

El Gato

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL

H. Strahs

District hires new superintendent

by Ainsley Northrop
Editor-in-Chief

On Feb. 11, the Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District (LGSUHSD) Board of Trustees voted 4-0 to appoint Acting Superintendent Heath Rocha as the district's permanent superintendent.

Studying computer science at St. Mary's in the East Bay, Rocha began college as an athlete on the pre-med track. He detailed, "I played football, and one summer I got really sick and stopped playing sports for the first time in my life. I was struggling in school...[and] kind of depressed." Following a recommendation from his kinesiology teacher, Rocha attended an injured athletes group with UC Berkeley sports psychologists. Inspired by the support he received, Rocha shifted his major to psychology, hoping to create a similar impact for others.

Rocha continued pursuing psychology, attending graduate school at the University of Vermont and working for their adolescent substance abuse treatment clinic. Here, Rocha made a career-changing observation: "[Working with] adolescents that had addiction issues...I saw they all lacked school success at an early age. So that's what shifted me into becoming a school psychologist...[and] got me into education."

After working at the Carmel Unified School District for six years, Rocha transitioned to LGSUHSD, where he has now worked for nine years. Until the end of the year, Rocha will continue working his current positions of overseeing special education and student services, alongside his new superintendent duties. Rocha described his job in student services as versatile and involved, dealing with everything from suspensions to health services. Notably, Rocha spearheaded the creation of LGHS's and SHS's beloved Wellness Centers, which provide mental health support, therapy, and a safe place for students on campus.

As superintendent, Rocha hopes to create an atmosphere of honesty, visibility, and authenticity. He reasoned, "The most important [thing] is that when I'm talking with someone, there's no doubt in the person's mind that I'm being genuine and authentic." Already, Rocha has made himself known on both high school campuses, visiting classrooms and engaging with students and staff.

One of Rocha's overriding goals—in his words, a "North Star"—is to encourage students to share their voices. Rocha is starting a Student Advisory Committee to do just that. Additionally, Rocha emphasized the importance of communicating with staff and parents to make sure that everyone feels "respected, valued, and supported."

Beyond work, Rocha enjoys raising his two high school children, watching live music with his wife, hiking, and occasionally scuba diving. He deemed his father and retired Carmel superintendent Marvin Biasotti his biggest role models: "My father was the first one to go to college in his family... He put himself through college by pumping gas at night and working at some type of tennis club on the weekends... [And] Marvin Biasotti was the superintendent for 15 years... I just admire him so much. Ironically, he was a school psychologist well prior."

While, according to Rocha, "there is no typical day as a superintendent," Rocha is determined to make the most of each one. He acknowledged that the district has room to grow: "If I ask any student or staff or parent, they could give me a list of ten things that we can get better, but that's why we're great. We're never going to stop, and our work is never going to end. That's what I love, that we're just, every day, every month, every year getting a little bit better." He concluded, "I'm just truly honored and humbled to be given this opportunity and even associate with these two high schools."



SUPER-DUPER INTENDENT: Heath Rocha smiles for a picture with a student.

LGHS presents Friday Night Live

by Kloe Adams
Editorial Editor

Los Gatos High School's production of Friday Night Live (FNL) on Feb. 8 displayed the immense talent of LG students. Junior Class President **Sophia Krish** and Vice President **Autumn Wadhwa** produced the show with the help of the class of 2026. The junior class was in charge of running the show, with volunteers taking shifts selling tickets, working backstage, setting and cleaning up, and advertising the event. Although FNL is a talent show for every grade, the proceeds go specifically to the junior class for their prom and extracurriculars. Senior **Ryan Idemoto** expertly hosted the show by making fun dad jokes and encouraging audience involvement.



RYAN VIO-LIN: Senior **Ryan Lin** astounds the crowd with his violin skills.

Auditions began on Feb. 3. The acts ranged from singing and dancing to musical compositions. In total, there were ten acts. The night started off strong with the Fugit brothers, sophomore **Charlie Fugit** and senior **Owen Fugit**, performing Something in the Orange by Zach Bryan. C. Fugit captivated the crowd with his emotional singing while impressively playing the guitar at the same time. O. Fugit, although not singing, did not fail to showcase his talent. He had multiple solos on the guitar, exhibiting his great aptitude for the instrument. Following the Fugit brothers, junior **Evie Ishak** performed an angelic serenade of My Love Mine all Mine by Mitski while also playing the guitar. Shifting the vibe of the talent show, juniors **Chloe Hsia** and **Valeriya Marinicheva** and senior **Janie Vidovich** danced a lively and upbeat routine to Meow by Meowv. The students' routine demonstrated a popular dance style, K-Pop, which worked to pump up the crowd. Another dynamic duo, juniors **Day Berenbaum** and **Joseph Soria Jr.**, performed a cover of Falling by Harry Styles on the piano and guitar.

The next two acts further blew the crowd away with the sheer skill displayed. The first act featured senior **Ryan Lin** playing the violin and junior **Ishaan Allen** playing the piano to Roundtable Rival by Lindsey Stirling. The melodies of Lin's violin mixed with Allen's piano transported the crowd to another world. If that was not enough, Lin and Allen appeared in the next act along with sophomore **Adrian Vierya**, juniors **Alex Rollins**, **Jenna Kim**, **Jacob Shkolnik**, and **Tanner Goulden**, and seniors **David Wang**, **Ryan Jiang**, and **Neil Khandelwal**. The extravagant performance involved multiple instruments, including the saxophone, trumpet, piano, violin, drums, and viola. This group of students worked together to portray the orchestra piece Jiyuu no Tsubasa composed by Revo.

Near the end of the night, another rendition of Something in the Orange by Zach Bryan took the stage with junior performers **Stella Miletich** and **Allen**. Near the end of the night, sophomores **Aarush Kalele** and **Guy Shaham**, junior **Seoyoung Choi**, and seniors **Naveen Ettema** and **Artem Melnik** performed Duvet by Boa as a band performance. Whether it was the singing, the drums, the guitar, or the violin, these students put on a concert for everyone to enjoy. Wrapping up the night, Krish put on the final act, singing and playing the piano for What Was I Made For by Billie Eilish. Already an emotional song, Krish's passionate performance ended the talent show on a heavy but strong note.

With help from the junior class and the astounding talent of the LGHS student body, the fundraiser proved a huge success for the 2026 class. Krish noted the significance of supporting events like FNL: "It's important for students to support and come to these kinds of events because it contributes to our hopes of building a cohesive and tight knit community. I believe that supporting each other's passions not only inspires all of us but also displays the many unique talents and qualities of Los Gatos High."



BAND TOGETHER: Students perform Duvet by Boa at the end of the show.

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LGHS's Bench Boys meet idiosyncratic individuals

by **Claudia Casal and Siyona Singhal**
Culture and News Editors

Every day, three sophomores, **Lucas Barbara, Syrus Ghazani,** and **Ethan Kaill,** sit on a bench at the front of LGHS and enjoy their lunch. They relax and talk to their friends, but some days, the trio talks to people outside of their friend group. They find that strangers often come up to them to share some truly preposterous stories and offer fantastical observations about this town and life more generally. What started as friendly conversations has turned into many entertaining encounters. Instead, the trio has a special talent for drawing out funny and unexpected tales from strangers.

One time, the trio remembered when a man walked across the sidewalk with a donkey following behind him. The taupe and fluffy donkey had a saddle full of supplies, and when questioned about the donkey, the man said that he was backpacking from Tennessee to Mexico. The mystery man declined the trio's attempts to ride the steed. Another time, the boys recalled when a man came up to them, claiming he had five million dollars and planned to invent the Frisbee. The group was obviously quite confused, so Ghazani called over a staff member, who convinced the stranger to leave after alerting the police.



THREE MUSKETEERS: The Bench Boys squad poses for a picture in the hall.

Kaill recounted that later on, another man approached the school and began taking photographs of the main building. This photographer told the trio that he was part of the fallen Soviet Union, claiming that he had traveled to the US to bring back pictures to his country. Another time, Ghaziani, while looking

to buy ice cream from the ice cream truck parked in front of the high school, was approached by the ice cream man. The ice cream man, who was locked out of the truck, then proceeded to ask Ghaziani to climb through the window of the ice cream truck to unlock it from the inside. The boys also recounted that they witnessed a lady in a gray Prius hit a car, leave a dent, and then drive away. While the driver was attempting to escape, she hit a curb, but nothing seemed to slow her down, not even the trio shouting at her to stop. After she left, the boys waited for the owner of the car to arrive so they could explain what had happened, but the owner never showed up.

According to the boys, they have learned many lessons from these meetings and gained valuable insight. Kaill's advice for high school students was to "stay in school," while Ghazani suggested that students "take things one day at a time." When asked what they would say if they walked past this particular bench, Barbara said, "I would probably say that I've been to space," but Kaill had a different mindset and claimed, "I would just walk by and not say anything."

Barbara, Ghaziani, and Kaill never seem to run out of these seemingly tall but true tales. If you see them sitting on "their" bench, consider waving hello or stopping by to share a quirky little story of your own.

Trump issues transgender-related orders that affect CA

by **Chloe Wilson**
Humor Editor

Because President Donald Trump has recently issued several anti-transgender executive orders, California is increasing its efforts to protect its gender laws. One order that he issued rejects liberal "gender ideology" and restores the "biological truth" of the two sexes. According to Trump, his administration will only recognize "two sexes, male and female" in federal policy, and not "gender identity" that differs from "biological reality." In the executive order, he asserted, "These sexes are not changeable, sex is not a synonym for and does not include the concept of 'gender identity.'" This is likely to prompt significant changes in federal laws, from laws pertaining to prisons, passports, and school sports. "Agency forms that require an individual's sex shall list male or female," he noted, and prison officials "shall ensure that males are not detained in women's prisons."

Yet this order—which does not specifically mention transgender people—conflicts with California's existing laws forbidding any discrimination based on identity. The order also conflicts with laws in other blue states, which are likely to experience legal challenges from the Trump Administration's new regulations. According to Georgetown Law Professor David Cole, "In practice, what this

order means is that the administration is not only denying that transgender people have rights, but that they exist. There are about 1.5 million people in the United States who are transgender, and that reality cannot be denied with an executive order."

In another executive order, Trump declared that the US will not "fund, sponsor, promote, assist, or support the so-called 'transition' of a child from one sex to another." In yet another order, he banned transgender people from serving in the military and playing sports in school. "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports," one of Trump's many executive orders surrounding gender policies, insisted, "In recent years, many educational institutions and athletic associations have allowed men to compete in women's sports. This is demeaning, unfair, and dangerous to women and girls, and denies women and girls the equal opportunity to participate and excel in competitive sports."

These policy changes will likely lead to legal challenges and, if upheld, would apply to blue states like California. However, many colleges and schools receive federal funds, so these institutions are required to follow certain federal regulations. As these federal laws come into effect, California is attempting to protect its laws to avoid conflicts that Trump's orders might create. California has made a promise to protect the state's many laws,

some of which ensure that transgender student-athletes can still participate in sports according to their gender identity. (Sources: ABC10, LA Times, Newsweek)



MAKING VOICES HEARD: LGBTQ+ advocates protest in Washington DC.

LG pickleball causes tension

by **Lucy Panicacci**
Editor-in-Chief

Pickleball is an essential part of Los Gatos recreation. Onlookers and LG residents cannot pass by the local La Rinconada and Blossom Hill parks without hearing the distinctive thwack of a ball hitting a paddle. Responding to community demand for pickleball programs, Los Gatos-Saratoga Recreation created a pickleball club, making adult leagues for all different skill levels, classes, and tournaments.



SERVING SABOTAGE: Stains permanently dirty the courts.

LG residents Christine Le, Debra Chin, Denise Leffers, and Sharmin Khan play in the Los Gatos-Saratoga league and have competed at the La Rinconada park for almost two years. Chin shared, "I work from home, so for me, it's a chance to get outside and do something active, as opposed to just being a keyboard jockey." For this group of women, pickleball also provides a sense of community. Khan emphasized, "[My favorite part is] the camaraderie that can develop with other players. For me, a lot of it is the social side of it. The three of us have become friends...so I love that." Laura and Josh Grose, along with their young children Huey, Elsie, and Emme, play as a family every few weeks at La Rinconada. Splitting into three versus two, Huey, Elsie, and Emme enjoy the competitive spirit of trying to beat their parents. L. Grose stated, "They make us run a lot."

Although they enjoy playing pickleball at La Rinconada, the Groses and Leffer family noticed

issues with the court's condition. Leffers said, "My concern is that some things have been done to the court that have made it much more difficult and in fact, dangerous for pickleball players to play." Discussing the safety concern, L. Grose pointed out two large, slick stains that resulted from an unknown person intentionally pouring motor oil on the court. She explained, "We came out over Christmas break a couple times, and people had just poured it... It makes it super slippery, and then they can never get it out." J. Grose recalls Huey falling as a result of slipping on the oil. Sharing his perspective, five-year-old Huey emphasized, "The motor oil didn't even smell good."

This vandalism likely arose due to noise complaints of the loud pinging sound of pickleball, creating tension between La Rinconada and Blossom Hill homeowners and players. Originally strictly a tennis court, the La Rinconada court added on pickleball courts, posing an unexpected noise concern for people living across the street. Although the courts allow play from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM, homeowners cite pickleball matches starting as early as 7:30 AM and continuing at night, disturbing their sleep. In a letter to the Los Gatos, Mary Holford detailed an incident at La Rinconada park on Oct. 16, 2024: "Several of us seniors felt threatened by the rage of one of the owners across from the pickleball courts. We are a very polite group and bother no one. How they complain about us constantly, film us and threaten us is escalating."

In response to the vandalism and noise complaints, the LG Parks and Sustainability Commission is considering resurfacing the La Rinconada court and adding a sound barrier; however, both measures cost tens of thousands of dollars. To mitigate the tension, Khan emphasized the importance of communication between neighbors and pickleball players: "If we could get together for a meeting, we could talk about each of our concerns and then hear what their concerns are, and come to some sort of negotiable agreement." (Sources: The Town of Los Gatos, Los Gatos, NY Times)

Los Angeles fires subside

by **Nelson Kramer**
Humor Editor

Since Jan. 7, wildfires have devastated the Los Angeles County area. Nonetheless, in less than a month, the fire departments and community have been making significant progress in containment and recovery efforts. By Jan. 31, firefighters contained the Palisades and Eaton fires, which were the most destructive of the four. However, the damage left behind is staggering. The fires burned over 57,000 acres, destroyed 18,000 structures, and claimed at least 29 lives, making this one of the most catastrophic wildfires that California has seen in years.



WELL WISHES: LG students make cards for victims.

In addition, the wildfires have worsened LA's ongoing housing crisis. Thousands of displaced residents now struggle with soaring rent prices and limited housing availability. LA locals struggled through the evacuation process, and now many have no place to turn as housing is destroyed and shelters are filling up. Advocacy groups are pushing for measures such as eviction

moratoriums and rent freezes to provide relief for those affected.

After the height of the fires, many criticized the California insurance agencies for pulling out of the state altogether. The central claim is that businesses that have profited from Californians have a financial and social responsibility to support those affected by the devastating fire. Insured losses have already surpassed 20 billion dollars, with total economic damage estimated at around 50 billion dollars, far exceeding the cost of previous wildfires.

Different organizations aiding in relief efforts are attracting massive donations from all around the country as they are putting money toward helping the communities who have been displaced by the fires. Locally, the Los Gatos High School Home and School Club plans to host a fundraiser for the Pasadena Education Foundation through LGHS clubs on March 25.

Many different citizen-run relief efforts are stepping up to the challenge as they fight to advocate and provide for the thousands of civilians displaced by the fires. The LA culinary community is offering free meals to victims of the fires, along with celebrities rallying and pledging money to different organizations like the California Fire Foundation and the Red Cross Foundation. A FireAid benefit concert featuring Billie Eilish, Green Day, and Lady Gaga on Jan. 30 raised approximately one hundred million dollars for wildfire relief. Additionally, the Grammy Awards spotlighted the crisis, with Crew Nation pledging one million dollars to assist live music professionals impacted by the disaster.

As LA begins its long road to recovery, questions remain about wildfire prevention, housing stability, and environmental resilience. Lawmakers and residents alike are calling for stronger fire safety measures, increased emergency preparedness, and more stringent policies to mitigate the effects of climate change. The coming months will be critical in determining how the city rebuilds and safeguards itself against future disasters. (Sources: Fox Business, gov.ca.gov, LGHS, Reuters, The Guardian, The Atlantic, wri.org)

ICE begins to arrest and deport immigrants in CA

by Margo Rawlings
Editor-in-Chief

Following President Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration, he began to fulfill one of his major campaign promises: mass deportations. One aspect of Trump's executive order on immigration included changing former President Obama's policy of restricting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents' ability to arrest illegal immigrants in sensitive locations, such as religious buildings, schools, and hospitals. ICE agents began their arrests shortly after Trump signed the executive order on Jan. 20 and 21. They specifically targeted sanctuary cities, including San Francisco, New York City, and Los Angeles that have certain policies restricting local law enforcement's cooperation with ICE agents. Their policies are meant to promote undocumented immigrants reporting crimes and accessing public services without the fear of facing deportation. Most recently, ICE operations reached the West Coast, with Americans reporting arrests throughout California, including Los Angeles, San Jose, Pomona, and San Diego.

With ICE agents' new ability to conduct arrests in sanctuary locations, many schools across California

have begun preparing their staff and students with protocol in the case of a visit from an ICE officer. The Los Angeles Unified School District provided their students with red "Know Your Rights" cards in case an immigration officer approached them. The cards include information for interactions with the agents, such as not opening classroom doors for



SPEAK UP: Protesters show their opposition to policies.

them, remaining silent, and not signing anything without consulting an attorney. Similarly, at the Santa Ana Unified School District, staff assembled a video to prepare students and their families for possible encounters with immigration officers.

At Los Gatos High School, Superintendent **Heath Rocha** distributed a protocol to staff members to prepare for possible visits from immigration officers. The protocol includes informing the superintendent's office of the visit as well as requesting to see a federal judicial warrant. In an email sent to the LGHS staff, Rocha stressed, "We understand that these situations can be challenging, and we are committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive school environment for all."

With fear and anxiety rising due to recent raids in other cities, misinformation has skyrocketed. False information that ICE agents would be visiting three schools and two malls in San Francisco and San Mateo County spread throughout the Bay Area in an undated flyer, with President Trump's forged signature.

Americans have taken to the streets, protesting Trump's immigration policies. In Los Angeles and San Francisco, protestors gathered for several days

to demonstrate their support for keeping California a sanctuary state.

Trump's new executive order is affecting all areas of the US, resulting in many cities and school districts creating new protocols to address such situations. (Sources: Fox 11, KSBW, KQED, NBC News, Vera)



SPEECH: Trump addresses a crowd of his supporters.

El Gato holds Bake Off

by Lucy Panicacci
Editor-in-Chief

El Gato held its 33rd annual El Gato Bake Off on Feb. 16, welcoming fellow El Gatans to make their favorite bakes and present them to me, the competition's host and judge. Five bakers competed in the bake off: Graphics Editor **Emery Curtis**, News Editor **Hayley Strahs**, Culture Editor **Claudia Casal**, Editorial Editor **Kloe Adams**, and Opinion Editor **Sam Gruetter**. Let's introduce each of the contestants and their bakes!

Curtis made delicious vanilla cake pops. According to Curtis, the complicated creation process took many hours; the recipe required making the cake and frosting, mixing the two, chilling the cake pops and then coating the cake pops in chocolate. The inspiration for her bake came from her mom. Curtis explained, "I really like to bake with my mom because she used to make cakes. As a business, she used to sell cakes. I love it. I was probably around five [when I started baking]." Curtis hopes that her version of cake pops outshines Starbucks, allowing her to enjoy one of her favorite sweet treats at a lower cost. Curtis stated, "I was tired of the Starbucks ones being four dollars."

Enticed by a craving for oatmeal, Strahs baked applesauce oat muffins. Keeping it simple, Strahs' recipe involved mixing wet and dry ingredients, baking in the oven, and topping the muffins with oats and sugar. While she hasn't practiced since the last bake off, Strahs felt hopeful she could come away with the win this time. She reasoned, "**Katie Nelson**, [last year's winner] isn't here, so I actually think I have a decent shot at winning since she is insane at baking."



SO YUMMY: Casal made delicious matcha muffins.

Casal decided to bring matcha muffins. Using her mom's special recipe, Casal included numerous specific steps to ensure the muffins came out perfectly. She had to make sure they were the right consistency, rested for half an hour, and baked at three different temperatures to achieve the correct rise and texture. Casal shared her baking journey, stating, "I've been baking since forever, but I started making a lot of muffins last year." Believing in her mom's recipe, Casal is confident in her ability to win: "I've made [matcha muffins] like a million times. I know it's good and deserves to win."

Working together as a duo, Gruetter and Adams made tiramisu cookies. To make this twist on the classic Italian dessert, Gruetter and Adams started by creating the cookie dough and undergoing the laborious process of kneading it. They then baked the cookies and frosted them with a mascarpone whipped cream frosting. Taking their baking very seriously, both Gruetter and Adams have baked since the moment they were born, all in preparation for this very competition. According to the pair, winning this competition would mean "everything." Adams elaborated, "It would be a really big honor because this is our first bake off, and we put a lot of work and effort into making the cookies."

All the contestants made wonderful and tasty treats. If you want to see my judging of each bake and discover the winner, scan the QR code to watch the full bake off competition!



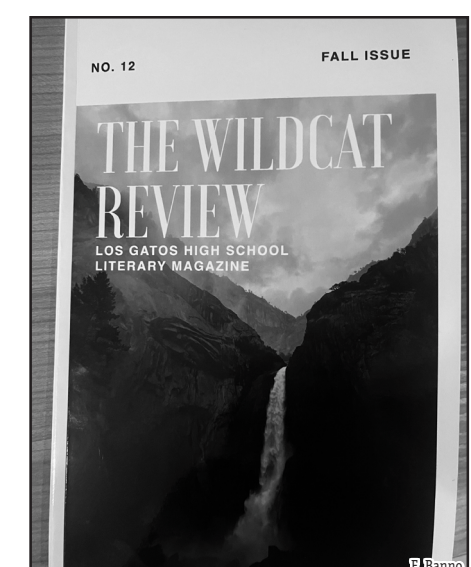
WATCH: Scan the QR code to view the whole bake-off.

LGHS publishes magazine

by Fuyu Banno
Graphics Editor

Los Gatos High School's literary magazine The Wildcat Review recently released its Fall 2024 issue filled with student writing, art, and photography.

As a published literary magazine, The Wildcat Review consists of a dedicated staff who work endlessly in reviewing submissions, editing, and evaluating what should go in the publication. Editor-in-Chief of the publication, junior **Hayley Strahs**, leads a group of students, each with their own job that contributes to putting together the magazine. Submissions to The Wildcat Review include student-created short stories, poetry, photography, paintings, and other forms of artwork. The Fall 2024 edition displays a diverse range of mediums, including iPhone photography and origami.



FRONT: The latest issue features a waterfall on the cover.

Sophomore **Naitik Gupta**, who submitted various works to the publication, took the waterfall photo featured on the front cover. When asked about this photo, Gupta explained that "[a waterfall] could be depicted in a lot of different ways. It could be like mine, really dark, but it was really showing serenity." Gupta's enjoyment of capturing scenery is portrayed through his photo submissions of a lighthouse and the red torii gates.

Besides photography, the art submissions captured a variety of spectacular scenery as well. Among the artists, senior **David Wang** expressed his creativity and skill through digital illustration and origami. The illustration, titled *Girl 32*, portrays a girl looking up, with Wang utilizing shadows in the artwork to express depth. Wang has been drawing for around a year and a half, stating that the artwork was originally an art study but turned out to be something he is proud to present. His origami piece, which took around 40 hours to complete according to Wang, depicts the Japanese god of lightning made out of intricately folded paper.

Finally, the third category included English masters from all grade levels. Freshman **Cleo Chan** submitted an abstract writing titled *Shoes*. Chan, who wrote the short story in seventh grade on a nondescript afternoon, described how she found it interesting that shoes or other personal objects have a lot of history behind them. Chan is also a part of The Wildcat Review staff who helped put together this edition. Joining the staff after a recommendation from a friend, Chan helps review submissions made to The Wildcat Review.

Issue XII of The Wildcat Review is available in LGHS English classrooms and the LGHS library as well as the local public library. For those interested in submitting poetry, short stories, photography, and/or artwork, the Spring 2025 edition is open for submissions. Wang shared a final word for those who may want to submit something, stating, "I feel like sharing is one of the biggest parts of art."



MEETING: Club members pose for a group picture.

Seniors host Monkeys4Matcha pop-up event

by Aliya Koshaliev
Media Production Editor

On Feb. 16, two Los Gatos High School seniors threw an unforgettable pop-up. Students **Anthony Nguyen** and **Everett Wang** partnered with a fellow senior from Saratoga to host *Monkeys4Matcha*.

In this pop-up event, Nguyen made four different types of matcha, and Wang baked three different kinds of pastries. Nguyen credited the success to his previous experience working as a barista at Starbucks, saying, "I mean, two years as a Starbucks barista definitely helped. I learned how to make drinks quickly and consistently, especially during rush hour. I learned how to work with different flavors, and I even got time to experiment with them, which is how we birthed the idea of *Monkeys4Matcha*." Nguyen handcrafted a variety of matcha drinks including honey matcha, strawberry matcha, sea salt cheese foam matcha lattes, and matcha lemonade. "At first, I would make the occasional matcha for a customer at work, and I decided to invest in the tools I need to make matcha at home. I would invite my friends over and make matcha for them. I had Everett over once and he suggested we make matcha for people, and I guess the idea stuck," Nguyen

explained. Wang, who recently started working at a boba shop also credited his work experience. "Like Anthony, working with different ingredients and recipes was the lightbulb in terms of creating recipes." Wang, a passionate cook, incorporated his favorite recipes into the pastries menu for the pop-up, serving black sesame mini cakes, coffee toffee chocolate cookies, and mochi puff pastry.



COOKING: The boys prepare pastries and drinks for the event in advance.

Teens from various high schools flocked to the event, with 50 students from San Francisco, Palo Alto, Los Gatos, and Saratoga arriving for matcha and pastries. Wang hosted the pop-up at his house, serving drinks and food alongside Nguyen from his window while event goers congregated in his driveway. Senior **Isabella Argonza** attended the event, praising the chefs for their drinks: "The matcha was phenomenal, especially given the price." *Monkeys4Matcha* sold matchas for three dollars and pastries for two dollars. Argonza pointed out that "most matcha places will charge six or seven or even eight dollars for some mediocre matcha that tastes like water, but Anthony and Everett gave me a deal I couldn't resist." **Boden Ruvane**, another senior who attended the event, raved about the matcha and the pastries: "I know Anthony makes amazing matchas, but I was blown away by Everett's pastries. I had the cookie, and I swear it melted in my mouth."

After serving matcha and pastries for almost five hours, *Monkeys4Matcha* closed up shop. "I was so scared that we would make too much food or no one would show up, but everything went swimmingly," Nguyen said. Later that night, Wang and Nguyen sent out a text, telling attendees to stay tuned for a second pop-up.

- Trump enacts new tariffs on goods
- Senate elects Russell Vought

NATIONAL

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American Airlines flight collides with a US Army helicopter

By Katie Borders
National/World Editor

On Jan. 29, 2025, at around 8:48 PM, the United States Army Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter collided midair with American Airlines Flight 5342 over the Potomac River near Washington DC. The plane, descending and approaching Runway 33, was less than 20 minutes away from landing when the collision occurred. Both the US Black Hawk helicopter and the American Airlines plane plummeted down into the frigid river in a cloud of burning debris, with the plane carrying 60 passengers and four crew members and the US Black Hawk helicopter carrying three military personnel. After sending out an immediate search and rescue attempt to find any possible survivors, officials tragically concluded to the devastation of many that there were no survivors from the crash. First responders continue to recover bodies, with at least 41 bodies recovered so far — 28 of which remain unidentified. The nation mourns the shocking tragedy, and an investigation of the cause is underway.

The CEO and executive director of the Skating Club at Boston, Dough Zeghibe, stated that two adolescent figure skaters, their mothers, and two renowned Russian figure skating coaches were among the 14 members of the US Figure Skating Team aboard the

American Airlines plane that crashed into the Potomac River. The US Figure Skating Team members had been returning from the National Development Camp in Wichita, Kansas after the US Championships. US Figure Skaters across the nation paid tribute to and commemorated the memory of the 14 ice skaters and parents who lost their lives in the crash.



DISASTER: Wreckage of American Airlines flight floats in the Potomac River.

Hamaad Raza, husband to one of the passengers in the plane crash, received a final text from his wife before the collision, in which she texted, "We're landing in 20." Raza had been waiting to pick his wife up from the Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington DC. Tragically, the US Black Hawk helicopter collided with Flight 5342 soon after the text was sent. Raza as well as many other families grieve and mourn the devastating loss of their loved ones.

The regional airline awarded posthumous honors to the crew members who were aboard the passenger jet, which included Captain Jonathan Campos, 34, co-pilot and Second Attendant Sam Lilley, 28, who was set to get married this fall, and flight attendants Danasia Elder and Ian Epstein. Among the soldiers aboard the Black Hawk Helicopter were Staff Sergeant Ryan Austin O'Hara, 28, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Eaves, 39, and Captain Rebecca M. Lobach, 28.

The Federal Aviation Administration continues to lead an investigation to find out the cause, as the Black Hawk helicopter appears to have ignored a warning from air traffic control 30 seconds before it flew into the path of the passenger plane, colliding with each other and crashing into the Potomac River. Family and friends continue to mourn their loved ones who died in the crash. (Sources: BBC, CBS, CNN, Live 5 WCSC, NY Times, The Guardian)

Judges block Trump's order

By Kloe Adams
Editorial Editor

US District Court Judge Deborah L. Boardman issued a preliminary injunction on Feb 5, which indefinitely blocked President Donald Trump's attempt to eliminate automatic US citizenship. Following the commencement of his second term as president, Trump released an order called Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship, declaring that children born in the United States to undocumented immigrants after Feb. 19 would no longer be treated as citizens. The order also excluded citizenship rights for babies born to mothers who are in the country legally but temporarily, if the father is a noncitizen. Two nonprofit organizations, Maryland-based Court Appointed Special Advocates, and New York-based Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project, brought the case forward, as well as five pregnant women who are living in the country either unlawfully or on temporary visas. Boardman ruled, "The executive order conflicts with the plain language of the 14th Amendment, contradicts 125-year-old binding Supreme Court precedent, and runs counter to our nation's 250-year history of citizenship by birth."

Boardman's injunction follows a temporary 14-day restraining order issued on Jan. 23 by federal judge John C. Coughenour in Seattle. Boardman's injunction proved more permanent than the 14-day restraining order. However, on Feb. 6, Coughenour



INTERVIEW: Karoline Leavitt speaks with press regarding Trump.



RALLY: Trump stands before a crowd during election season.

issued his own injunction. The matter before Coughenour involves four states: Arizona, Illinois, Oregon, and Washington. It has been consolidated with a lawsuit brought by the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project. The Justice Department can now appeal the preliminary injunctions to the US 4th Circuit of Appeals. The Justice Department lawyer who argued the case did not say if the department plans to file such appeals.

While the Justice Department did not agree to release a statement, the White House commented, "President Trump was given a resounding mandate to end the disregard and abuse of our immigration laws and to secure our borders." White House spokesman Kush Desai said, "The Trump administration will continue to put Americans and America first." Additionally, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt voiced that the administration believes that birthright citizenship is unconstitutional, justifying Trump's signing the executive order.

Becoming the third judge to do so, US District Judge Joseph Laplante in New Hampshire blocked Trump's executive order. New Hampshire Indonesian Community Support, League of United Latin American Citizens, and Make the Road New York sought the injunction.

In most cases, a preliminary injunction remains in force until a case is resolved or a higher court overturns it.

(Sources: CBS, NBC, NY Times, PBS)

CISA forces staffers to go on leave

By Megan Saul
Culture Editor

The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has placed 17 staffers of the recent elections on administrative leave. President Donald Trump founded CISA in 2018, intending to help control the nation's infrastructure and secure elections. In 2020, CISA aimed to disprove misinformation that sprung from the 2020 presidential election. During the most recent election, CISA worked to alert the public about misinformation spread internationally. With many workers currently on leave and pending a review, officials are concerned with the lack of support CISA currently has for the election offices across the country and the effect of this change on the future of the country's cybersecurity.



SPEECH: Donald Trump and Kristi Noem discuss CISA layoffs.

On Feb. 5, before CISA placed staffers on leave, the Trump administration allowed staffers to participate in the Deferred Resignation program. The goal of this program is to shrink the federal government. A CISA spokesperson shared, "At this time, CISA employees may be considered for the Deferred Resignation program. CISA remains committed to ensuring the continuity of our mission while supporting our workforce through this process." Since Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) arranged the Deferred Resignation program, cybersecurity experts are worried whether DOGE workers will take over the roles of the many CISA employees.



INFLUENCE: CISA Secretary speaks at Security Division Ceremony.

Following the conclusion of this offer, CISA placed staffers on leave. Out of the 17 employees, CISA recently hired ten of them before the 2024 election to increase election security expertise. These staffers work for the field operations division. The other staffers are currently or have recently worked for the Election Security and Resilience team. People aware of the situation infer that the purpose of the leave is to tackle disinformation campaigns within the nation's current politics.

Many state officials have defended and protected the agency's work, despite the changes to the program the government plans to make. For example, Kentucky Secretary of State Michael Adams shared, "The most value that we've got from CISA has been the people that they have on the ground in our state that build direct relationships, not just with us but with the individual county clerks...They're teaching them and helping them check their physical security and their cyber hygiene, and that's been extremely popular." On the contrary, other officials have become doubtful and critical of CISA's work and whether it is achieving its purpose. Kristi Noem, the newly appointed Secretary of Homeland Security, explained that CISA has gone "far off mission." While both the Deferred Resignation program and the act of CISA placing staffers on leave are separate issues, they both contribute to CISA's changing program and size.

(Sources: ABC, NPR)

Trump appoints CEO Elon Musk head of Government Efficiency

By Sam Gruetter
Opinion Editor

Immediately following President Donald Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20, he employed several controversial and extreme policies, including the appointment of tech CEO Elon Musk, a non-cabinet member, as head of the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). DOGE aims to decrease government spending by making adjustments to the government, such as decreasing the number of government employees.



FINAL STINT: USAID disaster-aid supply pallets await US helicopter on airstrip.

Musk immediately began taking action to bring the goal of DOGE to fruition, entering a period of productivity he proclaimed as his "demon mode." Musk often adopts this manic behavior, including sleeping in his office or going several days without sleep, during his reconstruction of companies. One of the department's first policies was to send out an email to federal workers stipulating that they could either agree to leave their jobs in September, but continue to work and get paid until then, or risk being fired. The initial deadline for employees' decision was Feb. 6, although a federal judge suspended this deadline due to a lawsuit that the American Federation of Government Employees filed.

Another one of DOGE's changes under Musk included shutting down the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Trump initially halted funding for the organization for 90 days; however, Musk took this a step further, even going so far as to call them a "criminal organization" on X. Over the course of the next few days, the government laid off masses of employees and locked them out of their email accounts, despite many Democrats questioning the legality of Musk's actions.

DOGE's policies have sparked controversy among different political figures, many of whom are questioning the merits of DOGE's background, namely, the large volume of classified information DOGE has acquired through President Trump. This information includes financial records of many Americans, medical records, payroll information about government employees, and identities of undercover government officials. Anonymous senators from Congress commented on the lack of transparency from

both Trump and Musk, saying, "No information has been provided to Congress or the public as to who has been formally hired under DOGE, under what authority or regulations DOGE is operating, or how DOGE is vetting and monitoring its staff and representatives before providing them seemingly unfettered access to classified materials and Americans' personal information." (Sources: BBC, CNN, PBS)



CHAT: Musk participates in fireside chat with Lt. Gen. John Thompson.

The US Treasury aims to stop production of pennies

by Kayla Mitchell
Media Production Editor

President Trump's sweeping agenda, which aims at reshaping US policy and government, has recently found a new target: the penny. On Feb. 9, shortly after departing from the Super Bowl in New Orleans, Trump announced that he had instructed the secretary of the US Treasury to stop producing pennies. With the cost of manufacturing outweighing the coin's value, the government has zoned in on the drawbacks of America's least valuable coin.



HEADS UP: A large pile of pennies display either a head or tail.

A major downside of the penny is that the creation of the coin costs more than its value. The day after Trump's inauguration, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) criticized the penny

in a tweet, sharing how each penny costs over three cents to produce, which ultimately costed American taxpayers over 179 million dollars in the fiscal year 2023. The US Mint — a bureau of the Department of the Treasury — announced the manufacturing price rose to 3.69 cents per penny in 2024. In their annual report, the US Mint reported a fiscal loss of about 85.3 million dollars last year because of the 3.2 billion pennies produced. Trump wrote on his social media, "Let's rip the waste out of our great nation's budget, even if it's a penny at a time."

Past government officials and presidents have publicly shared the advantages of removing the penny and their desire to do so. Former President Barack Obama shared his support for stopping the production of pennies in an interview in 2013. Obama believed extra costs due to the penny were unnecessary, stating, "This is not going to be a huge savings for the government, but anytime we're spending more money on something that people don't actually use, that's an example of something we should probably change." In the past, many law officials and economists have attempted to stop the production of pennies or at least addressed its harmful costs. In 2017, Senator John McCain co-sponsored a bill with the intent of pausing penny production for ten years and having the Government Accountability Office study the effects that the experiment would have on the US economy. With other countries eliminating their lowest currency values over recent years, US citizens have supported debates to eliminate the penny since the 1980s. In its 1989 edition, the Farmer's Almanac wrote, "Only tradition explains our stubborn attachment to the penny. But sometimes traditions get ridiculous."

This proposes the question that has been up in the air since Trump's announcement: does he have the power to do it? Congress oversees the

Mint's functions and authorizes the production of US coins. Mint's website notes, "As a part of the U.S. Department of Treasury, the United States Mint derives its authority from the United States Congress." As of now, it seems that Trump's goal depends upon an act of Congress to stop the production of pennies, but due to some grey area, it is also possible that the US Treasury might also have the power to stop production. Scott Bessent, Secretary of the Treasury, has not publicly responded to Trump's endeavors. The penny's "negative seigniorage" has caught the attention of government officials, and this time, it is not certain it will make it out alive. (Sources: AP News, NPR)



EYE CONTACT: President Trump speaks before his vast audience.

Trump implements tariffs

by Rory Zeman
Media Production Editor

On Feb. 1, President Donald Trump unleashed a salvo of tariffs on numerous countries and goods around the world. Trump, citing the need for a return to America's industrial glory age, justified his actions by mentioning how numerous American manufacturing groups lobbied for such increases.

Specifically, Trump enacted a ten percent increase in tariff rates for all goods coming from China, to which the US currently owes around 300 billion dollars. In retaliation, the Chinese placed tariffs on American computer chips, metals, and added fashion brands Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger to its unreliable trading list. The Wall Street Journal called this exchange the start of "the dumbest trade war in history."



STAND PROUDLY: Trump displays his signed order.

However, Trump didn't stop there. He then proceeded to announce 25 percent tariffs on all goods from Mexico and Canada. The two recipient countries were quick to respond, with Mexico claiming its intentions to impose retaliatory tariffs and Canada

announcing tariffs on American cosmetics, paper products, and beverages, resulting in an estimated cost of 85 billion dollars for American consumers. However, Trump's tariff plans for Mexico and Canada will not come into effect until Mar. 1.

On Feb. 10, Trump announced a plan to put 25 percent tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports from every country in the world. Trump cited the necessity for an isolationist economy, labeling the move a "time for our great industries to come back to America." Despite lobbying efforts and support for these moves by American steel industries, the repercussions of such grandiose taxes could short-circuit American and even global manufacturing. For instance, ten percent of the United Kingdom's steel exports end up in the United States, meaning the tariffs could have devastating impacts on European economies. Furthermore, the increased prices of precious metals across the board could be costly for American markets. Car, food packing, and technology consumers in America could suffer greatly if the prices continue to rise and certain manufacturers suffer from more expensive raw materials.

Trump's next target is not official, but economists predict that other Asian countries are likely to be next on the list because Asian countries have imposed steeper tariffs on American imports in comparison to those that the US has in place on them. For instance, South Korea has 13.6 percent tariffs on American goods with the American reciprocal being only 1.9 percent. Similarly, India has 10.5 percent tariffs to an American 2.7 percent tariff to counter. Vietnam's cabinet has also started preparing for this scenario. In the past, Trump called Vietnam "almost the single worst abuser" of trade, for Vietnam is one of many countries to take billions of dollars of investment from American trade nemesis China. Although it is almost impossible to predict Trump's next move, tariffs will certainly become an American normality over the next four years. (Sources: AP, BBC, CNN, NBC, NY Times, WSJ)

US Senate confirms Vought

by Margo Rawlings
Editor-in-Chief

The Senate confirmed Russell Vought, President Donald Trump's controversial pick for the White House budget director, in a party-line vote of 53-47 on Feb. 6.

Vought first entered the political world as a Senate aide to Texas Republican Phil Gramm in the late 1990s. He then became executive director of the Republican Study Committee and later on, a policy director for the Republican Conference of the US House of Representatives. Vought served under Trump during his first presidential term as the Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2017 before Trump appointed him to the director position in 2020. Following Trump's departure from office, Vought founded the Center for Renewing America, a far-right nonprofit group, and he became one of the authors of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025.



QUESTIONS: Vought stands before journalists.

During his confirmation hearing, he faced extensive questioning from both Republicans and Democrats. He expressed his plans to reduce the size of the government as well as the national deficit by cutting government spending. To do this, Vought intends to reduce federal government inefficiency. Many Democrats raised concerns about Vought's partisan back-

ground, emphasizing the importance that the OMB remains bipartisan.

The Senate Budget Committee voted along party lines, in a 12-11 vote, to send his nomination to the Senate floor. With the Republican party holding the majority in the Senate, Democrats had little power in halting Vought's confirmation.

However, due to the Senate's permission of debate, Democrats utilized their allotted time to protest his nomination. Senate Democrats held the floor in an overnight session that lasted for almost 30 hours to delay Vought's confirmation. The Senate minority leader, Chuck Schumer, explained, "We're going to be speaking all night. We want Americans, every hour, whether it's 8:00 PM or 3:00 AM, to hear how bad Russell Vought is and the danger he poses to them in their daily lives." Various Senate Democrats came together to fill the allotted time, taking slots throughout the night, and often holding the floor for more than two hours each. Senator Andy Kim from New Jersey wrote on X, "Just got back to the Capitol past midnight as I prepare to speak during an all night marathon session to control the Senate floor and keep the focus on this assault on our Constitution. We have to raise the alarm to the American people."

During overnight sessions, it is customary to see moments of lightheartedness from speakers. Senators Brian Schatz (Hawaii) and Christopher Murphy (Connecticut) who held the floor from 2:00 to 5:00 AM briefly discussed their consumption of caffeinated beverages. Murphy informed his colleague, "Just for the record, Sen. Schatz, it's Diet Mountain Dew. Mountain Dew is disgusting. Diet Mountain Dew is acceptable."

While the protest was largely performative, as Democrats retained the minority vote in the Senate, it demonstrated their strong opposition to Vought's nomination. (Sources: Forbes, NY Times, Politico, Roll Call, The New Republic)

President Trump ends DEI policies in federal workplaces

by Julia Valencia
People Editor

On Jan. 22, President Donald Trump signed an executive order terminating DEI preferencing for all federal-related work. Now, companies are scrambling to figure out how they will go forward with the news and whether or not they will apply.

DEI, implemented in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson, stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion. DEI was created so that government employers were required to hire the best-suited applicant, regardless of their race, religion, sex, or any other attribute that has historically been discriminated against. President Trump says that DEI has proven to be discriminatory, counterproductive, and too democratic, hence his endorsement of ending the long-standing policy. The president threatened colleges with federal funding, saying that if they kept the diversity programs in place, they would face fines "up to the entire amount of their endowment."

Trump ordered government agencies to place all DEI office staffers on paid leave until further notice and to take down all DEI-focused websites by 5:00 PM on Jan. 29. The White House also forced employers to cancel any future DEI training. Any federal workers who suspect that DEI programs are still in effect under a different name are required to report to Trump's Office of Personnel Management within ten days or they will face "adverse consequences."

Some companies had already implemented these new orders, beginning in late 2024, after President Trump had won his second presidential term. Walmart, Target, and Amazon are among some of the largest retail companies in America that were the first to drop DEI. Many upset Americans have taken to social media, where backlash has been particularly harsh on Target, with calls to boycott the company. Shaun Harper, a business and public policy professor at the University of Southern California, said, "Companies have been doing DEI on the cheap for years... They've been trying to do as little of it as possible, as inexpensively as possible... They've never been properly funded or staffed."



MAJOR MARKET CHAIN: A Costco sign shines brightly over the store.

Costco and Trader Joe's, however, are among the few big companies holding firm on their commitment to keep their DEI programs in place.

Both companies have made their stances clear on the debate and intend to keep applying the benefits that DEI offers. At the beginning of February, almost 20 Republican attorney generals urged Costco to remove their DEI policies, going against the company's decision made by shareholders in an overwhelming majority to keep DEI.

President Trump's executive order to end DEI once and for all has caused an uproar amongst the policy's supporters and will likely stay a central topic of discussion until more companies are sure of the details and decide their course of action. (Sources: AP, CNN, NY Times, SD Union-Tribune, Supermarket News, The White House)



BIG SIGNATURE: President Trump signs an executive order to terminate DEI.

- Trump displays interest in CECOT
- Conflict in Africa continues

WORLD

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El Salvador's CECOT prison remains a topic of discussion

by **Kat Littfin**
News Editor

El Salvador's new Terrorism Confinement Center, CECOT, known as, opened in 2023 under President Nayib Bukele's campaign to fight the heightening gang-related crimes in his country. Recently, the prison has garnered international attention due to news reports of abuse and President Trump's proposed deal to send detained migrants and imprisoned citizens to the facility.

CECOT sits 45 miles east of the nation's capital, Tecola. In 2024, the establishment held around 110 thousand inmates, almost 100 times the number of prisoners usually held in a US federal prison. The prison has a large capacity and uniquely has cells designed to fit 60 to 75 individuals. The high cell capacity is one of the prison's many tactics to deter gang behavior, as prison workers often place members of rival gangs into cells together, forcing the separate gangs to coexist. Furthermore, the prison does not allow their prisoners to have visitors or even go outside. The prison's goal is not rehabilitation but rather isolation, as within the prison, there are no programs to help the inmates assimilate into society after their imprisonment, such as educational or work programs. President Bukele has even mentioned that he doesn't plan to release any of the inmates held in CECOT back to their communities.

Although the conditions of the facility are extreme, El Salvador has struggled with some of the highest crime rates in the world. During the early 2010s, many considered El Salvador the murder capital of the world. President Bukele's campaign to attack the rampant crime in the country was largely popular and many approved his plans to construct the facility. Because of Bukele's and CECOT's radical and controversial measures, El Salvador's homicide rate reached a record low in 2024, depicting the success of the president's campaign promise.

Despite the positive outcome of Bukele's war on crime, conditions in the prison have stirred some controversy among advocacy groups. In the summer of 2024, the prison reported that 261 people had died. Though the ratio of prisoner versus staff deaths is unclear, the number is concerning, especially amidst accusations of human rights violations. According to the Associated Press, human rights advocacy group Critosal reported cases of abuse, torture, and lack of medical attention as causes of death. Though the prison may be preventing death and abuse outside of its bounds, its promotion of torture and climbing casualty rates are somewhat alarming to many.

CECOT has recently made national headlines as President Trump has proposed sending migrants and incarcerated citizens to the facility. This decision is contentious, especially because it is illegal to deport American citizens under the Constitution. Though both the American

and El Salvadorian presidents have agreed to the deal, it may not pass due to the unconstitutional nature of the agreement. (Sources: AP, The Guardian)



HIGH-SECURITY: Police officers take inmates to their cells at CECOT.

Sweden school shooting kills 11

by **Quinn Hathaway**
National/World Editor

On Feb. 4, a gunman entered the Risbergska Education Center, located in Orebro, Sweden, executing an attack that killed at least 11 people.

Risbergska Education Center, a campus that teaches classes for adults over 20 years old, as well as surrounding schools, went on lockdown. Footage shows students hiding behind and under whatever they could find. Five people sustained significant gunshot wounds, and the police found the suspected gunman dead, with officials saying there is "a lot to indicate" suicide.

In addition to the injured students, six officials had to undergo treatment for smoke inhalation. This type of mass shooting is extremely uncommon in Sweden, as the country enforces strict gun control laws, and only about 660,000 people are registered gun owners out of the 10.5 million citizens. In contrast, according to the Texas legislature, approximately 40 percent of households in the US own guns, with estimates of US citizens owning a total of over 400 million private guns. Despite Sweden's harsh laws, the past few years have seen a rise in gun violence, with 391 incidents in 2022 according to police data. Most of those infractions were correlated with drug or gang activity, but the Feb. 4 attack

seems more similar to American school shootings, as the gunman acted alone.

Police identified the shooter as Rickard Andersson and are discussing several possible motives, although none have yet been confirmed. Andersson once was a student at Risbergska, which is home to a very ethnically diverse student population. Xenophobia and prior negative experiences at the center are both leading theories in the motive investigation. The shooter was "previously unknown to the police" with no prior infractions, although prosecutors did identify the man on Feb. 10.

The attack shook Sweden as a whole, as there have only been two school attacks in the past decade, one in 2015 and one in 2022; both were stabbings and no firearms were involved. Families of the deceased and injured as well as concerned community members gathered outside the Orebro school, leaving flowers and many cards. However, the school remains closed as the investigation continues.

The police did not formally announce the victims' names, but several have been identified, including Salim Iskef, a 28-year-old Syrian refugee. Iskef's sister, Hanan, along with the rest of his family, is distraught, asking TV4, "How am I supposed to live without him?" Others include Elsa Tekley, 32, from Eritrea, Bassam Al Sheleh, 48, another Syrian refugee, and Aziza, whose surname was not released, from Kurdistan.

Swedish Prime minister Ulf Kristersson released a statement calling the attack "a horrific act of violence" and asked the country to rally as a whole because "when the perpetrator attacked [the school], he attacked all of us." Kristersson visited the memorial along with King Carl XVI and Queen Silvia to lay flowers and pay their respects. The school shooting at Sweden has shocked millions. (Sources: BBC, CBS, NY Times)



CATASTROPHE: Swedish police line up near the school.

Natural disasters strike Greece

by **Jordan Park**
Sports Editor

For the past several weeks, thousands of tremors have rattled the islands of Greece and its inhabitants.

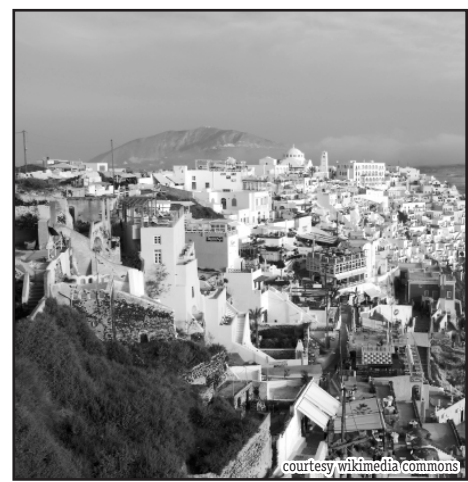
Since Jan. 25, Santorini, located about 150 miles southeast of Athens, and surrounding islands have experienced thousands of small earthquakes, sometimes occurring every few minutes. Although most of the tremors were relatively minor, there were 160 tremors with a magnitude greater than four in the first several days of February. The seismic activity reached its height with a 5.2-magnitude earthquake northeast of Santorini on Feb. 5. On the night of Feb. 9, residents of Athens felt a magnitude 5.0 earthquake, followed by a magnitude 5.3 earthquake in the same region late on Feb. 10.

Santorini is part of the Hellenic Volcanic Arc, a series of islands formed by volcanic activity. The last significant eruption occurred in the 1950s. However, Greek authorities have indicated that the recent tremors are attributed to tectonic plate movements rather than volcanic activity. The extent of the risk remains uncertain, with some experts downplaying the likelihood of a significant earthquake. They emphasize that the seismic activity is not connected to a dormant volcano on Santorini, ruling out the possibility of an eruption.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared a state of emergency on Feb. 6 and stated that every possible measure is being implemented. "We're preparing for the worst while hoping for the best," he said during a visit to the island of Santorini on Feb. 7, urging residents to stay calm. Local authorities are also advising residents to avoid indoor gatherings, review escape routes, steer clear of cliffs, and drain swimming pools to

minimize potential structural damage to buildings in the event of a significant earthquake. In response to the shaking, authorities have closed schools and prohibited large indoor gatherings. Emergency personnel have been sent to the island, and landing craft are prepared for potential evacuations. Certain areas of Santorini have been sealed off due to concerns about landslides, and sandbags have been placed near coastal homes. The island's inhabitants are also taking action as at least 13,000 of the island's 15,500 residents, unsettled by the ongoing tremors, have departed in the past week, leaving the cobblestone streets largely empty.

As of Feb. 11, authorities have reported no injuries and only minimal damage, such as minor landslides. However, scientists are unable to predict the precise timing, magnitude, or location of earthquakes, so the outlook for Santorini, one of Greece's most popular islands, remains relatively unclear. (Sources: AP, BBC, NY Times)



PARADISE: Santorini island stays a hot vacation spot.

Sudanese army continues war against rebel group and more

by **Owen Fugit**
Editor-in-Chief

Countries across Africa continue to confront issues and conflicts, from continuing violence in Sudan to a swift worsening of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Republic of South Africa. Here are some of the headlines from the past few months concerning the most important African developments.

Sudan's conflict continues: After a spat over the shape of the government came to a head in 2023, the Sudanese Army continues to battle the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) rebel group for control of Sudan. The conflict has left millions without food, killed at least 61,000 people, and alarmed the international community. Recently, the Sudanese military launched a brand-new campaign to recapture the nation's capital, Khartoum, from the RSF. The conflict is ongoing, and the people of Sudan continue to suffer despite international efforts to supply food to starving communities. The war has also displaced nearly 12 million people, making it one of the largest conflicts in recent years.

and subsequently burned down Goma prison in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Before setting the inferno, members of the group entered the prison, raped all the female inmates,



SMILE: The South African president poses for photo.

and locked them inside the building as it burned, killing hundreds. In an unexpected turn of events, M23 attacked DRC on Jan. 27, capturing the provincial capital of Goma and raising concerns that

the budding conflict in the resource-rich region may widen into a regional war. Rwandan military groups have already forced one million of Goma's two million residents to flee their homes, feeding concerns of a potential humanitarian crisis in the region.

Trump feuds with South Africa: On Jan. 23, the Republic of South Africa signed a new law into effect, allowing the government to seize or purchase lands for public use as it sees fit. The law, officially the Expropriation Act No. 13 of 2024, came under fire from President Trump, who criticized the law for its "shocking disregard of [South Africa's] citizens' rights," and claimed the law allowed "the government of South Africa to seize ethnic minority Afrikaners' agricultural property without compensation." The Trump administration directed the government "to prioritize humanitarian relief, including admission and resettlement through the United States Refugee Admissions Program, for Afrikaners in South Africa who are victims of unjust racial discrimination." Multiple Afrikaner representation groups in South Africa refused Trump's offer, with the Solidarity Movement group, issuing a statement declaring, "We may disagree with the African National Congress, but we

love our country. As in any community, there are individuals who wish to emigrate, but repatriation of Afrikaners as refugees is not a solution for us." (Sources: AP, African Union, BBC, Reuters, Solidarity Movement, Sudan War Monitor, The Guardian, The Week, The White House, Wall Street Journal)



LAW: A South African statue watches the nation.

- El Gato staff support the preservation of English 9 Honors

EDITORIAL

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LGHS should keep English 9 Honors as a course option

by Aliya Koshaliev, Julia Valencia, and Annabelle Pan

Media Production, People, and Graphics Editors

Los Gatos High School, a school known for its academic rigor, is making changes to its already limited course offerings for freshmen. Starting in the 2025-26 school year, incoming freshmen can no longer choose English 9 Honors (9H) as an advanced English class. The school's cited reasons for removing English 9H, which include fostering community and supporting mental health, are important for improving student life, but the English department should not be the only department that changes classes to address the need for increased community and mental health awareness.

Before 2019, to enroll in English 9 Honors, incoming freshmen were required to take an entry test. Roughly 50 spots were available, and once those were filled, no other students could sign up for the class. Students who passed the test entered into 9H, and those who did not took regular English 9. Eventually, the demand for the class increased, leading to a larger number of 9H courses, but the mandatory test stayed. The system worked well for a long time, until the administration questioned why the school should prevent determined students from taking the course. Thus, the test became optional, giving more students the opportunity to take desired courses, but this also limited the English teachers' understanding of students' skill sets and abilities. Since many students opted out of the test, the Honors English teachers decided to remove the requirement completely, a decision that has remained unchanged until now.

At the beginning of the 2024 academic year, the school's leadership, composed of department chairs, counselors, and administrators, held a meeting to discuss the direction of LGHS. Counselors and administrators noticed stress and anxiety were becoming increasingly common

among students, fostering an unhealthy sense of competition. The school leadership proposed the idea of taking away the GPA boost in 9H but keeping the class. Current English department chair and veteran English 9 and 9H teacher **Kathleen Wehr** brought up this idea in a meeting with all English 9 teachers but was met with resistance as the other teachers made convincing arguments for taking English 9H away entirely.

With the removal of English 9H, incoming freshmen would have two classes, Health & Fitness and English, where everyone would be at the same level. As English 10/10H teacher **Blaine Bowman** explained, "I understand the argument that freshman year needs to be about community building, and that English is like an equalizer. Every student has English, and therefore it is the one class that we can create the camaraderie in that community at Los Gatos High School, and I do think that that's really important." Additionally, Wehr and other teachers discerned that "stress and anxiety were becoming a real thing and more students were visiting the Wellness Center. A lot of kids come to

us, and it's stress-related school issues," mainly concerning their grades. Many students believe they need to have an A in their honors classes, which shifts the focus from the process of learning to the end result.

Another problem that the English department had with English 9H was that it was clear that parents and students were signing up for the class solely for the grade boost. Based on students' interest levels, or lack thereof, teachers observed a substantial divide in their classes' overall ability. Wehr noted that, with open access to English 9H, she "started getting kids in the class where their parents would sign them up because it looks good on the transcript," and other students "would sign up purely for the grade bump and that was it." After a while, she observed: "Some kids were not doing well. They were getting Ds and Fs in honors because they wouldn't complete the work." With so many students who did not enjoy reading or English signing up for the 9H class, the course was straying further from what it was originally intended to be: a higher-level class for students who enjoyed English and wanted a more challenging curriculum. Even with

English 9H removed, students who favor a harder English curriculum can still succeed and learn in a standard English class. The English department is working to modify the curriculum to suit all students, but, in the end, most teachers would concur with Wehr when she says, "My job is to teach the student, not necessarily the subject."

Although many people agree that the honors program has its flaws, removing the class entirely is not the best way to address those flaws. Removing an honors course does not change the fact that a lot of students are only focused on their grades; this is a personal mindset that only the student can change. Even after removing English 9H, students can still worry about their grades in Biology Honors, math, and all of their other classes. Furthermore, fostering community at school by having two classes where all students are at the same level could also be done by removing Biology Honors or reducing the many levels of math. European history could be a required course for freshmen. However, it is the English department that is making changes to achieve this community and supporting the social-emotional needs of students'.

To ask the English department to reduce its course offerings in favor of preserving other classes is problematic. Student-counselor meetings always fall on the English department, taking away from class time. These meetings are indispensable and happen during English class because it is the only required course divided into grade level each year.

However, the school could designate a tutorial period like MOSAIC for the counselor meetings, which would not affect any class, English or otherwise. Though English is the only subject that students are required to take for all four years, it does seem that most students prioritize STEM subjects over humanities, especially since we live in Silicon Valley. This emphasis on STEM is clearly displayed in the elective options.

Incoming juniors can take three AP science classes but only one AP writing. Removing English 9H will be detrimental to students who are more interested in humanities, as it takes away the opportunity to push themselves and excel in a class they enjoy.



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graphics E. Curtis, A. Pan, F Banno

EL GATO

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- Literacy is an important skill
- Surf etiquette must be followed

OPINION

EL GATO • FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2025 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONNEWS.COM

Fugit encourages students to appreciate history classes

by Owen Fugit
Editor-in-Chief



By the time a Wildcat graduates, they will have taken a minimum of two history courses at LGHS: at least one covering world history and one covering US history. Even with some of the best history teachers in the Bay Area, the subject still falls by the wayside for many students at LGHS, who see it as a class

based solely on rote memorization of facts and dates that have no tangible impact on the world in which we live. However, this could not be further from the truth as the study of history is vital to understanding our world.

It is no secret that the history courses are some of the best in the bay, with world-class teachers dedicated to imbuing students with deep historical knowledge. According to 32-year veteran social studies teacher **Thomas Hughes**, history is important because “there’s so much that goes on presently that you have to understand...and you gotta know the background.” In an ever-changing world, it is becoming increasingly beneficial to understand the background of current events, something people often overlook when learning about new developments. “So I don’t care what

subject you’re talking about,” Hughes said. “It’s all built upon the past, so you have to understand that past and understand what’s going on right now.”

To better understand the past, as Mr. Hughes made clear, students must pay more attention to their history teachers.

AP United States History teacher **Tyler McGlashan** explained that “learning history is really about learning about the world that you’re going into as a young person,” which is why it is imperative that we take our history teachers seriously. Widely known is the fact that students will often take shortcuts or cheat outright to pass a history class. Still, as Mr. McGlashan noted, “You can say you don’t want to understand history, but do you really not want to understand how government and economics and college and jobs and all the things in your life, how and why they take place?” History is far more than the study of dates and names. It is time for students at LGHS to respect history and historians.

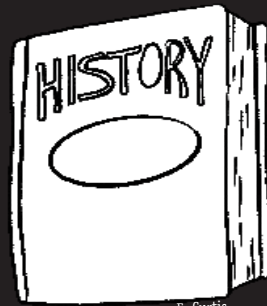
As the United States enters the controversial presidency of Donald Trump, student activists are left wondering how they can make their voices heard. Mr. Hughes advised students to question the history of events. “Why is that going on?” Mr.

Hughes suggested asking. “Well, there’s some history to it...I’m not sure everyone always sees that.” Mr. McGlashan recommended that students “don’t just think of the history, but what do you think about it?” While student activists may be eager to decry

Trump for his actions in the present, activists must examine similar instances in the past and the ways in which people dealt with them in order to find the best course of action for their own problems today.

As students proceed through their second semester, they must remember to use history as a tool and analyze events to understand the world we live in, and the world we may be heading towards. Mr. McGlashan summarized the importance of listening to history teachers, saying, “I also believe that we allow students

to figure out who they are as human beings in this world, and I think that’s probably the most important thing, because as they learn about history, they learn about the world, and then they start to develop their own opinions...people’s opinions and thoughts about history and current events define who they are as a human.” We must respect the study of the past in order to better understand our present world today, and the first step in this process



E. Curtis

Reading is highly valuable

by Megan Hastings
Public Relations Manager



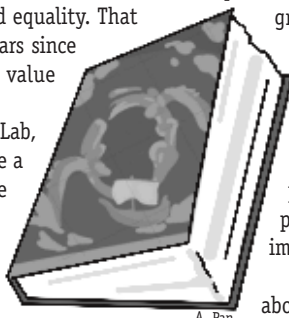
Frederick Douglass said, “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” It’s an observation that not only highlights personal liberation but also the broader, societal power reading and

writing have historically offered individuals and communities. Throughout history, the struggle for the right to read and write has been a central theme in the fight for freedom and equality. That hasn’t changed in the past 130 years since Douglass’s time, yet, Americans’ value of education has.

According to the APM Research Lab, 54 percent of American adults have a literacy rate below the sixth-grade level. This number may seem surprising in a first-world country like ours, but to many the issue is staunchly real and has consequences that will affect both Americans and the global community. On the surface, literacy has significantly improved over the last 200 years. In 1820, just 12 percent of people worldwide could read, whereas today, 12 percent cannot. The ability to read and write is not a choice in the modern economy; it is a necessity. The National Institute of Health conducted research that shows those with lower literacy levels are less likely to find steady work, get paid more, or even understand the conditions of their health care.

For some, education is simply a time-consuming, costly endeavor with unpredictable results. There are serious repercussions when sizable portions of

the populace do not recognize the value of education. Social mobility decreases in tandem with literacy rates. Because they lack the resources to negotiate complicated institutions like healthcare, housing, and finance, or to attain higher-paying occupations, entire communities become trapped in a cycle of poverty and find it hard to improve their circumstances. A population with lower levels of education produces fewer innovators, critical thinkers, and workers who are less competitive on the international scene. Long-term, government underfunding of education jeopardizes not just personal wealth but also the stability and growth of the national economy.



A. Pan

Given the indisputable role that reading plays in navigating the modern world, it is alarming that, sometimes, the very institutions that are supposed to support us—schools—are failing to provide the assistance needed to improve literacy rates.

We have to change the way we talk about education to avoid this rising trend.

We must prioritize literacy and education at every level of society. To demonstrate that education is a necessity rather than a luxury, communities, governments, and schools must collaborate. We must rekindle the belief that education is the cornerstone of opportunity, whether that is done by expanding access to high-quality education for everyone, assisting adult literacy initiatives, or motivating companies to spend money on workforce development. We can only make sure that everyone has the resources they need to achieve and that we don’t leave millions behind if we restore the value of literacy.

(Sources: EdTrust, NPR, NBC)

Health care is inaccessible

by Julia Valencia
People Editor



Health care is a fundamental human right that everyone should have access to, and it should not be treated as a privilege. It is essential for survival, and it should not be reserved

for only those who can afford it.

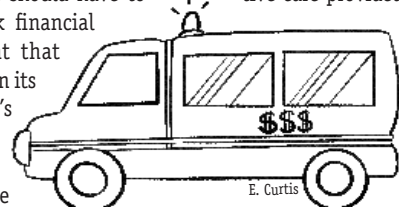
A person’s access to health care can be the difference between life and death, and withholding the proper care from someone who simply cannot afford it presents a troublesome ethical situation. No one should have to suffer because they lack financial resources. A government that neglects health care fails in its duty to serve the public’s well-being. In exchange for taxes, a common understanding is that the government must protect basic human needs, of which health care makes up a large percentage. A government’s investment in its citizens benefits the nation as a whole.

The American health care system ranked last in a 2024 Commonwealth Fund study looking into health care from ten high-income countries. Joseph Betancourt, president of the Commonwealth Fund, said, “The US is failing one of its principal obligations as a nation: to protect the health and welfare of its people.”

The countries included in the report consisted of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It focused

on a few factors, including: access to health care, the care process, and health outcomes. The US has the highest rate of preventable deaths along with a lower-than-average life expectancy out of the ten countries. The Commonwealth Fund also reported that “the US spends nearly 18 percent of GDP on health care, yet Americans die younger and are less healthy than residents of other high-income countries.”

As of 2024, the US has 26 million uninsured individuals out of a population of 335 million, mainly attributed to the exorbitant out-of-pocket prices required to pay for health care. The argument that universal health care is too expensive is significantly flawed, as preventative care provided through universal health care



E. Curtis

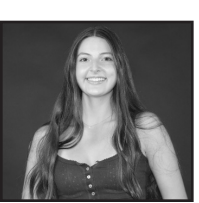
saves much more money in the long run. Medicare For All, an act introduced to Congress in 2003, aimed to establish a universal single-payer national health care system. A study by Yale epidemiologists found that Medicare for All would save around 68,000 lives a year while reducing U.S. health care spending by around 13 percent, or 450 billion dollars a year.

Providing health care for all is not just a moral obligation, it is a necessity. The current system in the United States fails millions of people, leaving them without the care they need simply because they cannot afford it. No one should have to choose between going into debt or receiving life-saving treatment. It is time for the US to recognize that health care is a human right, not a privilege and that we must take action toward setting up a system that prioritizes people over profit.

(Sources: AJMC, The Commonwealth Fund, WHO)

Northrop argues CA arts programs need more support

by Ainsley Northrop
Editor-in-Chief



In 2022, California voters approved Proposition 28: The Arts and Music in Schools Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act. Now, in light of California’s two billion dollar budget deficit, it is imperative that we acknowledge reality: Prop 28 is not enough. Despite this proposition’s

promised support, California arts programs are still in dire need of financial and hands-on support.

Although the state Education Code stipulates that all schools should have sequential dance, music, theater, and visual arts programs, only around 11 percent of California schools actually do. Furthermore, according to a Stanford Research Institute international report, fewer than half of elementary schools have rooms and equipment dedicated to the arts. The absence of specialized spaces damages learning; lack of proper equipment—such as instruments, dance mirrors, and art supplies—obstructs student participation and signals that the arts are not a priority.

Due to budget and liability concerns, Fisher Middle School and surrounding elementary schools no longer allow outside organizations to facilitate theatrical productions, and Saratoga High School lost its chance to host the California Music Educators Association

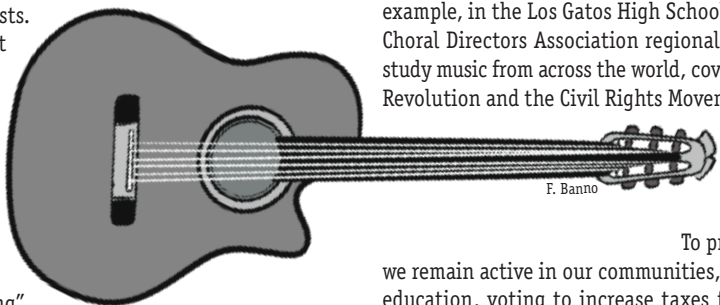
Festival. Last year, LGHS temporarily removed their drama elective altogether. And most recently, LGHS Music suffered a decline in eighth grade program recruitment.

Prop 28 funds are not enough to support arts education. In April of 2024, teacher unions filed a complaint on the Los Angeles Union School District’s fund use; the schools fired existing arts teachers to rehire them with fund money instead of putting it towards new costs.

With Prop 28’s requirement that 80 percent of funds be spent on hiring arts educators, many California schools struggle to create a substantial change in arts education. If schools cannot hire a new teacher, the majority of their funds are unviable, warranting “rehiring” existing teachers and redistributing their past salaries to other school costs outside of the arts.

Music and art programs are essential to student success, bolstering emotional well-being, cognitive empathy, school engagement, and career aspirations. The World Health Organization even asserts that the arts “help tackle noncommunicable diseases – from cardiovascular

diseases to cancer,” and a recent University of Southern California study on elementary school students found that early music education improves writing and social skills. Students who learn music from a young age have, on average, improved mental health and confidence, sharper memory, and more specific goals for the future. Furthermore, as the American Academy of Arts and Sciences mentions, arts education fosters cultural understanding and empathy. For example, in the Los Gatos High School choral program and California Choral Directors Association regional and all-state events, students study music from across the world, covering topics such as the Haitian Revolution and the Civil Rights Movement. Learning history and different languages through music, students build multicultural awareness and appreciation.



F. Banno

To protect the arts, it is crucial that we remain active in our communities, whether incentivizing teacher education, voting to increase taxes for schools, speaking with the school board and booster clubs about how to help, calling senators and house representatives, or even attending Superintendent Heath Rocha’s coffee chats. Arts programs are essential for student education, and we cannot take their existence for granted.

(Sources: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Chicago Tribune, New York Times, USC Today, World Health Organization)

Acknowledge surfing etiquette

by Sam Gruetter
Opinion Editor



One of the unspoken rules in the Santa Cruz surfing community is that respect amongst surfers supersedes the desire to catch a perfect wave. As many

locals try out surfing as a summer hobby it is apparent when they do not abide by surfing etiquette, a set of rules and guidelines designed to keep surfers safe and maintain the respect that permeates tight knit communities at Santa Cruz surf spots. As summer approaches, new and returning surfers must acknowledge and abide by surfing etiquette.

Surf etiquette is composed of four rules: the surfer closest to the break of the wave has the right of way, surfers must paddle around waves not through them, surfers must hold onto their board when navigating the waters, and all surfers must help one another. In many Northern California surf spots one will find these tenets carved into wooden sign posts, urging locals and newbies alike to heed them when they are in the water. According to Science Direct "the number of surfers in the United States increased by 17 percent during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and by 35 percent within the past decade." With the large number of novice surfers,

it is more important than ever to navigate breaks with caution. As a new surfer, one may struggle to paddle through rough waters, navigate choppy breaks, and maintain control of their board. These struggles could pose hazardous to surrounding surfers, with the risk of running into a board or another person being high. The only way to offset this lack of experience is to adhere to surf etiquette.

When surfers don't follow this protocol, there is a higher chance injuries will occur, especially in crowded surf spots. Losing control of one's board, improperly avoiding a set of waves, or not wearing a surfboard leash can all lead to waves dangerously throwing boards around, and even head or face injuries to surrounding surfers. According to the National Library of Medicine, injuries to surfers occur most during summer, and the head, neck, and face are the most commonly injured parts of the body. Additionally, children have a concussion rate of 6.5 percent, while adults have a rate of 3.2 percent. Summer is the most crowded season for surfing, as the weather is ideal and swells become more frequent, meaning it is also the prime time for injuries to take place. Surf etiquette is extremely relevant in crowds and provides the best measures surfers can take to avoid bodily harm to themselves and others.

While it is a matter of safety, it is also a matter of respect. Respect for oneself, ones surfing equipment, the environment in which they are surfing, and those around them. Local surfing communities are renowned for being tight-knit, all because surfers respect one another. If respect is prioritized, safety will undoubtedly follow.

(Sources: National Library of Medicine, Science Direct)



Children need to do chores

by Siyona Singhal
News Editor

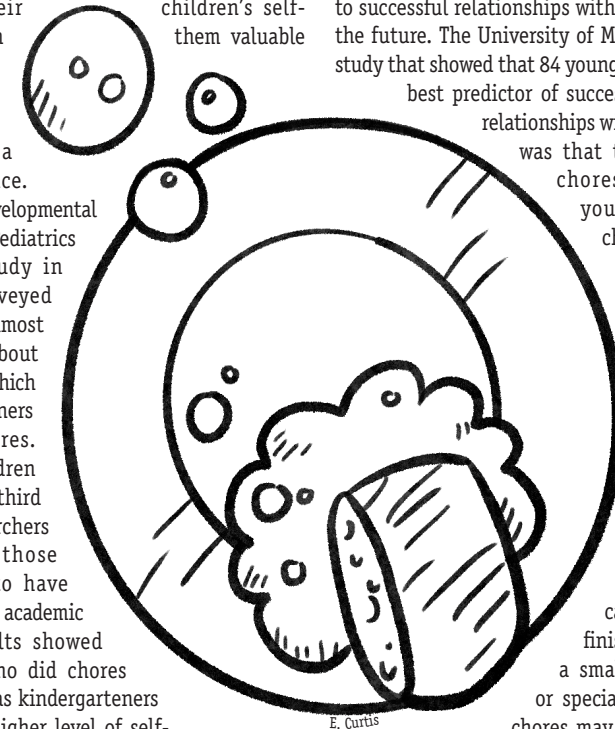


Most if not all of us have been told to sweep the floor, do the dishes, and perform other household errands that we undertake with little to no enthusiasm. While these tasks seemed mundane and made to torture us, I now realize that household chores are a necessary part of a developing child's life. All parents should give their children chores to increase their children's self-esteem and teach them valuable life skills.

Successfully finishing a chore can increase a child's confidence. The Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics conducted a study in which they surveyed the parents of almost 10,000 children about the frequency at which their kindergarteners were doing chores. Once those children had reached the third grade, the researchers came back to those same children to have them complete an academic exam. The results showed that children who did chores more frequently as kindergarteners not only had a higher level of self-satisfaction and were more social, but they also did better on the exam. Completing chores gives children tangible accomplishments, which are essential for confidence and helping a child feel more successful overall.

In addition, chores teach children life skills. Children need to practice tasks such as doing the dishes or ironing clothes so that when they go off to live on their own, they will not struggle with basic household errands. Beyond cleaning skills, however, chores also give children lifelong skills and traits that help them in the future. La Trobe University in Australia conducted a study that found that traits such as planning, self-regulation, and focus were directly correlated with chores. Tasks, such as making a meal or caring for a family member, increase one's memory and inhibition. As surprising as it sounds, participation in common household tasks can also lead to successful relationships with friends and family in the future. The University of Minnesota performed a study that showed that 84 young adults found that the

best predictor of success, including positive relationships with family and friends, was that they participated in chores when they were younger. Furthermore, chores instill a sense of diligence and responsibility that children will carry with them for the rest of their lives. Children must participate in chores to be successful as they develop into adults. To motivate children to do chores, parents can attach a reward to finishing a task, such as a small amount of money or special treat. Even though chores may seem burdensome to the child, these simple household tasks are significant in that child's development. (Sources: La Trobe University, Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, University of Minnesota)



Rawlings argues for stricter regulations on insider trading

by Margo Rawlings
Editor-in-Chief



For decades, congressmen have unjustly economically benefited from insider knowledge undisclosed to the US public. In 2012, Congress passed the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge (STOCK) Act, which prohibited congressmen from making trades based on nonpublic information and set requirements for reporting transactions.

While the act succeeded in its goal of creating transparency and recognizing possible conflicts in interest, it has blatantly failed to penalize those partaking in insider trading, as Congress has never prosecuted a congressman under the STOCK Act. In order to restore Congress's integrity, they must pass the Transparent Representation Upholding Service and Trust (TRUST) in Congress Act, which requires all congressmen, their spouses, and their children to place their investments into a blind trust or establish that they do not own any covered investments for the length of their tenure and until 180 days afterwards.

Most recently, members of Congress who voted to ban the popular social media platform, TikTok, in January, own between 29 million dollars and 129 million dollars of shares in TikTok's competitors. Specifically, 44 of the 342 members of the House of Representatives

who favored the bill own stocks in companies such as Meta, Google, Amazon, Microsoft, and Snap, which would benefit from TikTok's sale or banning. The ability to use insider knowledge to make economic gains should alarm all Americans and prompt them to consider whether their representatives are voting in the interests of the American people or themselves.

This instance of possible insider trading is far from the first of its kind. Congressmen have long benefited from national crises, such as the 2008 stock market crash, COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2023 bank failures, all while denying that their insider knowledge influenced their decisions. In 2022, 13 lawmakers admitted to trading stocks of companies that their committees were investigating; of 50 of the congressmen most active in the stock market, 44 traded shares in companies their committees influenced or received classified information regarding. Such behavior is unacceptable, undermining the principles upon which the United States embodies. How can a "government of the people, by the people, for the people" hold true if lawmakers have economic incentives to take certain political and economic stances?

Congress must be held to the same standards as American citizens. If companies face severe repercussions for insider trading, so should Congress. While congressmen have repeatedly introduced bipartisan legislation to prevent such investments, no bills have gained enough traction to become law. The same body that benefits from these trades refusing to hold themselves accountable highlights the necessity for more stringent legislation.

Passing the TRUST in Congress Act accomplishes this goal. By placing their covered assets into a secure blind trust, congressmen will be unable to use the private information they acquire in briefings to make their financial decisions, but will not suffer economically by being completely barred from trading. An alternative the bill offers is for lawmakers to certify they do not own covered investments. A covered investment includes investments acquired through the use of a derivative, but not mutual funds or bonds. Both options apply to members for the term and 180 days following their departure from Congress. This bill eliminates the issue of prosecution and penalty because congressmen will be unable to trade any covered stocks.

At a time when the American people's trust in Congress has significantly diminished, such legislation would help to reinforce Congress's integrity and protect the principles of American democracy. (Sources: Ballard Spahr, Campaign Legal, Chip Roy, Independent, Quartz)



F. Banno

Strahs condemns spending money on collections

by Hayley Strahs
News Editor



I collect enamel pins and have been for nearly years. Similar to watching a short video or pulling a slot machine, buying new pins gives me the quick rush of dopamine that modern humans crave. However, collection culture has gotten out of hand: at what point does accumulating items transform

from a hobby into an addiction? In fact, I would go as far to say that the terms "collection" and "overconsumption" are synonymous in day-to-day conversation. Modern society often associates the merit of accomplishments with their numerical value. When most people think of a good collection, they think of a vast accumulation of items, automatically equating prestige with volume. While some truly derive joy in purchasing mass quantities of their favorite collectible, many feel a greater obligation to their role as a collector than satisfaction in their hobby when adding to their assortment of items.

Predictably, companies often take advantage of collectors' devotion to their products. Under the Disney umbrella, there are countless collectibles, blind boxes, clothing items, and

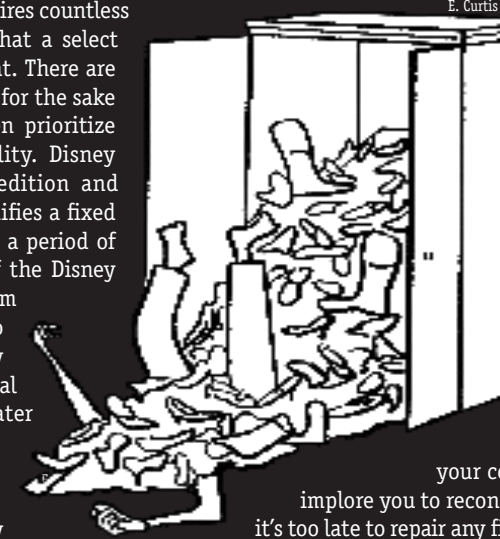
more merchandise that they expect diehard fans to purchase. However, due to my first-hand experience, I am going to focus on the advertisement and buyer reception of the company's pins. Every month, Disney releases and retires countless new designs with complete assurance that a select group will purchase them no matter what. There are blogs dedicated to collecting Disney pins for the sake of accumulating them, and people often prioritize the pins' rarity over their design quality. Disney draws a distinction between limited edition and limited release pins: limited edition signifies a fixed quantity, while limited release indicates a period of time in which they will sell the pin. Of the Disney pins in my collection, most are some form of limited edition or release. There is no inherent issue with anticipating a new item or valuing a rare one, but it is vital to recognize marketing tactics that cater specifically to avid collectors.

However, more issues arise when looking at collections of practical items, like books and vinyl records. Many readers have a physical to-be-read, or "TBR" pile consisting of books they've bought and haven't read. I'm

not proud to say that my personal TBR pile is well over 30 books, many of which I bought without even reading

the synopsis. Collecting for the sole sake of collecting is, at the very least, reasonable when it comes to trinkets. On the contrary, accumulating practical items such as books, records, or puzzles without completing them is wasteful when you could instead fill your shelves with media you truly enjoy.

In no way am I advocating for people to stop collecting their items of choice. However, it is important to take a step back and figure out if it's true interest or addiction that fuels your collection habits. If it's the latter, I implore you to reconsider your purchase choices before it's too late to repair any financial damage. Collection culture isn't going anywhere anytime soon, so it's vital that you ensure your purchases are logical in the long-term.



E. Curtis

Milk Chocolate

Milk chocolate is arguably the most popular chocolate in the box, but it also has secrets. You hide an aspect of your personality behind a more popular exterior—just like the ganache inside a Lindor chocolate. Others may see you as normal or boring, but you actually have an eccentric personality that people often fail to recognize. In 2025, you will step outside of your comfort zone and show the world that there is more to you than your milk chocolate exterior. Challenge yourself with new activities, be proud of your quirkiness, and let your inner ganache shine this year.

Annabelle Pan, *Graphics Editor*



Dark Raspberry

You have quite the year ahead of you! Your love life may look bleak and bland like the outer shell of the wonderful dark chocolate raspberry truffle; however, mirroring the candy's sweet interior, you will find friendship and solace in someone you least expect. Maybe you will make a new lifelong friend you can always confide in and feel comfortable around. Alternatively, you may find a date just in time for prom season or for the new spring formal dance. Either way, you should feel fulfilled by the close friendships and relationships you make during Valentine's Day and the rest of 2025.

Kat Littfin, *News Editor*



White Chocolate

If you chose white chocolate, your year will be smooth, sweet, and full of pleasant surprises. Like the creamy richness of white chocolate, you will find yourself surrounded by moments of joy, comfort, and indulgence. This will be a year when you focus on enjoying the finer, simpler things in life—whether it's deepening relationships, treating yourself to small luxuries, or embracing a more carefree and lighthearted approach to challenges. Just as white chocolate is sometimes seen as unconventional or different, you might also have some unexpected experiences that stand out and add a little sparkle to your year.

Siyona Singhal, *News Editor*



Do You Have Future



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DARK Ch♡cocolate

Much like dark chocolate, it may take some time for people to warm up to you. People may call you an old soul, but you really just know what you want. This year, your social circle will become smaller, but don't worry, you'll become closer to those most important and rekindle old friendships. Although you may not be the sweetest, you value quality and honesty in your relationships more than anything. 2025 will be the year of deepening relationships and finding yourself!

Claudia Casal, *Culture Editor*



Marshmallow Caramel

According to your choice of fan-favorite marshmallow and caramel chocolate, your year will be one of the best ones yet. Maybe this year you will find someone who complements you like these two flavors complement each other. You will make great friends based on your choice of chocolate, perhaps some you would not expect. Just like the different flavors in this chocolate, you are spontaneous, making for a great time. Do not be afraid to go out there and let your improvisation guide you! This year you will open up new relationships and pathways.

Chloe Wilson, *Humor Editor*



STRAWBERRY CREAM

If the strawberry cream chocolate is your candy of choice, you need to rethink some things. Maybe take a trip to your dentist instead, since you seem to enjoy the artificial pink bubble gum toothpaste flavor. I know how stubborn you can be based on this chocolate alone, so don't try to act slick by choosing another gross fruit-flavored chocolate in the box. Like the chocolate, you will be sure to find some surprises in your future endeavors. Do your best to avoid any temptations, like that evil strawberry flavoring.

Megan Hastings, *Public Relations Manager*



- Littfin discusses XO, Kitty season two
- Nintendo announces new console

CULTURE

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LITTFIN DETAILS SEASON TWO OF XO, KITTY

by **Kat Littfin**
News Editor

On Jan. 16, *XO, Kitty*, a popular Netflix original television series and spinoff of the hit book and movie *To All The Boys I Loved Before*, came out with its second season. The show follows protagonist Kitty, played by Anna Cathcart, on her journey at an international school in South Korea.

XO, Kitty's first season, which debuted in May of 2023, amassed 72 million viewing hours in the first week of its release, an incredible turnout for its debut season. Because the show had many of the same creators as *To All The Boys I Loved Before*, the series retained the same teen romance charm as the movie, yet writers and directors aimed to incorporate traditional K-Drama elements into the production of the show. In the first season, Kitty convinces her father to let her go halfway across the world to complete her junior year of high school at the Korean Independent School of Seoul. Kitty discovers that her mother, who passed away in her childhood, went to the same school on the same exchange scholarship that Kitty won. Kitty's journey

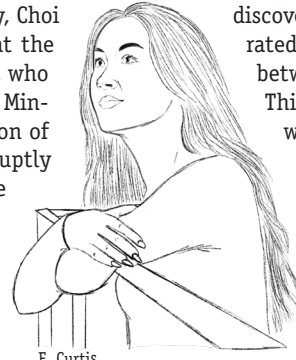
to Korea is two-faceted as she hopes to reconnect with her heritage, but, as with any teenage romance series, she hopes to spend time with her long-distance boyfriend, Dae, who attends the same school.

The casts of both seasons include Cathcart as Kitty, Choi Min-young as Dae, Gia Kim as Yuri, Kitty's enemy at the beginning of the show, and Sang Heon Lee as Min-ho, who at the end of the first season reveals his love for Kitty. Min-ho's confession coupled with Kitty's sudden realization of her feelings towards Yuri, her supposed enemy, abruptly ended the first season and amassed much audience anticipation for the upcoming season of the show.

XO, Kitty's second season has its fair share of romantic drama, mostly stemming from the end of the first season. Love triangles turn into love pentagons between the many couples in the show. Though the series is, at its core, a romance, the second season explores more serious topics as well. Kitty's realization of her crush on Yuri allows the show to focus on self-discovery

and coming out more than it did in the first season. Though the show did feature several same-sex couples in the first season, Kitty's direct experience with queer love allows *XO, Kitty* to go more in-depth on the topic. Furthermore, Kitty discovers family members in Korea who had separated from her family years ago because of a feud between her grandma and her grandma's sister. This leads Kitty on a journey of reconnecting with her heritage and bridging familial bonds across continents. Predominantly filmed in Seoul and casting many Korean actors, the show also aims to portray and celebrate Korean culture through the lens of a Korean-American. With a successful second season, fans eagerly expect a renewal for season three in 2026.

If you are looking to watch a light-hearted and romantic show that also explores important coming-of-age topics, *XO, Kitty* is the show for you.



E. Curtis

Mitchell suggests formal dress brands

by **Kayla Mitchell**
Media Production Editor

While recent chilly weather is dimming the party spirit, winter and spring dances are coming up soon. Whether your school has a Sadie's dance or a spring formal, your mission to find another perfect dress is about to begin. This dance is good practice before finding the perfect look for prom. These dances might seem far away, but remember that shipping times and finding the right style are now your biggest enemies. Scrolling on your computer for hours, looking for the right dress instead of getting work done, is over. Here are some of the best and most popular stores to find your perfect look.

Lucy in the Sky has always been an obvious choice when school dance season comes around.

This store offers the most styles and certainly has a dress for everybody. Lucy in the Sky is not afraid to show



off their sparkles, sleeves, and lively prints for the spring season. Before making your big purchase be sure to compare dresses with all of your friends so that you don't all have the same one! Some of these designs are so cute that no one can resist them, so if your perfect dress is sitting in your cart on this website, make sure to check out before someone else swoops in and buys the last one.

If you were a little late picking your dress this year or couldn't get that dress you were waiting for, Windsor is always a classic pick in a crunch. This store has hundreds of styles ranging from big ball

gowns to simple sundresses. If you have trouble deciding between a long maxi dress or a short mini, luckily for you this store has both. A cute and affordable option, what's not to love? Do a quick trip to a local mall with the store and find your look.

One of the most popular online stores for teen dresses right now has got to be PepperMayo. Sadly, this brand does not have a physical location near Los Gatos, but its super cute website makes up for it. PepperMayo dresses are some of the most elegant and well-known styles right now. The silky fabrics and pretty hues of these dresses will help to bring out the colorful spring season and even help you get ready for summer. Everyone has their eye on these limited dresses so if you find your perfect dress from this store

make sure to buy it quickly before it sells out!

If you are looking for a new, fresh dress store to explore, Hello Molly may be a promising option. Check out their best sellers section because these pretty dresses are all over TikTok. Hello Molly dresses will pull you out of your winter slump and remind you that even though it feels far away, bright sunny weather is coming soon! Pictures with your friends are going to look Instagram worthy this year if you choose one of Hello Molly's stylish pieces. The student discount and free shipping add to this store's appeal.

Secure some of these dresses, do a fashion show for your friends, and have an amazing time at your dance.

Netflix releases new episodes of The Night Agent

by **Jordan Park**
Sports Editor

Following the overwhelming success of its first season, Netflix's *The Night Agent* is back with ten thrilling new episodes.

Premiering on Jan. 23, the show continues right from where season one left off. Peter Sutherland (Gabriel Basso), the FBI agent stationed in the basement of the White House to handle Night Action calls, has proven himself and become a night agent. However, his first assignment in Bangkok goes disastrously wrong. He and his partner Alice, played by Brittany Snow, are assigned to watch a former FBI agent suspected of selling state secrets, but things quickly spiral out of control. Sutherland ultimately finds himself back in the United States, thrown into yet another complex conspiracy, and forced to navigate a dangerous political landscape while maintaining his commitment to uncovering the truth.

The second season is just as binge-worthy and engaging as the first, featuring likable characters facing overwhelming challenges, a host of surprising twists and turns, and plenty of cliffhangers to keep you on the edge of your seat. The season hits the ground running and never lets up. Season two does not stray from the main structure of its original season but broadens the conflict with additional subplots to follow and features some thrilling international espionage.



A. Pan

Season two also introduces an entirely new cast of characters. Catherine Weaver, played by Amanda Warren, serves as Sutherland's handler; she's a seasoned Night Action agent with a past closely connected to Sutherland's own story. Marwan Kenzari portrays Sami, a multilingual ex-soldier and fellow Night Action agent, along with Noor (Arienne Mandi), an employee at the Iranian embassy, who is determined to help her family escape Iran and is willing to take

significant and dangerous risks to achieve that goal. As the season unfolds, these diverse characters and their storylines come together in a tense race against time as a terrorist group plots a devastating attack in New York City.

Although audiences have met the second season with much enthusiasm, fans are frustrated with the lack of screen time for one returning character in particular. Fans have deemed that Rose Larkin, played by Luciane Buchanan, is underwritten in the second season. While she appeared relatively early on, Larkin is no longer central to the story. In the first season, Peter and Larkin find themselves involved in an overwhelming chaotic situation. This shared challenge brings them closer, fostering compelling chemistry and a romantic interest. In season two, Rose almost feels out of place, fueling the discontent of fans.

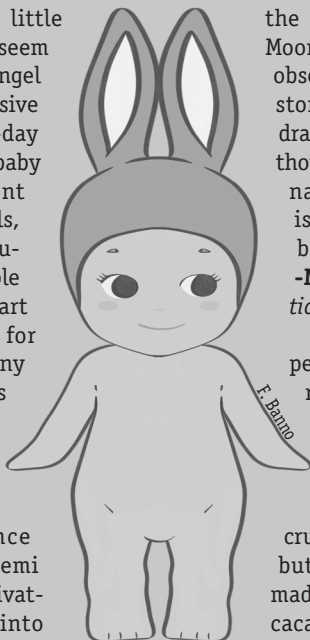
If you've already blown through season two, don't worry, as season three has already been green-lit and started production earlier this month! (Sources: Forbes, Screen Rant)

El Gato recommends: Sonny Angels, The Substance, & more

Are your car keys looking a little bland? Does your bedside table seem dull and lifeless? Well, a Sonny Angel is a perfect portable and inexpensive trinket to spruce up your day-to-day scenery. Sonny Angels are small baby figurines that come in different styles and themes, such as animals, fruits, and other foods. These figurines are inexpensive and accessible at a variety of stores, like Walmart and Amazon. They are perfect for collecting or brightening up any part of your day. Whether it's for a friend, family member, or yourself, a Sonny Angel is the perfect accessory.

-**Sam Gruetter**, Opinion Editor

On Sept. 20, *The Substance* debuted worldwide. Starring Demi Moore, *The Substance* is a captivating sci-fi thriller that delves into



E. Bando

the eerie consequences of scientific ambition gone wrong. Moore delivers a gripping performance in this chilling tale of obsession and morality. With a sleek aesthetic and intense storytelling, the film masterfully blends suspense and drama, keeping audiences on the edge of their seats. A thought-provoking exploration of human nature and power, *The Substance* is a must-watch for fans of bold, boundary-pushing cinema.

-**Megan Hastings**, Public Relations Manager

If you're looking for the perfect dessert to make on a rainy day, try Grasshopper pie! Anyone can make it by following a set of simple instructions online. The pie features an Oreo crumb

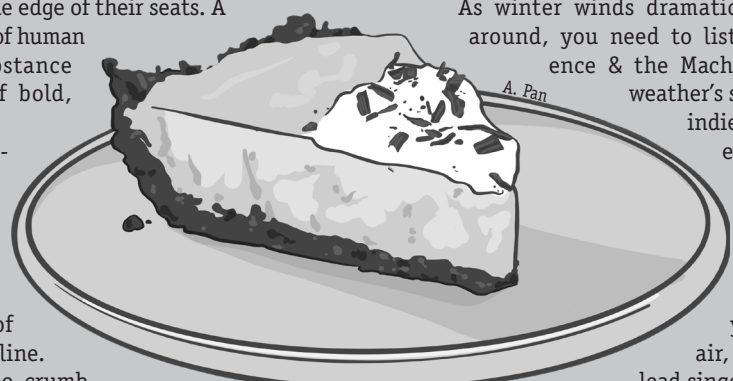
crust, creating a delicious base for the filling, but the best part of this dessert is the whipped mousse made from marshmallows, creme de menthe, and creme de cacao. The light green color of the filling makes it easy

to see where the pie gets the name "Grasshopper" from. Perfect for any occasion, make sure to try out this pie next time you bake!

-**Isabella Langner**, People Editor

As winter winds dramatically thrash trees around, you need to listen to some Florence & the Machine to match the weather's stormy energy. The indie rock band offers everything from the vengeful ballad *Girl with One Eye* to ethereal songs that make you feel like you're floating on air, like *Falling*. The lead singer Florence Welch's timeless voice and fiery lyrics are truly enchanting, with Welch even remarking in *Girls Against God* that the devil gave her evanescent vocals.

-**Claudia Casal**, Culture Editor



A. Pan

Saturday Night Live celebrates its 50th anniversary

by Megan Saul
Culture Editor

Saturday Night Live (SNL) is a popular American late-night comedy show that airs parody sketches, musical performances, and more. Known for its iconic line that ends its cold opening, "Live from New York, it's Saturday Night," generations of fans have watched and loved SNL. As the first episode aired in 1975, on the weekend of Feb. 14, SNL celebrated their 50th anniversary with many events to honor the show's musical side and all of the cast members from over the years.

Lorne Michaels created SNL in order to fill the empty Saturday night television timeslot. His goal was to create a show containing political satire and comedy. Since then, SNL has won countless awards and the most Emmy nominations received by a television program. Many of the cast members of SNL have continued on to lead successful careers, even having their own late-night talk shows.

Prior to the anniversary celebrations, NBC released a four-part docu-series entitled *Beyond Saturday Night*. This docu-series details the behind the scenes of the show including dynamics from the writer's room. One episode of this program even shows the five-minute audition tapes of current and past cast members. This series helped viewers learn more details about the show and drew them in for the anniversary celebrations.

The celebrations consisted of the re-airing of the first episode and the airing of a musical special concert titled SNL50: The Homecoming Concert as well as a three-hour special called SNL50: The Anniversary Special. The first episode of SNL, hosted by George Carlin, re-aired on Feb. 15 and demonstrated how far SNL has come as a show. The Homecoming Concert, with host and past cast member Jimmy Fallon, celebrated the musical performances featured on SNL over the past 50 years.

This concert occurred on Feb. 14 at the Radio City Music Hall and included performances from over 25 musicians. While many songs were heartfelt and emotional considering SNL's longevity, others were, as expected, comical.

The biggest part of the celebration was the Anniversary Special, and while it didn't have a specific host, many past members joined in on the action. To start the episode, Steve Martin delivered the opening monologue and singers Sabrina Carpenter and Paul Simon sang a duet. The night continued with additional performances by Paul McCartney, Adam Sandler, Miley Cyrus, and more. Many of the sketches were sequels or recreations of popular skits from prior episodes, including a skit on Domingo, a character created this season, and one titled Debbie Downer, which originated in 2004. Throughout the night, there were cameos from such celebrities as Alec Baldwin, Lin Manuel Miranda, Tom Hanks, Garrett Morrison, Peyton Manning, Meryl Streep, Ryan Reynolds, and Cher.

At the end of the special, Martin Short said, referring to and thanking Michaels, "The reason we're all here, the man who made our dreams come true." Stars, laughter, and, most notably, gratitude for the show that changed countless people's lives filled Saturday Night Live's 50th anniversary events.

(Sources: NBC, Time, USA Today)



The Grammys awards artists

By Quinn Hathaway
National/World Editor

Taking place at the Los Angeles Crypto.com Area, the 2025 Grammys was a night full of surprises and performances. Hosted by Trevor Noah for his fifth year, the annual event featured both new and old faces, commemorating the musical achievements of 2025.

Many featured artists performed, but Chappell Roan, Charlie XCX, Billie Eilish, and Sabrina Carpenter gave especially memorable performances, with Carpenter and Roan in particular showcasing acts involving both dance and song. The Recording Academy nominated this duo respectively for Best New Artist, alongside Benson Boone, Doechii, Khruangbin, Raye, Shaboozey, and Teddy Swims.

Roan ended up winning this award and pushed labels to increase advocating for artists in her passionate acceptance speech. Roan received six nominations in total, including Good Luck Babe for Record and Song of the Year. However, she ended up taking only Best New Artist and concluded her acceptance speech with "Labels, we got you, but do you got us?" both confirming her dedication to more music and standing up for artists' rights.

Kendrick Lamar earned the most awards throughout the night, filling all five category nominations. Notably, Record of the Year and Song of the Year both went to the same Lamar song: Not Like Us. Not Like Us also won Best Rap Song, Best Rap Performance, and Best Music Video.

Beyoncé's Cowboy Carter, besides winning Album of the Year, additionally won Best Country Album. Beyoncé "was really not expecting [Album of the Year]" as she commented following Taylor Swift presenting her with the award. After being nominated

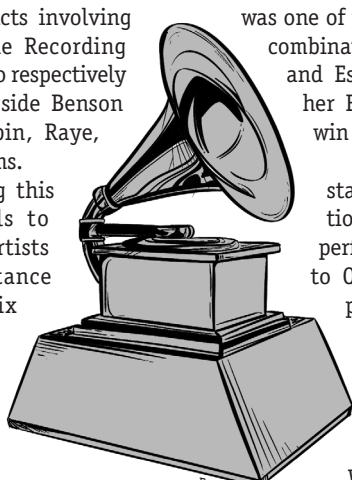
for and losing Album of the Year four times previously, Beyoncé's 2025 win solidified her as the first Black woman to win the award this century.

Sabrina Carpenter received six nominations prior to the Grammys this year, most of her popularity resulting from her new album *Short n' Sweet*. In addition to winning Best Pop Solo Performance for Espresso as well as Best Pop Album for *Short n' Sweet*, Carpenter also received nominations for Song of the Year, Record of the Year, Album of the Year, and Best New Artist. Carpenter was one of the opening acts, singing a combination of Please Please Please and Espresso, directly following her Best Pop Solo Performance win at the Premiere.

Most recently known for starring in the movie adaptation of *Wicked*, Cynthia Erivo performed a touching memorial to Quincy Jones, a renowned producer and composer. Accompanied by Herbie Hoover on the piano, she sang a rendition of Fly Me to the Moon. Other artists such as Stevie Wonder, Lainey Wilson, and Jacob Collier performed tributes. The accolades of Quincy Jones's seventy-year music career touched hearts, and the wide range of music performed in his honor represented his significant impact on the music industry at large.

Charlie XCX closed the 2025 Grammys with an upbeat performance, singing both Von Dutch and Guess off her album *Brat*. She ended up taking home three Grammys in the categories of Best Dance/Electronic Album, Best Dance/Pop Recording, and Best Recording Package.

Giving new artists commendation and superstars more and more credit for their work, the 2025 Grammys was an excellent year for music.



Panicacci reviews new movie Companion

by Lucy Panicacci
Editor-in-Chief

Full of twists and numerous comedic moments, the horror sci-fi movie *Companion* did not leave me amazed but kept me entertained nonetheless. In the first moments of the film when Iris (Sophie Thatcher) and Josh (Jack Quaid) have a meet-cute in a grocery store, their relationship appears perfect. However, in reality, Iris is a human companionship robot with all her memories programmed and controlled by Josh in order to fulfill his desires. A weekend getaway turns violent when Josh uses Iris to carry out the murder of a billionaire named Sergey. Faced with the self-revelation of her robot existence, Iris fights to escape Josh, spiraling the movie into a chaotic chain of events.

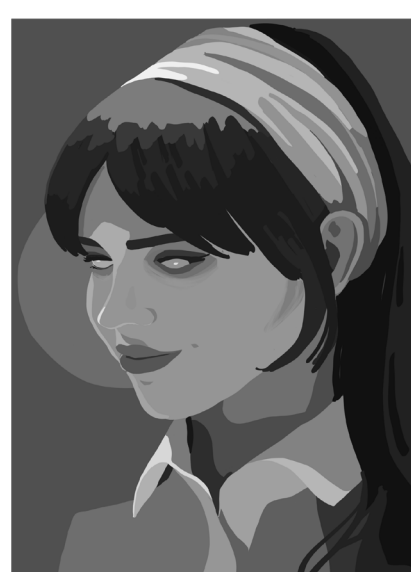
Throughout the film, Thatcher's acting shines. I originally wanted to see *Companion* because I loved Thatcher as Natalie in the show *Yellowjackets*. In *Companion*, she does not disappoint. She carries the film with her excellent acting, embodying the role of Iris. She portrays everything from the devotion of her character to Josh to the disbelief of her programmed existence to the pain of a candle melting off her plastic skin. On *The Movie Podcast*, writer and director Drew Hancock discussed Thatcher's extraordinary acting abilities: "She can cry on command, and I think she can even pick which eye it comes out of." With her acting in *Yellowjackets*, the 2024 horror film *Heretic*, and *Companion*, Thatcher proves to be a rising horror star.

Despite Thatcher's acting performance, the trailers and the revealing of major plot points early on in the film took away from the shock factor of *Companion*. The *Companion* trailer spoils the

majority of the film, showing the most important scenes and giving away that Iris is a robot. I would have enjoyed the movie more if I had gone into it blind. In addition, in the first few minutes, Iris says that, inevitably, she will kill Josh. Furthermore, knowing that Iris cannot die takes away from the suspense of the film. The movie includes dramatic twists and turns, but I didn't feel any anticipation or tension because the beginning gave away the ending. Although marketed as a horror film, I didn't find *Companion* fear-inducing at any point.

Still, *Companion* delivers important commentary on the ethics of AI. The film proposes a nightmare version of our future, where the male loneliness epidemic evolves into men getting AI girlfriends and police driving voice-commanded Teslas. *Companion* shows that the issues with advancing AI lie in the people, not the robots. While the idea of a realistic robot catering to your every need and desire sounds appealing, tech companies in the film should not have allowed the creation of an advanced companion robot in the first place, nor should people have wanted a robot companion to replace real human relationships. While AI chatbots only seem like a minor problem now, *Companion* points to a darker future if individuals don't stand up for the value of human connection over programmed connection.

Companion, or as I saw it, *Compañera Perfecta*, because I accidentally selected the showing with Spanish subtitles, is a solid film deserving of its 93 percent rating on Rotten Tomatoes. If you ever find yourself feeling guilty for scolding ChatGPT after getting your math question wrong or turning to AI chatbots for relationship advice, you might just want to give *Companion* a watch! (Sources: The Movie Podcast, IMDb)



Nintendo announces new console

by Fuyu Banno
Graphics Editor

On Jan. 16, the long awaited Nintendo Switch 2 was revealed with new information on its design and release, delighting long time Nintendo fans and video game fanatics alike. Nintendo released a video trailer showcasing the Switch's updated design, shared information on software compatibility, and advertised future events to hype up fans until its official release date.

It has been almost eight years since the release of the original Nintendo Switch, which has become one of the most loved video consoles of all time. Its attraction came with an easy-to-use interface, its all ages appeal, and most of all, its flexibility. The switch's main lure is its ability to become an at-home console as well as its ability to be played on the go. The side console could be "switched" so many people could play at once, while also functioning as a hand-held console.

The biggest change that comes with the Nintendo Switch 2 is that the Switch 2 will no longer have the same trademark "switch" function where the side consoles

can be removed, but instead the controllers will be attached and removed by snapping them on and off. The controllers will also lose their iconic bright colors that fully encapsulate the controllers, but instead will be completely black with only a small highlight of blue and red. Besides the controller, the new switch will have an enlarged screen and a bigger kickstand.

Fans were worried that their old Nintendo switch games wouldn't work with the new Nintendo Switch 2, but Nintendo revealed that the Switch 2 will be mostly backwards compatible. This means that

the games that work on the original Switch will also work on the new one as well, making it so players do not need to repurchase games. With the hefty price tag on the games, this flexibility is a big relief for players.

Aside from older games, Nintendo recently revealed that there would be a new Mario Kart for the Switch 2. Although this is the only new game that has been confirmed, fans speculate that there will be more information on new games in the foreseeable future.

For those especially enthusiastic about the release, Nintendo also announced that there would be events where people could try the new gaming consoles in certain areas. These trial parties are set to open around the world in Japan, Spain, Australia, and in certain cities in the United States.

In the following months, there will be more information on the new Nintendo switch, including a more specific detail on the technical specifications of the device and, more importantly, its price. With the steady popularity of the original Nintendo Switch, the Switch 2 will no doubt be Nintendo's next biggest star.

(Sources: Cnet, Nintendo, Screenrant)



- Pan struggles with her busy friends
- Nelson turns her mistake into a trend

HUMOR

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Pan complains about making plans with friends

by Annabelle Pan
Graphics Editor

Every time you try to make plans with friends, there are always those two people whose busy schedules seem to eliminate all of the possible days to spend time together. One has no time on weekends, and the other is busy every weekday. Making plans to hang out seems to get harder and harder the older we get. In elementary school, all it took was five minutes and a phone call. Once we reached middle school, we had to make plans a few days in advance. As high schoolers, we could begin preparing weeks in advance and still struggle to come up with a time that works for everyone. Of course, we could always arrange one during the break, but people are often traveling. What can we do?

Your best option is to find a time that works for the majority and kidnap



everyone else from their extracurriculars. Since you can't find a day that works for everyone, you might as well give up on that one friend with seven school periods, sixteen outside classes, and sports practice every other day. But, because excluding them would be cruel, just make sure they can't attend whatever activity overlaps with your hangout plans. Problem solved!

If friend-napping isn't your cup of tea, you can split your plans into thirty-minute chunks. Surely you can find thirty minutes that everyone has free. Although conversations will be stilted and it will be hard to do anything with such a short time, at least you can hang out with your

friends. Find thirty minutes once a week, and, by the end of the month, your total hangout time will be two hours. It's better than nothing, but not by much.

One of the few ways to get a full hangout with everyone present is to reserve a time a few months beforehand. Pretend you are going to the world's highest-rated, most overbooked restaurant and compete to make the reservation before all of the times fill up. If you decide on a hangout time months before the event, you can save a spot in your friends' busy calendars. Just make sure you remind them every day of the hangout, or they might accidentally double-book themselves.

The best, but most time-consuming, way to arrange a time together is by having all of your friends fill out a calendar with any activities. You can find the empty spaces that line up with each person's schedule and choose a time to hang out. However, this will take a while if they have many miscellaneous activities or events that often change times. For the best results, you could have them map out their schedule for the entire year, week by week, but it might be easier to just go back to friend-napping at that point.

There is also a last resort in case none of the previous solutions work: execute your plans at school. You can all go to one tutorial classroom and watch a movie or play a game together. If your friends don't go to the same school, then I wish you luck.

Gruetter gives ideas for legal servers

by Sam Gruetter
Opinion Editor

You've been served! Unfortunately, this does not mean you showed up somewhere dressed to the nines and projecting Adriana Lima level confidence. No mama, you are being taken to court for committing a crime or being sued. However, the process of serving someone does not look like a police officer knocking at your door and cuffing you to a cop car while you loudly proclaim your innocence and think, "How long will it take until this is on nextdoor?" Instead it is a much more discreet process. Prosecutors can hire personal service, who discreetly dress up as an everyday person and deliver the appropriate documents to a defendant, informing them of their impending lawsuit. Here are some examples personal service can employ to secure that five star review.

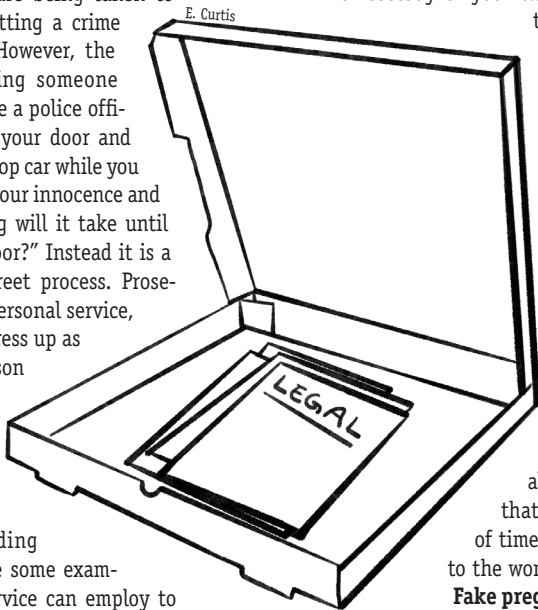
Pizza delivery: This one's a classic. One three-cheese pie for Bob? Think again, Bob. It's a lawsuit for potential tax fraud. While the defendant may be expecting a delectable cheesy and saucy meal to end their week off right, they are instead served with the consequences of their (alleged) actions in a steaming cardboard box.

Open heart surgeon: This is a unique case that will only work if your defendant requires immediate, but non-life-threatening, surgery. You put them on the surgery table and walk in, scalpel in one

hand and file in the other. Just as they are about to be cut open,

Harvard Business School: You keep getting emails from Harvard Business School saying they want YOU, unlike your ex-wife who is suing you for custody of your two children. So you decide to apply, and you get in; those kids aren't going to feed themselves. You go through three years of rigorous tests, student debt, and endless cramming, and finally, the big day arrives: graduation. As you walk up to the stage in your cap and gown, you reach for the diploma you have been yearning for, only to be handed a paper that says, "You've been served." You never actually went to business school; that was almost as big a waste of time as your ten-year marriage to the woman who is suing you.

Fake pregnancy: This method of service requires an extensive time commitment, but hey, that lawsuit isn't going anywhere, and you will walk away from the ordeal with a new husband and fake pregnancy bump. You find your defendant and trap him into marriage by getting pregnant after your first date. However, instead of carrying his child, you are carrying the papers that will send him to court. Finally, your due date comes, and after seven long hours of labor, your new husband is shocked to see service papers, instead of the baby girl he was expecting, swaddled in a pink blanket. Congratulations, it's a lawsuit!



Nelson makes light of her fake trend

by Katie Nelson
Center Editor

In the last press cycle, as Center Editor, I was tasked with creating a center page that helped you figure out what 2024 meme you were. During class, my classmates threw out hilarious memes that could say something about you: Maybe you're always facing bad luck and prefer to express your feelings through Pepé The Prawn King. Perhaps you're trying to remain nonchalant like The Chill Guy, or can't get over anything like the nagging Low Taper Fade meme. Regardless, I wrote down everyone's ideas, somehow writing fellow El Gatan **Nelson Kramer's** idea of "brat summer" twice, but once without the "b" in "brat." Without knowing it, I created Rat Summer, a meme that does not exist anywhere except in my imagination.

Later that night, I submitted my graphics requests with links to all the memes people suggested, including Rat Summer. I was hurrying and chose the first image I could find: a rat in flip-flops and sunglasses at the beach. It seemed close enough to what a rat summer might look like, so I added the link for the graphics team to reference and called it a night.

By the time press week rolled around, I was compiling all the blurbs and graphics onto my page. I saw a graphic for both Brat Summer, a big green box with the word "brat" spelled inside, and Rat Summer, a beautiful graphic made by **Annabelle Pan** featuring the lovely rat wearing

his flip-flops. However, there was no blurb to go along with it, and I hated to waste this beautiful graphic that Annabelle had made. "Does anyone want to write a blurb on 'rat summer?'" I asked. Everyone looks around, confused. "What is rat summer?" **Lucy Panicacci** asked. I stop to think. What IS rat summer? I asked her to scour TikTok for info. "Katie...rat summer isn't a thing," Lucy told me a few minutes later. Uh oh. I came to the slow realization that I just made Annabelle create a graphic for a meme that didn't even exist. I felt so bad and told her this piece of artwork must be reused somehow. "I'll write a humor article on it next cycle," I promised her. So here I am, writing about rat summer.

I know that not enough people will read this paper to begin a trend, but I will try nonetheless. Rat Summer should absolutely be a meme. It's so catchy. Rat Summer. What's not to love? I want to be a carefree rat on the beach, tanning (wait, never mind, rats can't tan), drinking my ice-cold lemonade in my flip-flops and sunglasses. Rat Summer could be a movement. It could represent living your best life in summer, with no concern for putting effort into your appearance. It could also represent letting go of reality because, remember, you're a rat wearing flip-flops.

I feel like rat summer just works logically in my mind. This summer, I absolutely want to be a river rat floating down a nice alpine stream in my inflatable tube. Or a road rat, spending time with my friends on our senior road trip. Lake rat, sun rat, pool rat, beach rat, gym rat, you name it. It may not be the year of the Rat, but it certainly can be the rat summer you have always dreamed of.

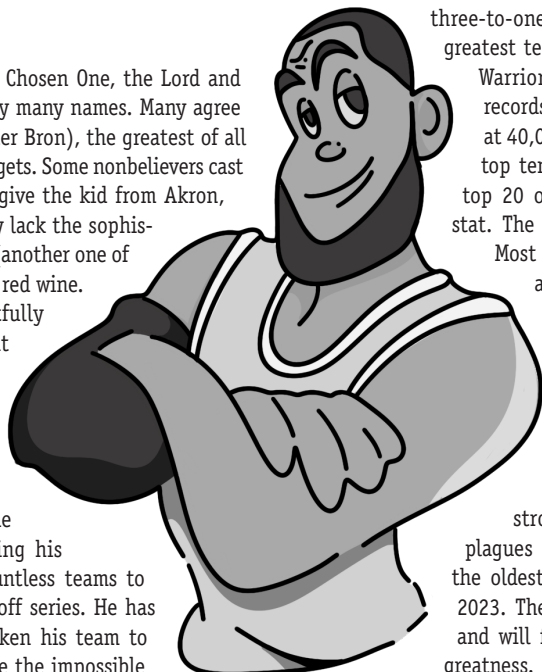


MUTHUKRISHNAN DEFENDS LEBRON JAMES GLAZING

by Sahil Muthukrishnan
Sports Editor

The king, our only sunshine, the Chosen One, the Lord and savior LeBron Raymone James goes by many names. Many agree that in the year of LeBron 40 AB (After Bron), the greatest of all time (GOAT) deserves all the praise he gets. Some nonbelievers cast doubt on the love and attention we give the kid from Akron, Ohio; however, these heathens simply lack the sophistication to appreciate that LeBonBon (another one of his nicknames) James ages like a fine red wine. Many online may refer to the rightfully earned love for LeBron as "glaze," but this is simply untrue. There are three main reasons LeBron is impossible to over-love.

His stats: The king is renowned for his basketball prowess, consistently being the greatest player in the world since around 2009 and keeping his title until 2022. LeBron has led countless teams to the playoffs and won dozens of playoff series. He has four championship titles and has taken his team to the finals ten times. LeBron has made the impossible



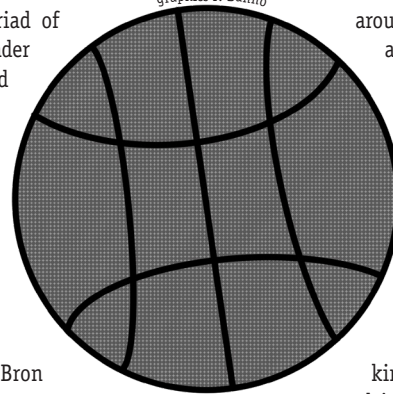
three-to-one-win comeback in the finals against the greatest team ever assembled, the 2016 Golden State Warriors. He has also shattered a myriad of records; he is the all-time NBA points leader at 40,000, top five in all-time assists, and top ten in all-time steals. He is in the top 20 of almost any relevant all-time stat. The Hammer has taken home four Most Valuable Player (MVP) awards, along with his four NBA Finals MVPs. With his incredible stats, LeBron gives us a reason to keep watching basketball. He truly is an inspiration to all.

The GOAT is eternal: LeBron turned 40 years old on Dec 30, 2024 (New Year's for his fans) and has been going strong since. The sharp drop that typically plagues old players has been absent so far. He is the oldest player in the league and has been since 2023. The king is the face of the league even now and will forever be remembered in the NBA for his greatness. He is even playing next to his 20-year-old

son Bronny this year and has shared his hopes to play a year or two with his 17-year-old son Bryce. The GOAT will be around for years, and Bron fans are glad to accept that fact.

Memes: LeBron is the center of a countless number of jokes. Whether you prefer to watch LeBron shout at J.R. Smith in the finals with an impeccable amount of exasperation, love yelling "It's our ball ain't it," enjoy bald LeBron getting super hyped up in the locker room after going three and one, or pondering endless LeBron triple dog dares, the king has you covered. Endless memes and jokes keep fans entertained constantly and continue to show why worshipping the lord and Savior LeBron is a necessity of life.

LeBron, the king, the GOAT, The Chosen One. Bron is a necessary part of the 21st century. His influence is felt by fans and haters alike. LeBron's greatness is a true art form that many have the privilege to admire. Next time you find yourself bored, think about what the GOAT has done for you and all of us.



FUGIT DISCUSSES DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF LINKEDIN

by Owen Fugit
Editor-in-Chief

Every day, millions of Americans get out of bed and go to work. This is no secret. But if you look a more closely, one question starts to emerge: "How did they get here?" Now, the answer may seem obvious at first. They probably submitted a resume and a cover letter to an employer they wanted to work for and then interviewed for the position. It seems straightforward enough. However, the search for jobs is confusing and strenuous, and it is difficult to know the qualifications for any given position. That's where LinkedIn comes in. In early 2003, tech bros brought this website to life with a mission to connect people with jobs and their managers for some reason. In the more than 20 years since, LinkedIn has morphed into something very strange, and very, very funny. Today, I will take a deep dive into the world of LinkedIn and give you a journalist's rundown of what this website is, and if it really can help you get a job in an increasingly competitive market. You can think of LinkedIn as a dating app crossed with Twitter. An algorithm is constantly trying to match you with the perfect job while simultaneously working to keep your attention focused on the app so you can't read any of those pesky email replies to your job application. It seems a little counterintuitive. But

that's not the worst part. Even if you already have a job, with your credentials on LinkedIn and everything, LinkedIn will still try to connect you with employers. I opened the app one day and was greeted with a popup asking, "Are you currently searching for a job?" I was not, but LinkedIn had other plans. The only two options to make this popup go away were "Yes," and "No, but I am open." Things went downhill fast from there. The biggest part of LinkedIn are the posts. Posts on LinkedIn are odd. They cover things nobody needs to know and are either written like a pitch on Shark Tank or a district email. In one post I spotted, an

entrepreneur wrote a ten-paragraph essay that was essentially a Shark Tank pitch for his AI-enhanced Ring camera knockoff. Even funnier are the motivational posts on LinkedIn, with captions like: "You don't need talent, you need discipline," or "Create a circle of positivity." Who is this for? Of course, LinkedIn is not immune to the "hustler grindset" culture popular across other social media platforms, and more than once, I found a real post titled: "You want that Lambo? You think it'll just show up? Nah." This is a professional work search app. I did not come here to be motivated; I came here to submit a resume. LinkedIn feels more like a professional version of Twitter than an app for me to connect with my coworkers and add my official contact information. After intensive study and a lot of thorough review, I have determined that LinkedIn is not a good place to spend your time. You will not find a job on LinkedIn, but you will find the "ten secrets to corporate success only expert managers know," as well as 100 of the same hot takes about AI.



F. Banno

KRAMER GOES REDNOTE VIRAL

by Nelson Kramer
Humor Editor

One day, you're a simple high school student trying not to crash out over AP classes, and the next, you're signed to an endorsement deal with Dunkin' Donuts, raking in millions of dollars every year.

Charli D'amelio, another ordinary high schooler, posted a video of herself dancing back in 2018. Now, not even a decade later, she is one of the biggest influencers on social media. Being thrust into the spotlight as a teenager is tough, but there's no denying that her TikTok dancing days—something she's admitted she wants to leave behind—have set her up for life.

With all the fame, money, and TikTok power Charli holds, people can get really jealous of her success. But hey, who am I to judge? After all, I too, know the trials and tribulations of rising to fame at such a young age. While all the dependent losers scrambled to make their last TikTok videos before the January 19th ban took effect, I downloaded rednote or Xiaohongshu in Mandarin Chinese. You have probably wondered what it's like to wake up one day and realize you're a huge hit overnight. Well, here's the inside scoop of what life as a celebrity is like. In just one video, I went viral, and I plan to tell all of you plebeians about it!

When it comes to making TikToks, I'm a professional. My videos are comedic and easily digestible; this is the perfect combination that any simple-minded doom-scroller can understand. If you ask me how I do it, I'll simply turn the other way; I don't have any advice for being funny as it comes naturally to me. After all, famous people should never associate with lower life forms like the average Joe.

You may be wondering how I handle all my fanmail; well, the simple answer is that I don't. I set up a P.O. box and haven't gone to check it since. I'm sure by now they have to keep the TVs, Cars, flowers, and love letters in the back due to the critical overflow. Those people at the post office are so accommodating; I'm sure they treat all A-listers like me the same.

I really don't understand why so many celebrities complain about death threats. All of them go straight to Twitter and tell their fans how scary it is to get a DM from a creeper telling them that they are outside waiting for them to go to bed. If you know me, you know I don't associate with creepy lurkers on the internet; that's why I borrow Trump's Secret Service while he is asleep. Let's just be honest: I am America's treasured jewel; if anyone needs protection, it's me.

A mere 12 hours after I had struck rednote gold, some over-competent fool somewhere in the new presidential administration got TikTok



A. Pan

back online in the US. The past, irrelevant Nelson would have jumped for joy, but this one hurt big time. I mean, come on, we can't get simple legislation passed to slow climate change, but right as I get famous, they have to pull the rug out from under me. Maybe I should just move to China...

HASTINGS MASTERS SENIOR ASSASSIN

by Megan Hastings
Public Relations Manager

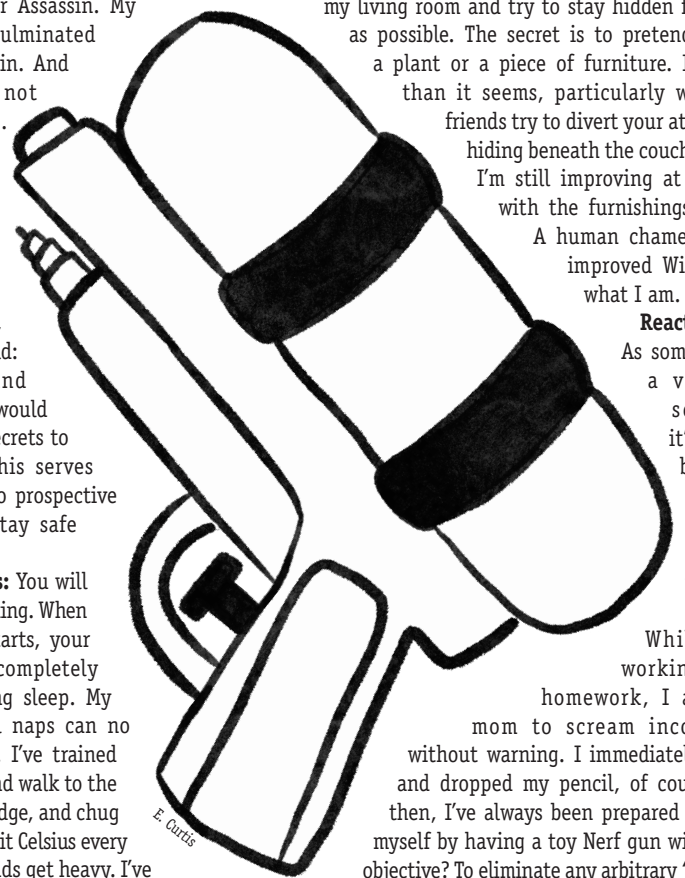
All of the tears, all-nighters, and in-class essay crash-outs over the past four years have led to this moment. No, not college acceptance or graduation. Senior Assassin. My impatience has culminated into my goal to win. And this time I am not playing around. If there's one thing I will accomplish aside from bagging an Ivy League acceptance letter, it is that pot of gold: over six-thousand dollars. Because I would never reveal my secrets to my opponents, this serves more as a guide to prospective underclassmen. Stay safe out there.

Strategic Naps: You will never catch me lacking. When Senior Assassin starts, your daily routine is completely upended, including sleep. My daily after-school naps can no longer be routine. I've trained myself to get up and walk to the kitchen, open a fridge, and chug a Mango Passionfruit Celsius every time I feel my eyelids get heavy. I've even started setting my phone alarm for random intervals throughout the day to keep my body on high alert. The only downside is that insomnia is funny, and sometimes my mom wakes up at 2:00 AM to my wandering around the kitchen, plastic water gun in hand. One time, my mom woke me up so suddenly that my fight-or-flight response was to spray water at her. So, yeah, just make sure to warn your loved ones about your strategic naps.

Camouflage: No one will catch me off-guard. I've been working on the skill of remaining motionless

when anyone walks in the room. This is also a good time to apologize to my classmates. Every time someone walks in, I more than likely look uncomfortable. It's not you, it's me. Actually even with my family around, I'll stand in the center of my living room and try to stay hidden for as long as possible. The secret is to pretend that I'm a plant or a piece of furniture. It's harder than it seems, particularly when your friends try to divert your attention by hiding beneath the couch cushions. I'm still improving at fitting in with the furnishings, though. A human chameleon with improved Wi-Fi, that's what I am.

Reaction Time: As someone with a very busy schedule, it's easy to blindside me, which is why that will never happen. While I was working on my homework, I asked my mom to scream incoherently without warning. I immediately faltered and dropped my pencil, of course. Since then, I've always been prepared to protect myself by having a toy Nerf gun with me. My objective? To eliminate any arbitrary "attackers" before they even realize what's hit them. It is comparable to having a miniature army of one. So far, the results have been mixed—my friend has yelled at me twice for shooting her with the Nerf gun while she was trying to cook dinner—but hey, it's all about staying alert. With around six-thousand dollars on the line, I find myself more motivated than I have ever felt in my life (yes, including college applications and SATs). If you see me around campus, don't be alarmed if I flinch or flash crazy eyes at you; I'm all in.



E. Curtis

BANNO SHARES WHAT YOUR STATIONERY SAYS ABOUT YOU

by Fuyu Banno
Graphics Editor

From pens to highlighters, everybody uses different types of stationery to take notes in their social studies class or to scribble down an endless number of math equations each and every day. In a world with countless brands producing something for anyone, we all have our standard go-to stationery, so here is what the stationery you use says about you:

Zebra Mildliner Highlighters: You aren't as preppy as you think you are, because at least ten other people in the room use the same highlighters. You also make aesthetically pleasing notes with calligraphy and flowers but don't get the hint that it may not be the best idea to do that when you are taking notes on heavier topics, such as the Black Death.

"Erasable" Colored Pencil: You discovered these in third grade and thought you

were the coolest person on earth. You also thought you were way too mature for the regular 12-color pencil pack and looked at everyone around you as poor littlepeasants. In reality, these "erasable" color pencils didn't really erase and never ended up actually erasing any of your color pencil masterpieces.

Pink Pearl Eraser: Why even try? You just scribble your mistake instead of actually erasing it. Although if you do genuinely use this eraser in 2025, I advise you to rethink your choices, then go to your local Office Depot and buy an eraser that actually fixes your mistakes.

Ticonderoga Yellow Pencil: You are a respectable human being. Classy and straightforward, you are here for it. You probably enjoy a freshly sharpened pencil and have a nice Hi-Polymer eraser to pair with it. Although, on the flip side, you either have illegible handwriting that frustrates

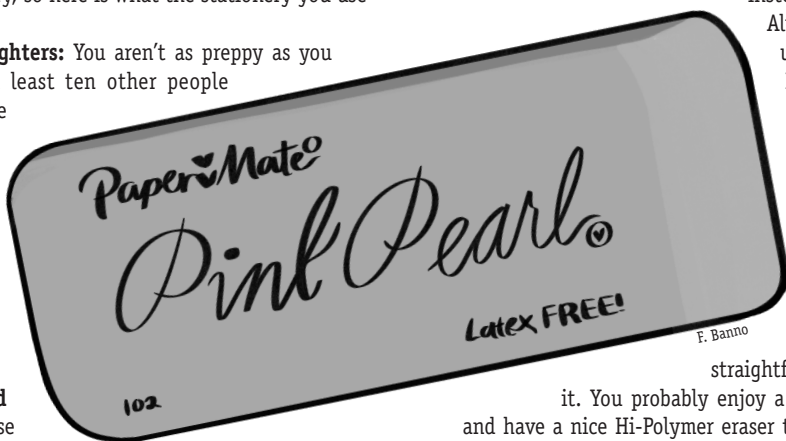
any teacher that tries to grade your writing, or your penmanship looks like Comic Sans but on paper.

Ticonderoga Yellow Pencil (1 inch): You are no longer respectable. Get out. "Hey, it still works!" No, it does not. Ever since first grade, you make sure you use the most microscopic pencil in the hopes of getting attention. Still, the only attention you ever got was from a teacher replacing the pencil sharpener every month because you got that pencil stuck inside it.

Fountain Pen: You either use a fountain pen unironically (aura points), or you write in fake cursive because you think it looks "classy." You also probably look at your friends and go, "All these screenagers." But then again, you probably are sixty-one years old mentally.

King Size Sharpie: You either already gave up in life and don't care anymore, or you are the next Grammy-winning pop star. You use this unusable Sharpie to practice your signature when you get famous and can't decide if you should add a smiling face to your name or if it would be too cringy. But then again, you could also be a psychopath who likes inhaling the smell of Sharpies, and the regular size doesn't do it for you.

And there we have it: These predictions are as accurate as your daily horoscopes. Perhaps I correctly guessed what kind of person you are. On a final note, if you do still use a Pink Pearl Eraser, you deserve so much better.



F. Banno

- Callaghan expresses passion for music
- Thariq excels in mock trial

PEOPLE

EL GATO • FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2025 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONNEWS.COM

Bae thrives at LGHS while managing multiple clubs

by Hayley Strahs
News Editor

Whether she's cheering for LGHS at a competition or leading a club meeting at lunchtime, junior **Chesle Bae** is a jack of all trades. Bae is the president of two clubs: Interact and Cats Against Domestic Violence (CADV). Even though CADV is new to LGHS, the club has already begun raising money for local domestic violence shelters. In contrast, Interact, short for International Action, is an offshoot of



the historic Rotary Club that hosts collection drives and volunteers at Rotary-sanctioned philanthropy events. In addition, Bae is the vice president of LGHS Key Club and the executive assistant for Division 12 West, which spans the Bay Area.

Earlier this year, Bae joined the LGHS Cheer team. Despite her rookie status, Bae earned a spot on the award-winning competition team, to which she remarked, "I'm glad I [joined], even if it's a lot of work." She described feeling both "nervous and inspired" at cheer competitions, such as the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) State Cheer Invitational on Feb. 1 in Manhattan Beach, CA. Moreover, Bae has been a crucial member of the LGHS Badminton team since her freshman year. She initially decided to join the team because of her love for tennis, a sport she has played since she was 11. While Bae did not compete for LGHS as a tennis player this year, she was an assistant coach for the junior varsity team at the start of the year.

While balancing three sports, three club board positions, and seven difficult classes is not easy, Bae manages it all. Every Sunday, she goes to Los Gatos Roasting Company to do homework and study with her friends. This year, Bae is taking three science courses: AP Biology,

Anatomy and Physiology, and Physics. Of these, her favorite is Anatomy and Physiology because it directly relates to her plan of becoming a nurse. "I've always been drawn to medicine and I always knew I wanted to be a doctor," explained Bae. She continued, "Later, I realized....the things that people say that doctors do are actually what nurses do." In addition to her high school courses, Bae will soon enroll in certified nursing assistant courses later this semester with the end goal of working as a nursing assistant over the summer.



Photos courtesy C. Bae

In addition, Bae plays the flute in the Wind Ensemble at LGHS. She started learning flute in elementary school after her mom purchased her one and has stuck with it ever since. However, beyond perfecting scales and performing onstage, she particularly enjoys the social aspects of band. She expressed, "I've met so many people from different grades that feel like family."

From leading clubs to playing music, Bae's numerous talents empower her to succeed across a wide range of activities.

Cross explores her passion for dance and softball

by Kloe Adams and Isabella Langner
Editorial and People Editors

Experiencing newfound freedom as a high school freshman, **Alexa Cross** is thriving at LGHS. From softball and surfing to dance and school, Cross is an inspiration to all.

Cross began her high school career strong, trying out for and making the LGHS dance team. After dancing for 12 years, Cross was ecstatic about the opportunity to pursue dance as a high school sport. Alongside five other freshmen, Cross noted, "It was really cool getting to meet other people who do the same sport as me. They are all super nice and funny so it's always fun to be there." Her favorite football game that she danced at this fall was the blackout game, as it was both her birthday and the first football game she performed at. Recently, the team performed at Santa Clara University's boys' basketball game.

Outside of school dance, Cross competes with a competitive dance team at The Dance Company of Los Gatos. When she is not busy competing, Cross extends her dance skills to groups of younger students. While she specializes in hip-hop, Cross also



teaches styles such as lyrical and contemporary dance. Out of all the styles she knows, her favorite is open, which consists of a wide variety of genres mixed together. Although Cross has three more years of high school dance ahead of her, she would enjoy the opportunity to further her dancing career in college. She recognizes that "in that community it is hard to make it, so it's something [I'll] have to work towards."

After finishing dance rehearsal for her competitive team or LGHS, Cross continues her day at softball practice. Playing softball all her life, Cross commented: "I didn't really know what softball was when I was younger. I got involved because of my sister and never stopped." After a long week of tryouts in gloomy weather, Cross secured her spot on junior varsity as the pitcher.

Despite tackling two sports in the same season, Cross is ready, saying, "I love both dance and softball even though it's tiring. It's worth trying to find the balance."

Despite the difficult jump from Fisher Middle School to LGHS, Cross loves the freedom high school brings. She added, "I like that I get to meet a lot of new people from other schools." Her favorite class this year is Spanish 2 with Señora **Danielle Stinson**.

While not at school or sports, Cross makes the most of her freedom by spending time with friends and family, including her Labradoodles Luna and Coco, and surfing at the beach. Cross's love for surfing developed on a trip to Hawaii. She said, "I didn't really like it [at first], but I've grown to love it." Her passion for surfing fuels her desire to go to college near the beach, so she can be closer to the water.

From softball to dance, Cross explores her passions with dedication and commitment. Make sure to say hi to this freshman if you see her around school!



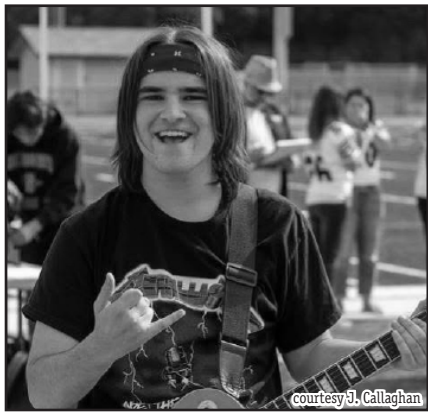
Photos courtesy A. Cross

CALLAGHAN PURSUES GUITAR

by Chloe Wilson
Humor Editor

Sophomore **Jymmi Callaghan** is an enthusiast of all things creative, especially when it comes to drawing and playing the guitar. From playing the national anthem at an LGHS Spirit Rally to sketching his favorite characters and playing video games with his friends, Callaghan puts his all into his many passions.

Callaghan explained his main inspiration for starting to play the guitar: "When I heard the song One by Metallica. I just really like that intro riff. It is such a cool riff, and I immediately learned it. I remember practicing that intro solo for hours at a time, for weeks, until I got it perfectly down." Callaghan continued, "I



Courtesy J. Callaghan

but yes, that was fun." Recently, Callaghan also played the national anthem at the girls' basketball senior night.

As for his other passion, art, Callaghan said that when drawing, he likes to sketch portraits: "That's my favorite thing. You know, sketching faces and stuff like that." One other thing Callaghan likes to do for fun is play video games. "Right now, I've just been playing a lot of Marvel Rivals with my friends. Sometimes we play Fortnite. But yeah, if they are on, I'm on just to hang out."

Beyond extracurriculars, Callaghan enjoys his classes at LGHS, particularly English and his teacher: "I just really like [Kurt] Kroesche, and how he kind of brings philosophy and ethics into you know, this sophomore English class." He also expressed that "all the projects we do, all the assignments we do, it is just not too much. He always makes it fun."

When he is not shredding on the guitar, sketching portraits, or playing games with his friends, Callaghan also enjoys listening to music and cooking. When Callaghan is enjoying these hobbies, he likes to share his cooking with his family: "I made a steak for my mom's birthday, so she was happy, and that made me happy. But other than that, I go on walks and spend time with my family."

As Callaghan pursues his second year at LGHS, he continues to express himself in the Los Gatos community.

THOMAS EMBRACES LOVE FOR ADVENTURE

by Megan Hastings
Public Relations Manager

The future may seem like an overwhelming uncertainty to many high school students. However, that future has already started to take shape for senior **Ewan Thomas**, who is passionate about learning and exploration—far outside of Los Gatos High School's familiar surroundings.

When he is not working in agroecology or ceramics, Thomas spends the weekend with friends. At home in the Santa Cruz mountains, he prefers to spend days snoozing with his cats and watching TV with his parents. In addition to his interests, Thomas has a distinct sense of style that captures his personality. Thomas also likes to spend his free time thrifting, saying, "I just wear what I like."

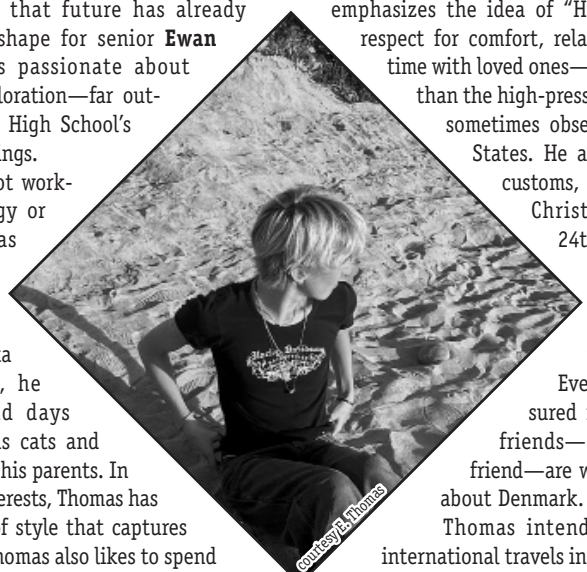
Most people don't know that Thomas is a Pennsylvania native, born in Philadelphia. He moved to the Santa Cruz mountains at the age of four, but his sense of adventure did not stop there. His love for travel has taken him across 13 countries and nearly half of the states in the US, fueling his desire to experience life beyond the places he has called home.

Thomas's ambition to travel the world brought him to Denmark for an amazing study abroad experience that changed not only his academic interests but also his outlook on life. His stay in Denmark had a profoundly transformational effect on him. "I had an incredible time in Denmark,

and I miss it every day," he said. "Being able to attend a Danish high school was truly life-changing, and I made amazing lifelong friends there." Thomas explained that Danish culture, which emphasizes the idea of "Hygge"—a profound respect for comfort, relaxation, and quality time with loved ones—is far more laid back than the high-pressure business culture sometimes observed in the United States. He also adopted Danish customs, such as celebrating Christmas on December 24th, Fastelavn (a February holiday akin to Halloween), and birthdays with Danish flags. Even with these treasured memories, Thomas's friends—especially his best friend—are what he misses most about Denmark.

Thomas intends to continue his international travels in the future through, he hopes, attending University College Syddanmark in Denmark to further his studies. In order to teach English, he intends to obtain a bachelor's degree in education. He is also considering pursuing a profession in environmental science. His time overseas has fueled his desire to change the world, whether through environmental advocacy or education.

Thomas has one piece of advice for anyone thinking about studying abroad: "It's the best thing you could ever do in high school. I'm so, so glad that I decided to move abroad for a year and every day I think back on the amazing trips, school days, and weekend shenanigans that I experienced and I am forever grateful and I wish I could live it all over again."



Courtesy E. Thomas

Reilly Mendez takes full advantage of her senior year

by **Britt Melinauskas**
Sports Editor

Senior **Reilly Mendez**, a resilient beacon of joy and optimism, balances her roles as a president of the Black Student Union club, a right side hitter for Mountain View Volleyball Club (MVVC), and member on the LGHS Girls' Volleyball Team with admirable tenacity. Her ability to coordinate a variety of pursuits is truly inspiring, as she not only excels academically but also makes time to bake and connect with her family.

Mendez's journey with the LGHS Black Student Union began in her freshman year, and she has been a consistent contributor ever since, rising to the position of club president. She described her experience with the Black Student Union as "a source of camaraderie and community building," a testament to her leadership and commitment to fostering a supportive environment for students on campus.

Mendez also plays volleyball, a sport she has been committed to for eight years, four of which she spent in competitions, after "my mom got me playing, and I fell in love with it." Mendez played



a significant role in LGHS Girls' Varsity Volleyball success in years past, reaching second place in the 2023 Central Coast Section Division 1, flourishing through tournament triumphs, and leading the team to an Open Division appearance in 2024.

When asked about LGHS volleyball's impact on her, Mendez explained, "I feel like the team is such a supportive group, and we all have so much fun together. Everyone brings something unique to the team and is encouraging." For Mountain View Volleyball Club, previously, her team competed at a Las Vegas Qualifier achieving a second-place finish. "Tournament travel is always so fun and exciting, and each person has special traits that make the team's bond tighter," Mendez commented, reflecting on her memories from her last year at the club. "MVVC has been a true family to me."

When she's not showcasing her athletic talent, Mendez's love for baking and cooking takes center stage. Her culinary skills reveal

the warmth and care she puts into everything she does, especially when preparing her family and friends' favorite chocolate cookies. Mendez stated that she enjoys baking because "it gives me a chance to unwind and focus on the recipes, letting go of the stress from school work."

Despite her numerous extracurricular activities, Mendez excels in her academic pursuits, taking Business, Economics, US Government, English 12 Social Justice, Statistics, and Agroecology. Her favorite subject, English 12 Social Justice, is particularly meaningful to her as her teacher, **Tiffany Hamm**, relates social justice topics to current events, inspiring Mendez to think critically about social issues.

As Mendez navigates whether to continue volleyball in college, she remains focused on her future aspirations in the medical field. While she has "not yet committed to a university," she has a clear vision for her future primary and career paths.

"I hope to pursue nursing because I love to help people," she explained. Her inspiration comes from her grandmothers, both of whom were nurses, and she strives to follow in their footsteps.



photos courtesy R. Mendez

Adrian Hsu thrives during his first year at LGHS

by **Siyona Singhal**
News Editor

Though he is taking many challenging classes, freshman **Adrian Hsu** continues to participate in a multitude of different activities, allowing him to excel during his first year at LGHS.

Hsu is enjoying his freshman year despite his enrollment in difficult courses such as English 9 Honors, Biology Honors, Algebra Two Accelerated, Health and Fitness, Chinese 3 Honors, Intro to Engineering Design, and Robotics. Hsu remarked that, so far, his favorite class has been robotics. He explained "It's super cool because you get to build robots, and we get to be independent and do what we want to do on the robot. We get to learn what we want to." Hsu joined the class because he hopes to one day dual major in engineering and business in a program at UC Berkeley. Hsu is eagerly looking forward to next year and cannot wait to be more involved on the team.

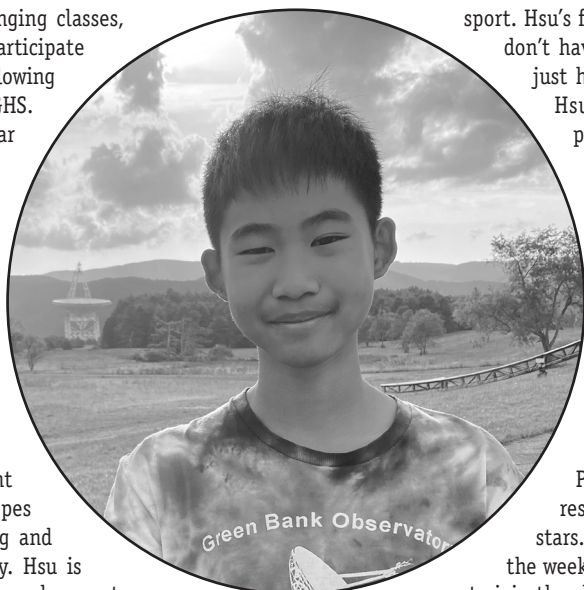
Beyond robotics, Hsu also enjoys playing tennis. He has been a self-declared "undedicated player" since fourth grade. Though Hsu is committed to the sport now, at first, he hated tennis and would

have much rather been playing baseball or soccer. However, his mom forced him to stick with it, and he found his love for the sport. Hsu's favorite thing about tennis is that "I don't have to worry about teammates, and I just have to be concerned about myself."

Hsu takes private lessons and often participates in tournaments so he can stay on top of his game.

Hsu is also the president and founder of the Pulsar Discovery Club. The astrology enthusiast discovered pulsars, a type of dying neutron star, last summer when he and his family went to Griffith Observatory in LA where there was a pulsar exhibition. They have fascinated Hsu since. The Pulsar Discovery Club joins with the Pulsar Search Collaboratory to do real research and analyze data to find the stars. They meet every last orange day of the week during lunch, and Hsu urges people to join the club if they are interested in pulsars.

In his free time, Hsu can be found practicing his violin. He has played the instrument since first grade and practices every day. "If I have time, [I practice for] two hours. If I don't, one hour," Hsu remarked.



photos courtesy A. Hsu

Adrian Hsu's freshman year at LGHS is a testament to his ability to balance a rigorous academic schedule with a diverse array of passions and extracurricular pursuits. From building robots and analyzing pulsars to perfecting his tennis serve and mastering the violin, Hsu embodies the spirit of curiosity, dedication, and resilience. His enthusiasm for learning and his drive to explore new horizons make him a standout student and an inspiration to his peers. As he continues to navigate his high school journey, there is no doubt that Adrian Hsu will keep reaching for the stars.

Qiu excels as a three-sport student-athlete

by **Kloe Adams and Sam Gruetter**
Editorial and Opinion Editors

Junior **Andy Qiu** impresses many with his unwavering commitment to three school sports, a rigorous academic schedule, and a myriad of unique creative outlets. Whether leading his soccer team as captain or winning awards for refereeing, Qiu is constantly making impressive contributions to the Los Gatos High School community.

Qui commenced the 2024-2025 school year on the Junior Varsity Los Gatos Boys' Cross Country Team, making it his third year with the program. He described the sport as fun but challenging: "Some days the workouts were pretty difficult. My least favorite workouts are probably mile repeats where we just had to run miles over and over again." Despite the physical toll, Qiu found enjoyment in running on trails with friends. By the end of the season, the hard work paid off, resulting in Qiu's placement in the top 15 of the team and winning the league.

Straight from cross country, Qiu transitioned into the soccer season, making the junior varsity team and quickly rising to the role of captain. Qiu leads his team as a defensive starter and captain, helping attain their current record and place in their league. Qiu commented on the team environment and culture, saying, "Everyone enjoys playing with one another, which helped us form a tight-knit team. We are all very supportive of each other." Qiu's high school coach, Rick Morin, also coaches Qiu's competitive team at the club level, where he plays for local club Los Gatos United.



courtesy A. Qiu

Qiu's commitment is unwavering as he continues to play club soccer during the cross country and track seasons. As the soccer season reaches its midway point and track preseason begins, Qiu continues to look forward to trying out for track and field, specifically for the 800m, 1600m, and 3200m events.

If three sports were not enough on his workload, Qiu furthers his pursuits in academics as he takes rigorous courses, prioritizing advanced classes within the STEM field such as AP Physics, AP Statistics, and AP Calculus AB. He described his busy schedule, saying, "It is pretty hard managing three sports with school, but I think I am doing pretty well." Physics proves a challenge to Qiu; however, he expressed that it is one of his favorite classes. "Physics is enjoyable because my teacher **Rachel Peters** is very engaging. There are also a lot of labs, so it is more hands-on, which helps me learn better." He identified a specific interest in STEM and noted his desire to major in a STEM-related subject.

Already preparing for next year, Qiu is excited about more science course options. Specifically AP Environmental Science, and most notably the trip to Catalina Island, "I am really looking forward to the Catalina trip. I've had some friends who went on the trip, and from what they've shared it sounds like a lot of fun." As his impressive junior year comes to an end, Qiu expresses similar ambitions for the remaining duration of his time at LGHS.

THARIQ JUGGLES HER BUSY SCHEDULE WITH EASE

by **Siyona Singhal**
News Editor

Meet sophomore **Farah Thariq**, a dynamic and driven student making waves at Los Gatos High School with her exceptional leadership skills, fierce competitiveness on the badminton court, and sharp wit in the mock trial courtroom.

Thariq is taking many challenging classes this year, including AP European History, English 10 Honors, Pre-Calculus Honors, and Chemistry. On top of these, Thariq is also taking two electives: French Three and Leadership. In Leadership, Thariq is on the dance committee and enjoys it very much. Currently, they are planning the Spring Formal, which will take place on March 7. "It's kind of a challenge because it's very different from Sadie's but we still want a lot of people to come, and we have some budgeting issues right now," remarked Thariq. She also helped plan the Homecoming Dance, which happened earlier in the school year. According to Thariq, the greatest challenge they faced in planning the dance was "figuring out how we were going to get water from the field house to the front lawn. We tried to get a water truck, but in the end, we had to have people going back and forth, which was not ideal." Thariq's favorite part about being in Leadership is "how I have made so many new friends, and I really enjoy doing the spirit rally. Even though it's a lot of work, it's still super fun. I'm already looking forward to the second one."



courtesy F. Thariq

On top of Leadership, Thariq is also on the LGHS Varsity Badminton Team. She started playing the sport in seventh grade because "my dad said I was home too much and signed me up for badminton lessons." She plays on the school team and also attends practices outside of school to hone her skills. Thariq has been on the varsity badminton team for two years now. Last year, her favorite part of the season was "when I was playing singles, and even though I was not very good, I beat the other girl and it made me happy because she was a senior and also really mean to me." This year Thariq is looking forward to meeting many new people and playing in games. If she didn't play badminton, Thariq remarked that she would want to play tennis because it seems similar to badminton but still looks fun, prompting her to consider trying out for the tennis team next year as well.

After school, Thariq is a dedicated member of the LGHS Mock Trial Club. She acts as an attorney and chose this instead of a witness because "I'm not really that good at acting and I think I would be very boring on the witness stand." Her favorite part of mock trial is that "even though a lot of the trial is scripted, you still have to perform and think on your feet, and you get to meet a lot of new and cool people."

Whether it's planning dances, practicing her serve, or delivering an argument, Farah Thariq always excels in what she does.

- Eagles triumph in Superbowl LIX
- LG soccer begins final games

SPORTS

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Varsity and JV boys' basketball teams finish out regular season

by Sahil Muthukrishnan
Sports Editor

Junior varsity and varsity boys' basketball teams are having exemplary seasons, ranking near the top of their respective leagues. The LGHS Boys' Varsity Team has been incredibly successful, coming off last season's Division 1 Central Coast Section (CCS) Championship win. They have a robust record of 17-5 and a league record of 8-3, putting them third overall in the De Anza division. Playing Gunn on their senior night, the varsity team kept their blazing six-game win streak going strong into the remainder of the season. The team previously defeated Gunn 76-58 on Jan. 22. Alongside this win, the varsity team secured victories against the top seven schools including Wilcox, Mountain View, and Los Altos. Varsity hopes to avenge losses against the first and second seeds in the De Anza division, Milpitas and Palo Alto, in upcoming games.

Senior player **Osha Moloney** remarked, "We're having a pretty strong season. We kind of went off to a rough start at our home games, losing to Mountain View, Palo Alto, and Milpitas. Our game plan has been to just come back stronger and regroup as a team." This season, the team is focusing on its collaboration. As Moloney commented, "We

lost a lot of experienced players last year. So building team chemistry [is a priority] with the new group we have. It's been kind of a change in dynamic." As reigning CCS champions, the team has a very high mountain to climb. Moloney added, "Every team we play, we have a target on the back of our jerseys, and it is motivational." Junior **Ryu Iijima**, a shooting guard on the varsity team, noted improvements over last season: "We get along a lot better as a team. We do team bonding a lot, and that's really fun."

The JV team has made notable strides with a 16-5 overall record and a 6-3 league record. JV continued their five-game winning streak by beating Gunn, also on senior night. The team avenged their earlier loss to Gunn by 68-70 from the away game on Jan. 22. Alongside Gunn, the JV team has grabbed victories against competitive teams such as Terra Nova, Los Altos, Westmont, Mountain View, and Willow Glen. The JV squad has only incurred losses from Milpitas, Gunn, and Palo Alto.

On the team's success, **Lucas Liu**, a sophomore and JV's starting forward, said, "The season's been going well...our chemistry is improving. At first, it was a bit off, but now we're all friends." Liu added, "We're working on building even more chemistry."

Sometimes we get too selfish when driving to the basket and miss open teammates, especially those in the corner. We're aiming to improve that."

Both varsity and JV ended league play with 8-3 records. Make sure to come out and support the Varsity team in the post-season! Go Wildcats!

(Source: MaxPreps)



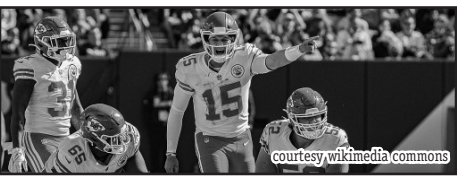
JUMP: The Los Gatos Wildcats get ready for their tipoff against the Gunn Titans.

Eagles win Superbowl LIX

by Rory Zeman
Media Production Editor

On Feb. 9, the Philadelphia Eagles crushed the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL's 59th Super Bowl. The win squandered the possibility of the first NFL three-peat victory by the Chiefs while also granting the Eagles redemption after their loss to the Chiefs two years ago in the 58th Super Bowl.

The game never really got close, with the Eagles gaining the largest lead in the third quarter 34-0. However, a late burst by the Chiefs led to a narrower margin, with the final score standing at 40-22 Eagles. Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts led the way for the Eagles, receiving the Super Bowl Most Valuable Player award after the historic win. The superstar quarterback had 221 passing yards and 72



SET HIKE: Mahomes, Chiefs quarterback, gives directions.

rushing yards, which was more rushing yards than all of the Chiefs players had combined. Additionally, Eagles running back Saquon Barkley, who finished third place in the regular season MVP voting, got 57 yards to help his team overcome the tough Chiefs defense. However, the Eagles's defense, especially in the first half, ultimately earned them the victory. They stopped arguably the best offense in the league from scoring any points until there were 34 seconds left in the third quarter. Additionally, they held the Chiefs to under 300 total yards and only 49 rushing yards.

The top defensive Eagles players were Josh Sweat, Cooper DeJean, and Zack Baun. They caused the Chiefs to throw two interceptions, lose a fumble, and only get 12 first downs. However, the statistic that continuously demolished the Chiefs' offense

was the six sacks, which prevented the Chiefs from making any significant drives for the first three quarters.

Despite the groundbreaking performance from the Eagles, it would be hard not to discuss the disappointing game from the team that had three-peat aspirations. Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce only had four receptions for a total of 39 yards. Additionally, Chiefs running back Isiah Pacheco only had three carries for a total of seven yards. However, Chiefs wide receiver Xavier Worthy carried the bulk of the weight, with his eight receptions yielding 157 yards. Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes had an underwhelming night, with a majority of his 257 passing yards coming from completed hail marys late in the game when it was already unwinnable. Furthermore, his two interceptions were vital to the Eagles' success. After the game, Mahomes discussed his role in the loss, noting, "The turnovers hurt. I take all the blame for that. Those turnovers swing the momentum of the game, and they capitalized on them." Jalen Hurts commented on the success of the Eagles' Defense in stopping the Chiefs' drives, stating, "Defense wins championships," and "We saw how they played today. We saw the difference they made in the game. They gave us opportunities, gave us short fields. And we're able to do what we do."

With yet another NFL season completed, fans are excited for what the next, possibly even more competitive season will bring.

(Sources: NBC, NFL, NY Times, The Athletic)



HAIL MARY: Eagles quarterback Hurts prepares to throw.

14th NFL Honors commences

by Megan Saul
Culture Editor

Before the Super Bowl, the National Football League (NFL) held the NFL Honors, an award show recognizing the league's best players for that season. Occurring on Thursday, Feb. 6 in New Orleans and led by multitalented actor, rapper, and personality Snoop Dogg, the 2025 NFL Honors was certainly one for the books. The first NFL Honors took place in 2012 in Indianapolis. This year's event marked its 14th occurrence.

During the award show, various panel members who voted for the awards as well as respected athletes presented players and coaches with their awards. These honors included Coach of the Year, Comeback Player of the Year, Defensive and Offensive Players of the Year, Rookies of the Year, and many more. The NFL named Kevin O'Connell, the Minnesota Vikings head coach, Coach of the Year for his unforeseen success and adaptability. The Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow won Comeback Player of the Year for an accomplished season upon returning from a season-ending injury the prior year. This year, Burrow had an impressive 43 passing touchdowns, his best season yet. He previously won this award during the 2021 season. Burrow said, "I wouldn't say this is necessarily an award you wanna be nominated for two times, but



HOLY GRAIL: The NFL's MVP trophy is its most coveted award.

I'm proud of the work I've put in to come back from these injuries I seem to face every year." The Defensive Player of the Year, Denver Broncos cornerback Pat Surtain II, and Offensive Player of the Year, Philadelphia Eagles running back Saquon Barkley, dominated their respective positions. Lastly, the two rookie of the year awards were given to the best players of the 2024 draft class, Los Angeles Rams linebacker Jared Verse and Washington Commanders quarterback Jayden Daniels. All of these athletes and staff shaped their team's seasons positively.

The most anticipated award of the night was Most Valuable Player (MVP). Josh Allen, the Buffalo Bills quarterback, took home this honor. He won with 383 votes, compared to the second place, Baltimore Raven quarterback Lamar Jackson, with 362 votes. Allen's story is an inspiring one; following high school, Allen did not have any scholarship offers from colleges, so he worked to get himself on the team at the University of Wyoming. The Bills drafted him as the seventh overall pick in the 2018 NFL draft. Since then, Allen has changed the Bills franchise and has brought them to multiple playoffs. Allen had a dominant season this year, even breaking his own NFL record for consecutive seasons with 40 passing or rushing touchdowns. Allen's win marked the first time since 1957 that the MVP is not also a first-team all-pro player. In his acceptance speech, Allen shared, "I know this is an individual award and it says Most Valuable Player on it, but I think it's derived from team success, and I love my team... Be good, do good. God bless, and Go Bills."

In addition to awards, four past league players were inducted into the Football Hall of Fame. These include cornerback Eric Allen, defensive end and former LGHS student Jared Allen, tight end Antonio Gates, and wide receiver Sterling Sharpe. This year's NFL Honors celebrated the conclusion of a successful football season and the many people who contributed to it.

(Sources: ESPN, NFL, USA Today)

The NBA undergoes league-altering historical player trades

by Atharava Pandey
National/World Editor

The NBA had perhaps its craziest trade deadline — the last day of the season to make a trade — in history, with the league looking almost unrecognizable in the span of a week. The trade season opened up with the most shocking deal in NBA history on Feb. 1, in which Dallas Mavericks superstar Luka Doncic was traded to the Los Angeles Lakers for Anthony Davis and a first-round pick. The trade left most NBA fans stunned as they could not comprehend the reason the Mavericks would make this deal. Luka Doncic is a 25-year-old generational talent in his prime, while 32-year-old Anthony Davis is a great basketball player but is injury-prone. The Mavericks' general manager, Nico Harrison, hired additional security due to the fans' extreme frustration.



LAYUP: Former Mavericks star Doncic goes for a shot in the NBA All-Star Game.

Harrison explained his rationale for this trade, saying, "I believe that defense wins championships. I believe that getting an All-Defensive center and an All-NBA player with a defensive mindset gives us a better chance. We're built to win now and in the future."

On Feb. 2, the San Antonio Spurs traded for DeAaron Fox in a three-team deal, sending Zach Lavine to the Sacramento Kings. The Spurs have been looking to get some help for their superstar Victor Wembanyama, and a young, explosive guard like Fox fits well with him. The shocking aspect of this trade is that the Spurs kept all of their young talent while the Bulls and the Kings walked away with no real compensation. While Lavine is a great player, the Kings are already struggling to make the playoffs in a competitive Western Conference, and this deal does not make them instant contenders.

After two months of drama, the Miami Heat finally traded Jimmy Butler to the Golden State Warriors for Andrew Wiggins, some role players, and a first-round pick. The Warriors were desperate to make a deal. They needed to get their superstar Stephen Curry some help since the Warriors have been struggling to make the play-in. Although this deal certainly makes them better, a fan must question how much better a 35-year-old Jimmy Butler is than 29-year-old Andrew Wiggins.

The Cleveland Cavaliers managed to pick up DeAndre Hunter from the Atlanta Hawks, which makes the Cavaliers even better. The Milwaukee Bucks also traded aging star Khris Middleton for Kyle Kuzma. Many deemed the Bucks fraudulent contenders; they have struggled in the East and will hope their deal helps them compete with the strong teams in their conference.

All-time great Kevin Durant was almost traded, with the Phoenix Suns reportedly listening to offers. Allegedly, a deal was made which would send Durant back to the Warriors and Butler to the Suns. Durant shut down the deal when he expressed that he did not want to go back to the Warriors. Nevertheless, at this trade deadline, many teams completely rebuilt their roster and will now gear up for the NBA playoffs in April.

(Sources: Basketball Network, ESPN)



FROM DEEP: Former Bull Lavine shoots a three over his now teammate DeRozan.

LGHS Boys' and Girls' Lacrosse prepare for spring season

by Atharava Pandey
National/World Editor

Los Gatos High School's lacrosse teams are gearing up for another successful season. They have been training hard in the preseason to improve on their performances from last year, and with all the players working hard and putting in effort, both the boys' and girls' teams will inevitably triumph this season.

LGHS Boys' Lacrosse had a great season last year. They beat Palo Alto High School by a score of 12-10, winning the Central Coast Section (CCS) championship for Division II. They also beat numerous



STICKS UP: Girls' Varsity Lacrosse Team engage in a team huddle before a match.

other teams, including Archbishop Mitty in the CCS semifinals, Los Altos High, and Saratoga High. With the team boasting exceptional players and coaches, boys' lacrosse is looking to replicate their past success this season and will strive to win CCS again this year. LGHS Boys' Lacrosse will play their first game against Menlo on Feb. 25 at Helm Field.

LGHS Girls' Lacrosse had a similarly successful season last year, finishing as the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL) champions. They also beat many other teams, such as Gunn High School, Wilcox, and Mountain View. Girls' lacrosse is looking forward to improving even further this season. According to junior **Isha Joshi**, "We are putting in double the effort, double the time, and really trying to focus on improving as an individual and as a team." Both teams are stressing the importance of putting in time and effort, as this is something that will undoubtedly help them during the season. When asked about their biggest goals, sophomore **Darcy Armstrong** said, "To make it to CCS and do our best to make it through the first round and eventually win it." LG Girls' Lacrosse is looking forward to a great season and will play against Hillsdale on Mar. 3 at Helm Field.

Lacrosse is taking team chemistry very seriously this season. Joshi explained, "We are all bonded. The biggest thing before we actually start games is to get to know our teammates, get to know each other and our strengths and weaknesses to bond as one team." Both teams realize the importance of working well together on the



photos courtesy J. Natividad

READY FOR ACTION: Players circle up for a pregame talk and gameplan.

lacrosse field. Team bonding will continue to help throughout the lacrosse season and will result in even more success for both groups.

LGHS lacrosse has set big personal and team goals for themselves this season, and with the players putting in significant work during the off-season, these goals will likely be achieved. With a challenging off-season training regimen including weightlifting and numerous hours of strenuous practice, LGHS lacrosse is poised to have another great year. According to Armstrong, "We are just going to make sure we have chemistry on and off the field and that we are fit and ready for the season." Make sure to come to Helm Field and buy tickets on GoFan to support our fantastic teams this upcoming season!

Swim and dive begin meets

by Nelson Kramer
Humor Editor

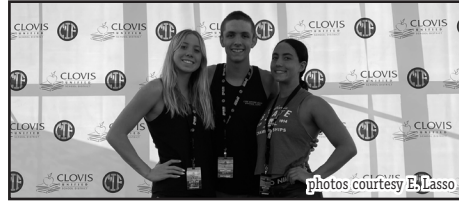
The 2025 swim and dive seasons are starting in a sprint as athletes prepare for their first meets within just three weeks of practice. In the first couple of weeks, swimmers and divers warmed up their skills in cloudy and rainy conditions. Over break, however, all teams enjoyed the many days and nights of warmer weather, and as some of the vets can attest to, anything is better than last year's season of complete rainy downpour. In light of the new season starting, here are some highlights of two amazing veteran athletes' experiences on both teams.

Junior **Eduardo Lasso** is competing on the varsity swim team, continuing his successful season on varsity swim from last year. Even though Lasso started off the 2025 season with some sickness, he has full confidence in making this season great, treating this setback as a mere pebble in his path. Lasso began swimming during the pandemic and has found success and enjoyment in competing for his high school and club teams ever since. He noted, "My favorite thing about swimming is the camaraderie between teammates and even coaches. While many people view swimming as an individual sport, there is certainly a team aspect that keeps me motivated when training is intense." He further explained, "The team community at my high school is like none other. There are very few practices throughout the season where we don't have a blast and end up hanging out and grabbing food after practice. I think



SPLASH: LG diver Singh plunges for her opening meet.

we undoubtedly have the best team community in the area because everyone is having fun." Despite Lasso's major success from his sophomore season where he competed at state finals, he mentioned that his goals for this season are more focused on helping to create a fun team environment as he wishes to see younger swimmers prosper athletically and socially. Keep an eye out for Lasso this season; if you blink, you might miss this swimming all-star!



photos courtesy E. Lasso

CHEESE: LGHS divers pose for a photo after victory.

Senior **Aanya Singh** starts her fourth and final season on the varsity dive team this year. Singh captains the high school diving team and is excited to make improvements and reforms while also pushing toward overall team success with the addition of their newest member, **Bert Wolfe**, a freshman at LGHS. Singh first joined after retiring from gymnastics. In an interview, she emphasized, "My favorite thing about diving is the spirit of the team. I have made a lot of friends on all of the other high school teams, and it's really cool to hang out with all these different people from other schools who are interested in the same thing." Although the team faces the cold climate with a bit of fear, mainly because most of the sport is spent standing on deck, exposed to the elements, Singh is confident in her team's ability to succeed. While explaining her goals for the season, Singh noted, "I think my biggest goal is to qualify for CCS," as she made it last year and had a lot of fun competing. Watch out as Singh makes leaps and bounds this season.

LGHS baseball commences

by Chloe Wilson
Humor Editor

After last year's spectacular season full of success, the Los Gatos High School Varsity Baseball Team is ready to go into 2025 stronger than ever. With a first place standing in the De Anza League for the 2025 season, the players are looking forward to repeating their accomplishments this year. With a 23-5 overall record, an 11-3 league record, and fifth place in the Central Coast Section rankings, their season had many recognizable achievements. With a strong lineup and solid preparation, the team is equipped to take on the new season's challenges.

A major highlight from 2024 was the varsity team's trip to middle Tennessee to compete against teams outside of their league. Interestingly enough, the tournament took place at Cumberland University where coach **Mike Minkel**, played collegiate baseball.

As for individual player achievements, the team had its fair share of awards, featuring current senior **Zach Biller** and junior **Ethan Williams** on the First Team All-League, along with junior **Rowen Smith** being named to the Second Team All-League. All players recognized have proven to be key aspects of their team's successes.

Sophomore **Josh Pearman**, who played for the freshman team last year, shared that during the pre-season, the players would "go to the cages and do on-field stuff before the season starts." The Wildcats did lose their CCS Division 1 First Round game against No. 4 seed Carmel last season. However, it is clear that the coaches have focused on training to come back stronger this year and be more prepared than their opponents.

Concerning the JV team last year, their season was also triumphant, with an overall record of 23-4 and a league record of 12-2. The

JV team, alongside varsity, had many victories this past season, beating schools like Saint Francis (10-4) and Mitty (6-3), proving that Los Gatos is one of the few public school teams still competing against programs in the West Catholic Athletic League.

The freshman team also had an impressive season during 2024, with a record of 6-6-1. A former player on the freshman team last year, sophomore **Sam Petke** explained that his favorite memory on the team was "probably our last away game, versus James Logan [High School]."

Los Gatos baseball looks to set high expectations for all three of their teams during this season. Striving to hold their teammates to high standards and accomplish even more than their celebrated season last year. With a strong foundation of talent and determination, the Wildcats are prepared to go even further this season. Getting their season started early, the varsity team's first game away versus Menlo Atherton is on Feb. 25. As they carry on the Los Gatos legacy, make sure to come out and support your Wildcats baseball team!

(Source: MaxPreps)



courtesy J. Natividad

BATTER UP: An LGHS baseball player hurls a strategic pitch.

Boys' tennis makes early preseason preparations

by Kayla Mitchell
Media Production Editor

As the Los Gatos High School Boys' Tennis Team prepares to kick off its season, the players are looking forward to a successful and dominant year. After a victorious run last spring, the boys' team is determined to make an even bigger impact in the tennis rankings. With new, motivated players and coaches on the roster, the group is ready to start working and competing again. The team began hosting weekly practices and meetings in February to regroup and start their preparations for the matches soon to come.

The LGHS Boys' Tennis Team competes in the El Camino division. Last season, their team's toughest competitors were Mountain View High School and Cupertino High School, a trend that head Coach **Justin**



S. Singhal

STROKE: Varsity Boys' Tennis players gather before their practice.

Stenger believes will continue in this coming season. The team missed the opportunity to compete in the CCS championship last year after a narrow loss to Palo Alto High School. Stenger said, "That's our goal this season, to be there in CCS. But I won't really talk about that throughout the season. It's more important that we focus on one day, one match, one point." With his motivated and optimistic goals, Coach Stenger is excited to see the potential of his boys' team this year.

Coach Stenger hosted tryouts the week of Feb. 10 and was very pleased with the new talent hoping to join the squad. Several important players, who were instrumental in the team's success last season, are returning to compete with the team again this year. Coach Stenger, who is returning for his second season with the boys' group, is excited by the number of players interested in the program and the amount of freshman talent hoping to join the varsity and JV teams. With over 50 players attending tryouts, Stenger has shared how difficult it has been for the coaches to sort through the talent and cut the number down to 20 players per team. **Jim Blanco**, a football coach at LGHS who regularly works with the team's kicker, is joining the tennis team's coaching staff. Stenger stated, "Coach Blanco reminds me of myself. He was a football coach who really fell in love with the game of tennis, and just really found that he enjoyed it." The full coaching staff and new talented roster will support the hard-working boys' team this season.

The boys' team is excited to get back on the court together and to begin preparing for their first matches. Coach Stenger plans to focus on the importance of teamwork this season, and he admires how the boys motivate and challenge each other when competing against one

another in weekly practices. Senior captain **Micheal Hein** will be an important figure on the team this season, guiding the group and helping everyone learn during training. Coach Stenger talked about Hein's presence, saying, "He is more than just a captain. He has become almost an assistant coach for us. He is very objective, and we really look to him for strategic stuff. I really respect his tennis knowledge." Hein will be playing the number one singles line for the boys' team and will be a key figure in helping the team achieve their CCS goals. The boys' tennis team is ready to be back on the court and is motivated to leave an even larger impact in the rankings than last year.



courtesy C. Hines

SERVICE: Hein tosses the tennis ball up to hit at his opponent.



SPORTS

Friday, February 28, 2025

Volume 99 Number 6

www.elgatonews.com

LGHS Girls' Basketball competes in CCS tournament

by Britt Melinauskas
Sports Editor

The LGHS Girls' Basketball Teams have completed league matches, excelling through competition, striving towards Central Coast Section (CCS), and making their presence known throughout the Bay Area. Both teams finished undefeated in the league with records of 10-0 for varsity and JV, placing them at the top of the league's standings. Senior **Nicole Steiner** explained that league matches have moved swiftly: "We usually have really good team wins, and everyone plays a lot. We're good at staying locked in the whole time, and we use it to practice new things that we want to do against harder competition like press and different defenses."

On Feb. 7, the varsity team faced Lynbrook and defeated the Vikings 48-36. However, the following day, the Wildcats challenged Carondelet, the nineteenth-ranked team in California, losing with a final score of 57-85. Freshman **Kate Langner** said, "Coach **Sara Quilici Giles** tries to coach us, not just about basketball, but about life. Every win, every loss, she teaches and uses it as an opportunity for us to learn."

In non-league matches, the varsity team has faced tough opponents, and even though several have been losses, Steiner commented, "When we play higher competition, it's also really fun because they aren't out of reach. A lot of the games were close, and they taught us

how to face adversity, and it allowed us to grow a lot in the middle of the season rather than late during playoffs. Our hard pre and midseason schedule makes us much more prepared for playoffs."

The JV team has dominated league play, consistently securing impressive victories with a margin of over thirty points in many of their matchups. Freshman **Monika Leaverton** explains, "Our team dynamic has been a key factor in our success, as we all get along and share a strong sense of unity." At the moment, JV has only experienced two losses: one against Valley Christian and the other against Archbishop Mitty. Throughout the season, they have significantly improved their teamwork, overcoming obstacles and making great strides forward, making their goal of league champions clear.

The Wildcats held their annual senior night on Feb. 11, a heartwarming event during which parents and players celebrated the contributions of Steiner, **Ashley Childers**, **Ella Rabitz**, and **Lucy Panicacci**. Each player delivered an outstanding performance on the court, leading the LGHS Girls' Varsity Team to a decisive 65-53 victory over Monta Vista. The JV team also triumphed 73-13, extending their undefeated streaks in league play. On Feb. 17, the Wildcats capped off their league season with a dominant performance, defeating Milpitas 59-22 in the varsity game and 43-17 in the JV match. Both teams secured perfect 10-0 records, clinching the title of league champions!

Do not miss the chance to support the LGHS Girls' Basketball Team as they compete in Division 1 for CCS!

(Source: MaxPreps)



AT THE READY: Steiner battles a Los Altos player for a rebound shot.

POM: Zach Biller commits to Willamette University

by Katie Nelson
Center Editor

Baseball star **Zach Biller** prepares for his fourth and final season of baseball here at LGHS before embarking on his collegiate career at Willamette University in the fall. Biller has continued to be an integral part of the team with his skills and the tight bond he shares with his teammates.

Biller first began playing baseball at three years old and hasn't stopped since then, participating in Little League for many years in LG before playing in high school. Biller explained the joy he's had from playing a sport at LGHS: "Just being a part of something, it's really nice, you know. Also being at LG, [the] winning culture is really cool...just being able to compete every day... it's really fun."

This year, he hopes that the team can continue building on their successes and make a deep run in the CCS playoffs. He said, "I think this year will actually be really good. You know, the last couple of years we've lost the first round of playoffs, and I think that this year we'll get past that." He added that whatever happens, he values the time he spends with his teammates and the fun they have together.

Next year, Biller will continue his athletic career at Willamette University. While he said recruiting was tough, he's happy with how everything panned out. He explained that recruiting for baseball

is concentrated almost entirely during junior year and the summer before senior year: "I was gone a lot [this past] summer. I went to Arizona a lot [on a] travel ball team...[It was a [lot of] going to showcases and college camps." He added that recruiting is also a lot of "moving on from rejection. You start with a list of forty schools you're talking to and it shrinks every day, but you find the one that's right for you."



BATTER UP: Biller bats against the opposing team's pitcher during a game.

Biller said he began the process unsure of his recruiting prospects, explaining, "I guess like last year, I was kind of a late bloomer. I wasn't supposed to play as much last year and I kind of earned that spot and it kind of blossomed from there into something I could pursue in the future."

Biller is looking forward to attending Willamette, describing, "I think what was really appealing for me for Willamette was, I mean, it might not be the most prestigious school in terms of acceptance rate and stuff like that but the teachers there are great and I had the opportunity to talk to some of them...Also the campus is awesome, you're in the middle of Oregon, [and there's] no more beautiful a place than Oregon." He added that the school is perfect for him because it allows the opportunity to invest himself in both academics and sports: "With it being D3, there's less rigor for baseball, so it allows me to do whatever major I want, so I get to do what I want to do, which is bio."

Reflecting on his biggest inspiration, Biller said: "It's kind of cliché but I would say my mom. She loves to do a bunch of different things and she always preaches whatever you do, do 100 percent when you're doing it...Also being balanced in life, not being one dimensional, and I think it fits with my quality of life." As a dedicated student-athlete with a holistic outlook on life, Biller will continue to excel in his baseball career and beyond.

Boys' volleyball commences

by Isabella Langner
People Editor

As LGHS Boys' Volleyball kicks off its 2025 season, they plan to improve in all ways possible, from tournaments to individual skills. Following a strong 2024 season, the team is sure to succeed.



LOCKED IN: LG players prepare to receive a serve.

Last year, the team finished in an impressive second place in Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL) Division II, with a record of 11-4. This launched them into Division I of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Central Coast Playoffs. Despite their effort, they lost to Evergreen High School in the first round, ending their run. The previous season has fueled motivation for success in the league and CCS playoffs this year, as boys' volleyball is now in SCVAL Division I. Junior **Gracin Ting** shared what he is most looking forward to: "We just moved up a division, so hopefully we'll play against harder teams in Division I."

Tryouts for LGHS Boys' Volleyball began on Feb. 7 and lasted through the week. Prior to tryouts, the team hosted open gyms at the school for anyone interested in preseason training. Senior **Markus McGrath** added, "The team has been coming back

to open gyms over the course of the semester, but most of us have been playing club outside of school." Boys' Volleyball's first game is scheduled for Feb. 25 against Archbishop Mitty at home. The official start to league play is Mar. 12 versus Lynbrook at LGHS.

So far, Boys' Volleyball is set to play in a tournament at Monta Vista, a competition that they struggled with last season. Junior **Sean Slover** remarked, "We did pretty bad at tournaments last year, but we won most of our league games. So a goal this year is to do better."

Ting and McGrath both claimed they are most looking forward to playing Harker High School, a team they did not play against in the 2024 season. From tournaments to bonding at practices to play-offs, the players are excited for the season ahead. "I'm looking forward to team bondings the most," Slover commented. After a long year of not playing together, LGHS Boys' Volleyball also looks forward to immersing themselves in the high school season. McGrath shared, "The high school season is just a time to enjoy it with friends and teammates." For the most part, the roster will remain identical to last year, with a few possible exceptions due to incoming freshmen.

LGHS Boys' Volleyball has set many team and personal goals. Regarding his goals, Slover said, "My personal goal is to play the best I can. For team goals, I would say make it to CCS." Additionally, McGrath added, "This year, we will make CCS, but a goal would be to make it farther in [the] playoffs. Last year we got eliminated [in the] first round, but I think this year we can probably go to the semi-finals or quarter-finals." Boys' volleyball is beyond excited to begin their 2025 season!

LGHS soccer concludes

by Sam Gruetter
Opinion Editor

The LGHS Girls' and Boys' Varsity Soccer teams have had respectively exceptional seasons and are going into their final league games and beginning stages of CCS with high hopes and equally high energy.



GAME TIME: Ozawa prepares to strike the ball upfield.

The girls finished their regular play in first place of the first division of the De Anza league, bringing home the title after their 3-2 triumph over Homestead on Feb. 12. Sophomore **Abby Nelson** scored the first goal off a left-footed shot to the low corner, clinching a 1-0 lead early into the game. Junior **Emma Jackson** then built off of this momentum and scored the second goal off of an assist from Nelson. Securing their lead, Nelson scored a final goal, making the final result a 3-2 win in favor of Los Gatos. Just like the many wins they boast, the girls have accumulated points in their favor through their season, with a 3-0 against Palo Alto on Feb. 5, a 2-1 win against Los Altos, and 2-2 tie against Santa Clara on Jan. 29. Juniors **Piper Hansen**, **Leighton Ozawa**, and Jackson, senior **Isabella Ramos**, and sophomore

Avery Edson all play instrumental roles in the team's back line, defending the other team and facilitating quick and efficient communication amongst the LG players. Hansen described the harmony of the back line, stating, "We work well together and we're all supportive even when a mistake is made. We have each other's backs and step in defensively for one another when we need it." Unfortunately, the girls' winter season ended in their CCS quarterfinals match on Feb. 22, when they lost to Leland 2-3.

The boys have also had a challenging season, but despite this, they have still managed to yield positive results, currently residing in sixth place of the De Anza league with a 4-7-2 record. In their most recent matches, the boys had two close losses against Homestead and Mountain View. On Feb. 5, they won against Palo Alto, conceding no goals and finishing with a score of 1-0. However, they have also had more difficult matches where the results were less favorable. On Feb. 14, they tied Wilcox in a 1-1 match, their second-to-last game of the winter season. The boys team prevailed in their CCS quarterfinals match against Aptos where they clinched the win in penalty kicks.

The JV teams have also had immense success in their respective seasons, ensuring Los Gatos High School soccer teams will boast skilled rosters for many years to come. The LGHS Girls' JV Soccer team ended first in their league, with a 7-1-1 record in league play. The boys' JV team had ended with a 5-3-5 record.

All Los Gatos High School soccer teams deserve a hand for their unrivaled effort this winter season, and a wish of luck for those continuing to the CCS and state rounds. (Source: MaxPreps)