



after a 23-year grace period, then watch *Gladiator 2* while it's still on the big screen!

-Rory Zeman, Media Production Editor

If you are looking for the perfect winter drink to add to your order, try Starbucks's Peppermint Hot Chocolate. With its steaming temperature and a touch of peppermint, this drink is the ideal amount of cozy and festive. You can enjoy it at any time of the day – freezing mornings before school or rainy afternoons while doing homework. Add whipped cream and tiny chocolate curls to take this beverage to the next level of deliciousness. Order this drink on your next trip to Starbucks and you will not regret it!

-Isabella Langner, People Editor

While some may think stuffed animals are only for children, Jellycats are versatile gifts for all ages. This stuffed animal brand features creatures and critters of all sizes, from traditional teddy bears to food items such as cupcakes and croissants. Additionally, the products



encompass all aesthetics, allowing the consumer to select the color and, occasionally, the pattern of their stuffed animal. Their ability to be easily transported and put in a variety of places around the house largely contribute to their perfect giftability.

-Sam Gruetter, Opinion Editor

As winter holidays approach, the weather gets colder, and the need for a good quality hoodie increases. Dandy Worldwide was first established by siblings Kian and Mia Schank in 2021, with their goal being "to create something unique and high-quality." Dandy focuses on promoting kind messages, such as words of affirmation and messages of gratefulness. Showing off embroidered designs and gorgeous artwork, the hoodies and other apparel are a stylish addition to anyone's wardrobe. A hit with teenagers but beloved by all, any recipient of a Dandy hoodie will surely appreciate it.

-Quinn Hathaway, National/World Editor

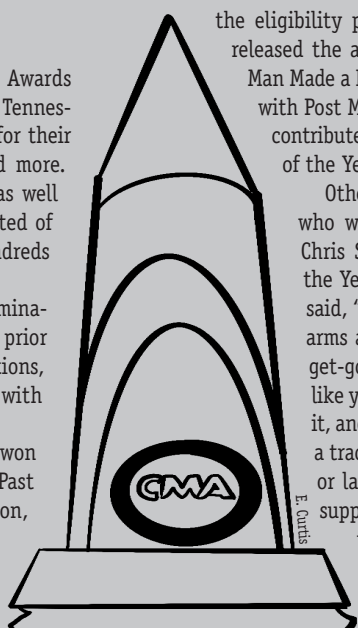
Megan Moroney, Chris Stapleton, and more receive awards at CMAs

by Megan Saul
Culture Editor

The 58th annual Country Music Association (CMA) Awards took place on Nov. 20 at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee. These awards honored country music's biggest stars for their vocals, instrumentals, songs, albums, music videos, and more. Hosted by country stars Luke Bryan and Lainey Wilson as well as former quarterback Peyton Manning, this night consisted of lively performances, bold outfits, and the assembly of hundreds of talented musicians.

Prior to the award show, the CMA released the list of nominations, which included many new and returning names from prior years. Notably, Morgan Wallen led with the most nominations, seven, followed by Cody Johnson and Chris Stapleton with five nominations each.

Although not in attendance at the award show, Wallen won the biggest award of the night, Entertainer of the Year. Past artists who have received this honor include Lainey Wilson, Luke Combs, and Eric Church. Wallen started his career in country music in 2016 with his first hit *The Way I Talk*. In 2020, he won the Best New Artist award at the CMA Awards, and his career continues to skyrocket. During



the eligibility period for this year's awards, Wallen released the album *One Thing at a Time*, the song *Man Made a Bar* with Eric Church, and collaborated with Post Malone on *I Had Some Help*. These hits contributed to the CMA's naming him Entertainer of the Year.

Other prominent winners include Wilson, who won Female Vocalist of the Year, and Chris Stapleton, who won Male Vocalist of the Year. After accepting the award, Wilson said, "Man, this community has wrapped its arms around me and lifted me up from the get-go. I've always been told that if you feel like you got a gift, you're supposed to share it, and I think that means whether you drive a tractor or pour coffee, make people smile or laugh, whatever that is, I think you're supposed to share that gift. And I just want to say thank y'all so much for letting me share mine."

Another big award of the night, New Artist of the Year, went to

Megan Moroney. The CMA predicts that the winner of this award will have future success in country music. Previous artists to win this award include Jelly Roll, Wilson, Jimmie Allen, and Wallen, all of who have gone on to have successful careers and win more awards. George Strait won the Willie Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award, named after Nelson, the first to win it in 2012. Strait said, "I want to thank the CMAs for adding my name to the incredible artists on the small list of recipients carrying the name of the icon Willie Nelson."

Many artists also took to the stage to perform. In total, groups of artists and soloists performed 20 songs. Many performers took home awards, including Moroney who performed *Am I Okay?* and Cody Johnson, the winner of Album of the Year, who performed *I'm Gonna Love You* alongside Carrie Underwood. Other performances included hits *You Look Like You Love Me* by Ella Langley and Riley Green, the winners of the Musical Event of the Year, *A Bar Song (Tipsy)* by Shaboozey, and *The Architect* by Kacey Musgraves.

This year's CMA Awards were an exciting event for many country artists and fans. If you missed watching the performances and award ceremony live, you can still stream them on Hulu. (Sources: ABC News, Billboard, CMA Awards, Parade, People, USA Today)

DISNEY RELEASES MOANA 2

by Quinn Hathaway and Fuyu Banno
National/World and Graphics Editors

The beloved Disney film *Moana* has officially received its sequel, *Moana 2*, which was released on Nov. 27. *Moana 2* features Auli'i Cravalho and Dwayne Johnson reprising their roles of Moana and Maui respectively, while also incorporating many new voices. The sequel captures the magic of the original *Moana* movie while also developing an original storyline with new music and characters.

Music is a significant part of what makes Disney films stand out, and *Moana 2* returns with a unique soundtrack that highlights Polynesian culture. The main reason behind the musical changes is a change in songwriters. Lin Manuel Miranda, the composer of all of the music for the original *Moana*, chose not to return for the second film. Disney songwriters Abigail Barlow and Emily Bear stepped in for the sequel, and as a result, the new music's vibe is fairly different from the prior soundtrack. There is a larger emphasis on incorporating Polynesian culture into the music, as seen in songs such as *Tulou Tagaloa (Sei e Va'ai Mai)*, and *Tuppupupu*, both of which prominently feature the Maori language. While there do not seem to be any songs that reach the popularity of *How Far I'll Go*, Barlow and Bear added their own particular flair and produced a solid Disney soundtrack.

Besides the change in music, *Moana 2* introduces a new lineup of characters. Unlike the

first *Moana* movie, mainly consisting of Moana's attempts to find herself through adventures alongside Maui, viewers see Moana interacting with a whole crew of various personalities. Disney expands their cast palette to include a woman in STEM, an elderly man with a passion for gardening, and a young man who worships Maui while still working on himself. This more diverse group allows for a plot less unilaterally dependent upon Moana, as the focus is distributed among a broader group.

The larger cast ultimately makes the movie more intricate and complex.

In comparison to the original *Moana*, *Moana 2* follows a similar wayfinding tale, but with less of a rushed feeling and more mature elements. Moana faces another threat to her tribe's existence and finds herself on an adventure across the tumultuous seas. While fans of the first movie still experience the adventurous ocean feel, the new peril does not invoke the same desperation as the original, and this ultimately leads to a more peaceful movie. In her journey, Moana faces new issues and persists in

the face of adversity. Moana nurtures a profound feeling of purpose, enabling her to reach new levels of wayfinding. With the introduction of a distinctive yet *Moana*-esque soundtrack and a diverse cast of characters, *Moana 2* does not disappoint as a sequel. Whether you are a die-hard *Moana* fan or just want a fun movie for the holiday season, *Moana 2* is worth the watch.

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SIWA MAKES NEW SONG

by Kat Littfin
News Editor

Ex Dance Moms dancer and self-proclaimed pop star JoJo Siwa is at it again with the release of *Iced Coffee*, her raunchy, upbeat new single. Siwa released this song amid her uncharacteristic disappearance from social media. The release has had more positive reviews than expected, leading Siwa's followers to question her recent social media break.

Siwa's mysterious disappearance occurred soon after her acceptance speech at the Industry Dance Awards, where she thanked Beyonce for her award. Thanking Beyonce became a TikTok trend for a short while, as conspiracy theorists noticed many artists, such as Adele, Lizzo, and Lady Gaga, thanking Beyonce after receiving awards for their respective genres. The day after receiving her dance award on Oct. 8, Siwa posted a video, but a few days later, fans began to notice that she wasn't posting. Commenters wrote: "Bro did Beyonce take you?" and "Almost a month. Are you ok?" When Siwa posted for the first time after her break on Nov. 22, promoting her new song with the caption, "JoJo Siwa's new song *Iced Coffee* just came out, and not gonna lie it's kinda a bop we should all go stream it," it confirmed many viewers' suspicions that she was

just fishing for attention. Since then, she has played into the idea that she is under duress, stating in her next post, "I'm not allowed to be posting right now so I'm going to get in a s***load of trouble for saying this but... this is my new song *Iced Coffee*. It's out everywhere now and you can go stream it." Her recent posts have led followers and haters alike to believe that her disappearance was a ploy to promote her music.

Siwa's actual song has received mixed attention. Some believe her lyricism is quirky and entertaining, playing on various puns related to coffee, but many find her song to be too similar to the popular song *Espresso* by Sabrina Carpenter. Furthermore, viewers of her second TikTok since her hiatus have observed that the cover art for her single heavily resembles Artificial Intelligence art. People are attacking Siwa for her use of AI art, as many in the art community heavily critique the employment of AI for commercial art, because it takes away jobs and opportunities from real artists. Though some people dislike Siwa's new song, and music listeners criticize her music career at large, *Iced Coffee* has received the most positive feedback out of all of her musical releases. Former haters commenting on one of her posts dancing to the song state, "Wait why is this song kind of a bop," and "Low-key I actually like this."

It seems as though Siwa has lived up to her promise in her 2016 song *Boomerang*, where she sang "Won't let the haters get their way. Imma come back like a boomerang!" Though many believed Siwa was gone for good during her social media break, she returned with an unexpectedly catchy hit. Despite thousands of individuals criticizing her music, Siwa has continued confidently posting both her music and her dancing to all of her platforms.



Kendrick Lamar surprise drops album GNX

by Sahil Muthukrishnan
Sports Editor

On Nov. 22, renowned American hip-hop artist Kendrick Lamar dropped *GNX*, the 17-time Grammy winner's sixth studio album. This was Lamar's first album after his split from his longtime label Top Dawg Entertainment. The album joins critically acclaimed albums like *Damn*, *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers*, and *To Pimp a Butterfly*, for which he notably won a Pulitzer prize.

Arriving more than two years after the rapper dropped his last album, *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers*, *GNX* is named after the 1987 Buick Grand National Regal and features prolific rappers and R&B artists such as Roddy Rich, SZA, and Kamasi Washington. Lamar enlisted 11-time Grammy winner Jack Antonoff to produce the project. On this 12-track album, Lamar shows his West Coast roots with highly stylized production and flow.

The album broke records early on despite no publicity beyond a one-minute teaser trailer Lamar released on YouTube 30 minutes before the drop, clearing 363 million streams on Spotify during its opening week. The album came after his highly public rap feud with Canadian rapper Drake, in which he released the hit single *Not Like Us*, which also features a West Coast style.

Critics deemed *GNX* a scrappy, ruthless album different from his previous and highly conceptual pieces like *Damn* and *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers*. While *GNX* may not have the same elevated

feel as earlier albums, songs like *Reincarnated* shine through with the rapper's trademark storytelling.

In *Reincarnated*, Lamar portrays himself as a vessel for past artists like Billie Holiday. On *TV Off*, featuring Lefty Gunplay, the rapper discusses the significant number of frauds plaguing the rap scene. Lamar and SZA's *Luther* is a standout track that combines SZA's smooth vocals, a sample of Luther Vandross's song, *If This World Were Mine*, and a vision of a more just world. The track describes concrete flowers growing, representing how the greatest people can come from the roughest conditions. Lamar's next track *Heart Pt. 6* serves as a pseudo response to Drake's *d i s s t r a c k*

under the same name. Lamar does not address Drake in the track, instead reclaiming his signature naming scheme. Other tracks such as *Gloria*, *Peekaboo* featuring AzChike, and *Squabble Up*, which reached number one on the Billboard Top 100, have been well received by fans.

GNX is a testament to timeless West Coast-style rap. By diversifying his track list even more, the album helps cement Lamar as one of the greatest rappers ever. Lamar's lyrical prowess shines on every song. The esteemed rapper has joined the Beatles and Taylor Swift in history by claiming the entire top five songs of the Billboard Top 100 list. Not only that, but Lamar also had additional tracks in the top ten. With *GNX*, Lamar has proven *Father Time* has yet to take his musical talent; he is here to stay, an exciting prospect for fans already eager for the rapper's next project. (Sources: Billboard, Rolling Stone, Yahoo)



- Pandey details his tips for winter
- Strahs proposes new NYC Ball Drop

HUMOR

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Adams shares her ultimate curly hair routine

Kloe Adams
Editorial Editor

Let me guess! You were endlessly searching TikTok, YouTube, and Pinterest for the perfect curly hair routine? Well, if you ended up here, reading this article, you failed. Who even reads El Gato? Don't worry, though; I have a curly hair routine for you! One small disclaimer before you continue: if you have sensitive skin, are allergic to cement, cannot withstand 250 degrees Fahrenheit, or are prone to suffocation, I suggest you carry on with your search elsewhere. Now, let us begin!

Washing your hair: You never want to style your hair when it's dirty. The oil and grime on your scalp will not react well to any of the products you are about to use. So, you dirty thing, hop into the shower with your favorite shampoo and conditioner and lather those luscious locks! I recommend a scalp massager for full exfoliation. Once you are finished with the cleaning stage, you are ready for the real fun to start.

Prep work: Huh? You thought you could go straight into styling your hair? Silly, of course not! First comes the moisturizing products. You will want a leave-in conditioner to really lock in moisture. Almost anything will work; you just need a lot of it. I'm talking about two or three bottles. This might seem excessive, but dry hair will only get you a date to nowhere. Next, grab your

favorite whipped cream - I prefer the Reddi Wip red version - and shoot that onto your ends. Scrunch that sweet and tasty mousse in until it isn't visible anymore. While you're at it, give yourself a shot because after all this work you deserve a sweet treat! Lastly is the curl cream. Any one will work, so dealer's choice! And don't you dare use two or three bottles; this is not a leave-in conditioner. A little dollop will do just fine!

Gel cast: You are finally ready to start styling. First off, flip over your hair so you're looking at your toes. Then, grab your favorite wet cement

and start applying it to your ends. I'm going to need you to really scrunch in that sludge so your ringlets start to form. Only when your ends are sufficiently covered in cement do you apply some to your roots.

Plop: Don't you just love the word plop? I do. Hold on, you don't know what a plop is? For short, it's when you wrap your hair up tight and let it sit. To accomplish the plop, go grab some cling wrap and wrap it around your head and pull it taut. I need those curls locked in! Leave it for about thirty minutes, and then you can remove the plastic wrap. This step might need some supervision from people who are currently breathing, but that is up to you.

Diffusing: You're almost done; just hang in there! All you need to do now is diffuse your hair. Go grab your Moroccan oil blow torch and equip it with the diffuser head. Set the heat to the highest setting for max efficiency and let it burn! Really get that torch into the roots and make sure to follow your curl pattern.

Wow. That was a wild ride, but I'm glad I got to go through it with you. If you followed the steps exactly, you should've ended up with some pretty awesome results. I hope this tutorial was useful, and I would really appreciate it if you could please like and share it with all your friends!



PAN HIGHLIGHTS BANNED PETS

by Annabelle Pan
Graphics Editor

Imagine you just dragged yourself out of bed in the morning, feeling miserable because it's way too early, but you have to go to school anyway. You open your door and see your adorable pet raccoon sitting in the hallway munching on a grape. Wouldn't that make your day so much better?

Sadly, this can only be a reality if you move to one of the sixteen states that allows you to own a raccoon. Right now, there's a random person in South Dakota with a pet raccoon that you can't have. Some people view raccoons as dirty or dangerous, but raccoons even wash their food before eating it. Isn't that just adorable? Think of all the fun you could have with a raccoon. You could eat junk food, find treasures in the dumpsters, climb trees, go swimming, or be downright nuisances together.

It doesn't stop with raccoons. Out of all 50 states, only California and Hawaii ban the ownership of ferrets. You could have an ostrich but not a ferret. You could own a nine-foot-tall ostrich that is more than two times heavier than you, but you can't have a small four-pound ferret.

Even gerbils are illegal. Gerbils could easily become an invasive species if abandoned or released. But don't fret; you can get a hamster, rat, mouse, guinea pig, or chinchilla instead. You'd think that

with all the squirrels running around, surely it must be legal to have one as a pet. Nope. It's not even legal to feed stray or wild animals, a law that everyone is definitely following.

Although you can't own a wolf, and you probably shouldn't try even if it were legal, you can own a second-generation wolf-dog, which is when the offspring of a wolf and a dog mates with another dog and has a puppy. With that kind of dog, you could leave your front door unlocked, and no one would rob you. Just make sure you don't accidentally get a real wolf. If you're not a big dog person, you could also get a hybrid cat.

Breed a domestic cat and an Asian leopard cat, and you have a new pet. Even better, California legalized all-generation hybrid cats, so you don't have to wait five generations. These legal pets seem more dangerous than the illegal ones!

Owning zebras is apparently legal in most states. California requires that you have at least two years of experience handling animals, including zebras, but other than that, feel free to bring it home. If you're still sad that you can't have a raccoon, you can get a llama or alpaca to wipe your tears on, or even a bison if you need a bigger tissue. It's a bit of an upgrade from a 20-pound raccoon to a 2,000-pound bison, but it's legal. California should seriously rethink some of these animal bans; at least make ferrets and raccoons legal pets. Just look at their cute little faces.

(Sources: WAF, The Sacramento Bee, HubPages)



PANDEY SHARES WINTER GUIDE

by Atharava Pandey
National/World Editor

As we all know, the winter season is steadily approaching. While some look forward to Christmas and festivities, others dread the short, unbearable days. However, one thing is for sure: the winter season leads to a significant decrease in productivity. In the fall, a person can easily start their homework, but in the winter, the thought of even opening Canvas can make you physically ill. Everything is harder in the winter: getting out of bed, doing homework, going to school, and maintaining your daily routine. To combat this, I have devised many foolproof techniques that will help you remain as productive as possible.

The first thing you have to do is get rid of your cozy blanket. Although this may seem impossible and downright cruel, this peculiar strategy will greatly increase the amount of work you get done. One of the main reasons why working in winter is so hard is because with the cold weather, the appeal of your bed and blanket increases dramatically. In fact, your blanket will become your arch-nemesis when you are studying for finals. To be successful, you must remove all distractions, which is why you have to take this painful measure. You must use the most uncomfortable blanket you have to make it easier to get out of bed.

The second thing you must do is wake up earlier. If you wake up at seven in the morning in the summer, you must wake up at six in the winter. During these times, your alarm clock becomes your silent tormentor, but it is

important to overcome this. Not only does this instill extreme discipline, but this also helps you maximize your day. Since the sun sets at five in the winter, you must wake up an hour earlier in order to get adequate sunlight and fit in the rest of your routine. This also means that you must go to sleep an hour earlier. If you go to bed at eleven, you must now go to bed at ten.

It is crucial to stay active and maintain fitness during the winter months. Yes, it is important to actually maintain a life outside of your room. While you may have the urge to hibernate, you must remember that movement is going to significantly improve your mood, and it will even go to help you to remain productive. Simply playing a game of pickup basketball in the morning is going to sharpen your mind and get the ideas in your head flowing.

In the colder months, each day is a struggle. Sometimes, it can be hard to remain disciplined and stick to the standards you set for yourself. In these times, it is important to reward yourself for your achievements. The winter is not all gloomy and depressing; it has many positives as well. Treat yourself with a hot beverage or a warm snack whenever you achieve something that you are proud of.

These are the strategies I use to keep myself sane in winter. Remember, if you manage to continue being productive over the winter, you will thank yourself in the spring instead of regretting what could have been. I hope you manage to implement these techniques and be your most productive self over the next few months!



Fugit details his experience on Nextdoor

by Owen Fugit
Editor-in-Chief

As a journalist, it is my solemn duty to provide the people of Los Gatos with the most current and up-to-date news. If I were a journalist back in the olden days, this would require me to actually leave my house and talk to other people. Thankfully, we don't live in such an antiquated time. We now have technology that connects us with our neighbors quickly and seamlessly so we can always be in the know when it comes to local news. The prime example of this software is the website Nextdoor.

If you have never heard of Nextdoor, let me fill you in. Imagine Twitter, but instead of politicians, news organizations, or celebrities, it's actually filled to the brim with people you don't know who live in your town and are all over the age of 50. These are the people who complain when car engines are too loud and who still do not know how to use the internet. I recently joined Nextdoor for an article I was writing, but I forgot to delete the app. Since it is the season of giving, I have decided to give you the honor of reading some of the funniest Nextdoor posts I have found in my short time on the app.

I don't know how to use my phone: These are probably the most common posts I see on Nextdoor. They range from not understanding that you can just look something up online, to not knowing about the more nuanced features offered on the internet today. As an example,

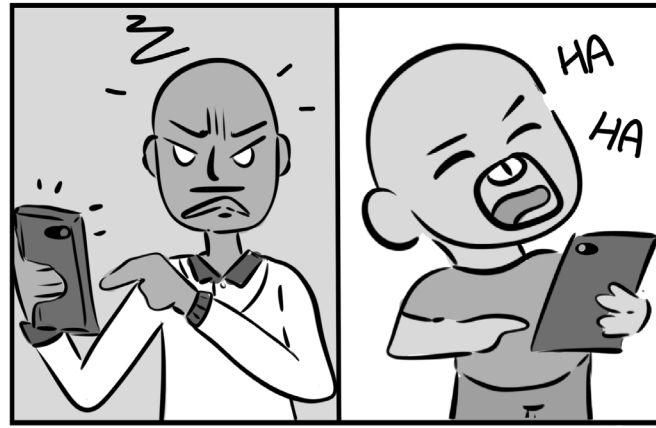
a resident wrote, "Does anyone know if Elon Musk's advertised space heater is for real or a scam?" This can be remedied with a simple Google search, revealing that Elon Musk does not have a space heater for sale. Another resident asked, "Can anybody identify this pair of birds? I think they're woodpeckers, they were pecking around" and attached a picture of two Yellow-Bellied Sapsuckers. Now, I am no birdwatcher, but if you right-click an image on Google and press the Search with Google Lens button, Google will correctly identify whatever is in the picture. Most people probably do not know about this feature, so I cannot make fun of them; however, I probably would not go to Nextdoor for bird-watching advice.

Hooligans in town: The next most common type of post on Nextdoor has to be the "who is this" genre, encompassing everything from pets to people. Often, Nextdoorers will post Ring Doorbell footage of a man in a hoodie trying and failing to break into their house and then

looking directly into the camera. Why these people go to Nextdoor instead of the police to bring these hardened criminals to justice, I will never know. However, every now and then you can find a post like

this one related to an animal. A resident reported, "Someone's pet bunny is on the loose and in our front yard...I can get fairly close to the bunny but have not tried to capture him/her yet." What I find funny about this is the apparent danger the bunny poses to the Nextdoorer. They included a picture of this rabid beast, and if you look up "bunny in a field" you will get a pretty good idea of this foul creature.

I would caution everyone to avoid Nextdoor for as long as possible. The majority of posts on there are either depressing or hilarious for the wrong reasons, and if anything important does come up, we at El Gato will write about it. So save yourselves from the porch pirates and stay off Nextdoor.



Panicacci predicts her Spotify Wrapped

by Lucy Panicacci
Editor-in-Chief

Last year's Spotify Wrapped majorly disappointed me. After a whole year of carefully curating my music, I felt excited to see my top artists and songs. However, one artist ruined it all. At some point over the summer, someone hacked into my Spotify account and proceeded to stream Lil Durk's album *Almost Healed* non-stop. By the time I found out, it was already too late. When I opened my Wrapped, Lil Durk popped up in every section. Top song: Lil Durk's *Cross the Globe* (feat. Juice WRLD). Top album: Lil Durk's *Almost Healed*. Top artist: Lil Durk. I had never heard of this scoundrel before in my life, yet I was in the top 0.5 percent of listeners with 1,746 minutes of forced captivity spent together. After blocking him on every platform, I vowed never to see or listen to Lil Durk again. While I hope that this year's *Wrapped* proves better than last's, here is a list of songs that I fear might ruin my Spotify *Wrapped* again.

Last Christmas by Wham!: I know you might wonder why a Christmas song would pop up in my Spotify *Wrapped*, but *Last Christmas* is more than a Christmas song to me. I listen to it year-round. If I'm out looking at Christmas lights or

decorating my Christmas tree, I'll be listening to *Last Christmas*. If it's 95 degrees outside and I'm driving to the beach, I'll also be blasting *Last Christmas*.

The song fits any mood or moment, transcending Christmas — though listening to this song on repeat worries me. I wouldn't want a holiday song showing up in my Spotify *Wrapped*. It would undermine the mysterious, cool girl vibe I'm going for. The same goes for Kelly Clarkson's masterpiece *Underneath the Tree*.

Karma by Jojo Siwa: I may have been obsessed with *Karma* in April. Any

chance I had, I played it, whether I was driving around with friends or sneakily queuing it on the speakers in El Gato. It's important to note that this obsession was ironic. Yet I don't know if people will understand that I listened to *Karma* jokingly when they see it as the number one song on my *Wrapped*. I'm praying that it doesn't show up.

Its Every Night Sis by Ricegum and Alissa Violet: I'm not even going to defend this one. *Its Every Night Sis* is an undeniable banger. From 2017 to now, every listen of this song still hits. I will forever have every lyric memorized. *Its Every Night Sis* on my *Wrapped* will make me a teensy bit ashamed. I wouldn't want people to know I'm still caught up on the Jake Paul and Rice Gum beef seven years later.

Any musical soundtrack: Throughout the year, I've had my moments with quite a few different musicals, including *Hamilton*, *Mean Girls*, and *The Muppets*. I would prefer for these short-lived obsessions to remain hidden. I once again believe it would mess up the music aesthetic I'm trying to maintain.

In the case that any of these tracks listed do magically happen to show up on my Spotify *Wrapped*, I will have to convince everyone that someone hacked me again. If you see me making excuses, please just go along with it.



A. Pan

Strahs proposes different New Year's ball drop

by Hayley Strahs
News Editor

2025 is fast approaching, so it's almost time for a classic, yet painfully American, New Year's tradition: tuning into ABC to watch a massive glowing orb drop a measly 0.01 miles in the middle of Times Square. While some swear by the ball drop's historic charm, I decidedly disagree. I propose that we spice things up this year and drop something else besides a boring old ball.

Nickelodeon slime: Long ago, Nickelodeon's Kids' Choice Awards was mine and millions of others' favorite annual broadcast, not the NYC Ball Drop. At first glance, these two events both feature B-List celebrities, bright lights, and viewers from across the globe. However, the Kids' Choice Awards possess something that the geriatrics in New York notably do not: large quantities of green slime. Sliming over 1,000,000 New Yorkers on live television would give at-home viewers a reason to keep watching past 12:01 AM and make for a fascinating entrance into the new year.

A really big apple: Get it? A big apple... in the Big Apple! I'm chuckling over here just thinking about it. However, the goal isn't to be funny: it's to send a message. Putting a massive apple in the Big Apple and broadcasting it for all to see can help the USA assert its dominance in New Year's traditions. Canada will cower in fear, for no amount of maple syrup can outdo an apple of such massive girth and height.

1,000,000 copies of El Gato: If you're reading this, you have the power to become a revolutionary trendsetter. Right now, hundreds

of El Gato issues sit neglected in classroom corners, longing for someone to unfold them and feast upon their knowledge. To broaden its audience, El Gato must travel to the land of newspaper prowess: New York City. What better time and place to hijack the tyranny of the NY Times than on its favorite holiday and on its home turf? Instead of their beloved Times, New Yorkers would receive a flying copy of your favorite monthly newspaper that is much cooler than a big gray ball without any articles or fun games on page 9.

Build a drop tower: Humans yearn for the thrill, and what better thrill is there than plummeting down a pole while strapped onto a state-of-the-art drop tower at the stroke of midnight? The current ball drop does not viscerally involve its viewers, but the NYC Ball Drop Tower would. Just like how humans mugged neanderthals with their superior jawlines

and intellect thousands of years ago, this drop tower would eclipse the pathetic globule on its big day.

Despite these theoretical salutes to the last 365 days, my Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 will be nowhere near as exciting. I plan to spend my New Year's consuming slime-covered apples inside a tent constructed completely out of December El Gatos, built inside of an abandoned drop tower, mourning the celebration that could have been, while regrettably rejoicing over New York's silly sphere and its uneventful fall.



A. Pan

BORDERS DESCRIBES HOLIDAY GIFT WRAPPING

by Katie Borders
National/World Editor

It's the most wonderful time of the year, and people around the world are getting into the festive spirit now that the days of December are ticking down to Dec 25. Celebrators hang up green and red lights on their Christmas trees, citizens are pulling out their ornaments and dusting off their stockings, and people are ordering rolls of wrapping paper by the hundreds. The holiday spirit is in full swing and you can almost hear the whistles and bells ringing in the cold air. However, this also means that it is time for one of the most aggravating activities of the year: gift wrapping. Don't get me wrong, I love finding gifts for family and friends and am all for the holiday spirit, but wrapping presents has always been a tedious job that I can never seem to reach even mediocrity with, much less excel at.

The process always begins the same: assemble the gift and collect the necessary materials to wrap it — grab some festively patterned wrapping paper, some scotch tape, a bow or two, and sticker labels to address who is the gift recipient and the giver. Celebrants turn on the holiday music in the background (*Last Christmas* or *Winter Wonderland* more often than not) and giddy parents pull out the hideous Christmas sweater or flannel pajama pants out of the back of the closet for this tedious activity and the family photos.

As a seasoned Christmas experiencer and part-time gift wrapper, I've taken part in wrapping gifts for years, but I must admit that I am most definitely not great at it. It sounds simple — just cut the paper, wrap it around the gift, finish it off with a piece of scotch tape and a red or green bow. However,

every time I sit down to wrap a gift myself, my folding and taping always turn out to produce an oddly shaped and crinkly box. What should be just a rectangular box or cube-shaped item suddenly appears to develop a fifth corner or ugly air bubble along its smooth surface.

Although I am not exactly a perfectionist, gift wrapping is an activity that continues to aggravate me when

I get it wrong. I want the gift that I wrap to look pretty and like there is something special inside...not like how a toddler would wrap a gift (I confess, the gift I wrap always seem to appear that way from an outsider's perspective). However, the problem does not stop at the ugliness of my wrapping job. When I try to redo the wrapping, I always run into issues in which the paper rips or the wrapping job honestly turns out worse the second time around. You can always spot my wrapping job under my Christmas tree, as the presents I wrap compared to the presents my parents and family wrap are, quite frankly, dreadful. This Christmas, I hope to gift wrap in a somewhat less abominable way. Who knows, maybe this year I'll be in luck.



F. Banno

BANNO DISCUSSES POPULAR GAME BLOCK BLAST

by Fuyu Banno
Graphics Editor

Whether you don't want to work on an unfinished essay that's due in an hour, or you are trying to find a way to pass time during an awkward family dinner, I say it's time for you to download *Block Blast*.

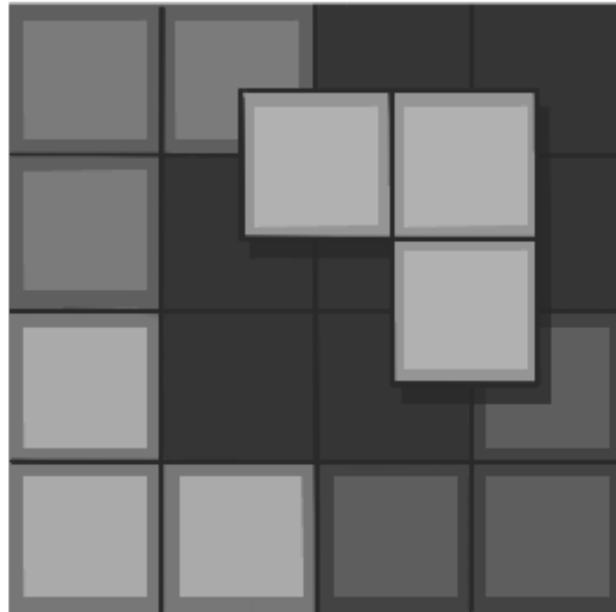
Block Blast consists of a simple eight-by-eight grid where a player is given three different pieces at a time that they must fit onto the grid. By filling a row or a column, the player destroys blocks and earns points. I guarantee you that *Block Blast* will be your new best friend. It will fill your life with color and joy. It will supply you with the dopamine needed to keep you alive and healthy. And most of all, *Block Blast* will steal away all your time.

If you have friends who are already playing *Block Blast*, you may be concerned with the seven plus hours of screen time that those friends have accumulated. But think of the game this way: what were you doing in those seven hours your friend was playing *Block Blast*? I promise you that you were not doing anything of importance. Perhaps it was adding another video to the hundreds of drafts you have saved on TikTok or maybe it was from watching a whole movie from a hundred-part Instagram Reel.

In fact, *Block Blast* is also a wonderful alternative to doom-scrolling on Instagram or TikTok. Mindlessly skimming through the videos of AI-generated animals dancing or another influencer convincing

you to buy a five hundred dollar hair dryer off of TikTok shop does not benefit you in any way possible. But *Block Blast*? With the same benefits of swiftly taking away all your time, the game helps exercise the cores of your brain. The game helps you with thinking beyond what is displayed on the screen.

Sophomore *Block Blast* player **Milli Perroud** can vouch for the miracles that the puzzle has given



F. Banno

her. She credits the game for helping her earn a good score on the Continental Math League (CML) recalling that "I got a 3 on the CML, but I was fully expecting a 0. I credit *Block Blast*, it really helps with puzzle and problem-solving."

Another fanatic of the game, sophomore **Claire Hsia** has played for two months and defended against accusations that she has a pathological relationship with the puzzle stating: "What I have with *Block Blast* is a strong, healthy, unbreakable bond and relationship. Each time I get a clear it gives me more serotonin than watching a cat video on Instagram. I would argue *Block Blast* has helped my attention span, as I can play [the game] for hours on end without growing tired."

Less time on social media, more mental benefits, and evidence of improving academic performance and attention span: the game seems to be a blessing to humankind. But in the end, it may perhaps be that the game is a wolf in sheep's clothing created to eat away time you can never get back...

- Lin demonstrates extensive knowledge
- Uhlfelder thrives during senior year

PEOPLE

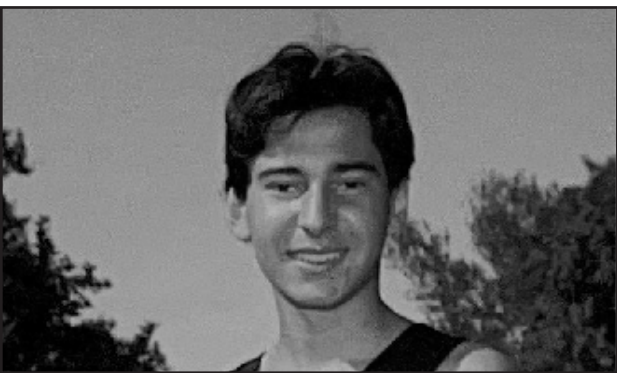
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Casal makes his mark in LGHS cross country and debate

by Claudia Casal and Fuyu Banno
Culture and Graphics Editors

From the classroom to his post-high school plans, **Alex Casal** is cruising through sophomore year. Casal pursues his many interests through his involvement in academics, cross country and track as well as his leisure activities, including pickleball and board games.

An avid history scholar, Casal tackles AP European History with ease. When asked about where his love for history stems from, Casal said, "I just think it's really fascinating to know how we've gotten



where we are, and how things came to be." He particularly finds wars a depressing yet interesting topic about which to learn. Casal hopes to increase his knowledge of history by learning more about significant geopolitical events and the yet undiscovered people who defined the past.

Outside of the classroom, Casal is involved in many prominent extracurriculars. Casal is part of two sports at LGHS: cross country, and track and field. Casal's favorite core memory from being involved in cross country was the many pasta feeds he was a part of, which ended back in November. In the upcoming track and field season in the spring, he is ready to get back into shape and enjoy the sport with his friends. Outside of sports, Casal recently became a member of the highly competitive LGHS Debate Team. As for the aspect of debate he most enjoys, he stated, "I like being able to use all of the knowledge I have, instead of just letting it sit in my head."

After high school, Casal is unsure of what he wants to do but hopes to attend a college either in New York or California to study economics, law, or political science. He envisions himself as

an environmentalist, a lawyer, or even a politician. His aspirations for politics come from his passion for understanding history and his hope that politics in the United States can improve. About becoming an environmentalist, Casal explained, "Our planet is a beautiful place, we have to take care of it."

When he is not running or studying for AP European History, you can find Casal hanging out with his friends and playing pickleball with his family. His favorite part of pickleball, he said, is "how my dad tries to play the game properly, but I just go for trick shots and I always get them. It's great." Casal is always ready to bike or run along a local trail to spend time with his friends. He also likes to play several board games, including Catan and Dominion, enjoying the strategic aspect of each new match. When asked about his life motto, Casal said, "It is all mental." There is no better example of this than Casal, as he uses his extensive knowledge to win board games and debates alike.

Whether you need a running buddy, some extra experience on AP European History, or someone to hang out with, Casal is happy to talk.



photos courtesy A. Casal

Younan shines as a multi-sport athlete

by Chloe Wilson
Humor Editor

Hardworking first-year student **Helena Younan** has leaped into freshman year both academically and socially. As a student, multi-sport athlete, and friend of many, Younan positively impacts everyone around her with her humor, kindness, and work ethic. Younan is a three-sport athlete, playing flag football, basketball, and soccer. In her free time, she likes to play video games and hang out with her loved ones.

She joined the LGHS flag football team because she "wanted to be a quarterback" and had "played it for three years before." As a skilled quarterback for the Girls' Junior Varsity (JV) Flag Football team, she helped lead her team to an 18-1 team record by the end of the season. One of her biggest accomplishments of this year so far was "beating the St. Francis team in flag football" because her best friend is on their team. A favorite memory of Younan's during flag football season was the bus ride home from the Aptos game. She explains that all of the excitement from winning made for an entertaining bus ride.



Additionally, she selected basketball because she "thinks it's really fun" and "a lot of my friends were doing it." She played basketball for several years at her middle school, St. Mary's. She now looks forward to participating on a high school level during basketball season. Another reason Younan chose basketball is because she loves being outside and active during the school year. She is currently playing on the Girls' JV Basketball team as a guard. Even though she made the decision to play basketball over soccer this school season, Younan does participate in club soccer.

Younan explained that her biggest supporters are her parents: "They always say that it's my decision, but help me make smart decisions while still letting me choose what I want to do." She said that in her time spent outside a busy schedule of sports and school, she enjoys "hanging out with friends and family, and going out to eat." Another hobby of Younan's is playing video games: "I like playing Fortnite, and I like playing Call of Duty, and I like playing Roblox." As a multi-talented and competitive student and athlete, Helena is crushing her freshman year. Younan also managed to efficiently juggle school and sports. She commented

excitedly, "Yeah, this is definitely my best school year ever. It's really fun." She is taking classes such as Art 1, French 1, and Biology. She described that she likes to learn new languages, so French 1 is an interesting class to take for her first year at LGHS.

Younan aims to be an involved, funny, and empathetic person at LGHS, always striving to bring positivity and energy to everything she does. Her determination, kindness, and sense of humor will undoubtedly inspire her peers and teachers alike. Whether it's competing in games or engaging in her classes, Younan is committed to leaving a lasting impression on those around her. As she continues her journey at LGHS, Younan's presence will be felt both in the classroom and beyond, making her a true asset to the school community.



photos courtesy H. Younan

Lin succeeds in GeoGuessr

by Ainsley Northrop
Editor-in-Chief

An expert GeoGuessr player and aspiring physician, LGHS senior **Brian Lin** rises to the top in all of his endeavors. Lin consistently brings an intense work ethic, whether diving into world cultures, designing graphics, or volunteering for the Red Cross.

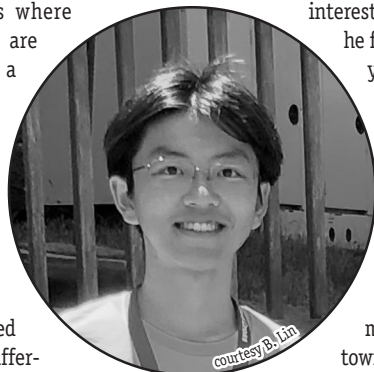
As a seasoned GeoGuessr player, Lin has visited over 100 countries without ever stepping foot in them. Now one of the top 40 players in the nation and among the top 300 in the world, Lin has found immense success. Lin began playing GeoGuessr, a game where players guess where Google Street View locations are based on their surroundings, as a sophomore when current senior **Brayden Robinson** introduced it to him. Intrigued, Lin started researching architecture, languages, plants, and landscapes to further his geographic knowledge. He described the collaborative learning in the game: "I've worked with other people who have different expertise...we all share knowledge whether it's [about] a different trash can or telephone pole." Lin pours hours into refining his craft, studying community-made guides and working with advanced players. Lin explained, "GeoGuessr [has] been a platform for me to connect with others through not only geography, but also their cultural background. I've made friends from, for example, Germany...It's been cool to learn about how things are different around the world."

When he is not building his geographical knowledge, Lin plays instrumental roles in three LGHS clubs. As co-president of the Red Cross Club, Lin searches for volunteer and leadership opportunities with the Red Cross; of particular note was the

leadership development camp he participated in this summer. During this, he learned about Red Cross opportunities and trained in CPR and first aid. In addition, this year, inspired by his at-home calisthenics, Lin joined the LGHS Climbing Club. Here, he helps organize meetings at the climbing gym, building climbing expertise through regular practice.

Furthermore, Lin applies his extensive graphic design skills as vice president of the Graphic Design Club, where he provides guidance with Adobe tools and designs in general. Lin's interest in graphic design began when he first took the class his freshman year. He explained, "I've never been really good at physical art, like drawing or painting, but using digital tools and having creative control is quite cool...I've always been interested in technologies." Lin has designed everything from Minecraft and GeoGuessr magazines to banners for the town of Los Gatos and professional work for the Santa Clara County Human Trafficking Course. Additionally, through the LGHS graphic design courses, Lin participated in competitions where students submitted work for real-world clients, one being a Dutch farm.

Outside of school, Lin enjoys spending time with friends and listening to music, specifically Vaultboy's Closer, for which he was in the top 0.001 percent of listeners this year. In the future, Lin hopes to enter the medical field as a physician and expressed particular interest in the Anatomy and Physiology course he is taking this year. Next time you see this senior, be sure to ask him about his current GeoGuessr ranking, challenging course load, or his top artist, Vaultboy.



courtesy B. Lin

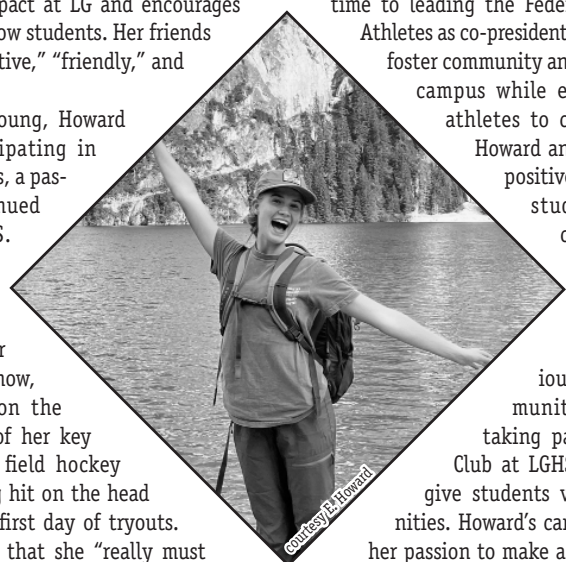
HOWARD EXCELS IN ALL EXTRACURRICULARS

by Kayla Mitchell
Media Production Editor

As a junior at Los Gatos High School, **Evelyn "Evie" Howard** is determined to be an active and involved member of her community. An athlete, a leader, and a friend to those around her, Howard makes a positive impact at LG and encourages and supports her fellow students. Her friends describe her as "positive," "friendly," and "a ball of sunshine."

Since she was young, Howard has enjoyed participating in many different sports, a passion she has continued to pursue at LGHS. Howard immediately joined the LGHS Girls' Field Hockey team her freshman year and now, as a junior, plays on the varsity roster. One of her key memories from her field hockey experience is getting hit on the head with a stick on the first day of tryouts. Howard pointed out that she "really must have loved the sport if a head injury couldn't keep [her] away." Along with field hockey, Howard also plays on the LGHS Girls' JV Soccer team. Howard began playing soccer at age five and always enjoyed competing and being on a supportive team. Inspired by her mother's track experience in high school, Howard also competes as a member of the track team at LGHS, specializing in hurdling. Howard's resolve to participate in a range of different sports demonstrates how she loves to try new things and aspires to be involved in her school's community during her high school years.

When she isn't training for one of her various athletic teams, Howard spends time focusing on



courtesy E. Howard

clubs and fundraisers at LGHS. With a role on the school's leadership committee, Howard loves to help organize and take part in the fun activities at LGHS. Following her position as spirit representative in her sophomore year, Howard now works as part of the advertising commission. She also devotes her time to leading the Federation of Christian Athletes as co-president. The FCA's goal is to foster community and faith on the LGHS campus while empowering young athletes to compete in sports. Howard and the FCA spread a positive message to other students by inviting coaches, athletes, and ministers to speak and share their journey. On top of her various acts for the community, Howard enjoys taking part in the Interact Club at LGHS, where she helps give students volunteer opportunities. Howard's care for her town and her passion to make a positive impact on any group she joins are proof of her generous and supportive character.

Aside from being a hard-working student at LGHS, Howard enjoys many outdoor activities and spending time with her family. Howard's favorite activities include backpacking and camping, especially in the Dolomites in Italy and Joshua Tree, heightened after an exciting trip this past summer. Howard explained how her "passion to encounter new activities and experiences" leads her to many fun adventures with her family and friends. Still undecided about her future, Howard is focusing on living in the moment and always being a positive influence on the people around her.

Hou dances her way through sophomore year

by Annabelle Pan
Graphics Editor

From dancing in *The Nutcracker* to playing flute in Wind Ensemble, sophomore **Darby Hou** puts her all into everything she does. At LGHS, Hou is taking many difficult classes including two honors and two APs, AP Chinese and AP European History. Outside of school, she takes a tutoring class for Chinese, private flute lessons, and ballet.

Hou is currently a level seven ballerina at Los Gatos Ballet, the second-highest level, and performs multiple roles in their upcoming *Nutcracker* show, including the soldierette doll, a Chinese dancer, and snowflake. Hou started her ballet journey when she was only three years old because, as she explained, "My mom thought ballet was a good form of exercise, and you could make friends along the way." Hou's favorite part of *The Nutcracker* is "the rehearsal process and going through learning a new dance each time with the fun music. Also, you get to do four shows of it." She likes how, in ballet, "the rules are really clear, and you don't really have to think about



anything because you know what you're working towards, and it's not very subjective."

In addition to her talent for dancing, Hou also excels in flute. Her interest in flute began in first grade when "there was a professions day where all the parents came in and one of my friend's parents came in and played the flute." Hou immediately wanted to learn how to play the flute, so her mom found a music teacher at her old ballet studio in Singapore. She joined the California Youth Symphony (CYS) in 2021 and was a member of two of their bands before stopping in 2023. She was first chair, the position for the best flute player, for one year in intro winds during the Covid lockdown and first chair flute for wind ensemble for two years in-person. In eighth grade, she applied and was accepted

into All-State Honor Band, an extremely challenging ensemble to get into. She is the second chair flutist in the Wind Ensemble band at LGHS. Hou got into Wind Ensemble as a freshman and was one of the very few in her grade to do so. Earlier this year, Wind Ensemble made a recording of a piece in which Hou played as the first chair flutist.

Aside from ballet and flute, Hou enjoys doing crafts and learning new things. She used to do archery and metal work, and she recently picked up wood carving, which she started a few weeks ago. Hou commented, "I like doing small craft stuff, just learning it and immediately forgetting it. I just search up tutorials, which is interesting." Hou also enjoys *Dungeons and Dragons* and even hosted a session as a dungeon master. She loves creative writing and authors adventurous, original plots for her friends. Hou's friends bought her a mini red dragon stuffed animal as a gift, and it became a constant companion in their classes and the symbol of the dungeon master.

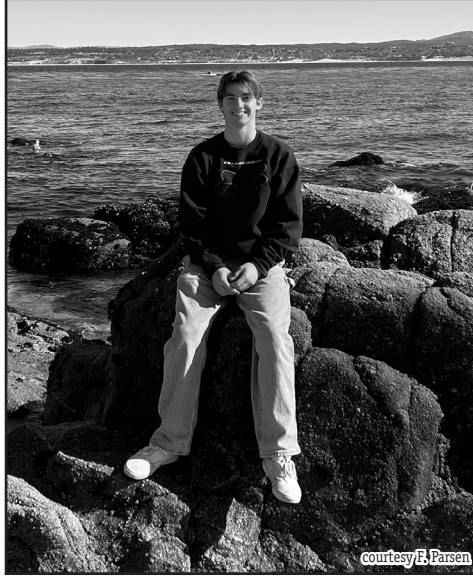


photos courtesy D. Hou

PARSEN BALANCES EXTRACURRICULARS

by Katie Nelson
Center Editor

Junior **Finnley Parsen** continues to excel as he explores his many interests at LGHS. Parsen is currently in his third season of wrestling for the school, and he explained that he first became interested in the sport because "my grandpa [and] my dad did it, so naturally I just started to take interest in it as I got to my eighth-grade year." He added that he has been doing the sport ever since, on both the high school team and club teams in the summer. The best part of wrestling at LG, he said, is "the big tournaments when I'm just with all my friends... also the surreal moment when you're wrestling one on one because there's people watching you and it's just you against the opponent



courtesy F. Parsen

business class and "getting into that kind of thing and seeing what that's all about." Parsen plans on remaining dedicated to his studies in hopes of later attending Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Outside of school, Parsen has many interests and hobbies that involve the great outdoors.

He explained, "I like to get out with my friends. Usually, I'm not a big movie or staying indoors person. I like to get out and we try to surf. I'll go biking or hunting, stuff like that. Just doing anything I can to stay active is kind of what I like to do." Parsen said that he enjoys biking in the trails near his house in the Santa Cruz mountains and surfing at Santa Cruz beaches. He elaborated that when he

surfs, he likes to "go out with my friends, and we all—even if we're not catching anything—just hang out and laugh."

Parsen also likes to hunt, saying, "You get up early in the morning and go out pretty far so you can see the sunrise. Where I go for a certain kind of hunting there's cows all over the place so I get to hang out with the cows which is really fun."

Parsen's outgoing and kind personality is reflected in his description of a perfect day, which, he said, includes spending time with friends. Parsen's enthusiasm for nature, love for wrestling, and devotion to friends and family makes him a friend to anyone.

Uhlfelder makes her last year at LGHS count

by Megan Saul
Culture Editor

Halfway through her last year of high school, senior **Kate Uhlfelder** has made an impact on LGHS that will last for years to come. Whether she's diving into her classes, snuggling with her dog Molly, or scoring goals on the lacrosse field, Uhlfelder is nothing short of extraordinary.

Uhlfelder is currently enrolled in an intense course load, including classes such as AP US Government with **Christie Pacheco** and AP Literature with **Paris DeSoto**. Although Uhlfelder enjoys these classes, her main interest in school is psychology. She shared, "I took AP Psychology last year, and it was one of my favorite classes ever. I had [**Christine**] **Chiodo** and loved her." Uhlfelder found her love for the subject through this class, resulting in her choosing psychology as her college major.

Her many activities and achievements include being President of the Big and Little Club, a club designed to pair an upper-classman with an underclassman to create bonds across grades. Uhlfelder's older sister, **Abby Uhlfelder**, was a part of and founded this club while at LGHS. Uhlfelder said, "We were in it together for one year when I was a freshman and she was a senior. It was fun because my friends got to know her friends." Before and during the club meetings, Uhlfelder plans and leads the activities. She noted, "It's great getting to see people form bonds and relationships with other people that they may have never gotten to meet."



Courtesy K. Uhlfelder

Although it is still early in the college process, as many schools haven't released their decisions yet, Uhlfelder already plans to attend Wake Forest University after being accepted during the school's early decision process. Because she had already been accepted into her top school, Uhlfelder only applied to two other schools and now is battling a case of senioritis, in her own words.

Following a years-long interest in Wake Forest attributed to raving comments from friends, Uhlfelder visited the school during the summer and fell in love with it. She explained that she loves the school for its small size, impressive sports, and sensational academics. Uhlfelder looks forward to meeting new people, experiencing college game days, and taking interesting classes about psychology.

On top of her impressive extracurricular activities, Uhlfelder also plays lacrosse. She has played for the LGHS Girls' Lacrosse Team since her sophomore year. Although unsure if she will continue playing this year, she certainly enjoys the camaraderie on the team, saying, "I love getting to see the friends I have made through [lacrosse] at practices."

With only a semester left at LGHS, her time in Los Gatos is also coming to a close as her family plans to move to Maryland, where Uhlfelder grew up, after graduation. She said, "I am going to miss Los Gatos a lot." Uhlfelder is skillfully navigating her senior year with a balance among academics, extracurriculars, and her new case of senioritis. Watch out for this soon-to-be Demon Deacon around campus!

Alejandro Chavez jumps head-first into freshman year

by Siyona Singhal
News Editor

Freshman **Alejandro Chavez** is making the most of his first year at LGHS by combining his passion for engineering, robotics, and cars with his drive to learn and grow. With an ambitious schedule packed with challenging courses and impressive extracurriculars, Chavez demonstrates a remarkable ability to balance his studies with his hobbies. Whether he is designing innovative projects in Intro to Engineering Design or learning the intricacies of Computer-Aided Design (CAD) in robotics, Chavez is laying the foundation for a promising future in mechanical engineering.

Chavez expressed how his first year at LGHS is going great, saying, "I really enjoy spending time with my friends and I like my classes." Chavez is taking Algebra 2 Accelerated, Biology Honors, English 9 Honors, Spanish 3, Intro to Engineering Design, and Robotics. He explained that his favorite class this year is math because "the teacher is very nice and I enjoy what we're learning right now." He also remarked that he is currently enjoying the project he is working on in Intro to Engineering Design, which is "creating an automata of a car crashing."



Chavez has high hopes for his first year in Robotics. He is on the CAD sub-team and hopes to "learn as much as possible this year, so next year I can help and contribute a lot." Chavez chose the CAD sub-team because "my brother told me it was a good stepping stone to do manufacturing, which is what I want to do next year in robotics."

Chavez wants to study mechanical engineering in college, which stems from his dad and brother. His dad works as a mechanical engineer while his brother is currently studying it in college. Chavez hopes to one day work in a pit crew for F1 drivers. He was drawn to this particular job because "I just want to work on cars, and being part of a pit crew would allow me to do that." Currently, Chavez enjoys helping his dad take apart cars, expressing how "I like the adrenaline of taking a car apart and seeing all the inner workings, plus I get to spend time with my dad."

While Chavez may not play any sports, if he were to participate in one, it would be "golf because my dad plays it." In his free time, Chavez enjoys off-roading because "it's fun and you can go super fast." He owns three dogs and a snake, whom he received as a kid. He describes owning a snake as an "interesting experience." Chavez is

also attempting to build his own race car using spare parts from his dad's car shop. He hopes to use an old engine and is collecting other parts to put his race car together.

Looking ahead, Chavez is excited to continue building his skills in robotics and engineering while preparing for a career that lets him turn his passion into a profession. His positive outlook and dedication to growth will surely lead him toward success in high school and beyond.



photos courtesy A. Chavez

- San Jose Sharks bounce back
- LGHS soccer begins

McLaren driver Norris dominates in Constructors' Championship

by Owen Fugit
Editor-in-Chief

Formula One (F1) fans saw one of the most hectic and dramatic seasons draw to a close on Dec. 8 during the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix at Yas Marina Circuit. The Drivers' Championship had already ended two weeks prior at the Las Vegas Grand Prix when Red Bull Racing's Max Verstappen narrowly clinched the victory. However, entering the Abu Dhabi race weekend, the Constructors' Championship was undecided. McLaren led the pack with 640 points, closely followed by Ferrari with 619 points, and Red Bull with 581 points.

Verstappen won the Drivers' Championship with an astounding 63-point lead over his closest rival this season, McLaren's Lando Norris. This is Verstappen's fourth consecutive Championship, cementing him as one of the greatest F1 drivers of all time. Surprisingly, in the season's final race, once his victory was all but assured, he finished sixth, a rare occurrence for the Dutch driver. Unlike last year, Verstappen's championship win did not come easily. His main rival this season, Norris, rocketed up the ranks, securing a second place in the final Driver's Championship, up from his sixth overall Championship place last year. Verstappen won 437 points this year, and Norris won 374,

putting him well behind Verstappen, though still close enough to raise his chances of championship victory next year.

The championship drivers fought for in Abu Dhabi was the coveted Constructors' Championship. Teams compete for the Constructors' Championship throughout the season, with winners receiving a hefty cash prize of more than 140 million dollars. This year, despite Red Bull's dominance in the Drivers' Championship, they had little chance to win the Constructors' due to inconsistent performance in their drivers and a less reliable car. McLaren made yet another leap this season, from finishing fourth place last year to a first-place finish this year, winning the championship with 666 points to Ferrari's 652. Once the season began, fans, drivers, and teams realized the excellent performance of the MCL38 car, and McLaren's journey to the top began.

Abu Dhabi was a close race, with Ferrari's finishing in second and third place, putting pressure on Norris and his team to deliver in the make-or-break season finale. Mere seconds after the race began, Norris's teammate, Oscar Piastri, suffered an accident on the first turn, launching his car into a spin and effectively knocking him out of the running for a top spot, forcing McLaren to change their race strategy without having completed a full lap of the circuit. Norris began the

race in pole position and spent the Grand Prix fighting to stay there. He narrowly beat Ferrari's Charles Leclerc by five seconds, finishing first. McLaren's lead in the championship, combined with the skill of Lando Norris and the 25 points won by his first-place finish, gave them their first Constructors' Championship win of the 21st century. Their last Constructors' win came in 1998.

F1 fans can catch the exciting 2025 season opener in Melbourne, Australia on Mar. 16, where several new drivers will make their F1 debut. (Sources: ESPN, F1, McLaren, MotorSport, Sky Sports)



PEDAL TO THE METAL: Red Bull driver Max Verstappen speeds past his competitors.

NFL progresses into Week 14 49ers suffer season injuries

by Atharava Pandey
National/World Editor

The end of the NFL regular season is fast approaching. As of Dec. 5, the Bills, the Chiefs and the Lions have already clinched playoff spots while the Patriots, the Jaguars, the Raiders, and the Giants have been eliminated. The next few weeks of the season will clarify who is in contention for the elusive Lombardi Trophy, awarded to the winner of the Super Bowl.

The defending champions, the Kansas City Chiefs, remain dominant in the AFC, with an 11-1 record through week 13. However, the Chiefs are statistically the worst 11-1 team in the history of the NFL, only having a +54-point differential. Despite playing well below their championship



GO CHIEFS: Chiefs prepare for game with a pregame show.

standards, the Chiefs have managed to find ways to win games. For example, in week 12, they kicked a field goal to narrowly beat the Panthers, arguably the worst team in the league, 30-27. Their quarterback Patrick Mahomes continues to struggle to find his rhythm.

The Detroit Lions stand as the number one seed in the NFC, with an 11-1 record. The Lions only have one goal in mind this year: winning the Super Bowl. The Lions best showed their determination in their week 11 performance, in which they destroyed the Jaguars 52-6. The Lions look calm, composed, and focused, displaying their best start to a season in franchise history. The Lions hope to go to the Super Bowl this year following their heartbreaking loss to the 49ers in last year's NFC Championship game.

The San Francisco 49ers have had a rough season. In their last two games, they suffered embarrassing blowout losses to the Packers and the Bills. The 49ers struggled due to many injuries. They concluded their season at the bottom of the NFC West with a 5-7 record. The Buffalo Bills comfortably clinched a playoff spot in week 13. Performing well, they have a 10-2 record and mark the only team to beat the Chiefs this season. Their quarterback, Josh Allen, is producing another MVP-caliber season. The Bills have often struggled in the playoffs, usually being eliminated by the Chiefs in the AFC. They are hoping this is finally the season they go to the Super Bowl.

After an unfathomable collapse halfway through last season, the Philadelphia Eagles added Saquon Barkley in the offseason, who has turned them into a contender. The Eagles are currently on an eight-game winning streak, recently beating a strong Ravens team in Baltimore on Dec. 1. The Eagles went to the Super Bowl in 2023 and have a real shot at going back in 2025.

Over the next month, the playoff picture will clear up and the NFL will set the playoffs bracket. These next few weeks promise to be thrilling considering what is at stake. Teams are fighting for their division, their conference, and playoff spots. Some teams are even fighting for a better lottery pick. It is officially all or nothing in the NFL. (Sources: CNN Sports, ESPN)



LIONS ROAR: Lions quarterback Jared Goff jogs onto the field.

by Isabella Langner
People Editor

After their loss to the Buffalo Bills on Dec. 1, the San Francisco 49ers placed both of their running backs on injured reserve (IR). Christian McCaffery, the team's starting running back, missed the first eight weeks of the season due to Achilles tendonitis. The NFL awarded McCaffery AP NFL Offensive Player of the Year for the 2023 season. He played a vital role in the team's offense and helped lead the team to the 2024 Super Bowl in Las Vegas. However, the 49ers 2024 season is off to a difficult start likely due to McCaffery's absence. The team is currently 5-7, claiming last place in the NFC West Division.

When McCaffery was first injured, Jordan Mason stepped in the starting running back position. As a former undrafted free agent, Mason put up impressive stats throughout his twelve games. McCaffery reemerged from IR on Nov. 11 and joined San Francisco for only four games. Toward the beginning of the second quarter, the team ran a play that most likely ended McCaffery's 2024 season. Quarterback Brock Purdy handed the ball off to McCaffery, who only ran about three yards before sliding to a stop five yards behind the line of scrimmage. He quickly got up and limped off the field straight to the blue medical tent.

49ers head coach, Kyle Shanahan, confirmed that McCaffery suffered a PCL injury to his knee but will not require surgery. The 49ers estimate that he will miss at least six games on IR, most likely finishing his season. Shanahan commented, "I feel for him. It was a really frustrating year for him...I think he was really feeling good and about to take off. He just had that really unfortunate injury [Sunday] night...He is a hell of a player, hell of a person and an unbelievable 49ers player. He'll be back stronger than ever next year to help us." Shanahan also shared that Mason remains on injured reserve for a minimum of four games due to a high ankle sprain.



AERIAL ROLL: 49ers player jumps over defender into the endzone.

With San Francisco's top two running backs out for the near future, rookie Isaac Guerendo stepped into the starting spot. On Dec. 8, Guerendo scored two touchdowns in a 38-13 win for the 49ers against the Bears. Despite his impressive performance, he exited the game in the fourth quarter due to a foot injury. Patrick Taylor Jr. took over for the rest of the game. Apart from the three running backs, multiple other notable players have been sidelined. Nick Bosa, Aaron Banks, Dre Greenlaw, Brandon Aiyuk, and several others are currently unable to play. San Francisco's injuries have continued to multiply as the season goes on, putting the team at a disadvantage without their complete roster. (Sources: ESPN, San Francisco 49ers, Sports Illustrated)



HUDDLE UP: 49ers' offensive team groups up to plan a play.

NBA season continues on with shocking comebacks and downfalls

by Rory Zeman

Media Production Editor

As the NBA season progresses, certain teams and players have stood above others. Here's a recap of what has happened so far in the latest NBA season as teams try to start their year off strong.

In the Western Conference, the Oklahoma City Thunder continue to meet their pre-season expectations and currently sit at the number one seed, the same position as at the end of last year. The team's driving force is Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, who averages an impressive 30 points and seven assists per game. Trailing right behind them stands the team with arguably the most surprising performance in the NBA: the Houston Rockets. The team hasn't made a run in the playoffs since the James Harden era back in 2020 and finished as the 11th seed last



CROSSOVER: Thunder All-Star point guard Gilgeous-Alexander pulls shifty move.

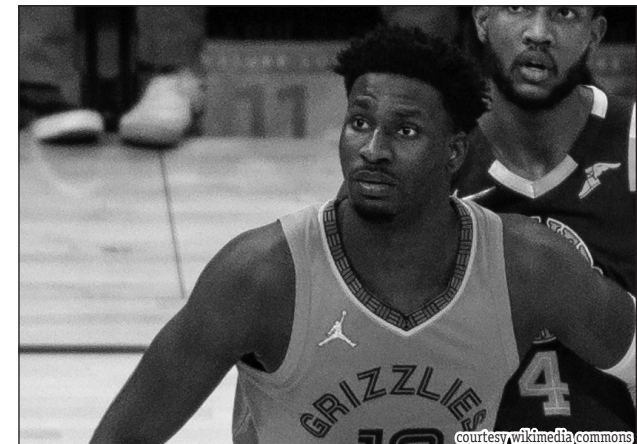
season. However, their young core with center Alperen Sengun and guard Jalen Green in the lead has shown promise this season and legitimated potential to make the playoffs this year. Another surprise is the performance of the Memphis Grizzlies, who sit at the fourth seed after a 13-seed performance the preceding year. However, with the return of star players Ja Morant and Jaren Jackson Junior, the team's sudden improvement isn't all that unexpected.

In the Eastern Conference, the Cleveland Cavaliers, although no longer perfect after losing their 15-game winning streak to the Boston Celtics, remain at the number one spot. After a championship run last season, the Boston Celtics are eager for that spot, and remain in second by only one game. Jayson Tatum is at the helm of the team, averaging 29 points and nine rebounds per game. Tatum's strong stats place him in second place on the KIA MVP Ladder, meaning he is a top contender to take home the 2025 MVP award. In addition, the Orlando Magic are close behind in the third seed and are developing at a fast pace with their recently drafted star player, Paolo Banchero, leading the squad.

Out of every outstanding performance by an NBA player so far this season, none rival that of Denver Nuggets star Nikola Jokic, who currently stands at first on the KIA MVP Ladder. After winning three out of the last four MVP awards, Jokic, to no one's surprise, is filling out the stat sheets. Jokic continues to set new records even for his standards. The superstar is currently averaging career highs in the three major stat categories: 30 points per game, 13 rebounds per game, and 10 assists per game. Another incredible player to kick off

the year includes Giannis Antetokounmpo, who is averaging 32 points per game and 12 rebounds per game. The Milwaukee Bucks star's stellar performance has led to an upsurge in his team's performance, boosting his team from the 15 seed to the fifth seed.

Although fans are starting to get a grasp on which teams and players will put up the best performances this NBA season, there are still over 50 games left to play until playoff time. (Sources: CNN, NBA)



DEFENSIVE LOCKDOWN: Grizzlies Jaren Jackson Jr. defends Cavalier Evan Mobley.

Michigan versus Ohio State rivalry sparks intense violence

by **Katie Nelson**
Center Editor

On Nov. 30, the Michigan Wolverine's football team upset the number two seed, Ohio State University, in a narrow 13-10 victory. After winning against their longtime rivals, a group of Michigan players planted their school flag in the middle of the field. Ohio State linebacker Jack Sawyer responded in immediate anger and ripped the flag from the ground. This incited a brief tug-of-war with the flag between Sawyer and other Ohio State players and a man in Michigan gear. People later identified the man from the videos as Jason Avant, a Michigan alum and nine-year NFL veteran, who is now a sideline reporter for the Michigan radio broadcasts. Considered by Michigan fans as the "saver of the flag," Avant has greatly elevated his already legendary reputation at the school.



VICTORY IS OURS: Michigan players storm the football field after the win.

The flag skirmish immediately sparked other fighting across the field, and many players from both teams threw punches. According to CNN, it took several minutes for security and police personnel to stop the fighting. Ohio State University Police utilized pepper spray to contain the situation, and CNN reported that in the melee, one officer sustained injuries and required medical attention. The use of pepper spray by the officers is currently under scrutiny, as many have debated its necessity in breaking up the fight.

Many fans quickly took sides on social media platforms, defending the actions of their respective teams in the brawl. Many agree that the fight should have never escalated the way it had. Immediately following the incident, Michigan running back Lalel Mullings said in an interview with Fox Broadcast, "For such a great game, you hate to see stuff like that after the game... All that fighting, we had 60 minutes, we had four quarters to do all that fighting and now people want to talk and fight. That's wrong. It's bad for the game. Classless in my opinion. People got to be better." Ohio head coach Ryan Day defended his players, stating, "I will find out exactly what happened, but this is our field and certainly we're embarrassed at the fact we lost the game. But there are some prideful guys on the team that weren't just going to let that happen."

The Big Ten Conference fined both teams 100,000 dollars for violating sportsmanlike conduct. The day after, the Big Ten Conference released a statement: "Not only did the actions of both teams violate fundamental elements of sportsmanship such as respect and

civility, the nature of the incident also jeopardized the safety of participants and bystanders." Although the fight disappointed both teams, a video shared by a CBS Sports reporter revealed multiple Ohio State players and a Michigan player huddled together praying during the fight, including Ohio State player Gee Scott Jr. In an interview, Gee Scott Sr. recounted what Scott Jr. told him about the prayer circle, "My son said, 'I was just hurt by seeing some of my brothers and some of the people I love go against the things that we have been talking about. No matter what, win or lose, we can't have that.'"

(Sources: AP, CNN, KiroNewsRadio, ON3, talkSPORT, The Christian Post)



FACING OFF: Michigan and Ohio State players scramble to receive the ball.

Naeher retires from US team

by **Sam Gruetter**
Opinion Editor

Two-time World Cup winner and Olympic Gold Medalist Alyssa Naeher announced her retirement from international soccer on Dec. 3. She played her final matches on the US Women's National Team's trip to Europe, where they faced England and the Netherlands. However, she will continue to play for the Chicago Stars in 2025 domestic league play. Throughout her international career, Naeher compiled an extensive list of honors and accolades, finishing with 113 goalkeeper caps, 110 starts, 88 wins, and 68 shut-outs.

Naeher began her career in 2014 at the age of 26, when she played her first cap, an international appearance, in Argentina against Brazil, in an impressive win. For a significant portion of her career, Naeher played alongside Hope Solo, one of the most successful goalkeepers in the history of the national team. In both the 2015 World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympics, Naeher played as the backup goalkeeper for Solo. In the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, Naeher claimed her spot as a starter on the team, eventually compiling a total of 22 starts at the World Cup and Olympics by the end of her career. In all of her 22 appearances, Naeher only conceded an impressive 12 goals.



SHOT BLOCKED: Naeher defends the box in international game.

In 2023, Naeher started in her second World Cup, continuing the momentum she had developed in the infancy of her World Cup career. In this tournament, Naeher got twelve shut-outs and only got scored on once. The US Soccer website posted an article, sharing a more human side of Naeher aside from her impres-



IN ACTION: Naeher leaps to defend a ball reaching the goal.

sive athleticism, describing one of her charming habits: "Known as the earliest riser on the U.S. team during her career, her teammates will long remember her love of sitting quietly with an early morning cup of coffee along with her crossword puzzle. She achieved one of her life goals when her name was an answer in the New York Times Crossword."

Naeher had an equally prosperous career at the club level. From 2010 to 2011, Naeher stayed local and played for the Boston Breakers, eventually playing abroad for a short period in Germany with Turbine Potsdam, where she continued to prove herself as a valuable player. After Germany, Naeher returned to familiar fields when she rejoined the Boston Breakers, only to be traded to her current club, the Chicago Red Stars, shortly thereafter.

From playing at the national level as a teenager for the U-16 and U-17 teams to being recruited to Penn State, Naeher's career has consistently impressed from start to finish. While the US National Team will undoubtedly miss her, Naeher's career will continue to flourish at the club level until her official retirement.

(Sources: Soccer Forward Foundation)

San Jose Sharks gain traction

by **Megan Saul**
Culture Editor

The 2024-2025 National Hockey League's season commenced on Oct. 4, making the season about a third of the way over. Locally, the San Jose Sharks have a record of 10 wins, 14 losses, and five ties, placing them seventh in the Pacific division. This record sets the Sharks up for a more successful season than last year, as they had 19 wins, 54 losses, and nine ties in their previous season.



SLICING THROUGH: Sharks compete in a dynamic game.

During the 2024 NHL draft, the Sharks selected Macklin Celebrini as the first pick. Even as a new addition to the team, he has made a significant impact, scoring eight goals. Proving his dominance, the NHL named him Rookie of the Month for November. During the draft, the Sharks also selected Sam Dickinson as the eleventh pick in the first round. In the remaining six rounds, the Sharks chose a total of nine players.

On Nov. 23, prior to the game against the Buffalo Sabres, the Sharks retired longtime player and legend Joe Thornton's jersey number 19. Thornton, nicknamed Jumbo Joe, played in the NHL for 24 seasons, being the first pick of the 1997 NHL. He played for the Sharks for 15 seasons, from 2005-2020, during which time he gained a large fan base in the San Jose area. Throughout his time playing, he scored 430 goals

over 1,714 career games. He became a dominant player on the Sharks, earning the honor of team captain. Due to his enormous legacy and impact on the Sharks community and the program, the Sharks gave him a well-deserved ceremony where they hung his jersey above the ice for all to see.

On Nov. 21, Thornton spoke at the San Jose City Hall regarding the upcoming ceremony and Joe Thornton Day. He said, "Mayor Matt Mahan, thank you so much. I never thought I'd get my own day, but here we are. You know how important the Sharks are for this city when one of their former players gets honored like this. Let's keep it that way for generations to come. The SAP Center, like the team itself, is in the heart of the city, and I love that. This city bleeds teal." Before the ceremony and game, the Sharks held the Jumbo Fest outside the SAP Center to celebrate Nov. 23 as Joe Thornton Day. Thornton is only the second player in franchise history to have his number retired, joining Patrick Marleau's jersey number 12. Thornton stated, "It truly was an honor to be your teammate, friend, and roommate. I'm absolutely humbled to have my number up there next to yours." He closed his speech by saying, "Thank you, Sharks fans. And like I said when I retired, I'll see you at the rink. Peace and love. Go Sharks."

Unfortunately, the Sharks followed this ceremony with a 2-4 loss against the Sabres. They then won their following game with a striking score of 7-2 against the Los Angeles Kings. Since that time, the team has played six more games and has won three of them.

So far, this season has welcomed new impressive players and has celebrated legends. As the season continues, the games become more difficult and the stakes become higher. Be sure to watch how the San Jose Sharks compete in the remainder of the season. (Sources: CBS, ESPN, NBC Sports, San Jose Sharks, The Athletic)

Northwestern claims second National Championship

by **Margo Rawlings**
Editor-in-Chief

On Nov. 24, Northwestern's Women's Field Hockey won their second NCAA National Championship. The program won its first title in 2021 following a 2-0 victory against Liberty University.

18 teams headed to the opening round of the NCAA tournament, with the NCAA Division I Field Hockey Committee selecting one team from each of the ten conferences to receive automatic qualification and then choosing an additional eight teams. The tournament began on Nov. 13 and concluded the first and second rounds on Nov. 17. The top



PRESSURE IS ON: Northwestern previously faced Penn State in a 2011 match.

four seeded teams, the University of North Carolina (1), Northwestern University (2), the University of Connecticut (3), and St. Joseph's University (4) hosted the first three rounds this year. Following the second round, North Carolina, Northwestern, St. Joseph's, and the University of Massachusetts advanced to the Final Four which took place in Ann Arbor, Michigan at the Phyllis Ocker Field.

11-time national champion and undefeated North Carolina, who was heavily favored to win, fell to fourth seed, St. Joseph's, in a 2-1 game. The game remained scoreless during the first quarter, with North Carolina outshooting St. Joseph's 6-0. During the second quarter, the Hawks increased their offensive pressure, scoring the game's first goal. With strong momentum going into the second half, St. Joseph's produced another goal from a short corner, increasing the score to 2-0. North Carolina, unwilling to concede, fired a shot on the last play of the third quarter, cutting the Hawk's lead to one. Although the Tar Heels stepped up their intensity in the fourth, producing six more scoring opportunities, St. Joseph's goalie remained strong, resulting in their victory.

Later in the day, Northwestern defeated UMass 1-0. The UMass Minutewomen held off the Northwestern Cats for almost 50 minutes, keeping the match scoreless until the end of the fourth quarter. On the counterattack, Northwestern's Ashley Sessa scored, putting the first and only tally on the board. UMass pulled out their goalie with five minutes left in the fourth, hoping to tie the game, but remained unsuccessful, allowing Northwestern to advance to the final.

Northwestern claimed their title in a decisive 5-0 victory over St. Joseph's. At halftime, the Cats led by an incredible five scores. The 10-1 shot ratio highlights Northwestern's dominance in the first half. The

second half saw no goals, with the Hawks increasing their offensive pressure, drawing three short corners. Northwestern diligently stopped each of the Hawks's attempts and created a few more opportunities for themselves to score, but they did not materialize. Not only did Northwestern win a second national championship, but they also tied the record for the largest margin of victory in a championship game, set by North Carolina in 2019.

(Sources: Inside NU, NCAA, SJU Hawks)



FINAL MATCHES: Michigan's Phyllis Ocker Field hosted the final four.



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LGHS soccer teams dominate in early season games

by Sam Gruetter
Opinion Editor

The LGHS Girls' Varsity Soccer Team started their pre-season games on Dec. 3 and Dec. 5 against Leland and Sequoia High School, setting a positive and promising tone for the rest of their season.

The girls' team saw a significant amount of new talent enter the field for the 2024-2025 season, including junior **Alessandra Munneke**, the team's top goal-scorer. A D1 Stanford commit, Munneke secured all three goals for LG in their game against Leland and one goal against

Sequoia. Other standout players include sophomore and captain **Abby Nelson** who held down the midfield and defensive lines in both games. Despite only being a sophomore, Nelson plays with impressive skills and strength, making her a force to be reckoned with on the back line.

Their Leland game was at home on Dec. 3 and concluded with a 3-3 tie. Throughout the first half, junior goalkeeper **Cora Bryant** continued her streak of excellent goalkeeping in her third year on varsity, conceding only one goal. At half, LG and Leland stood in a 1-1 tie. The dynamic quickly shifted after Munneke secured two goals for Los Gatos within the first five minutes of the second half. However, the game ended in a 3-3 draw. Junior defender **Piper Hansen** described her attitude towards the game's outcome, saying, "Everybody on the team played great and I cannot wait to see what the rest of the season holds as we all get to know each other better, and develop a closer team chemistry."

In their second preseason game at Sequoia on Dec. 5, the varsity girls dominated, concluding the game with a 4-0 win. Munneke, junior **Maci Schwab**, and sophomore **Teagan Kaefer** all scored goals for LG, amounting in a decisive win over Sequoia.

The boys also recently began their season, playing their first game against Leigh on Dec. 4, triumphing in a 3-2 win. In their Dec. 7 game against Westmont, the boys played a strong first half, concluding the

first 40 minutes with a score of 0-0. However, despite an excellent performance, the score dropped to 0-3 by the end of the game. The team will have a chance to redeem themselves in their upcoming game on Dec. 21.

Both defensively and offensively, Los Gatos has displayed much promise in the 2024-2025 season so far, making it clear that they are committed to their goal of winning CCS for the second year in a row. If you want to see some great soccer, make sure to check out their upcoming games.

(Source: MaxPreps)



BALLER: Senior **William Morley** prepares to pass the ball to a teammate.



KICKIN IT: Junior **Christian Zisa** beats an opponent and dribbles up the field.

Coach Spotlight: Heath Clark contributes to LG football

by Megan Hastings
Public Relations Manager

For football coach **Heath Clark**, the journey through Los Gatos High School's football team has been one of determination, passion, and community building. Through his time as coach, Clark has become a cornerstone of LGHS's athletic tradition, mentoring athletes on and off the field.

As a high school player lucky enough to continue his career in college, Clark says that becoming a coach felt natural. Starting in 1991, Clark stepped into the position as a coach at LGHS and quickly established himself as a dedicated leader. He shaped the program with his experience, enthusiasm, and commitment to the development of his players both on and off the field.

Under Clark's leadership, the team has seen great success, the past season included. Over 13 games, the LGHS football team made it to the California Central Coast Section (CCS) Championship, only losing after an impressive 10-2 record. These games reflect the team's athleticism and strong camaraderie, a quality Clark consistently emphasizes. Reflecting on the season, Clark expressed pride in the team's development, commenting, "All the guys are great." Clark also credits the team's performance to a dedicated coaching staff, particularly head coach and former LGHS teacher **Mark Krail**, saying, "A lot of [their success] is owed to Coach Krail."



MISTER MENTOR: Coach Clark poses for a photo in his history classroom.

Beyond the field, Clark makes a lasting impact through both his mentorship and friendship. He explained how "former players come back and tell me that they felt really loved," reflecting on

the support and connection fostered under Clark's guidance. Clark added, "There's a small number of people who really care about high school football. This is preparing them for life." When asked what legacy he wanted to leave as coach, Clark explained that he believed praise is unnecessary, as he values the personal growth and character-building the sport fosters in his players. As for the future, Clark has ambitious goals for the program. Aware of the overwhelming support and success, Clark hopes to expand the football team's resources to other sports in the school. Showcasing his vision for collaborating with other athletes and coaches, he stated, "I plan on running some speed and conditioning sessions and getting some flag girls and lacrosse girls involved." With a promising roster of returning players and up-and-coming talent trying out every season, LGHS football is poised to make an even greater impact next year.

Moving forward, Clark hopes to strengthen the program by emphasizing teamwork, improving conditioning, and creating opportunities for all athletes to grow both on and off the field. Through years of dedication, Clark has not only built a competitive football program but also a legacy of leadership and commitment to the development of every player. As the Wildcats continue to grow under Clark's leadership, our school can surely look forward to many more Friday-night lights and celebrations school-wide.

Cross country season ends

by Quinn Hathaway
National/World Editor

The Los Gatos High School cross country team officially closed their season after five months of training, racing, and winning. The girls' team progressed through the California Central Coast Section (CCS) competition and to the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) State championships. The boys' team did not continue past CCS, although varsity senior **Aydon Stefanopoulos** did qualify for CIF individually.

The CIF States were rough for the girls, as top runner senior **Shea Elmore** had to drop out due to shin splints. Down one of their best, the girls' team tried their hardest, but they ultimately fell short placing 24th overall. The cold weather also increased the difficulty, causing the runners' muscles to tense up.

While the boys' team as a whole may not have competed past the CCS competition, Aydon Stefanopoulos progressed to the CIF States. Stefanopoulos won first in Division II CCS and proceeded to place in the top five in the state championship. He will continue to run for LGHS during track season and hopes to commit to a college for running soon.

Reflecting on the past season, sophomore runner **Aleida Nunn** commented that "the season was really fun. I had lots of new opportunities, like going to States." As her first season on varsity, Nunn loves the team, saying that her favorite part of cross country is "the support the team gives." Nunn elaborated on the team bond, stating that the post-race atmosphere is always positive because everyone is "so comforting after races." When asked about her favorite memory from the season, Nunn replied, "Probably going to

Woodbridge. It was a really fun meet." The ASICS Woodbridge Cross Country Classic took place in Irvine, California in September and remains a favorite among multiple LG runners.

Varsity sophomore **Elise Greenstreet** summed up her season as "really so amazing, and everyone did really great. A lot of people beat personal records. Half our team is seniors, though, and it's really sad to see them go. But I'm excited to see how we do next year and to see all the people from junior varsity who are going to come up." Nunn reflected on the departing seniors, saying that she "looks up to all the girls in the class of 2025. They're all really fast and super nice." All the seniors will clearly be missed by the team.

Looking forward to next year, the girls hope to place higher in the CIF States and strengthen the team's bond. Nunn is already thinking about the 2025 season and is most excited about "experiencing new races and learning new things." The cross-country team did fantastic this season. Congratulations to all the champions!



VICTORY: Stefanopoulos celebrates finishing a race.

LG basketball continues

by Sahil Muthukrishnan
Sports Editor

The LGHS Girls' and Boys' Basketball teams are now officially in season. Both teams are coming off successful 2023-2024 seasons. Last year, the varsity girls advanced to the Open Division play-offs, winning their first game in Open Division, while the Varsity Boys' Basketball Team won the Division 1 CCS Championship

Sophomore **Kendall Feichtmier** is a junior varsity player going into her second season on the team. Feichtmier talked about the off-season workouts during the summer, stating, "It was really fun. It got us back into shape, allowed us to bond a bit more, and just hang out with each other while prepping for the upcoming season." The JV team feels strongly about the season ahead. Regarding the team's potential to win, Feichtmier commented, "I think we have a lot of skill and work well together, so I'd say we have a pretty good chance." On Dec. 7, the JV girls won the Monta Vista Tournament, where Feichtmier made the All-Tournament Team and coaches voted freshman **Taylor Payne** MVP of the tournament.

During the off-season, many girls' varsity players chose to play other sports, such as flag football, to keep themselves prepared and in shape. Junior and third-year varsity player **Lola Cuevas** is thrilled about the upcoming season, stating, "We came off a really good season last year, and we had a really hard stretch in the playoffs, so we're kind of picking up where we left off in terms of a challenging season this year." On Nov. 30, they played their first game of the season against Branham High School, winning 66-22. Following the Branham game, the varsity girls will face



THREE POINTER: Webb makes a jump shot during a game.

challenging opponents they competed against in last year's playoffs. On Dec. 4, they lost 72-45 against Pinewood High School, one of the top teams in CCS. The varsity team also has some younger members, freshmen **Kate Langner** and **Jenna Webb**, joining this year. To integrate the freshmen onto the team, Cuevas explained, "I really want to help them build confidence on the court and make their development take less time than mine." For overall team goals, Cuevas stated, "We have a goal of getting further than we did last season in the playoffs. Last year we got...our first public school win in Open Division. So hopefully, we can get more than one next year and go further in NorCal."

The Boys' Varsity Basketball team kicked off their season strong. In their first game of the season against Evergreen High School, they won 51-37. Additionally, they triumphed in the Dec. 4 to Dec. 7 Jefferson Tournament, winning 66-44 against Aragon, 68-60 against University, and 54-33 against Jerron.

Boys' varsity has their next home game on Dec. 13 and the girls play Notre Dame at home on Dec. 19. Be sure to come support!