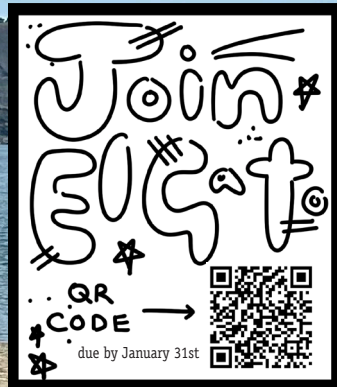


El Gato

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL



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LGHS holds its Spring Club Day

by Megan Saul
Culture Editor

Club Day is back again and better than ever. LGHS held spring Club Day on Thursday, Jan. 16, a lively school-wide event with a large variety of clubs from which to choose. While the fall Club Day took place on the school's front lawn, LGHS hosted this fair in the Quad. There were over 100 clubs present, allowing students to pick the perfect one for them. Many of the clubs were new while others were returning with the same or different board members.

Leadership's Club and Tech Commission organized the event. This semester, freshman **Anna Tomchenko**, sophomore **Mehul Patel**, and junior **Dylan Wadhwa** are on this committee. ASB Leadership Advisors and Activities Directors **Kasey Rice** and **Katie Marden** as well as LGHS Assistant Principal of Activities **Kristi Grasty** also supervised and helped facilitate the event.

On Club Day, club leaders set up their tables with sign-up sheets and posters to make their club stand out amidst the sea of qualified clubs. At many tables, club members were handing out an assortment of treats, including candy, cookies, brownies, and even donuts.



DANCING QUEENS: Members of the K-Pop Dance Club pose for a group photo.

Some fan favorites and returning clubs included the National Spanish Honors Society, led by co-presidents and juniors **Nico Bianchi** and **Stella Miletich** as well as vice presidents and juniors **Eduardo Lasso** and **Hanna Behnami**, and the Korean Pop Dance Club, led by the president, senior **Janie Vidovich**, and the vice presidents, juniors **Chloe Hsia** and **Jahnvi Bheemarasetti**. Both of these clubs have already made a remarkable impact on our school in different ways, one through volunteering and the other through performing dances that spread K-pop culture throughout the school. Another standout club and a part of this year's Club Day is Advocacy for Change, a club that focuses its efforts locally. President **Autumn Wadhwa** shared, "We want to positively impact our community through different fundraising opportunities with the homeless, animal shelters, and elderly. This club day was really great because we could see other people also wanting to make a difference in our community." The Pink Ladies Club, a club that raises money to provide menstrual products for homeless women in America and Africa, welcomed a new board, including co-presidents and juniors **Kaylee Cross** and **Alexis Stults** and vice-president junior **Maud Kerebel**. Stults said, "It was more fun than I thought it would be setting up for the club. It was cool seeing how into telling people about their club everyone got, especially with the Leo Club's lion costume."

This Club Day allowed many LGHS students to dive further into their passions, take a step toward bettering the community, and meet new people. Although both Club Days for this school year have now passed, many clubs are still welcoming new members. Be sure to follow them on their respective social media accounts and keep up with their upcoming meetings and activities.



RIPE RECRUITS: An interested student signs up for the Automotive Club.

Choir students travel to CASMEC

by Owen Fugit
Editor-in-Chief

The LGHS Music Department sent a select group of students to the California All-State Music Educators Conference (CASMEC) in Sacramento on Jan. 16 to perform in the various honor choirs featured at the conference. LGHS students performed in one of two choirs: the high-school-level Soprano-Alto (SSAA) choir, featuring upper-register voices, or the high-school-level Tenor-Bass (TTBB) choir, featuring lower-register voices. Each ensemble performed at the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium on Jan. 18 for a large crowd of parents and fans.



SMILING SINGERS: All-State choir members from LGHS pose for a picture.

To qualify for CASMEC, students auditioned in front of a panel of judges and had to qualify for their regional honor choir first. Students from LGHS qualified for the Coastal Region Honor Choir event at Santa Clara University in early November. LGHS senior **Shaurya Banjara** described his time at CASMEC: "It's been a great experience. You know, just like all All-States, the choir is really good." Beginning in his sophomore year, Banjara has participated in three All-State Conferences across California. Banjara explained, "I was in the TTBB choir this year...My favorite song [was] Legatum, from Ryan Main." The TTBB choir performed six songs at their concert, four of which were brand-new arrangements of popular pieces specifically for the TTBB CASMEC choir. Maryland resident Dr. Edryn Coleman directed the TTBB group.

Most LGHS choir students at CASMEC performed with the SSAA choir, singing seven songs under the direction of Dr. Kimberly Dunn Adams. LGHS senior **Isabella Argonza** performed in the SSAA ensemble and commented: "It was good. I think I learned a lot, musically." CASMEC was Argonza's first time performing with an all-state honor choir, and her favorite song was Let the River Run. Describing her choice, she reasoned, "One, because it's easy. And two, I think the percussion made us move more, making us sound better." Argonza shared how she enjoyed singing with the SSAA group and, as she pointed out, "To say that you went to all-state is already an accomplishment in itself." However, she disliked the hectic scheduling, a sentiment many of her fellow CASMEC singers shared.

On Jan. 16, the LGHS Treble Choir performed at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sacramento as a part of the conference. CASMEC featured a small selection of outstanding California choirs, and the Treble Choir was one of three high school groups selected to perform this year. Throughout the year, the Treble Choir has practiced extensively, preparing a six-song repertoire. A week before the singers in that ensemble traveled to Sacramento, they held a preview concert at the United Methodist Church for parents, friends, and fans who could not make it to the actual performance. The full CASMEC performance is available on the Los Gatos Music YouTube page.

The LGHS Music Department hosted the annual Choir and Orchestra Music Festival on Jan. 21, where eighth graders from Fisher Middle School traveled to LGHS to perform with their respective ensembles. The event was intended to entice incoming freshmen to continue their music education at LGHS. It also served as an exchange, where groups from Fisher and LGHS performed for each other and together.



PRE-PERFORMANCE: Families show up to watch the All-State choir concert.

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Los Gatos orchestra students travel to San Francisco

by Fuyu Banno
Graphics Editor

On Jan. 9, orchestra director **Armeen Ghafourpor** and parent chaperones accompanied the Los Gatos High School Orchestras on their annual trip to the San Francisco Symphony Hall. The trip was divided into two parts: watching the San Francisco Symphony open rehearsals and then a free lunch period at the famous Pier 39. Students arrived at the school in the morning, well before the regular school day started, and then took a ninety minute trip to San Francisco.

Once they arrived, many students experienced the grandness of the San Francisco Symphony hall for the first time. Among members of the general public, students were treated to a two hour open rehearsal period during which time musicians usually practice their music before upcoming performances. LGHS students were lucky enough to attend an open rehearsal featuring Ray Chen, an award-winning violinist and classical musician. With an enormous global audience and social media presence, Chen is considered by many to be the greatest violinist of our time.

The rehearsal period inspired many students because of the majestic atmosphere of the symphony hall and the stunning talents of Chen and the orchestra. Sophomore **Derek Yang**,

principle violist from the Philharmonic orchestra, expressed his excitement in seeing Ray Chen, "I was really happy to meet Ray Chen. I watched all his Youtube videos and watched his [collaboration] with TwoSet violin, so it's really cool to meet him in person." Furthermore, sophomore **Dylan Dadgar**, from Chamber orchestra, taken in by the awe-inspiring ambience of the hall, stated, "The [Symphony] was adept at creating mood, the room felt like a calm pond at one time and the tension was palpable at other times."

Although the open rehearsal lasted for a spectacular two hours, sitting for that long made students more than happy to indulge in San Francisco's food scene and hang out with friends. After a quick drive to Pier 39, students had their lunch break, splitting off into different groups. Many ate at the famous Chowders for a seafood lunch, while others had sweet crepes and snacks. Some instead skipped lunch and toured the souvenir shops with their friends. One student, sophomore **Fernanda S. Cantu Valadez**, commented, "[Pier 39] was really fun, because I got to eat with my friends and chat and walk around."

Overall, this enriching experience provided these students with a more intricate appreciation of music and performance as well as an opportunity to build a stronger sense of community in the City by the Bay.



TUNING TIME: Orchestra students get an amazing view of the symphony hall.

Deadly and destructive fires continue burning Los Angeles

by Sahil Muthukrishnan
Sports Editor

Since Jan. 7, four fires have continued to burn through the Los Angeles area. The Palisades Fire has burned the most acreage, followed by the Eaton Fire, the Kenneth Fire, and the Hurst Fire. The effects of these fires have been devastating. Many families have lost their property and homes. The fires reportedly killed 27 people: ten in the Palisades Fire and 17 in the Eaton Fire.

While law enforcement and fire officials have not yet determined the cause of the fires, the drought and high winds in Southern California likely worsened the conditions. Since October, Southern California has had ten percent of its usual rainfall. This, paired with winds of up to 70 miles per hour in some regions and dramatic weather swings, left Southern California extremely vulnerable to the rampant spread of fires.

The fires are forcing an enormous number of citizens to evacuate. Close to 200,000 people have already evacuated, and Cal Fire sent out more than 200,000 evacuation notices. 700 people are staying in nine evacuation shelters in the County of Los Angeles. Additionally, while the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) is not under evacuation notice, the red zones are nearing the campus. In response, the staff switched the more than 45,000 students



SIRENS SOUND: Los Angeles firefighters work tirelessly to help the city.

attending the school to remote learning until Jan. 21. The UCLA staff cited the immense challenges it faced because of the fire and communicated that it wishes to put the safety and well-being of its community first.

Entire blocks and neighborhoods have been completely burned down. Insured losses reached 20 billion dollars, and total economic loss is likely to reach around 50 billion. This is far greater than the 12.5 billion dollars of loss during the Camp Fire in 2018, previously the most costly fire in American history.

Firefighters are working extremely hard to protect citizens; however, the abundance of asbestos, lead, and arsenic in the smoke has led to additional challenges. Controversially, nearly 1000 incarcerated individuals are fighting the fires as part of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's volunteer program. Some call the program exploitative because of the low daily wage, between \$5.80 and \$10.24, and an extra one dollar daily if assigned to an active emergency. Their wages are insignificant compared to the salaries received by citizen firefighters, who earn upwards of \$100,000 yearly. So far, the Palisades Fire is 11 percent contained and the Eaton Fire is 15 percent contained. On a more positive note, the Kenneth Fire and Hurst Fire are both 100 percent contained. (Sources: BBC, CBS, CNN, NBC, Watch Duty)

New cafe opens downtown

by Hayley Strahs
News Editor

On Dec. 7, beloved Santa Clara bakery Croissant opened a new location in the heart of downtown Los Gatos.



SUNNY WELCOME: Croissant opens on a bright winter day.

As its name suggests, Croissant specializes in French pastries as well as cafe drinks such as coffee, chai, and matcha. They import their ingredients directly from France since the founders studied culinary arts there. The quaint premises, formerly belonging to Manresa Bread, establishes a cozy yet sleek atmosphere through its robin's egg blue and white color scheme. For those looking to relax as they enjoy their pastries and drinks, Croissant offers outdoor seating suitable for reading a book or getting work done.

In addition to the classic croissant, pain au chocolat, and kouign amann, Croissant offers many unconventional dessert options. Creative croissant flavor combinations, such as flaxseed with maple and white sesame with honey provide a unique take on the staple French treat. In addition, the establishment's white chocolate matcha scone adopts a noteworthy fusion of the popular matcha flavor and the typical scone. However, what sets Croissant apart from other French bakeries are its cube croissants, which Bay Area influencer Rachel Ahn posted about on her Instagram (@siliconvalleyfoodies), garnering 3.3 million views. LGHS junior **Megan Lu** also adores the inno-

vative dessert, stating, "I think the lemon cube is really nice" and "I would definitely go and get the lemon cube, chocolate cube, and vanilla cube [again]." Moreover, Croissant also sells drinks, including but not limited to chai and matcha lattes, various tea options, and espresso drinks, firmly cementing the bakery as an apt competitor among the numerous cafes in downtown Los Gatos.

Lu, a current French 4H student, also felt that her dining experience further connected her to French culture. "It was a really amazing experience. The food was great, and the ambiance was great...it really helped with my French learning and comprehension."

Croissant has become a hit among LGHS students, whether they are enrolled in French or not, along with the Los Gatos community as a whole. During her first visit, junior **Chesle Bae** tried the white sesame and honey croissant and recounted, "The honey really stands out. I really thought it was gonna be all sunken in." Even the cafe's free water is a hit, with junior **Jacob Shkolnik**, describing the free water as "lowkey fire," and Bae reporting it as "really crisp."

Despite its relatively recent opening, Croissant has established itself within the community as a delightful and noteworthy bakery and cafe. With its quintessential coffee and tea drinks to its imaginative adaptations of French pastries, Croissant is here to stay in Los Gatos. (Sources: Croissant, Los Gatos)



MOUTH WATERING: The almond croissant is a fan favorite.

WVYT employs LG students

by Ainsley Northrop
Editor-in-Chief

For nearly 20 years, the nonprofit West Valley Youth Theater (WVYT) has brought performing arts to the Bay Area. This year alone, the group has worked throughout Saratoga, Campbell, and West San Jose, engaging elementary through college students.

WVYT emphasizes preparing children for "every stage in life," even beyond theater. The most recent extension of this goal to help children succeed in both theatrical and real-life situations is their newly obtained grant from the Town of Los Gatos. This grant money allows WVYT to hire more Los Gatos High School students as choreographers, vocal directors, stage managers, and technical operators. So far, the nonprofit has hired seven LGHS students during the 2024-2025 school year and hopes to hire more for upcoming spring productions.



LEARNING: LGHS alumna teaches theater students.

At WVYT, high schoolers can head productions, act as creative staff, or work behind the scenes as costumers, makeup or set artists, lighting designers, and more. Board of Directors member Ben Horwath described the importance of hiring high schoolers: "[First, they receive] a very strong education in the performing arts as well as general problem-solving skills. Second, as teenagers,

high schoolers are a more tangible role model for our elementary and middle school actors, and that connection helps those actors get more invested and take pride in their work on the show. Finally, WVYT's mission...extends to our high schoolers: we're focused on creating well-rounded staff who are ready to take on bigger roles when they move on from WVYT."

In addition to its initiative to hire high schoolers, WVYT strives to build a supportive community. Many of its staff, including college graduates and musical theater BFA students, have been a part of the group since elementary school. Junior **Amiya Sheth**, who works as a camp counselor and sound technician, added, "Hiring high schoolers is so generous because it gives us...creative freedom to problem-solve in real time situations when taking care of kids. I started WVYT in 8th grade, and I've continued to perform there, so it's really important to me to pass on my love of musical theater."

Since its post-COVID rebrand, WVYT has been uniquely volunteer and student-run. Horwath specified, "For years [another parent volunteer and I] had participated in and appreciated the incredibly supportive Los Gatos theater community and didn't want to see such an amazing resource fade away. But what started as a 'super volunteer' role evolved quickly into completely running a local nonprofit business." Currently, WVYT is working towards self-sufficiency, hoping to establish a long-term presence and eventually directly teach arts such as music, dance, and cinematography to students.

With the new year in full swing, WVYT is preparing for their summer production camps of 101 Dalmatians, Beetlejuice, Aladdin, and The Wizard of Oz. Local students will comprise a large portion of the staff for all four camps, working alongside professionals such as Broadway veteran Heather Stokes. All camps are full productions, complete with mics, costumes, and a real theater to perform in, rendering them excellent for both those joining theater for the first time and those looking to strengthen theatrical resumes. For more information on working for WVYT, volunteering, or signing up for summer productions, visit wvyt.org! (Source: WVYT)

LGHS Mock Trial Club attends first invitational

by Katie Borders
National/World Editor

The LGHS Mock Trial Club attended the Santa Clara County Mock Trial Invitational on Saturday, Jan. 11, in which their prosecution team competed against Tracy High School's defense team and their defense team competed against Pacific Grove High School's prosecution team. Mimicking the ways in which a real court case would be taken to trial, Mock Trial splits into two teams: defense and prosecution. On each side, there are pretrial arguments, attorneys, and witnesses who come together to formulate an argument and case for their side, competing against other schools in front of a judge and scorers.

This year's exciting trial case begins with a campaign between characters Harper Dorais and Taylor Alexander. Tension builds between them as Alexander uses his campaign platform to promote the expansion of rental properties in Emerald Bend. Harper Dorais and his spouse, Logan Gold, own the Gold Inn and face a major hit with the rise of rental properties coming into their small town. Strain intensifies leading up to the debate between Dorais and Alexander; and on Nov. 11, 2023, everything came to a head. The day of the

debate, apprehension grows as Alexander and Gold are the only people missing in preparation for the debate. Hours later, Gold rushes to the debate, claiming that their car broke down while they were passing out campaign flyers. Then, to the shock of many, police find Alexander on her rental vacation property with ligature marks on her arms, claiming that she was kidnapped while on the way to the debate. The accused? Logan Gold.



GATHER AROUND: The team poses for a victory snapshot.

Junior and newcomer **Maud Kerebel**, who portrays a journalist on the prosecution side, expands on her experience with LGHS Mock Trial Club. She explained, "It's really fun and you get to meet other people... You become a lot less scared of public speaking." Kerebel also expressed, "I really like our coach. He puts in a lot of effort for us, and he makes sure that we always do the best we can do." Expanding on her team's focus, she remarked, "[For prosecution], we're trying to believe that the politician got kidnapped by the other politician's spouse."

Ryan Freeburger, a sophomore and also a newcomer to the LGHS Mock Trial Club, discussed his favorite parts about Mock Trial and why he decided to join the team, commenting, "I like learning more about law and spending time with friends... You get a case packet and there's different attorneys and witnesses. Then you have to either try to prove if the person is innocent or guilty." Freeburger also elucidated on the skills he gained from joining Mock Trial, including "public speaking and the ability to analyze texts and things." Freeburger plays C.J. Costly, a journalist and witness for the defense who provides an alibi for Logan Gold's whereabouts during the time of the kidnapping.

Another junior, **Anya Chauhan**, delivers the pretrial argument for the prosecution team. She explained what pretrial is: "You argue to exclude or include a piece of evidence into the rest of the trial. You refer to actual previous cases that existed in real life and compare the case at hand to make your arguments." Chauhan also extended her gratitude towards the team's coach, **Jordan Kahler**: "He's a real attorney, so it's interesting to hear his opinions and input."

Practicing and polishing their pieces, the LGHS Mock Trial Club prepares for the upcoming competitions that will begin on Jan. 24 at the Santa Clara County Office of Education.



GAME FACE: Team members model for a pre-trial pic.

Gity discusses her boutique

by Kloe Adams
Editorial Editor

Gity's Nail and Waxing Boutique, located on North Santa Cruz Avenue, is a hidden gem in the middle of downtown Los Gatos. Gity Rostamyazdi, the owner, opened up her boutique in 1990, making this her 35th year in business.

Rostamyazdi grew up in Tehran, Iran, where she knew from a young age that she wanted to go into cosmetology. She recalls buying rollers and doing her hair so well that the neighborhood kids soon rallied outside her house waiting to get their hair done. As Rostamyazdi grew older, her expertise soon expanded to applying makeup such as eyeliner and waxing eyebrows to achieve a perfect arch. Eventually, her work took her to Germany, where Rostamyazdi attended cosmetology school while working up to a job in a real salon. Rostamyazdi reminisced about the first client she had, saying, "My boss asked me to go over there and to color her hair, but I had never done that by myself. I mixed the formula and remembered being so scared of messing up, but it turned out to look so good, the lady gave me a big tip."

I have today is because of Richard. He pushed me to do it," Rostamyazdi shared. However, as time went on, she wanted to branch out on her own and become her own boss. When first opening, it was difficult for her because she did not know who would come, so she advertised her salon everywhere. Soon, people were filing into Gity's Nail and Waxing Boutique, and Rostamyazdi attracted over 500 clients: "After a while I did not need to advertise anymore because my clients were telling their friends who told their friends." In time, Rostamyazdi made many friends through her clients and fellow cosmetologists. She travelled to Europe on multiple occasions to attend shows where experts from all over the world came together to showcase their materials, tips, and techniques. Rostamyazdi credits these shows for a lot of what she knows now.

As her own boss and her only employee, Rostamyazdi does it all and plays to her strengths. In opening her own business, Rostamyazdi chose to only offer nails and waxing because other services like hair and facials required more expensive materials. Between nails and waxing, Rostamyazdi prefers waxing, which is a skill she has been mastering since she was 12 years old. Originally, when she came to the United States, "they did not know anything about wax. They asked me about it and I just said 'you put it on your legs and pull.'" Though running a salon is very expensive, Rostamyazdi perseveres, continuing to offer low prices and high quality service for everyone who walks in.



PORTRAIT: Rostamyazdi flashes a smile for a headshot.



STOREFRONT: The boutique is located in LG downtown.

Rostamyazdi's life brought her to the United States in 1979. For the years leading up to opening her salon, Rostamyazdi worked in several salons with a variety of employers; however, one stood out, her soon-to-be lifelong friend, Richard. "Whatever

JNHS hosts annual festival

by Fuyu Banno
Graphics Editor

On Jan. 18, the Japanese National Honors Association (JNHS) hosted its annual Japanese Arts and Film Festival (JAFF). All proceeds from event tickets and JNHS-hosted tables were donated to the Japanese American Museum of San Jose. The event included performances as well as a diverse range of vendors and concluded with a movie viewing.



POSE: Members of K-pop Dance Club stand for a pic.

The event started off with trivia, testing participants' knowledge of Japanese culture and facts. Two performances followed the game: one from the K-pop Dance Club and one from the dynamic duo **David Wang** and **Ishaan Allen**. The K-pop dance group delivered an impressive and energetic performance to songs such as Tsubakil by XG and Fireworks by &Team. Wang and Allen teamed up with the former on the violin and the latter on the piano to perform arrangements of popular Jpop tunes, including hits from Yoasobi. When asked about the performance, Wang expressed his enjoyment of playing with Allen: "I'm actually really happy with the performance. I had a lot of fun with it. Ishaan really did like most of the work though. The guy that composes [Yoasobi songs] he writes the piano parts for synthesizers, so no one is meant to play that with their hands."

After the performance, visitors browsed the wide options of vendors, including a variety of crafts and fundraiser booths. The Pokemon stand was a fan favorite. With a diverse assortment of Pokemon cards, Funko pops, and a huge Pikachu Plush, its popularity was evident. JAFF also offered a range of intricate homemade goods including a poetry stand, handmade leather goods stand, and a crochet booth. The Kimono try-on booth was popular as well, with students and parents alike putting on kimonos, a traditional Japanese garment. Many were shy to try it on at first, but ended up modeling the kimonos and posing for pictures.

School clubs made up a portion of the vendors, with many raising money for good causes. The Cats Crochet for Community Club sold different crochet animals and keychains, and the Key Club sold boba, with both clubs' proceeds going to those affected by the LA wildfires.

The event concluded with its main event, the viewing of the movie *Blue Giant*. *Blue Giant* is about a saxophonist who dreams of becoming the best, creating a jazz trio and, alongside each member, embarks on a journey of self-discovery and the pursuit of excellence.

Overall, the event was a considerable success, offering something for everyone. Co-president of JNHS and senior Fineas Langan had high praise for the festival, "Probably one of my favorite parts of this event is just kind of the variety of stuff we do every year, and we have the same things every year, but then we are able to tweak those things and make them better from previous years."



CATCH 'EM ALL: Students purchase Pokémon cards.

News-in-Brief: New Aegean restaurant opens and more

Oakland mayor is indicted: On Jan. 16, a federal grand jury criminally indicted the former mayor of Oakland, Sheng Tao, after a case by the Federal Bureau of Investigation revealed corruption involving Tao, City Hall, and the Duong family that operates the city's curbside recycling program. The federal grand jury indicted Tao's longtime partner, Andre Jones, as well. This comes after the FBI raided her home in June and her recall in November. Seneca Scott, the Oakland United Sheng Thao Recall organization leader, said, "We have known for a while that we alleged that Sheng Tao is a deeply corrupt individual, and my thought is that Oakland owes us a debt of gratitude." (Sources: NBC Bay Area, SF Chronicle)

- **Aliya Koshaliev**, Media Production Editor

Squirrels are becoming carnivorous: Many people across the world view squirrels as cute, kind creatures; however, recent scientific developments prove otherwise. Biology and ecology researchers in Northern California recently observed a change in the dietary habits of California ground squirrels. Traditionally, the species maintained a herbivorous diet consisting of nuts, seeds, and grasses, but recently, squirrels have exhibited

carnivorous behaviors as researchers have noticed them hunting and killing voles to eat. Researchers hypothesize that the squirrels' new eating patterns are a result of the uptick in the vole population and are a testament to squirrels' adaptability and importance in wildlife ecosystems.

(Source: CNN, University of California Davis)

- **Kat Littfin**, News Editor

New restaurant Opelia opens: A new addition to Los Gatos's diverse and exceptional restaurant scene is Opelia, an Aegean and Anatolian kitchen located at 25 E Main Street, the former location of Sidecar Modern Tavern. The chef and owner of Opelia, Coskun Abik, is also the chef of restaurants Blind Butcher, Lark, and Dunya Bistro. The inside of Opelia has a cozy ambiance, with framed pictures covering the walls and greenery adorning the room. Opelia is open seven days a week from 5:00-10:00 PM. They have a large menu that contains 21 mezes (small plates), three salads, and ten main dishes. Stop by this new restaurant for a meal featuring refreshing, complex flavor profiles from an accomplished chef!

- **Megan Saul**, Culture Editor



COME ON IN: Opelia offers a cozy atmosphere and lots of seats for guests.

- FDA prohibits use of Red Dye No. 3
- Winter storm Blair ravages Midwest

NATIONAL

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Zuckerberg works to mend his relationship with Trump

By Kayla Mitchell
Media Production Editor

Over the last few months, Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg has made a concerted effort to mend his rocky relationship with President Trump. Since 2020, Trump has repeatedly expressed his dislike of Zuckerberg and attacked him for using his social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram, to help defeat Trump's 2020 reelection bid. Now, with Trump taking office again, Zuckerberg implemented changes to his company in hopes of pleasing the president and improving relations between them.

Zuckerberg and Trump have long had a problematic relationship. Much of their dispute stems from the role Facebook and Instagram played in recent US elections. After the media accused Meta of spreading false claims and misinformation during the 2016 presidential election, it introduced a fact-checking system to ameliorate the problem. Trump, however, claimed that Meta's fact-checking program was weaponized against him because it had the effect of censoring conservative voices during the election in 2020. Trump has also sued Zuckerberg and Facebook for suspending his account after Trump supporters invaded the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Trump has repeatedly accused Zuckerberg of plotting against him,

threatened him with life imprisonment, and publicly called the CEO a "criminal."

As the political winds shifted with the 2024 election, Zuckerberg immediately began making moves to improve his position with Trump. He paid visits to Mar-a-Lago, contributed to Trump's inauguration fund, and made a host of changes at Meta designed to please Trump and other conservatives. Most significantly, Zuckerberg has announced his decision to end Meta's fact-checking system and replace it with a community-driven system similar to the one currently used at X, the social media platform owned by major Trump supporter Elon Musk. In addition, Zuckerberg has added prominent Republicans to his executive staff and board of directors and announced the roll-back of Meta's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

In Joe Biden's farewell address, the past president warned the country of the new tech "oligarchy" that he believes is now threatening American freedoms. Biden criticized Musk and Zuckerberg and went so far as to call the influential men similar to 19th century robber barons who needed to be stopped like once before. Biden especially shared his dislike for social media where he believes "the truth is smothered by lies told for power and for profit." It is clear

the past president does not approve of recent relationships between tech companies and the White House.

Zuckerberg is coming under a fair amount of criticism for his apparent pandering to Trump. His various pivots in recent years make it difficult to discern Zuckerberg's personal beliefs about the changes he is making to his company. However, Zuckerberg has made it clear that he is prioritizing whatever is necessary to promote Meta's success. (Sources: CBS, USA TODAY)



DEAL: President Donald Trump shakes hands with Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

FDA bans Red Dye No. 3

By Jordan Park
Sports Editor

On Jan. 15, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned the use of Red Dye No. 3 in all foods, beverages, and drugs, nearly three decades after scientists discovered links to cancer caused by the dye in animals.

The dye, chemically known as erythrosine, is a synthetic color additive made from petroleum. It is known for providing candy, beverages, and other products with their bright, cherry-red color. First approved for use in food in 1907, U.S. regulators prohibited the dye in cosmetics and topical drugs in 1990 after the agency discovered the additive was possibly carcinogenic. At the time, the FDA cited an industry-conducted study that found the chemical caused thyroid cancer in male laboratory rats and estimated that it might cause cancer in fewer than one in 100,000 people. Researchers have also linked the dye to health concerns for children. They have since pledged to do the same with the food industry; thus, the agency's move to ban the dye has been in the works for years.

Although the dye continues to appear in consumer products, many companies have begun switching to other natural food colorings derived from sources like beets, red cabbage, and insects, a move that increased after California became the first state to ban Red Dye No. 3 in 2023 along with three other food additives that scientists linked to disease. Just Born, the maker of Peeps, announced that the company would discontinue the coloring

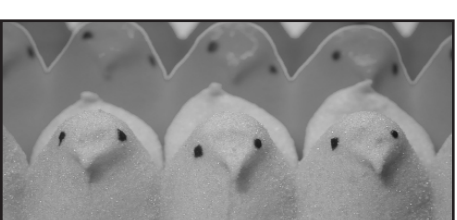


BANNED: Dubble Bubble Gum contains illicit substance.

after the 2024 Easter holiday. Other companies have switched to Red Dye 40, including Mars and its use of the dye in their red chocolate candy M&Ms. As for the dye's worldwide use, Red Dye No. 3 is already banned for food use in numerous places, including Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, except the dye in maraschino cherries.

When announcing the ban, the agency minimized the potential risks to humans, noting that studies on animals aside from male rats had not shown comparable cancer risks. Jim Jones, the FDA's deputy commissioner for human foods, stated that claims expressing that the use of Red Dye No. 3 "in food and ingested drugs put people at risk are not supported by the available scientific information."

Sarah Gallo, senior vice president of product policy and federal affairs for the Consumer Brands Association, responded to news of the ban by ensuring that food and beverage companies would comply. In a statement, she wrote, "Revoking the authorized use of Red No. 3 is an example of the FDA using its risk and science-based authority to review the safety of products in the marketplace. Food and beverage companies will continue to follow the latest science and comply with all food-safe regulations to ensure safe and available choices for consumers." Beginning in 2027, companies must eliminate the dye from their products. Additionally, imported foods sold in the United States must also discontinue using the additive. (Sources: CNN, NBC, NY Times)



POSE: Candy Peeps lined up to get boxed for distribution.

Trump delays TikTok ban

By Aliya Koshaliova
Media Production Editor

On Jan. 17, 2025, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld a new law that led to the eventual ban of TikTok, a popular social media platform. The ban went into effect on Sunday, Jan 19. The Supreme Court justices ruled that forcing TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, to shut down or sell does not violate the First Amendment after hearing oral arguments from both sides. TikTok and its users argued that the ban violates their right to free speech, while the government argued that the ban was necessary for national security since ByteDance is a Chinese company. The law, dubbed the "Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act," forces TikTok to divest from ByteDance or be cut from US app stores.

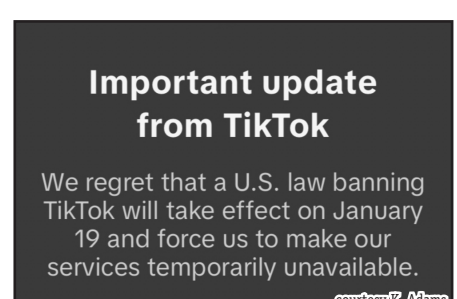
Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson argued that TikTok was "wrong" about accusing the US government of taking away their First Amendment right and said the case is more about the association between ByteDance and TikTok. Justice Brett Kavanaugh used the past example of the US blocking broadcasting companies from being associated with foreign governments to defend the decision. Kavanaugh observed, "[TikTok] seems like a huge concern for the future of the country," given TikTok's data collection of users in the US. Chief

Justice John Roberts claimed that Congress was more concerned about a "foreign adversary" gathering information about users rather than taking away their free speech.

The Supreme Court did acknowledge the sensitive balance between free speech and national security that has become increasingly addressed within the legislative branch. Last April, the law passed in Congress with rare bipartisan support. "There is no doubt that, for more than 170 million Americans, TikTok offers a distinctive and expansive outlet for expression, means of engagement, and source of community. But Congress has determined that divestiture is necessary to address its well-supported national security concerns regarding TikTok's data collection practices and relationship with a foreign adversary," according to the Supreme Court.

The court explained its decision in a unanimous opinion: "We conclude that the challenged provisions do not violate the petitioners' First Amendment rights." Trump originally asked the Supreme Court to delay the deadline so he could negotiate a deal, but the court followed through with the Biden Administration's plan to ban the app. However, the Biden administration announced that it would not enforce the law before the inauguration, leaving TikTok's fate up to Donald Trump.

On Jan. 18, users saw a pop-up message saying the app was no longer usable and directed them to a website with information on the new law. The app was also removed from app stores across the nation. However, the following morning, the social media platform was available on their website, and the app was fully restored shortly after. On the day of his inauguration, President Donald Trump signed an executive order delaying the federal ban on TikTok for 75 days. This order gives his administration "an opportunity to determine the appropriate course forward." Trump also called for the US to own 50% of the app in a "joint venture with ByteDance." (Sources: ABC News, CBS news, Forbes, New York Times, NPR, USA Today)



ILLEGAL: Users received the above message from on Jan. 18.

New York City employs new congestion fee in Manhattan

By Julia Valencia
People Editor

In 2023, New York City earned the title of the most congested city in the world, trumping London, Los Angeles, and Chicago. New Yorkers spent an average of 101 hours stuck in traffic, more than double the national average of 42 hours. A new congestion charge was implemented in New York City on Jan. 5 that requires a \$9 fee to enter the busiest parts of Manhattan in hopes of discouraging high car activity and decreasing traffic.

Lawmakers first proposed the idea for tolls in 2007, when the then mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg, suggested it. It was not until 2019 that the financial plan for the congestion tolls was approved. However, shortly before they were going to be put in place, Governor Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, spoke out negatively against the plan, fearful of what could happen to the city's economy. Shortly after, the COVID-19 pandemic put a pause on the plan for five years.

From 5:00 AM to 9:00 PM on weekdays and 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM on weekends, authorities will enforce the toll on all cars driving through designated high-congestion areas. Many New Yorkers who rely on public transport say that the toll is a long-overdue step towards improving the tedious hours spent in traffic. On the other hand, New York City residents who drive daily along with public officials belonging to both political parties say that the new system will do little to improve traffic and that it is a "money grab" by the Metropolitan transit Authority (MTA), New York's public transport organization, more than anything else.

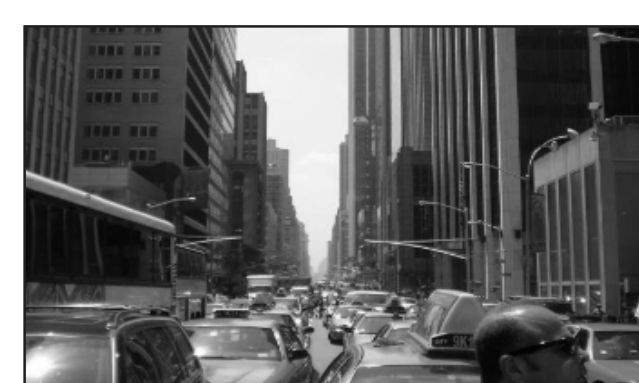
Ed Day, the executive of Rockland City County, a suburb of NYC, opposes the congestion plan, saying that "this is just simply a misguided policy" and that the program raises serious questions about "fairness, priorities and accountability." Day sued MTA in hopes of pausing the program and gaining more time for people who opposed it to devise a plan of action.

Cars looking to enter the Manhattan area during tolling hours can expect to pay \$9 versus the initially proposed \$15. Small trucks pay \$14.40 and larger trucks pay a little over \$20. The MTA has announced

that the toll will increase over the next decade, aiming to reach \$12 in 2028 and \$15 by 2031: both numbers apply to smaller cars. The MTA expects the tolls to bring in 500 million dollars in the first three years and eventually one billion dollars a year once the tolls reach \$15. The MTA claims that this new influx of money will go towards repairing and maintaining public roads and keeping up the New York subway, one of their most profitable services. (Sources: CBS, MTA, NYC 311, NY Times)



SNIPPED: Stifling Manhattan traffic demonstrates the need for increased tolls.



BUSY: New York City struggles with some of its worst congestion yet.

Snow storms rage across the Midwest and East Coast

by **Isabella Langner**
People Editor

Just prior to the outbreak of fires in Southern California, states in the Midwest and on the East Coast experienced the first major snowstorm of 2025, lasting from Jan. 3 to Jan. 7. Winter Storm Blair made landfall in the Pacific Northwest on Jan. 3, showering fresh snow on the Cascade and Sierra Mountains. As Blair reached Utah, it dropped more than twenty inches of snow over the Rockies. Avalanche crews triggered avalanches across the state to protect drivers from uncontrolled slides.



BITTER FROST: Snow covers a city in the Midwest of the United States.

The storm gained strength as it traveled across the Midwest. Kansas, Missouri, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Arkansas, and New Jersey all declared a state of emergency. Kansas City

experienced its heaviest snowfall since 1993 with more than a foot of snow. NFL teams, including the Kansas City Chiefs and the Jacksonville Jaguars, had to delay games due to teams being stuck in Blair's conditions. Parts of Interstate 70, 65, and 75 experienced closures because sleet and snow covered the roads. Blizzard conditions reached Topeka, Dodge City, and multiple other parts of Missouri. Certain locations in northeast Kansas received around 18 inches of snow, and Thomas, West Virginia, received the highest in the state with 19 inches on the ground.

Around 60 million people across the United States were under weather alerts, with cautions spanning 30 states. On Jan. 6, airlines cancelled 1,400 flights and delayed 800. Southwest, Delta, United, and American Airlines all waived change fees due to potential flight disturbances. The Ronald Reagan Airport closed its runways the evening of Jan. 6 to clear snow. At the Kansas City International Airport, 11 inches of snow fell, making Jan. 5 the fourth-largest single-day total recorded. Additionally, Amtrak cancelled multiple trains between mid-Atlantic cities "for the safety of Amtrak customers and employees, due to forecasted winter weather." Schools across multiple states shut down alongside federal offices in Washington D.C., 350,000 Americans experienced power outages.

Blair also proved fatal with ten deaths confirmed due to the storm. Because the icy conditions covered the roads in sleet and snow, cars and trucks lost control, spiraling into other vehicles and ditches. The Missouri Highway Patrol reported 150 crashes related to the storm. In Wichita, Kansas, multiple passenger cars, trailer trucks, and a fire truck overturned on the roads. Trucks and vehicles slid off the road and caused a pile up on Interstate 70 in eastern Illinois, resulting in the highway's closure. Winter Storm Blair reached the Atlantic Ocean,

making it the first coast-to-coast storm of 2025, after doing significant damage to the midwestern and eastern states.

(Sources: BBC, CBS, The Weather Channel, National Weather Service)



SAFE DRIVING: A truck driver drives home amid the blizzard.

Senators sworn into Congress

by **Sam Gruetter**
Opinion Editor

On Jan. 3, 2025, the 119th Congress met for the first time to swear in its new senators, including a new group of four Democrats and six Republicans. The list of new Republicans includes Jim Banks from Indiana, Tim Sheehy from Montana, Bernie Moreno from Ohio, Dave McCormick from West Virginia, and John Curtis from Utah. The new Democrats include Elissa Slotkin from Michigan, Angela Alsobrooks from Maryland, Lisa Blunt Rochester from Delaware, and Ruben Gallego from Arizona. Lisa Blunt Rochester and Angela Alsobrooks will be the first black women to serve in the Senate simultaneously. The admission of the ten new senators marked both chambers of Congress having a Republican majority, alongside a Republican president, Donald Trump.



STAND PROUD: Kamala Harris delivers a speech.

Both the Senate and the House must undergo extensive ceremonies for the members to be sworn in to their new roles in Congress. These ceremonies included an election for the Speaker of the House, which Mike Johnson won in a 218-215 vote; swearing in the senators; establishing the quorum; and receiving speeches from influential political figures. Vice President Kamala Harris certified this process.

The swearing-in of Congress was not the only important political event Harris presided over during her final days in office. On Jan. 6, 2025, Harris

oversaw the counting of each state's electoral college votes, officially certifying Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election. This peaceful and efficient certification was a sharp contrast to its predecessor, which saw the 2021 Capitol riots and protests. After the official certification of the 2024 election, Harris commented, "I do believe very strongly that America's democracy is only as strong as our willingness to fight for it" and that the certification process was "about what should be the norm and what the American people should be able to take for granted, which is one of the most important pillars of our democracy: the peaceful transfer of power."



SPEAK OUT NOW: Mike Johnson accepts role proudly.

The ceremony itself proceeded without a hitch. Per tradition, the electoral votes from each US state were delivered to the capitals, and political figures gathered to watch as Harris read the Republicans' triumph: 312 electoral votes over 226, totaling only about thirty minutes. However, the tumult from four years ago was still felt, as the Electoral Count Act now declares that one-fifth of each chamber of Congress must support an objection for the objection to be considered legally valid. Trump himself shared his opinions on the 2025 certification process on social media, stating that the event was a "big moment in history."

(Sources: ABC News, AP News, CBS News, NPR)

Retail brands close stores

by **Annabelle Pan**
Graphics Editor

For years, Macy's and Kohl's have been leading department stores in the United States, but both have recently announced their plans to close multiple underperforming stores.

Macy's is a retail brand with many store locations across the country. The brand sells clothing, bags, jewelry, furniture, and more. They even host the famous Thanksgiving Day Parade, a popular holiday event. Macy's often offers discounts and high-quality products in all of their stores nationwide.



HEARTFELT GOODBYE: Macy's sign shines above store.

In 2024, Macy's announced their plan to shutter 150 stores by 2026. Macy's deemed these stores substandard locations for their Bold New Chapter strategy, in which they plan to appeal to wealthier buyers with high-end brands. In early January, Macy's released a list of 66 locations closing in 2025, including nine in California. Although the number seems large, Macy's currently operates more than 500 locations in the US and almost 90 in California alone. Macy's hopes that closing underperforming stores will help improve the higher-end stores with more shoppers and profit. The remaining stores will have more options for buyers and better customer service. Since announcing their plan, Macy's has seen its shares fall significantly, and buyers are skeptical about whether or not the changes will be effective.

Another popular department store, Kohl's, is somewhat similar to Macy's and offers a variety of products, including clothing, household appliances, books, and makeup. The two stores are most comparable in their clothing distribution, but Macy's has almost 25% more products, while Kohl's tends to give higher discounts.

Executives at Kohl's had a similar idea for maximizing profits, and they announced the planned closure of 27 of their stores only one week after Macy publicized their plan for 2025. All 27 stores were classified as underperforming, and Kohl's plans to close them to increase the profits of their other 1,123 locations. Out of the 50 states, Hawaii is the only one without a Kohl's store.

Kohl's previous CEO, Tom Kingsbury, announced the store closures as one of his last decisions before stepping down earlier this month. Ten stores in California will be closed while other states will have only one or two closures. The stores are scheduled to be completely shut down by April. The decision to close these stores was likely influenced by the difficult few years Kohl's has experienced as it struggled to adapt to consumer behavior. The future does not seem to hold a sudden increase in profit, either, since Kohl's has predicted an even larger drop in sales. The department store's stock has fallen 40 percent over the past six months.

(Sources: Britannica, CNN, IntelligenceNode, Kohl's, Macy's, Statista)



TEARFUL FAREWELL: A Kohl's store stands tall in a mall.

Former President Jimmy Carter passes away at 100

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

On Dec. 29, 2024, beloved former President Jimmy Carter passed away in the comfort of his home in Plains, Georgia, surrounded by family and loved ones. Carter spent the past two years in hospice, partially with his wife and former first lady, Rosalynn Carter, who passed away in November of 2023.



REMEMBER HIM: Jimmy Carter and his wife smile for the camera.

Carter began his political career as the Georgia governor before he ran for president in 1976 as the Democratic candidate. Following Richard Nixon's tumultuous presidency, Carter appealed to the American people, promising transparency and truth. He defeated the Republican

candidate Gerald Ford who faced criticism for pardoning Nixon for his actions in the Watergate scandal. During Carter's presidency, he dealt with various hardships, such as the Cold War, the women's rights movement, and fluctuating oil markets. Carter brokered a peace deal in the Middle East, known as the Camp David Accords, one of the greatest achievements of his presidency. Much of Carter's legacy, though, came after his presidency ended.

Following his time in office, Carter established the Carter Center, which aimed to improve human rights and further the spread of democracy worldwide. The center has specifically assisted with disease eradication, election monitoring, human rights advocacy, and conflict resolution. Additionally, Carter spent much of the remainder of his life volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, where he advocated for affordable housing for Americans. Due to his outstanding commitment to humanity, he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. Carter set the standard for future presidents for public service following the presidency.

The US honored Carter at his state funeral on Jan. 9 at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. All five living US presidents attended the funeral. President Joe Biden announced that Jan. 9 would be a National Day of Mourning across the US, and all US flags would fly at half-staff for the next thirty days. Carter's son, Chip Carter, spoke at his father's funeral, saying, "My father was a hero, not only to me but to everyone who believes in peace, human rights, and unselfish love. My

brothers, sister, and I shared him with the rest of the world through these common beliefs. The world is our family because of the way he brought people together, and we thank you for honoring his memory by continuing to live these shared beliefs." Additionally, Biden, who had been friends with Carter for over fifty years, provided Americans with some poignant advice. He offered, "To all of the young people in this nation and for anyone in search of what it means to live a life of purpose and meaning - the good life - study Jimmy Carter, a man of principle, faith, and humility."

(Sources: CNN, Deadline, NY Times, PBS)



FORMER PRESIDENT: Jimmy Carter sits in his office during presidency.

- Israel and Hamas reach agreement
- Police detain President Yoon

News-in-Brief: Israel and Hamas reach ceasefire and more

Israel and Hamas reach agreement: Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire agreement in Gaza on Jan. 19. This agreement is partly the result of the work that neighboring countries, Egypt and Qatar, have done as mediators of the conflict to keep regional peace. Within 24 hours of Israel and Hamas agreeing to the cease-fire deal, disputes between the two sides broke out, with Prime Minister Netanyahu stating, "[Israel] reserves the right to resume war." According to AP News, three Israelis were set to be released in exchange for 90 Palestinian prisoners. Initial Palestinian celebrations were tempered by the sight of devastation as Palestinians returned to evacuated cities and villages. The death toll from the fighting resulted in over 46,000 deaths in Gaza and the nearly 1,200 Israelis killed during Hamas's attack on Oct. 7, 2023. (Sources: CNN, New York Times Reuters, United Nations)

- Nelson Kramer, Humor Editor

Population Decline in China: A new report released by the Chinese government on Jan. 16 revealed that China's population fell last year for the third year in a row. The report showed that China's population was 1.408 billion, yet the country has faced a 1.39 million decline since 2023. The report predicts that the economy will struggle as the number of workers and consumers decreases. The country's population trends show a large aging

population and an emerging shortage of working-aged people. These trends are prevalent across East Asia, affecting the birth rates of countries including Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea.

(Sources: AP News, Reuters)

- Aliya Koshaliev, Media Production Editor

Comet 2024 G3 might be visible: For the first time in 160,000 years, a bright comet, Comet 2024 G3 (ATLAS), may be visible. On Jan. 13, Atlas was at perihelion, the point where it is closest to the sun. The comet's distance from the sun influences how bright it appears. Scientists believe it could shine as bright as Venus, which is visible to the naked eye given the right conditions. Dr Shyam Balaji, a researcher in astroparticle physics and cosmology at King's College London, said people who live in the southern hemisphere should "look toward the eastern horizon before sunrise, [and] after perihelion, try the western horizon after sunset." While it is impossible to predict the exact location of Atlas, everyone should look out for a bright comet in the sky. (Source: BBC)

- Kloe Adams, Editorial Editor

In the past couple of years, many space companies have pushed for further space exploration. Most notably, billionaires like Jeff Besos and Elon Musk have taken their seats at the rocket scientist club, and both of them have supported new developments in areas such

as reusable rockets and commercial space travel. In more space news, the James Webb telescope is making waves in the science community as it provides scientists with hi-tech data and photos of deep space. With its endless ability to provide earth scientists with information, the telescope gives updates every day. For example, the Webb telescope caught the binary star Wolf-Rayet 140 shooting out shells of carbon dust at 1,600 miles per second; the photographs of the ring waves of dust have gone viral in the science community. (Sources: Science News, Space.com, Washington Post, WWF)

- Nelson Kramer, Humor Editor



FIGHT FOR JUSTICE: Palestinian civilians protest the war's destruction.

Trudeau resigns as prime minister

by Sam Gruetter and Kloe Adams
Opinion and Editorial Editors

On Jan. 6, 2025, Canada's prime minister Justin Trudeau announced his plans to resign before the end of his current term, which he has been serving for nine years. Trudeau's unpopularity with the Canadian people has become increasingly apparent to many in the past few years, negatively reflecting on the Canadian Liberal Party, to which he belongs. The Liberty Party will select his replacement by March 24, 2025. At the press conference where he publicly announced his resignation, Trudeau stated, "This country deserves a real choice in the next election and it has become clear to me that if I'm having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election."

Trudeau's term as prime minister spanned two elections and almost a decade, making him the longest-serving leader in the G7. Towards the end of his term, Trudeau faced increasing backlash and pressure from both his party and the Canadian people in response to his approach to several pressing social and economic issues, such as inflation,

tariffs, and immigration. Trudeau's deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, abruptly stepped down on Dec. 16, 2024, reproaching his leadership and stewardship of the country. Additionally, Freeland, who had been a close ally of the prime minister, accused Trudeau of engaging in "costly political gimmicks" and being unprepared to face the challenges posed by President Donald Trump. However, his scandals were not limited to his office, as pictures surfaced of him before taking office, wearing blackface on multiple occasions. Furthermore, Canadians negatively commented that Trudeau's policies seemed significantly more ambitious than his actions, resulting in his limiting the number of immigrants his government let into Canada.

Following his resignation announcement, Trudeau confronted Canadian politician and leader of the Conservative Party Pierre Poilievre about his plans for the future of Canada. Trudeau has been under severe pressure from the Conservative Party, which in recent surveys has drawn a double-digit lead over the Liberal Party. In his briefing, Trudeau criticized Poilievre's vision for Canada: "Stopping the fight against climate change doesn't make sense. We need an ambitious, optimistic view of the future. And Pierre Poilievre is not offering that." In response to Trudeau's statement, Poilievre advanced his agenda for reducing taxes and enforcing strict controls on immigration.

Trudeau's resignation comes as Canada debates how to deal with Trump's pledge to impose harsh tariffs on Canadian imports. Trump and Trudeau met in November, where the Canadian government hoped to address Trump's tariff threat. In response to Trudeau's resignation, Trump suggested Canada should become America's 51st state, ultimately decreasing taxes and eliminating tariffs. (Sources: BBC, CNN, New York Times)



PAY ATTENTION: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gives speech.

Oil spill occurs in Russian seas

by Britt Melinauskas
Sports Editor

On Jan. 5, 2024, emergency task forces rushed to the Kerch Strait, a crucial waterway dividing the Crimean Peninsula from the Krasnodar region. The aftermath of a catastrophic collision between two Russian tankers, the Volgoneft-239 and Volgoneft-212, left the surrounding waters polluted, with debris scattered across the sea and rescue efforts ongoing. The ships, each carrying 9,200 tons of mazut, a dense, low-quality oil product, spilled an estimated 3,700 tons of fuel, leading to a staggering 155,000 tons of contaminated sand and soil.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that the oil spill is "one of the most serious environmental challenges we have faced in recent years." Emergency Situations Minister Alexander Kurenkov also commented that fuel contamination continues to develop with progressive spillage.

The severe weather conditions caused the first tanker, the Volgoneft-212, to tear the vessel's frontal section, which aids the ship's speed, balance, and control. An emergency resume operation was sent out as the crash occurred. 12 members of the crew were able to evacuate the vessel immediately, although fatalities occurred. The Volgoneft-239, the second tanker in the collision, traveled 80 meters offshore after the damage while its 14 crew members floated adrift in the sea.

According to Dr. Paul Johnston, a principal scientist for the Greenpeace Research Laboratories, an organization stationed at the University of Exeter, "Any oil or petrochemical spill in these waters has the potential to be serious. If it is driven ashore, then it will cause fouling of the shoreline, which will be extremely difficult to clean up." Dr. Johnston emphasized in his statement that prevailing wind and ocean currents,

combined with the current weather conditions, will make it difficult to contain the oil contamination.

Beginning on Jan. 15, 2024, a massive operation involving approximately 150 environmental workers and volunteers commenced the vast cleanup for the spill. However, after several individuals sought medical attention, deep caution spread among the individuals. Krasnodar Health Minister Yevgeny Filippov reported that 146 people needed medical attention during the cleanup efforts. Among them, 142 people were able to receive treatment and consultations immediately, whereas three remain under medical supervision. Tragically, a 17-year-old student who volunteered in the town of Anapa to assist with cleanup efforts passed away after ingesting toxic fumes.

The effects of the oil spill are impacting local ocean life as well, as Russia's Delfa Dolphin Rescue and Research Center reports that 61 whales and dolphins washed up on the shores. As of recently, the leak stretched 250 kilometers (155 miles) from the Kerch Strait to the shores of Sevastopol. (Sources: AP News, CNN, Firstpost)



CATASTROPHE: Oil spill in Russia causes water pollution.

Criminal investigators question S. Korean President Yoon

by Jordan Park
Sports Editor

On Jan. 15, President Yoon Suk Yeol became the first sitting South Korean leader to be detained for questioning by criminal investigators, who sought to interrogate him about his decision last month to impose a martial law decree.

The short-lived declaration of martial law lasted less than a day but threatened to put the country under military rule for the first time in 45 years. The move banned all political activities and civil gatherings and suspended the free press. Yoon's announcement imposing the law came at 10:30 PM on Dec. 3, 2024. The National Assembly swiftly approved a resolution calling for an end to martial law, prompting Yoon to retreat, stating that he would revoke his emergency declaration just five and a half hours after enacting it. Members of the Cabinet officially rescinded martial law during a meeting early on Dec. 4, 2024.

Shortly after his brief declaration of marital law, Parliament impeached Yoon on Dec. 14, 2024. Following his impeachment, Yoon spoke to the nation, outlining his alleged achievements during his time in office. He committed to continuing his

fight in the Constitutional Court, declaring, "I will never give up." The court will have six months to determine whether Yoon is guilty of the charges brought against him by the National Assembly. The



SPEECH: President Yoon Suk Yeol speaks in a meeting.

court will also determine if the offenses are severe enough to warrant his removal. Should the court decide to remove him formally, South Korea must conduct elections for a new leader soon.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Offices (CIO) is the primary agency investigating Yoon. The CIO's job is to enhance trust and integrity in the Korean government. It was the only agency that obtained warrants, so it led the efforts to detain the president. The state prosecutor's office and the police also opened criminal cases against Yoon over possible insurrection but agreed to let the CIO lead the case. South Korea's criminal law defines insurrection as any attempt to "overthrow government organs established by the Constitution or to render the exercise of their functions impossible by force." If the court convicts Yoon of insurrection, he could face life imprisonment or the death penalty. Following its investigation, the CIO must transfer the case to the prosecutor's office, which remains the only agency with the authority to indict the president. The Presidential Security Service, an agency legally obligated to protect the president, serves as Mr. Yoon's final line of defense against investigators. This agency has reaffirmed its commitment to safeguard Yoon, emphasizing that he is still the sole elected leader. In early December, the service successfully prevented investigators from detaining him during their first attempt.

On Dec. 27, 2024, Choi Sang-mok, South Korea's finance minister, was named the new acting president. Though not an elected official, he leads the country amidst immense political chaos and turmoil. (Sources: BBC, CBS, CNN, NY Times)



SMILE: S.Korea President Yoon poses for a photograph.

- Students emphasize importance of preserving downtown Los Gatos

El Gato urges locals to support small businesses

by Ainsley Northrop, Lucy Panicacci, and Margo Rawlings
Editors-in-Chief

Los Gatos is undoubtedly one of the priciest places to live in California, ranking as the state's 26th most expensive city. From the beginning of 2020 to the end of 2024, the median house price in LG ballooned from 1.6 million dollars to 2.5 million dollars. Alongside housing, LG businesses face skyrocketing prices, from growing rents in downtown LG to the higher costs of maintaining businesses. Full of wonderful restaurants, cute boutiques, and community events such as the weekly farmer's market and annual tree lighting, our historic downtown forms a foundational part of the unique charm and liveliness of Los Gatos. However, in the last year, notable downtown businesses have shut their doors due to one common factor: rising prices. After 45 years, Los Gatos dining staple Steamer's Grillhouse closed, serving its final meal to the community on Christmas Eve. When the landlords of Steamer's Grillhouse required that the restaurant pay for a costly remodel while renewing their five-year lease, restaurant owner Paul Matulich chose to cut his losses, marking the end of a beloved LG business. Due to increased rent prices, The Palms Restaurant shut down in 2023 after seven years downtown, and Rural Supply planned to close after nearly 60 years downtown until Ace Hardware stepped in and purchased the building.

With the cost of renting and demand for rental spaces in downtown LG increasing, the issue of rent prices does not appear to be going away for LG business owners any time soon. To preserve cherished shops and restaurants, LG businesses need continued support through protective legislation and community involvement. Local businesses consistently give back to LGHS through sponsorships and fundraisers, as well as offering goods and services geared towards students. Therefore, it is the duty of LGHS students and the LG community at large to reciprocate that support.

Gity Rostamyazdi has owned and operated her LG business, Gity's Nail & Waxing Boutique, since 1990, after she attended cosmetic school

in Germany. She explained her growing struggle: "Little by little, especially after the COVID, the business started really going down. And today, I tell you, I [went] home [early] because I didn't have any clients." With increased rent and competition from more than ten LG salons, it is harder than ever for Rostamyazdi to maintain her business. She commented, "The rent is really killing me... [My landlord's] building is empty...really no one is there because the rent is so high, and people, they cannot afford to do it."

Many of Rostamyazdi's long-standing clients have since moved due to increased expenses of living in Los Gatos, and few new community members are utilizing her services. Unlike other salons, Rostamyazdi does only natural nail painting with no acrylic or gel, the way she learned in Europe. She prioritizes quality and excellence in all of her work, referencing a client who commended her long-lasting polish compared to mainstream establishments. Despite her expertise and love for the craft, Rostamyazdi is currently receiving relatively little aid from the community, especially from younger crowds. This is harming her business, which has provided excellent service to the town for years.

For Margaret Smith, the owner of Domus, a home goods store in downtown founded by 1970s immigrants from the Netherlands, community support has been key to keeping her business alive. After closing her Los Gatos location in 2012 due to high rent, Smith reopened Domus on North Santa Cruz Avenue this year after a landlord sought her out, following resident inquiries about reopening the shop. Only because the community advocated for Domus's revival did the business get a second chance. Now, Smith heads an involved, community-oriented store, supporting nonprofits, district schools, and local charities. She added, "One lady...started to cry when she came into the store [because] her mother, her grandmother, and her aunt and she used to come every Sunday to shop at Domus, and they've all passed away. They used to tell the men in the family that they were going to church." This is just one of many heartfelt stories customers share with Smith while visiting her reopened store.

Yet despite recent success, Domus still struggles with rising rent and growing competition. Los Gatos's recent influx of chain businesses has been especially detrimental to its unique stores. With the ability to pay higher rent, offer larger salaries, and implement streamlined operations such as pre-pricing, these companies not only provide more financial incentives for landlords, but also siphon business from more unique downtown shops, often offering similar products that require less work to curate. Smith reasoned, "I happen to be a unique business, but even I faced tremendous competition when two kitchen stores opened up. That was really a fight for survival."

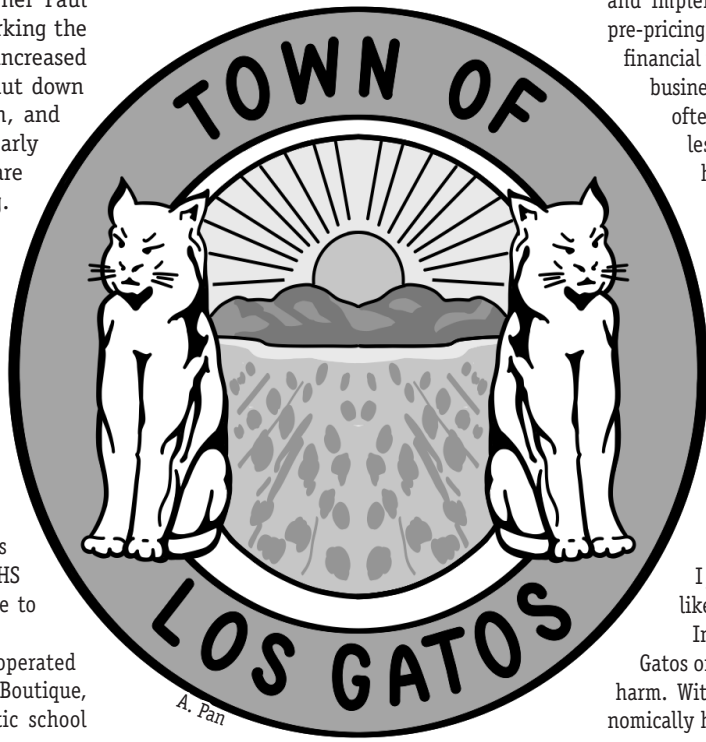
In order to keep our small businesses thriving, LG residents must think local. Smith added, "All day, customers thank me for being here... and I say to them, 'but we can't be here if you're not here.' So if the customer is not supporting us, we can't stay... Through community involvement, the small businesses can thrive. There's a place for chain stores. I just don't think that it's in a small town like Los Gatos."

Introducing large chains to downtown Los Gatos only causes small local businesses further harm. With increased competition to pay astronomically high rent, small business owners cannot

outbid large chains. In order to preserve downtown Los Gatos, the city council must enforce stricter guidelines for formula businesses, which are chain businesses with standardized appearances, logos, products, or operations across multiple locations. If the town council implemented stricter zoning restrictions, formula businesses would undergo more critical review when attempting to set up shop in Los Gatos. Similarly, by utilizing a more extensive public review process when receiving city approval, town council members and Los Gatos residents would have the opportunity to weigh in on the prospective business. Holding public meetings where business owners and other residents could share their concerns would foster a more collaborative environment for such discussions.

Furthermore, the city council should provide some form of subsidy for local businesses; this would increase the incentive for small businesses to open rather than commercialized ones. Cities like Berkeley and Carmel-by-the-Sea use these tactics to preserve the cozy, small-town feel of their downtowns, and in doing so, they maintain the unique characteristics that distinguish them from other places. Legislation is an important step in order to protect Los Gatos's distinctive downtown, but legislation cannot come without community involvement. Residents must see the value in supporting small businesses and rally together to preserve them. In Berkeley, residents often turn to activism to oppose the establishment of corporations that threaten to take away from cherished independent businesses. This community influence is what sparks change and is essential to making a difference.

LG's beautiful and lively downtown is one of the main elements that makes Los Gatos special. To maintain the uniqueness of our town, we need to stick to our priorities. In light of the ever-growing prices in Los Gatos, we need to value enriching the community and maintaining the aspects we enjoy over profit. With large companies being more equipped to handle the high rent costs, it is critical that Los Gatans step in and stay involved in our community by choosing to buy products locally instead of buying from Amazon, actively voicing opinions about incoming formula businesses, and treating local businesses with respect. There is no issue with businesses wanting to come into Los Gatos. The issue lies with keeping them. It is the role of the community to stand by their favorite LG businesses and think local.

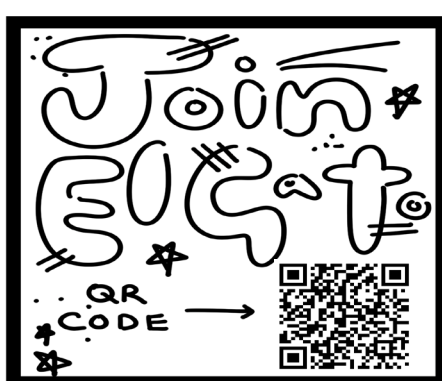


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word search K. Adams

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graphics A. Pan, E. Curtis, and F. Banno

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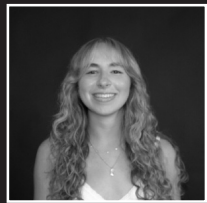
- Magazines must be affordable
- People should thrift more

OPINION

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Panicacci highlights positive impacts of TikTok ban

by Lucy Panicacci
Editor-in-Chief



On Jan. 19, a US law banning TikTok took effect for a few hours, before President Donald Trump signed an executive order suspending the ban. The law mandated that Apple and Google remove TikTok from their app stores and forbid TikTok from updating, causing the social media platform to degrade and eventually stop working for US users due to the accumulation of software bugs. Many of the app's 170 million US users expressed outrage over the ban, with small businesses losing a major form of advertisement. However, the removal of the app could have positive social implications, especially for teens. Addictive in nature, TikTok robs people of their attention spans and causes a harmful distraction in their everyday lives.

I've found that time becomes a void on TikTok. In the blink of an eye, I can scroll for an hour straight without even realizing it. According to a Network EC survey, users spend an average of 95 minutes per day on TikTok — a drastic difference from the average of 29.2 minutes they spend on Instagram. The extensive levels of engagement on TikTok result from the app's format. With short-form

videos typically lasting 15 to 60 seconds, users can consume hundreds of videos per day. As a result, users easily spend hours on the app, constantly entertained by the brevity of the content.

The entertainment that TikTok provides lures people to spend hours on the app. University of Southern California professor Julie Albright explained the gratification of the app: "When you're scrolling...sometimes you see a photo or something that's delightful and it catches your attention, and you get that little dopamine hit in the brain...in the pleasure center of the brain. So you want to keep scrolling." The diverse set of content on a user's For You Page includes videos that they don't like or are not interested in, making the search of finding an extra funny or enjoyable video more rewarding. This process of rewarding users at random time intervals, known as random reinforcement, leaves people constantly seeking instant gratification.

The negative social impacts of TikTok especially affect teenagers. According to the Pew Research Center, 58 percent of teens use TikTok on a daily basis, with 17 percent describing their use

as constant. The impacts of short-term media consumption, creating the constant expectation for a reward, has leaked into the daily habits of teens. At Los Gatos High School, several teachers have implemented a "phone jail" because of students' urges to check their phone during class. Teens' attention spans have dramatically decreased. I've found myself and my friends unable to watch a whole movie without checking our phones or scrolling through social media. Often, I find myself scrolling through TikTok rather than doing my homework or going to bed. Many people I know have apps that restrict their screen time on TikTok or have deleted the app altogether in order to be able to focus. The addictive nature of TikTok, providing an endless stream of dopamine, prompts some users to place harsh restrictions or eliminate the app in order to function in their day-to-day lives.

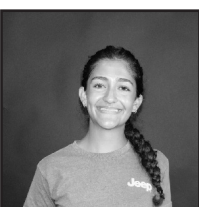
I cannot deny that I enjoy TikTok. I spend hours on it every day, laughing at funny videos and interacting with friends. However, I find myself addicted to the extent that the app distracts me from school and prevents me from using my free time in more fulfilling and enriching ways. If I delete it, I will inevitably redownload it again. Although the ban would remove an important social media outlet, consider it from a social and health standpoint: "Would I be better off without TikTok?" (Sources: Forbes, NBC, Pew Research Center, Richmond Journal)



F. Banno

Magazines should be cheap

by Kloe Adams
Editorial Editor



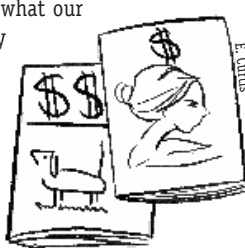
When I was younger, everytime I went to the grocery store with my mom, she would treat me to any magazine I chose. As I grew older though, we stopped buying the magazines because they

were beginning to cost almost half of what our groceries cost. Magazines, especially print editions, have experienced significant price increases over the past decade, making them increasingly inaccessible for readers. Magazine prices need to be reduced to preserve the unique depictions of media that they offer.

Magazines are important for everyone to have access to because they reflect society's culture, values, and issues. They do so from a variety of perspectives. Whether it is art, fashion, or social justice, magazines can highlight voices that mainstream media overlooks. Additionally, there are copious amounts of independent, niche magazines that address unique topics that many online media sources often exclude. To illustrate, Dirty Furniture is an independent magazine that chooses a single piece of furniture for each issue and focuses on that piece of furniture through a political, historical, technological, and design point of view. Some magazines highlight aesthetics and making a piece of art for people to look through; some, such as TIME Magazine, are political; and others are simply for entertainment and celebrity gossip. Magazines offer people the distinct opportunity to choose exactly what they want to

read about. Furthermore, magazine subscriptions allow readers to receive constant updates about their favorite topics while also allowing convenient home delivery or digital access.

Magazines also offer platforms for academic scholars and universities to publish their findings, insights, and breakthroughs. For example, scientific journals like Nature and Scientific American publish groundbreaking studies and research articles that spark greater academic conversations.



These journals bridge the gap between academia and the general public, making complex ideas more accessible. Likewise, as well as publishing new ideas, educational magazines highlight emerging trends such as artificial intelligence. Wired, a monthly print magazine, focuses on how emerging technologies affect culture, the economy, and politics, inviting readers to have conversations about the impact of new technologies on everyday life. Exposure to academic and general opinions about topics is crucial in helping readers form informed opinions and urges critical thinking about different perspectives.

Most importantly, magazines are their own artform, combining information with aesthetics. Magazines like Vogue exhibit high-quality design, art, photography, and illustration that prompts creativity and inspiration. For instance, the magazine Architectural Digest creates spreads that invite readers to think about their living spaces in innovative ways.

Whether it's educational material, fashion inspiration, or celebrity gossip, magazines cover subjects for everyone to enjoy, and these personalized forms of media should be accessible to everyone.

Wilde condemns local zoo

by Jane Wilde
Public Relations Manager



People often portray zoos as wildlife conservation havens, and while that is often true, the San Francisco Zoo tells a different story. The city is actively fostering a hostile environment for animals with inadequate enclosures, lack of basic necessities, and overall disregard for the animals' well-being and greater regard for profit. Additionally, unlike other zoos, they do not take in injured and rescued animals, but rather obtain their animals through unethical breedings and exchanges with other zoos. In order to eradicate the unethical treatment of San Francisco zoo animals, we must act as a community by signing petitions to prohibit additional animals entering the zoo. Moreover, the zoo must expand its exhibits

One of the most prominent concerns of San Francisco residents regarding the zoo is the lack of remodel or update within the last several decades. Jane Tobin, with the Commission of Animal Control and Welfare, wrote in her report to the city hall about the animals' habitats, "They're quite old. Some of these habitats date to the WPA era, and they haven't been updated much except to minimum standards... It looks like an institution that needs a comprehensive, strategic redesign plan to modernize the habitats."

For example, according to the San Francisco Chronicle, the koala exhibit is so small that it

can only hold one koala; however, three of them currently live at the zoo. This means only one koala is allowed to go out each day, which is detrimental to the koala's fundamental wildlife welfare, as the other koalas are forced to stay indoors despite being wild animals. Another disappointing exhibit is the lion's den; however, the term "den" is generous. The San Francisco commission's report detailed, "We had difficulty locating the lone lion hiding under a concrete table in a WPA-era habitat (90 years old)...[and] the safety measures to meet the AZA and USDA enclosure requirements are minimal and even more frightening — unsafe for the animals and visitors." Lastly, their polar bear habitat is designed for a dry terrain animal, rather than the wetly adapted polar bear that remains distressed and powerless in its enclosure. The stone habitat is dry and lacks any body of water in which the polar bear can swim.



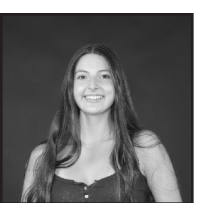
E. Curtis

Despite all of these rising concerns, the mayor of San Francisco, Daniel Lurie, is insistent on sending pandas to the facility. Without a complete 180 transition of care, habitat, and remodel, the zoo is nowhere near adequate to house such a high-maintenance animal like the panda.

In order to foster a more enriching environment for guests and animals alike, we must enforce laws inflicted to protect the lives of animals. There is a petition under the auspices of the global nonprofit organization, Greater Good Charities, to end neglect and unsafe conditions at the zoo, specifically prohibiting the introduction of panda bears to the facility. In order to make an impact, it's imperative that we sign petitions and boycott unsafe zoos like San Francisco's. It's critical to raise awareness of and actively participate in the betterment of San Francisco Zoo's wildlife. (Sources: San Francisco Chronicle, SFIst)

Northrop supports the use of traditional newspapers

by Ainsley Northrop
Editor-in-Chief



According to the Pew Research Center, over half of Americans rely on social media as a main news source. Not only does this reliance undermine established newspapers, but social media often spreads false information, which increases both social and political divisions and can ultimately lead to destruction and damage. Thus, it is essential that society

favors qualified, established publications.

Since its start in 1977, social media's popularity has grown exponentially, with an estimated 5.07 billion current users worldwide. Simultaneously, the public increasingly ignores qualified publications. The number of visitors from the websites of the country's top 50 newspapers decreased by over three million in less than a year, and their average website visit time now sits at around a minute, indicating minimal reading.

With the ability to post instantaneously, people can now reach large audiences with little regulation; most social media companies only police content after it is published—at a point where the information has potentially already reached millions. In fact, on Jan. 13, Mark Zuckerberg announced Meta's plan to scrap its current fact-checking system altogether.

Social media's algorithms blatantly encourage misinformation. According to the American Psychological Association, people are more likely to spread misinformation when it aligns with their beliefs or elicits strong emotions. The algorithms, notably TikTok's "For You Page," intentionally show viewers personalized content to align with their opinions and interests, making it more likely for users to believe and share potentially false content. Furthermore, shocking videos can distract from fact-checking: in 2024, an AI video of the Eiffel Tower burning surfaced on TikTok, and my friend believed it completely, sharing it with me and others in a panic.

However, misinformation from faulty news sources causes damage beyond panic. As CBS reported, during the 2016 election, misinterpreted emails turned to a conspiracy theory as people shared their misconceptions online. This rapid, unverified information drove North Carolina resident Edgar Welch to invade a Washington pizza restaurant with a gun, damaging property. Police determined that the conspiracy was unfounded. Because of unregulated news, Welch's potentially deadly actions resulted in a four-year prison sentence.

To prevent this sort of chaos and violence, society needs to revert to printed and established news sources. Not only do these publica-

tions go through crucial editing and fact-checking, but they provide more thorough coverage than brief social media statements. More importantly, classic print papers do not use an algorithm. Instead, they print one version of the story, communicating to a larger audience. While these news sources are admittedly of varying biases, informed professionals regulate and write for them.



A. Pan

Beyond opting for printed or qualified news sources, society can decrease the spread of misinformation through fact-checking and following well-known organizations. Sites such as AllSides evaluate sources for bias and credibility, and by following publications with differing views, people can keep up-to-date while having various, more objective sides of the story to piece together. People can even obtain accurate news by following qualified publications' social media accounts because

their posts are not subjected to an algorithm. For the sake of veracity, it is crucial that Americans combat the misinformation that social media journalism proliferates, by reverting to printed newspapers, following diverse and qualified publications, or simply fact-checking before believing and sharing any information.

(Sources: American Psychological Association, CBS, New York Times, Pew Research Center, USC Today)

US must support Navajo people

by **Samantha Gruetter**
Opinion Editor



In a recent 5-4 ruling, the Supreme Court determined that the United States government has no legal obligation to provide water to the Navajo nation. The ruling still passed, despite two treaties that clearly outline an agreement between the US government and Navajo nations in the mid-1800s over the Navajos access to water if they were to take residency in a new, permanent, homeland, determined by the US government.

Due to the stipulations of the treaties of 1849 and 1868, and the precedential rulings of the *Winters v. United States* (1908) case, the United States government has both a legal and moral obligation to provide safe and plentiful access to water for the Navajo Nation.

Winters v. United States (1908) was the first Supreme Court case that addressed Native American reservations land rights. When the government displaced numerous tribes and condensed their populations to limited portions of land, they made agreements that the tribes would maintain rights to the water sources necessary for survival. They stipulated that Native Americans would have “command of all [the waters’] beneficial use, whether kept for hunting, and grazing roving herds of stock, or turned to agriculture and the arts of civilization.” Furthermore, many tribes only agreed to be permanently condensed to these reservations if they were able to maintain their ownership over “the waters which made it [the land] valuable or adequate.”

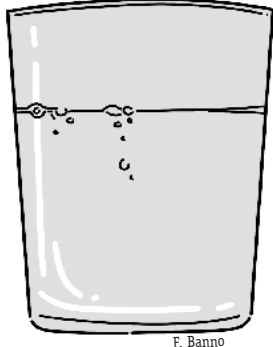
In a more recent ruling in the case of *Arizona v. Navajo Nation* (2023), the Supreme Court

decided that the treaties of 1849 and 1868 have no legally binding requirement of the United States government to provide water on a permanent basis for the Navajo Nation. Prior to the Supreme Court’s ruling, the Ninth Circuit court ruled in favor of the Navajo Nation, deeming that it had sufficient evidence to oblige the government to provide adequate water for a permanent homeland. After they ruled this, the Supreme Court reversed this decision.

Because initial treaties stipulated there must be enough water to produce a permanent homeland, the lack of water has become an issue of necessity for the Navajo tribe. According to the American Bar Association, “Over 30 percent of Navajos on the Navajo Reservation lack running water. Many must travel great distances to collect water. And the average Navajo member uses only about 7 gallons of water per day—strikingly little compared to the 80–100 gallons of water per day that the average American uses for household needs.” The lack of water also produces unsafe and unsanitary living conditions for tribal members, resulting in them having a higher COVID-19 infection rate in 2020 as well as increased susceptibility to other illnesses.

The Supreme Court’s negligence towards the water crisis in the Navajo Nation clearly displays the US government’s lack of accountability for the mass displacement of Native American tribes and inability to properly recompense for the damages they have done to these communities. The Nation’s dire circumstances show how the US government has a clear duty to provide them with access to water.

(Sources: American Bar, Administration for Children and Families, NRDC)



F. Banno

Phone addictions need to stop

by **Julia Valencia**
News Editor



Have you ever caught yourself “doom scrolling” on your phone? What feels like five minutes turns into 20, and then an hour, and sooner or later, it is 4:00 PM on a Sunday and you have yet to do anything productive. As a collective society, it seems that we have all simply accepted that we are addicted to our phones and yet continue to do nothing about it. Smartphones actively waste our precious and limited time, yet we acknowledge this and then make no effort to change it.

IBM released the first smartphone in 1992, called Simon. From 2000 to the present day, the average human attention span has decreased from twelve seconds to eight seconds. Goldfish have an attention span of nine seconds. A *Time Magazine* writer attributes this drastic fall the recent spike of smartphone users in the past two decades.

On average, an adult in the United States spends just over seven hours a day on screens, with four and a half hours being on their phones. Teens spend even more, averaging just under nine hours per day on screens, six of which are on smartphones. To give some perspective on those numbers, that is almost two full days a week, over one full week in a month, and around three months in a calendar year that teens spend on their phones. The following is a list of things you could learn to do or accomplish in 90 days: train for, and run a half marathon, take 15 round trips to the moon and back, learn how to solve a Rubix cube, or write a novella. Though these examples may seem somewhat exaggerated, they can provide a sense of clarity to what can

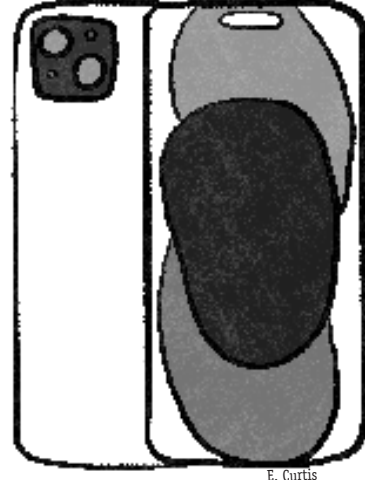
be accomplished in the amount of time instead spent on our smartphones.

Our brains crave dopamine, nicknamed the “happy hormone,” and by checking our phones, we trigger our brains to release that dopamine. However, researchers at Columbia University claim that the constant notifications that come from smartphones actually cause more stress and can lead to depression. The dopamine only provides a short and temporary boost of satisfaction, ultimately ending with a person feeling worse than when they first picked up their phone.

Considering how much we rely on our phones, an interesting question to consider is can you remember the last time you went multiple hours, comfortably, without your phone? Smartphones have become such an integral part of our daily routines that holding one often feels more natural than not having it in your hand. If there is a lull in a conversation, you pick up your phone. A long line at the grocery store? You pick up your phone. Why is it that these relatively new pieces of technology have so quickly infiltrated our lives, consuming every free moment that we have to ourselves?

If we don’t take deliberate and immediate action to regain control of our futures, smartphones will continue to consume more of our time and humanity, ultimately leaving us as mere extensions of the devices. The next time you feel yourself reaching for your phone for no particular reason other than boredom, consider implementing a screen time to limit your phone usage, or even just setting a timer to remind yourself that you are on your phone. We have to make a choice: either we make the active decision to set boundaries now, or we risk letting screens dictate the remainder of our lives.

(Sources: Columbia University, GSMA, Piedmont Healthcare, *Time Magazine*)



E. Curtis

Singhal argues for increased use of local thrift stores

by **Siyona Singhal**
News Editor



In a world increasingly concerned with sustainability, thrift shops offer a unique solution that combines environmental consciousness with affordability. These treasure troves of goods have gained steadily in popularity, but more people need to support thrift stores to end the still-existing stigma around them. First, shopping from a secondhand store helps the environment. In 2018 alone, nearly 21 million tons of textile waste, furniture, and furnishings ended up in landfills. Thrifting helps divert textiles from landfills, where they would otherwise take decades to decompose while releasing harmful methane gases. The fashion industry is the second-largest polluter globally, contributing significantly to water waste, carbon emissions, and landfill overflow. Every reused piece of clothing translates to fewer resources consumed and less waste generated. It’s an easy way to shrink your carbon footprint and make a meaningful contribution to environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, thrift stores are affordable. Thrift shops offer a less expensive alternative to buying new clothing, making fashion and household goods more accessible to people of all income levels. For students, young professionals, or families on limited budgets, these stores can be a lifesaver. Instead of spending hundreds of dollars on a single outfit or furnishing an

apartment with pricey items, thrifters can find everything from designer clothing to durable furniture for a fraction of the cost.

Thrift stores also encourage individuals to embrace their individuality and imagination. Each item in a thrift store has a unique story behind it.

Instead of following cookie-cutter trends, you can curate a wardrobe or home décor that reflects your distinctive style. Upcycling thrifted items is another way to express creativity, whether it’s turning a vintage dress into a modern outfit or repurposing an old table into a one-of-a-kind centerpiece. For DIY enthusiasts, thrift shops offer a cornucopia of

potential projects. By embracing thrift shopping, individuals not only stand out from the crowd but also gain a sense of accomplishment from making something expressly their own. Supporting thrift shops is a win-win for both individuals and the planet. It is an opportunity to save money, reduce waste, and contribute to important causes—all while cultivating your personal style. Whether you’re a seasoned thrifter or new to the world of secondhand shopping, consider making thrift stores your first stop for your next purchase. Together, we can create a more sustainable, inclusive, and creative future—one thrifted item at a time.

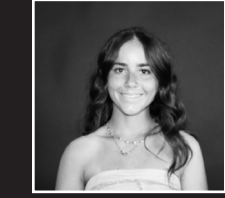
(Source: CBS News)



A. Pan

Rawlings believes aid for natural disasters should be non-partisan

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



Just months after the devastating hurricanes, Milton and Helene, that ravished Florida, North Carolina, and the Appalachian Mountains, wildfires broke out in Southern California. As of Jan. 15, the Palisades and Eaton fires have killed at least 25 people and have destroyed more than 12,000 structures across Los Angeles. The Biden Administration has pledged to cover the cost of wildfire response needed to remove debris, create shelter, and pay first responders for 180 days. Soon after its announcement, various Republican congressmen voiced their desire to include conditions on the aid. They justified their statements using misleading information which implied they wanted to add conditions, not because of mismanagement but because of California’s political beliefs. It is essential that federal aid for natural disasters remain non-partisan to emphasize the notion that country, in America, supersedes party.

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson rooted the cause of the California fires to problems with “water resources management, forest management mistakes.” He continued that “it does

come down to leadership and it appears to us that state and local leaders were derelict in their duty in many respects.” He used these mismanagements to justify his proposal to add stipulations to providing aid. Not only are Johnson’s claims false, but including conditions to aid Americans will continue to divide the country. Prior to the fire, officials filled three water tanks near Palisades with one million gallons of water each, due to dangerously high winds. The intensity of the fire caused first responders to quickly deplete the contents of the tanks. Furthermore, the federal government owns 57 percent of California’s forest while the state only owns three percent. To upkeep forests, Gavin Newsom doubled the number of controlled burns and invested 200 million dollars annually for healthy forest and fire prevention programs.

Johnson’s comments came soon after Newsom announced California’s plans to legally fight the future Trump administration. Regardless of a state’s leadership, their citizens should not have to suffer following a natural disaster. In fact, just last year Congress allocated 100 billion dollars

to emergency aid, which helped states that Hurricanes Milton and Helene impacted. There was no questioning whether states like Florida had properly prepared for the coming hurricanes. Adding conditions to give California aid shows Congress’s lack of concern for American citizens and highlights their misguided focus on partisan politics.

By denying aid, tensions between Democrats and Republicans will only increase at a time when collaboration and empathy are most crucial. Politicians should not give aid based on party, religion, or class; they should provide it based on need. California is in need now more than ever before. As Senator Catherine Cortez Masto said, “Disaster aid for wildfire victims who have lost their homes and businesses shouldn’t be used as a bargaining chip, no matter what state they live in.” Former

Republican governor John Kasich echoed her statements, asserting that “Americans help Americans regardless of whether a state is red or blue...Brute politics is becoming a scourge on our country.”

(Sources: NPR, NY Times, Politico, PBS, USA Today, Reuters, Washington Post)



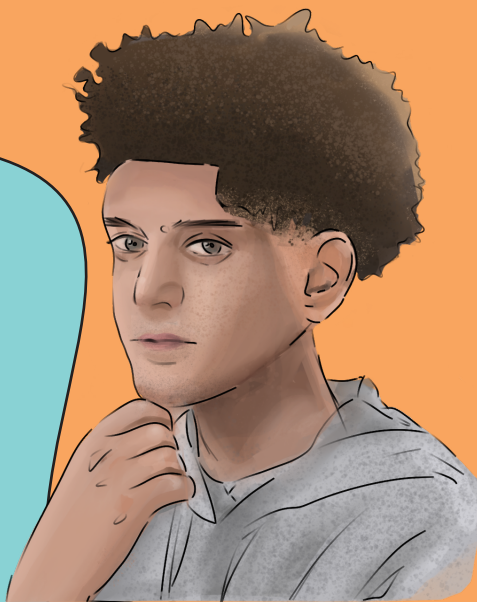
A. Pan

FIND OUT WHICH 20

Well, well, well, look where you've gotten yourself now: the low taper fade meme might be the one that best represents you. Like the meme itself, you just can't keep things in the past and insist on dragging things way beyond where they should go.

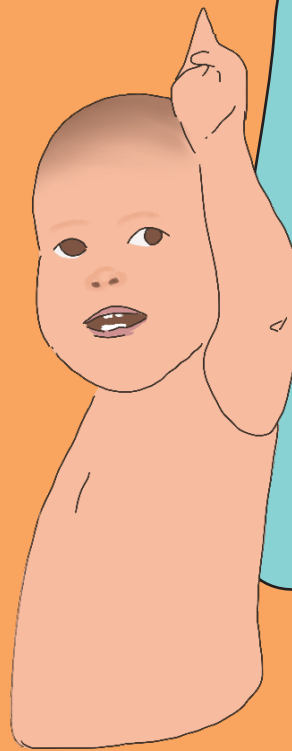
For example, you probably reposted at least one of the Low Taper Fade edits over a year after the meme's invention. You definitely like to get on your friends' bad sides by bringing up their embarrassing moments that you, for no conceivable reason, cannot seem to leave behind. Not to mention, you probably cry yourself to sleep every night knowing that you don't live in a world where people normalize blue hair with a low taper haircut.

Rory Zeman,
Media Production Editor



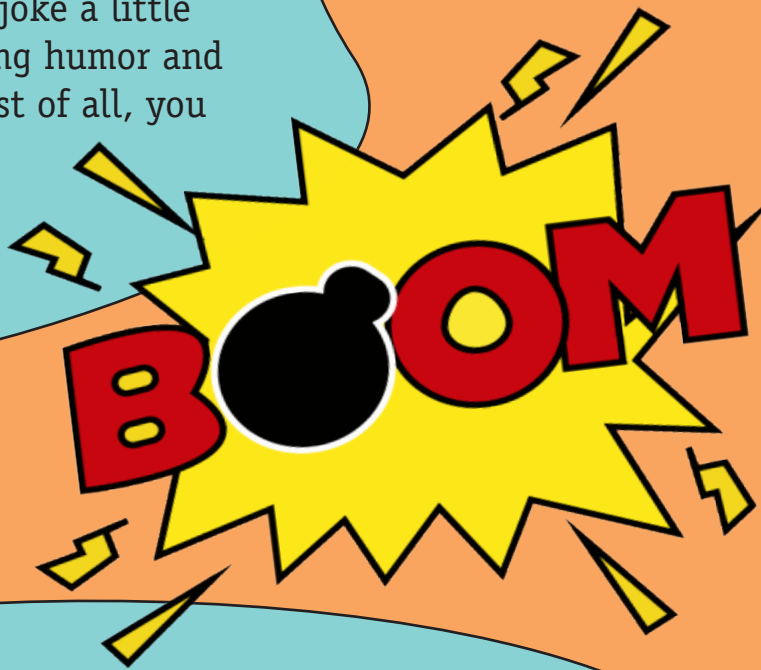
Yippee! You won a first prize in the Orlando—well, not really—but you are a fully conscious baby. You are a baby with the sense of humor of a one-year-old. You are a bad thing. Because of this, you are a bad thing to light up every room you walk into, no matter the situation. In addition, you have no taste and only accept the best of the best. However, sometimes you're impatient, so you take a deep breath and relax. This is a good thing.

Megan Saul,



Boom! You might be the Costco guys! You get five big booms for this one! It's likely you fancy delicacies such as the chicken bake or a classic double chunk chocolate cookie. Perhaps you've even been granted the nickname "rizzler" by your close friends. These same friends probably see you as the friend who milks every joke a little too much until it's totally butchered. You bring humor and light into every room you walk into, but most of all, you bring the boom.

Jane Wilde,
Public Relations Manager

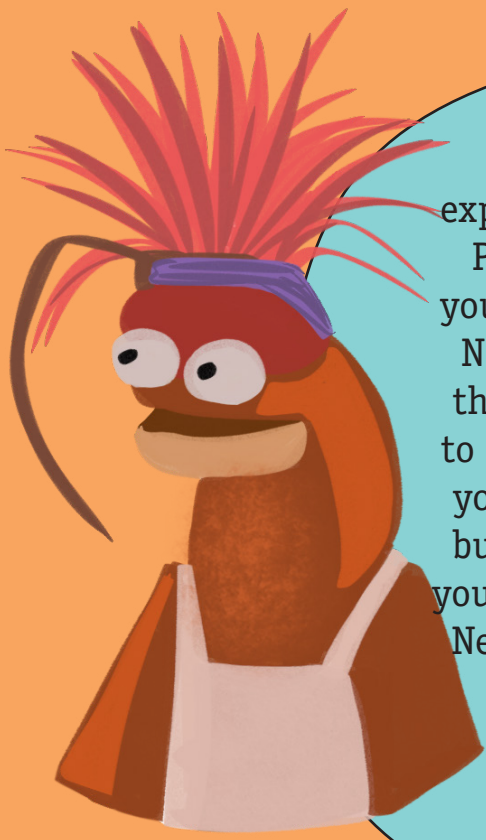


JoJo's iconic line has been remembered in internet history. In 2024, you likely were not too closely and are well-known. JoJo, you may have taken on holding the cliché "new year, new you." You may also have an obsession with outfits, leading to style changes 90 percent of the time or more. Going into this new year, you will be and more so.

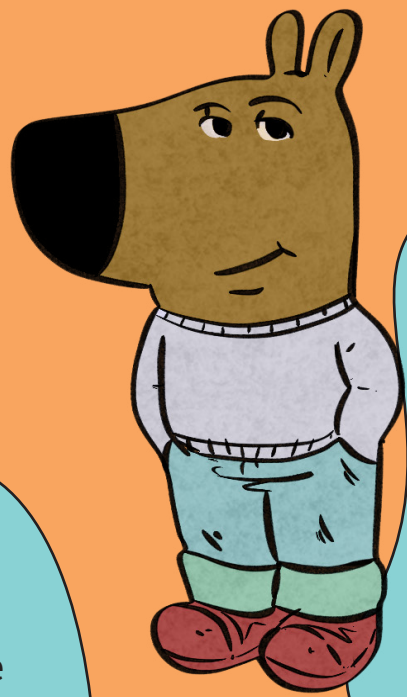
Kat Li

You might remember when people shared their crazy experiences alongside a picture of a distressed muppet, namely Pepé the King Prawn. Well, much like this frazzled muppet, you experience the weirdest things at the worst possible times. No matter where you go, whom you're with, or what you do, these absurd situations just seem to find you. You're the type to run into your biggest enemy everywhere, drop the ice cream you've been waiting forever for, break your arm cartwheeling, burn your leg with a curling iron, park at a Wendy's and have your car towed, or even just stub your toe at every opportunity. Never fear, though! At least these experiences will make for a good story, and Pepé is there to help you tell them.

Ainsley Northrop, *Editor-in-Chief*



2024 MEME YOU ARE



If the chill guy was your favorite meme of 2024, you are especially known for your nonchalance. You rarely, if ever, take the little things to heart and focus on the big picture. No matter the circumstance, whether a sudden change of plans or an embarrassing situation, you choose to respond with a simple shrug and smile. For this reason, you are a pillar for your friends with your dependability, stability, and open mind. At the end of the day, you are just a chill guy, trying to get through high school like the rest of us.

Claudia Casal, *Culture Editor*

...ee trip to the Four Seasons
...t you did get the meme of the
...extremely intelligent but have
...year-old, which isn't always a
...you have the impeccable ability
...lk into and make others laugh
...dition, you also have exquisite
...of the best, and you deserve it!
...patient and too eager, but once
...ax, you truly can achieve any-
...ng!

Culture Editor



Are you a homeowner? Do you want to be? Do you just love texting, particularly on iMessage? Are you a crying child, begging and pleading? Has a religious figure been identified in your residence? If so, you are the Ellie and Mason's house meme. People may doubt you, but you aren't crazy. Jesus was seen, and he was at your house. This is a very high and prestigious title to hold. Your favorite color is probably fancy, like royal purple. Your go-to shape also happens to be a heart.

Emery Curtis, *Graphics Editor*

...and makeup will forever be remem-
...ry. If this was your favorite meme in
...following JoJo's bad girl era a little
...acquainted with her hit songs. Like
...ried reinventing yourself last year,
...w year new me" close to your heart.
...affinity for outlandish makeup and
...e experiments in 2024 that failed 50
...more, depending on who you ask.
...ar, you are hoping for better Karma
...ney for fresh Iced Coffee.

ttfin, *News Editor*

Please can I go to Ellie and mason
House

brat

Congratulations, the 2024 meme that represents you best is Brat Girl Summer! You don't have to be a girl to be a part of Brat Girl Summer. No matter how you identify, you embrace the chaos that comes with life and thrive in it. Even if you don't remember what "uncut gems!" is, Julia Fox is still your biggest muse, as she is so brat! Some of your other inspirations may include the Kamala Coconut meme, the Harris Walz campaign, or just the Charlie xcx Brat album itself. Even though we are in the dead of winter, you refuse to believe that Brat Summer is over, and to that, I commend you for holding on to your true sense of self.

Nelson Kramer, *Humor Editor*

- Littfin discusses A Complete Unknown
- Mitchell details “hear me out” cakes

CULTURE

EL GATO • FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONNEWS.COM

IT ENDS WITH US STARS ENGAGE IN LEGAL BATTLE

by Britt Melinauskas and Sam Gruetter
Sports and Opinion Editors

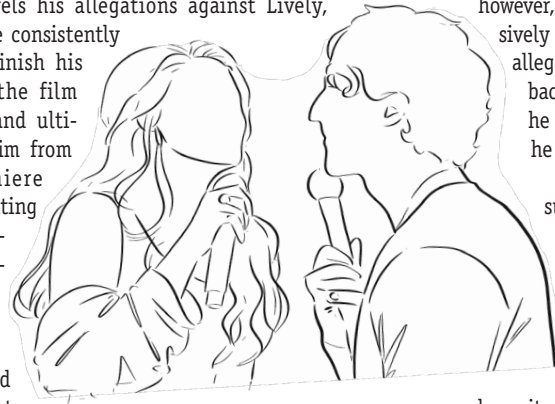
On Dec. 20, 2024, actress and star of *It Ends With Us*, Blake Lively, sued her *It Ends With Us* costar Justin Baldoni along with his publicist Jennifer Abel and Wayfarer Studios. She alleged Baldoni orchestrated a smear campaign against her after she spoke out about a supposedly unsafe work environment on the set of *It Ends With Us*. Lively alleges Baldoni made unwanted sexual advances towards her during filming and unnecessary comments on her appearance, both of which produced an unsafe work environment for her. Furthermore, Lively claims that Baldoni and his PR team intentionally produced and encouraged the release of negative media about Lively prior to the release of the film, criticizing her acting in the film and her lighthearted attitude towards the film’s portrayal of domestic violence. Lively supported her claims with a myriad of text messages between both her and Baldoni and Baldoni and his team, which painted the narrative that Baldoni and his team were running a smear campaign against the actress. However, Baldoni responded by providing more context to the text exchanges in his suit against the NY Times, where he stated, “How can we say

somehow that we are not doing any of this — it looks like we are trying to take her down.”

As Baldoni levels his allegations against Lively, he asserts that she consistently attempted to diminish his role throughout the film *It Ends With Us* and ultimately removed him from the movie premiere along with cultivating a hostile environment on set. Baldoni added that Lively intentionally tried to ruin his reputation and credibility by stating that he engaged in a smear campaign while altering film segments and taking control of the editing process.

A main accusation Baldoni attempted to clarify was his supposed remarks about Lively’s weight. He claims it was a misunderstanding; however, the comment led Lively’s husband, Ryan Reynolds, to “aggressively berate” Baldoni during a meeting. His response against the allegations of “fat shaming” were that he recently underwent a back injury and has multiple swelling discs. Baldoni claimed that he merely asked his trainer how much Lively weighed to ensure he could lift her up during the filming process.

Moreover, on Dec. 31, 2024, Baldoni explained that he was suing the NY Times for false statements and invasion of privacy throughout the process. Baldoni claimed the false statements were “cherry picked” from specific statements he made via his publicists, Abel and Melissa Nathan. Baldoni claims that Lively and her team adjusted messages that were “stripped of necessary context and deliberately spliced,” resulting in misled context. Alongside Baldoni’s lawsuit against the NY Times, he and nine other plaintiffs, including his publicists and Wayfarer Studios, will file additional lawsuits. (Sources: ABC News, Forbes, New York Times, USA Today)



F. Banno

MUFUSA: THE LION KING HITS THEATERS

by Isabella Langner
People Editor

Mufasa: The Lion King debuted in theaters on Dec. 9, 2024. The movie follows young Mufasa and brother Taka as they grow closer and embark on a journey searching for a land called Milele while escaping a pride of lions that wants to kill them. From music to heart-warming themes, this movie is a beautiful addition to Disney’s *Lion King* franchise.

Beloved characters such as Pumbaa, Timon, Rafiki, Simba, Nala, Zazu, and Kiara also make their way into *Mufasa: The Lion King*. The film starts with Rafiki telling Pumbaa, Timon, and Kiara the story of Mufasa’s life. This context allows the filmmakers to incorporate characters from the first two *Lion King* movies, as Kiara is Simba’s daughter and one of the main characters of the new movie.

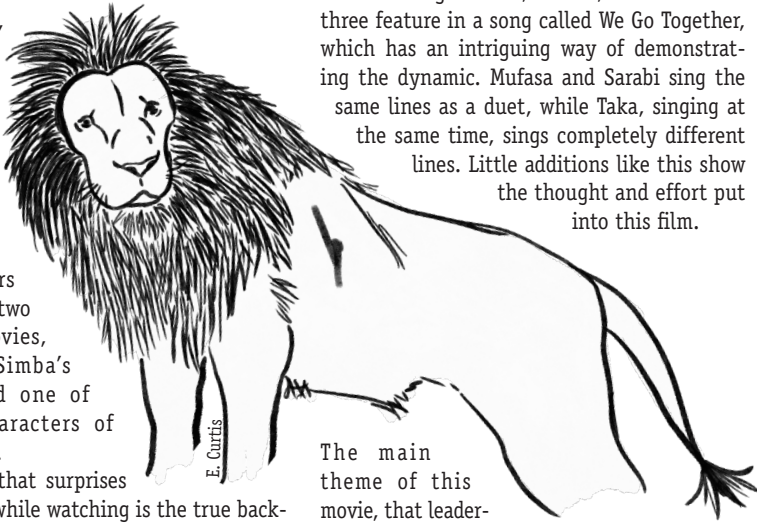
One thing that surprises many viewers while watching is the true background of the relationship between Mufasa and Taka (later known as Scar). In the original *Lion King*, viewers assumed that they were brothers by blood. However, *Mufasa: The Lion King* depicts how Mufasa was a stray who stumbled upon Taka and his pride, where Taka was next in line to be king. Also, unlike the original, this movie doesn’t make either Taka or Mufasa out to be a true villain. Instead, both characters make mistakes for justifiable reasons and it is easy to see how their relationship falls apart later in their life.

A major highlight of this film is the music. Songs such as *I Always Wanted a Brother*, *Tell Me It’s You*, and *Bye Bye* have gained popularity across the internet due to their catchy beats. Lin-Manuel Miranda, a songwriter and actor best known for his Broadway play *Hamilton*, wrote original songs featured in *Mufasa: The Lion King*. Not surprisingly, the three most popular songs previously mentioned were Miranda’s work. Other well-known names that appeared in this movie were Beyonce and daughter Blue Ivy Carter, Seth Rogan, and Donald Glover.

During the lion’s adventure, a love triangle forms among Mufasa, Sarabi, and Taka. All three feature in a song called *We Go Together*, which has an intriguing way of demonstrating the dynamic. Mufasa and Sarabi sing the same lines as a duet, while Taka, singing at the same time, sings completely different lines. Little additions like this show the thought and effort put into this film.

The main theme of this movie, that leadership is about responsibility, not power, is reflected in Mufasa and Taka’s relationship. Mufasa slowly gains his power through acts of bravery, while Taka expects things without doing the work, due to his previous status as prince of his pride. These traits make it easy for viewers to see how Mufasa ends up as king and Taka as the villain of *The Lion King*.

If you are looking for an entertaining film to start the year, make sure to check out *Mufasa* in theaters and on Disney Plus in a few months!



E. Curtis

Littfin recaps biopic A Complete Unknown

by Kat Littfin
News Editor

A Complete Unknown, the Bob Dylan biopic, premiered in theaters on Christmas Day, 2024. Generations of Dylan fans rave about the long-awaited film.

A Complete Unknown follows Dylan’s life from 1961 to 1965, the foundational years of the musician’s career. Dylan, a 20-year-old who moves to New York with nothing but a guitar, quickly finds fame in the city’s folk scene, acquainting himself with famous musicians Pete Seeger (Edward Norton) and an ailing Woody Guthrie (Scoot McNairy) within the first few days of his arrival to the East Coast, blowing the two away with his musical talent. From there, Dylan’s career flourishes. He quickly becomes friends with many other integral artists of the time including Johnny Cash (Boyd Holbrook) and Joan Baez (Monica Barbaro), and transitions from playing in small auditoriums to the renowned Newport Folk Festival. The later part of the biopic, after a time jump from 1961 to 1965, depicts Dylan’s transition away from folk and his struggles with his friends, fans, and management’s expectations of him. The movie also follows Dylan’s tumultuous friendships and romantic endeavors, including his longtime girlfriend, artist and activist Sylvie Russo (Elle Fanning), and fellow artist Joan Baez. The biopic encapsulates Dylan’s constant need to be a contrarian and his transition from a humble artist to a world-renowned, solitary folk/rock musician and political activist.

The biopic’s writers and actors uniquely showcased the musical and political atmosphere of the early sixties. Set designers and producers faithfully recreated festivals and performances from the

minute details of the clothes and makeup to the sets and technology in the shots. The realistic portrayal of artists influential in Dylan’s career seemed important to the creators and actors of the film, as the actors meticulously emulated their characters down to their vocal tone. Timothee Chalamet’s Dylan was particularly accurate in his representation of Dylan’s distinctive accent and tone. Though not the main focus of the movie, the creators of the biopic intentionally recreated and included real footage of shifts in American society during Dylan’s career, including the McCarthy era, the March on Washington, and JFK’s death, to underscore Dylan’s interest in socio-political advocacy.

Fans of Dylan often describe him as an enigma, so the careful and true depiction of the musician was essential to the creators of the biopic. In an article for *Variety*, director James Mangold reveals how he consulted Dylan for parts of the movie, allowing the writers to focus on a very short period of Dylan’s life and deeply explore his relationships, interests, and music. In interviews, Chalamet described his years spent learning guitar and researching Dylan’s career for the sake of authenticity.

My experience of watching the biopic was unique, as I went with my 60-year-old father and was in a theater filled with people over 55.

Their reaction to the movie was overwhelmingly positive as I heard many laughs and remarks about the authenticity of the film during the screening. While the credits rolled, the theater erupted into song. An incredibly moving and distinctively realistic biopic, the film is a must-watch for all generations of music fans. (Sources: *Variety*, Narduar)



E. Curtis

HASTINGS AND ZEMAN DETAIL THE BEST VINYL RECORDS

by Megan Hastings and Rory Zeman
Public Relations Manager and Media Production Editor

As vintage music listening methods like vinyl records become increasingly popular, music fans may seek the best albums to add to their expanding collections. Critics have hailed albums as great for a variety of reasons in several different categories, so today, we will simplify the process for you. Here are just a few albums to consider adding to your vinyl collection.

In *Rainbows*: What many consider Radiohead’s best album or even the greatest album ever, *In Rainbows* takes listeners through an oscillating roller-coaster of emotions, with each of its ten tracks resembling a different human conflict. The ethereal production also contributes to the album’s thematic value, with the band combining elements of rock, jazz, and classical music to align with the album’s goal of mirroring life’s ups and downs

with its soothing yet edgy sound. However, what makes this album truly novel and adventurous is the band’s mastery of layers, with the sounds—especially as they progress toward the end of each track—becoming more and more dynamic, thick, and multi-faceted, with each instrument combining to form an entire symphony. Ultimately, *In Rainbows* acknowledges and celebrates the fluctuating nature of life with its writing, production, and genre-bending sound, all of which seem to climax in the final seconds of each song.

Rumors: Hailed as one of the best albums of all time, Fleetwood Mac’s *Rumors* is sure to be recognizable to anyone who steps foot into your room. Listeners can only begin to understand the greatness of *Rumors* after learning the context behind the album. After six months of non-stop touring, members Christine McVie and John McVie divorced. At the same time, Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks were in an on-and-off relationship. The emotional tension present within the tracks mirrors to the tumultuous nature of the band. Coupled with the interplay of harmonies, intricate guitar work, and

rhythmically tight arrangements, the final product is a sonic delight. Ultimately, *Rumors* is one of those albums where the stars align—powerful performances, unforgettable melodies, and deeply personal lyrics all come together to create something much greater than the sum of its parts. The gold press version from Target perfectly encapsulates how much of a gem this album is—for only \$22.99.

The *Dark Side of the Moon*: Many cite Pink Floyd’s 1973 album as one of the best examples of vinyl’s dynamic range. The meticulous production, conceptual unity, and sweeping sound effects, including quadraphonic mixes, make it an immersive experience. The vinyl format allows the subtle details of the sound design to shine, like the creaks of doors or the clarity of the iconic heartbeat in *Time*. With topics including mental illness, existentialism, and human nature, *The Dark Side of the Moon* is a wide-ranging concept album. The album is ideal for vinyl because of the smooth transitions between tracks. However, on vinyl, the sides are organically separated, with the emotional changes being delicately emphasized as the album goes along. Listening to this album on vinyl is an experience that goes beyond just listening to music—it’s about immersing yourself in a sound world that has been carefully crafted for this medium.



F. Banno

NETFLIX RELEASES SECOND SQUID GAMES

by Emery Curtis
Graphics Editor

After the global sensation that was Netflix's Squid Games, audiences eagerly anticipated season two. Creator Hyang Dong-hyuk's vision of poor people betting their lives on playing children's games had audiences hooked. Luckily, season two lived up to the expectations. Season one is centered around Gi-Hun, a gambling addict, joined by 455 other participants to play Korean childhood games in hopes of winning millions of dollars. What they do not realize is that they will be murdered if they fail and that a masked audience is watching them. Season one concluded with Gi-hun traumatized but victorious at the expense of the other players.

This new season takes everything we loved from the first 12 episodes, the high stakes, excruciating suspense, and lovable characters, while still offering a new perspective on the games.



Instead of being in the dark along with Gi-Hun, played by Lee Jung-Jae, viewers now know what to expect. Two years later, he is thrown back into the games but this time with an advantage because he has played these games before. While the original season focused on getting through each challenge, season two is more morally centered as the players now get to choose to stay or leave. However, the prize money goes up by 100 million dollars every time someone dies, meaning the last one standing walks away with 45.6 billion dollars, making it a difficult decision to leave.

The plot is split into two storylines, following different groups inside the games and the journey of detective Hwang Jun-ho,

thought to have died at the end of the first season, as he searches for the island. This season also reveals more about the organization of the games, by showing who is pulling the strings. The frontman, the one behind it all, becomes a more prominent character, joining the deadly games as a mole. The show even follows the story of one of the guards, No-eul, who had to leave her baby to escape North Korea, revealing more perspectives.

While the first season featured iconic simple games like "red light, green light" and "tug of war," this new season takes them up a level. The rules are more complicated, and the time limit is shorter. New childhood games, including "mingle," "spinning top," and "gong-gi," require more talent and skill.

Season one of Squid Games focused more on the struggle for survival in this flawed system, but this season offers a more socio-political commentary that made the first season so compelling and interesting. It spends more time exploring the psychology of the players and organizers, shifting the focus of the show from how people survive and act under extreme stress.

There is no doubt Squid Games two will be as successful as its predecessor. Many more will tune into season three, which is also set to come out this year since the series ended so abruptly on a cliffhanger.

Hear me out trend goes viral

By Kayla Mitchell
Media Production Editor

Gathering a group of friends and discussing each other's crushes has always been a beloved pastime among teenagers. Sparked by this love of sharing, a new activity on TikTok that has become immensely popular during the past year is making the viral "hear me out" cake. Combining everyone's love for baking and the trendy saying "hear me out," these cakes have become a favorite group activity for teens.

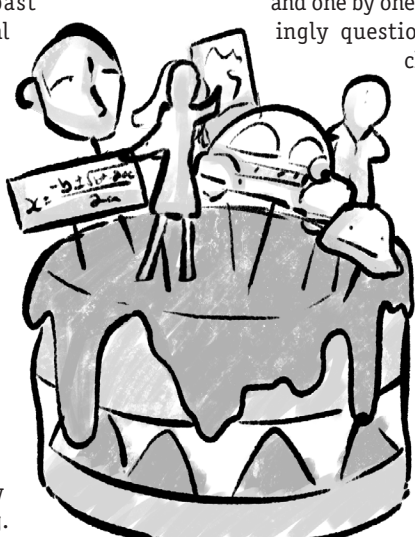
It all began when crush cakes, otherwise known as smash cakes, became a TikTok trend in 2024. Combining sweet treats and sharing crushes with friends, teenagers invented a new style of cake decorating. Teenage girls started the trend by printing out images of people they thought were attractive and using them to decorate a cake. The girls would attach the printed cutouts of their crushes onto popsicle sticks and toothpicks, then take turns inserting their sticks into the cake to reveal their crushes to the other group members. Sometimes the crushes were fellow teens the girls actually knew, but more often they were celebrities. Stars from movies and television shows loved by teens, such as Taylor Lautner, Dylan O'Brien, and Chris Hemsworth, were common choices. This style of cake decorating went viral throughout the summer.

As crush cakes began to grow in popularity on TikTok, the activity gained more participants and the goal of the activity morphed into something slightly different. Adding a humorous twist to the crush cake

phenomenon, new participants began to share more unusual and quirky selections. Crushes started to include fictional characters from books, animated characters from Disney movies, and even popular figures from memes. The now-viral activity consists of a group of friends gathering around a cake, and one by one, revealing their increasingly questionable and outlandish choices. As each participant places a picture of their crush into the cake, they say "Hear me out," and then attempt to justify their strange attraction and convince their friends to agree with their opinion.

The "hear me out" cake trend has been popular on TikTok for several months now, and a few characters seem to be emerging as universal favorites. The beloved movie character

Shrek often wins a spot on the cakes—perhaps it's his voice? Johnny, the gorilla from Sing, has also been surprisingly popular, and apparently, Mufasa from The Lion King has long been sparking funny feelings in viewers. Among male participants, Dory from Finding Nemo is a strange favorite. Whether it's her big smile or vibrant blue scales, the character has claimed a special place in the hearts of moviegoers and earned herself a spot on countless cakes. Male participants also seem to have a thing for rabbits, with Judy Hopps from Zootopia and Lola Bunny from Space Jam being common choices. Try making a "hear me out cake" with a group of friends to give yourself the opportunity to eat some yummy treat, exercise your imagination, and reveal your surprising attractions.



F. Banno

HOLLAND & ZENDAYA ANNOUNCE ENGAGEMENT

by Quinn Hathaway
National/World Editor

TMZ confirmed Tom Holland and Zendaya's engagement, first suspected following Zendaya's debut at the 2025 Golden Globes where she sported a large diamond ring.

Holland and Zendaya first met in 2016 on the set of Spider-Man: Homecoming, where the pair played the protagonists Peter Parker and MJ. As Parker and MJ looked set to be a couple in future movies, viewers speculated that the characters' chemistry was not limited to on-screen. News sources circulated dating rumors concerning Holland and Zendaya, although both publicly refuted these statements, with Zendaya commenting that Holland is "a great friend" and Holland referring to Zendaya as "mate" in an Instagram post.

In the summer of 2019, the second Spider-Man film, Spider-Man: Far From Home, arrived in theaters, and developed a romance between Holland and Zendaya's characters. Once again, relationship rumors about the two resurfaced, and yet again, the Spider-Man actors denied any speculation.

However, 2021 brought about an exciting development for fans of Holland and Zendaya. A leaked paparazzi photo of the couple kissing in a car quickly circulated around the Internet, immediately causing a commotion about the couple's relationship status. Several months after the photo's release, Holland shared an adorable post for Zendaya's birthday on Instagram, and fans took this as confirmation of the relationship.

In an interview in the fall of 2021, Holland commented negatively on the internet fame that the pair quickly accumulated, saying, "One of the downsides of our fame is that privacy isn't really

in our control anymore, and a moment that you think is between two people that love each other very much is now a moment that is shared with the entire world." He added, "I've always been really adamant to keep my private life private, because I share so much of my life with the world anyway."

The coming years brought many cute moments between the couple, such as Zendaya debuting a signet ring with Holland's initials and Holland wearing clothing with an embroidered Z on it. Holland also admitted to visiting Zendaya "at least 30 times" during the filming of her HBO show Euphoria. Zendaya commented on his frequent trips by saying Holland "supported me through the whole season."

The 2025 Golden Globes, which took place on Jan. 5, sparked engagement rumors after Zendaya showed up bearing a large ring, with fans also noticing the new addition of a tattoo that resembled

a "T." A TMZ exclusive confirmed the engagement, and Holland's father, Dominic Holland, posted on Patreon his thoughts about the couple's union.

D. Holland commented on his son's thoughtful proposal: "He had purchased a ring. He had spoken with her father and gained permission to propose to his daughter. Tom had everything planned out... When, where, how, what to say, what to wear." Holland proposed sometime between Christmas and New Year's Day, in one of Zendaya's family homes.

While the wedding may not be immediate because both Holland and Zendaya have upcoming Hollywood projects, the couple's upcoming nuptials are sure to be a delight!
(Sources: People, Vogue, USA Today)



A. Pan

EGRs: The Lumineers, Tpumps and more

On Dec. 20, 2024, American singer-songwriter SZA dropped a new album titled SOS Deluxe: LANA. The name for this album stems from SZA's real name, Solàna. LANA is an expansion of the studio album SOS, which she previously released in 2022. LANA consists of 38 songs, beginning with No More Hiding and ending with Forgiveless, which features Ol' Dirty B****d. In addition to this collaboration, Lana includes four other duets with artists such as Travis Scott and Phoebe Bridgers. This album is filled with vulnerable, romantic, and euphoric songs worth listening to.

-Megan Saul, Culture Editor

As an avid listener and fan of The Lumineers, imagine my utter surprise and delight when I discovered that one of my favorite bands had released a new single. The nearly three-minute track titled Same Old Song perfectly encompasses the indie folk sound fans know and love, pro-



F. Curtis

vides an instant serotonin boost, and has an addicting beat you just won't be able to stop listening to. Also, be sure to tune in for more from The Lumineers as their new 11-track album, Automatic, premieres Feb. 23!

-Jordan Park, Sports Editor

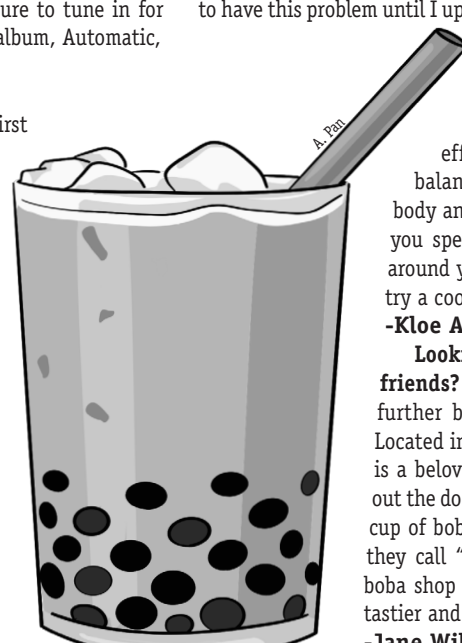
If you are stuck in a winter slump, the first step is to stop listening to depressing music. Music is such a big contributor to your overall mood, and it is time to incorporate some more happy songs into your daily rotation.

One song guaranteed to improve your attitude is Saturday Sun by Vance Joy, which sports lyrics such as "No ray of sunlight's ever lost," giving it a summery, West Coast-romance feel. The artist Joy may be predominantly known for his hit Riptide, but Saturday Sun is another banger sure to make your January a little bit brighter.

-Quinn Hathaway, National/World Editor

Do you overheat while sleeping? Do you flip your pillow over to the

cool side only to realize that it is just as hot as the other side? I used to have this problem until I upgraded to a cooling pillow. These pillows



A. Pan

use technology created by NASA to protect astronauts from extreme temperature fluctuations. Using this advanced technology, these pillows are effective at maintaining a temperature balance so heat is drawn away from your body and you always have a cool pillow. Before you spend another night aggressively moving around your pillow trying to find the cool spot, try a cooling pillow!

-Kloe Adams, Editorial Editor

Looking for a good spot to hang out with friends? Do homework? Drink boba? Look no further because Tpumps is the place for you. Located in both San Jose and Cupertino, Tpumps is a beloved boba location that often has a line out the door. The popular drink place offers a giant cup of boba for the price of a small one on what they call "Tpumps Tuesday." Ditch the same old boba shop you go to and indulge into something tastier and cheaper!

-Jane Wilde, Public Relations Manager

- Pan lists pet naming strategies
- Nelson retells her snowboarding fails

HUMOR

EL GATO • FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONEWS.COM

Fugit proclaims his best tips for school

by Owen Fugit
Editor-in-Chief

As we welcome the new semester, many students want to change things about their lives at school. Maybe some would like to get better grades, study longer, or even just pay closer attention in class. Today, I want to cover my tried and true tips on how to study better and get higher grades during the spring semester. These tips maximize free time and minimize the energy required to succeed at school.

Sleeping in class: There seems to be a stigma around sleeping in class. Many call it “disrespectful” or “rude,” but I like to think of it as a very healthy way to get more sleep and learn at the same time. It is no secret that watching YouTube videos while sleeping imparts information into your subconscious. The same is true for sleeping in class. Since most classes really are live-action YouTube videos, it makes sense to treat them as such. So, if you want to deeply understand the subjects teachers cover in class, please consider sleeping through your next period; you will not regret it!

Listening to sped-up audiobooks: Assigned readings are no joke and happen to countless

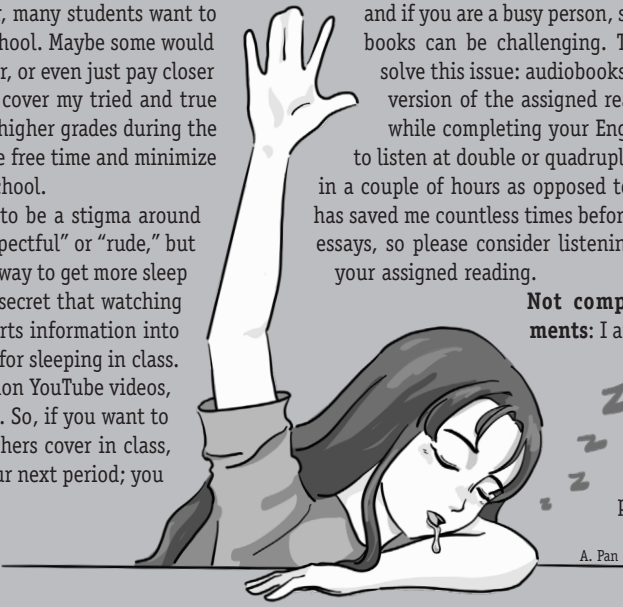
English students every year, regardless of grade level or class. Unfortunately, assigned books can take weeks to complete, and if you are a busy person, setting aside time to read those books can be challenging. Thankfully, there is a way to solve this issue: audiobooks. By listening to an audiobook version of the assigned reading, you can do other tasks while completing your English homework. If you choose to listen at double or quadruple speed, you can finish a book in a couple of hours as opposed to a couple of days. This tactic has saved me countless times before Socratic Seminars or in-class essays, so please consider listening to an audiobook version of your assigned reading.

Not completing homework assignments: I am always very busy during the week, and I frequently stay up late completing homework assignments. Chances are, you also face a similar problem. Luckily, I have the perfect solution to keep grades up and homework down: just do not do your homework. If you put off your

assignments and wait until the night before the test to complete them, you will have a boatload of study materials waiting to ensure you earn the best possible grade on your test. It also gives you the opportunity to focus on things that truly matter during the week, like reading El Gato, sleeping, and scrolling on Instagram reels.

Creative Excuses: The issue with taking all AP classes as a B student at best is getting all my homework done. When I’m in a real jam, and I have to decide between my work and watching a YouTube video essay, I open a fresh document and title it “List of Creative Excuses for School Assignments.” From grandma getting sick and spending my time mourning her last few days (again), to being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and forgetting to do the work, creative excuses like these can get you out of any homework assignment, and nobody can question you. If your teacher happens to inquire about the sudden onset of this disease, you can claim it violates your HIPPA rights to ask!

I hope these tips will help you conquer your classes and start the new semester off right. When using these tips proceed with caution as your biggest opps might find out and rat on you. If you’re having second thoughts just remind yourself that your time is precious than them. I know that these strategies have saved my grades countless times before, and that I will certainly continue using them this semester to boost both my education and my GPA.



GRUETTER PROTESTS COLLEGE SIBLINGS

by Sam Gruetter
Opinion Editor

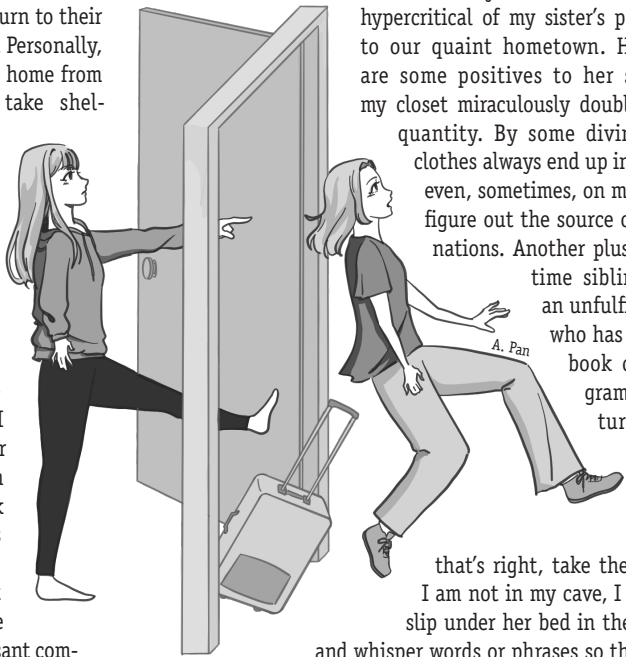
As Christmas break is over for most colleges, many younger siblings are relishing the fact that they, once again, have the house to themselves and get to exercise the utmost autonomy and authority with their returned freedom: To be Top Dog, if you will. What caused this reclamation of power, you may ask? The absence of older siblings as they return to their respective colleges. Personally, when mine returns home from college, I choose to take shelter in a cave dwelling in the middle of the woods for the duration of her stay. While there may be no electricity or lighting, the woodland creatures don’t cast judgmental glares when I leave the house for the first time in three days or ask me why my hair is so greasy.

Don’t even get me started on the constant and incessant comparisons of hometown life to the glitz and glamor of big-city college life. Just to set the scene, you are on a meal plan and your living quarters are constantly monitored by adults for the price of an arm and a leg. That sounds akin to a doggy daycare to me, more so than the life of freedom and luxury siblings claim it to be. However,

this does not prevent the relentless, “This would be so much better if I was at college.” I agree. That completely average bagel you are eating would be so much better at college. Furthermore, when siblings are back from school, everything is shared between the two of you. Your parents’ affection, your room, your car, and even your leftover Chipotle you clearly labeled, “SAM’S. DO NOT EAT.”

Now it may seem as though I am being hypercritical of my sister’s periodic returns to our quaint hometown. However, there are some positives to her stay. For one, my closet miraculously doubles in size and quantity. By some divine means, her clothes always end up in my drawers or even, sometimes, on me. I have yet to figure out the source of these machinations. Another plus is all the free time siblings have, like an unfulfilled yoga mom who has yet to discover book clubs or Instagram Reels. I have turned my sister into my own personal psychological lab rat;

that’s right, take the cheese. When I am not in my cave, I will frequently slip under her bed in the dead of night and whisper words or phrases so that she subconsciously picks them up during her period of REM sleep, conditioning her to do my bidding. Then, in the morning, when she asks if she should make brownies, I reply, “That is a great idea” and “How did you come up with that?” while I stare at the brownie I slipped under her pillow the previous night. Good rat.



Pan suggests her ideas for pet names

by Annabelle Pan
Graphics Editor

The most crucial moment in a pet owner’s life is the day they give their pet a name. There are many types of names from which to choose, but each has its own pros and cons.

The Classic: You could go the classic route and choose a name like Buddy, Spot, Fluffy, Teddy, etc. Just do a quick Google search for traditional pet names and scan the lists for one that you like. These names are all adorable in their own way, but you run the risk of using a common name. What if you accidentally gave your dog the same name as your best friend’s cat?

The Eccentric: On the opposite side of the name spectrum are the eccentric pet names. This category is for the extremely unusual names that you can be sure no other pet in the world has. You’ve solved the problem that comes with a common name, but people might give you an interesting look when you tell them your pet fish is named Gottfried.

The Character: Do you have a favorite book or movie character? Why not name your pet after them? You could even get two pets at the same time and give them a matching set of character names, like Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase or Fred and George Weasley.

The Switch: Why name a kitten Kitty when you could name it Rhino? You could name your little chihuahua Peanut, or you could switch it up and call him Boulder. These names are the

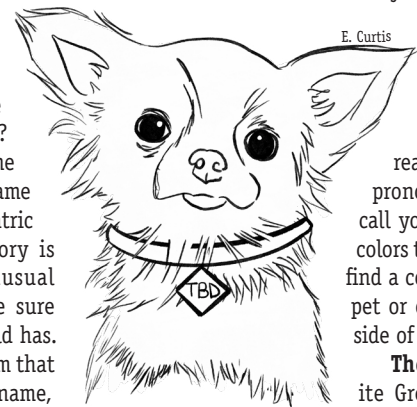
opposite of what you would expect, and that irony is part of their charm. The only downside is that little Boulder might get too big for his boots and start picking fights with a Great Dane.

The Human: This is another common naming method, and there are so many options. You could choose any name, from Bobby to William to Kathryn. One thing to keep in mind when selecting a human name for your pet is that you might make a friend in the future with the same name as your pet ferret and that would make for a funny introduction.

The Color: If you don’t want to use a baby name list, you could use a color wheel instead. Simply using a random hex code would be really weird and annoying to pronounce each time you want to call your pet, but there are many colors to choose from. You can even find a color the exact shade of your pet or one that is on the opposite side of the color wheel.

The Mythology: Have a favorite Greek god or goddess? Want your cute puppy to have a fierce name? Why not name him Ares? If your cat enjoys staring at the moon, you can name her Athena. A mythological pet name is both cute and serves as a way to represent your pet’s personality.

The Food: Gaining in popularity in recent years, food pet names seem to be everywhere. There are pets named Nacho, Rice, Waffle, Mango, and Sushi. The list goes on and on. Since foods come in all shapes and colors, you can name your pet after a food that resembles them. Just don’t actually try to eat your pet...



SAUL LISTS STRUGGLES WHILE WRITING HUMOR

by Megan Saul
Culture Editor

As someone who aspires to be an expert humor writer but often lacks the skills and ideas to do this, I have frequently fallen short of actually writing a successful humor article. My pieces often contain few if any comical aspects. My failures have left me with far more unsuccessful articles than I would like to admit. Instead of writing more humor articles on questionable ideas, I will now attempt to write a humor article evaluating and ridiculing the lack of hilarity my past ideas unfortunately contain.

To begin, in recent months, I attempted to write a humor article on Crumbl Cookies, and by attempted, I mean terribly unsuccessfully attempted. What caused me to write this article is now unknown because, to be frank, there is nothing funny about Crumbl Cookies. As much as I hate Crumbl Cookies (which in many aspects is true) I can’t help myself from often looking at their weekly flavors. I commend their genius business

strategies and ability to make me buy a cookie despite the \$4.99 price tag and sickly taste. To compare, the taste is equally as poor as the quality of my article. When looking back to reread it and reminisce about the good times I spent writing it, Google Docs must have done the rest of El Gato and me a big favor by deleting it (or at least making it impossible to find.) After this catastrophe, I learned something extremely important. Don’t try to write a humor article on Crumbl Cookies and don’t keep buying them because they are never as good as they appear.

You might think my articles couldn’t get any worse than mentioned above, but you would be incorrect.

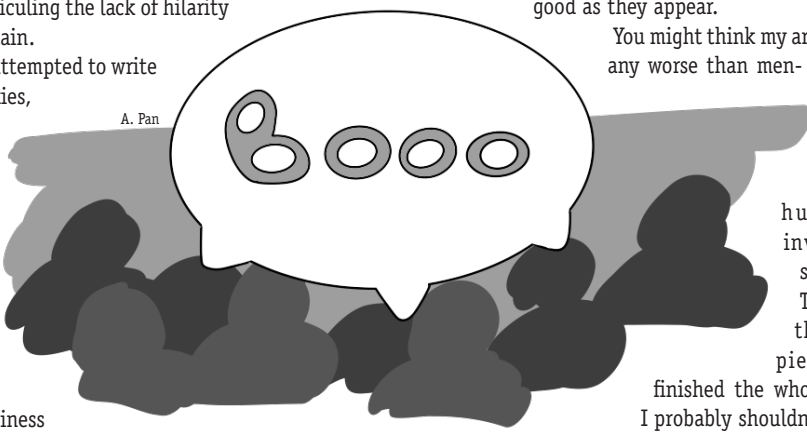
Another one of my failed humor articles involved daylight savings time. The only good thing about this piece was that I finished the whole thing, even if I probably shouldn’t have.

In the article entitled “Saul discusses uses for the extra daylight savings hour,” I do exactly what you might expect in a piece with a title as long as that—absolutely nothing worth reading. Some of my recommendations include solving world hunger and promoting world peace. While I would love to do both of these things, this joke just isn’t funny. I continue by recommending running a marathon and learning Pig Latin. After finishing this article, I wondered why I wasted an hour of my life writing it and wasted even more time not doing any of the activities mentioned.

Although I could continue to go on and on about my failed humor articles, I’ll spare you the boredom and share just one more, this time on Duolingo. In my article, I attempted to discuss Duolingo’s brilliant marketing strategies and online presence. I expected my piece to be as funny as the comments Duolingo leaves on other creators’ videos.

For example, in response to a comment saying “Duolingo, forgive me for I have sinned. It has been one week since my last French lesson,” Duo the owl said, “lol is this what a god complex feels like.” If my article turned out as amusing as Duolingo’s social media accounts, then it definitely would not be on this list.

Thank you for reading my redemption article to make up for my many failed humor articles. Even if this one should join them, just pretend it shouldn’t. Check back next time for another humor article #neverstopping!



panicacci and curtis discuss their Jellycat, Goon

by Lucy Panicacci and Emery Curtis

Editor-in-Chief and Graphics Editor

We recently had a major life change, embarking on the tumultuous journey of motherhood. On Dec. 29, 2024, at 1:23 PM, we, Emery and Lucy, spotted the bundle of joy who was about to change our life: our Jellycat son, Goon. From then on, Goon forever changed us for the better. As life coach gurus, nature lovers, and now your new best friends, we want to share with you the ups and downs (we hope more ups than downs) of raising the beloved Goon. Buckle up and get comfortable because we are going to take you through a day in the life of Goon and his two mamas!

I, Emery, rise bright and early, 6:30 AM to be exact, ready to take on the day. Lucy, on the other hand, needs her extra hours (she is such a sleepyhead). My next step is to wake Goon, but first, coffee! I can't function without it!

Then, we have breakfast, the most important meal of the day. Unlike his foodie moms, our little baby is such a picky eater. He won't even have his morning Red 40 supplement. Ugh! Through much trial and error, we discovered that he will only eat green food. We spent all morning preparing him an array of green treats: healthy green juice, asparagus, green Takis, and green eggs and ham (his fav!).

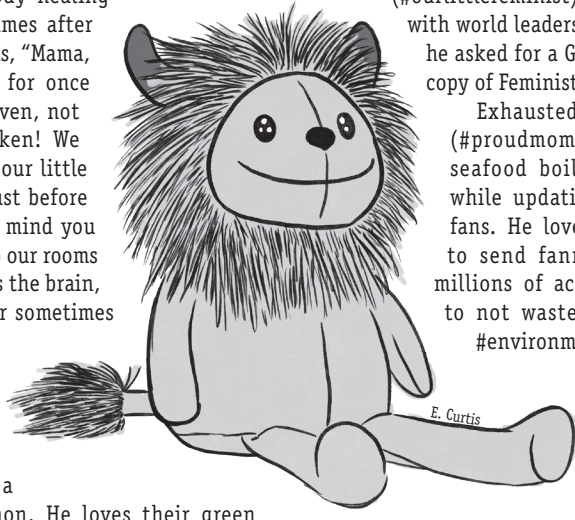
Goon keeps himself busy all day. When we leave for work, our little ball of sunshine has his one-hour-long prayer and manifestation ritual. He sits in a circle surrounded by crystals and listens to full-body healing frequencies. How cute! Sometimes after his prayer sessions, he will tell us, "Mama, handle your words with care, for once spoken, they can only be forgiven, not forgotten." He is so well-spoken! We think everyone can learn from our little one! #proudmoms. One time, just before we fell asleep, our little Goon, mind you he is only 11 days old, came into our rooms asking, "Is the mind the same as the brain, or do we have souls?" We swear sometimes I wonder if he's ours!

We have raised Goon to be completely independent. If he gets a little hungry throughout the day, he simply takes the private jet out for a light snack, preferably Erewhon. He loves their green

smoothies! He spends the rest of his day flying around the world in the jet, managing his various nonprofit organizations that tackle climate change, world hunger, and women's rights (#ourlittlefeminist), donating to charities, and negotiating with world leaders to achieve world peace. For his birthday, he asked for a Ghandi poster to hang above his bed and a copy of Feminist Philosophy of Mind. Our little bookworm!

Exhausted by his long day of saving the world (#proudmomsX2!), Goon winds down by watching seafood boil mukbangs and rubber-pulling ASMR while updating and interacting with his Instagram fans. He loves all his admirers! So please feel free to send fanmail to our megamansion, taking up millions of acres of land (via email obviously so as to not waste paper #wewillburnitifitisntrecyclable #environment #fossilfuels).

If you want to learn more about our little fluffy green ball of joy and watch as our Jellycat family grows, tune in to our blog at www.raisingthewonderfulandamazinggoonthejellycat.com. We hope you follow us on Goon's journey.



Hastings and Zeman consider sleep schedules

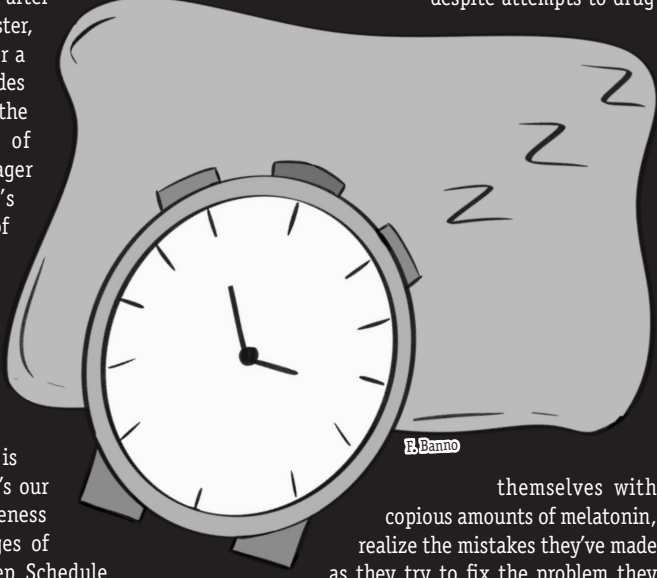
by Megan Hastings and Rory Zeman
Public Relations Manager and Media Production Editor

When the bell rings after the last final each semester, the sheer excitement for a break from school erodes all sense of logic. On the eve of the first day of break, students are eager to celebrate school's hiatus, unsuspecting of the torturous cycle they are about to embark on. The first few days are easy. Go to bed later and later and wake up later and later. However, the journey back to school is nearly impossible. Here's our attempt to raise awareness about the various stages of Post-School Break Sleep Schedule Disorder (PSBSSD).

The first stage of the disorder involves denial. When students first enter a school break, they revel in their happiness and fail to recognize the time. At first, this means nothing to the victims, as they merely make up for the lost hours of sleep the morning after. However, the vicious cycle deceives its victims by forcing them into a pattern of self-neglect in the late hours of the night, fostering a dependency on late wake-up times. Brain-rotting platforms like TikTok or addictive platforms like Spotify contribute to the cycle.

The next stage of the cycle is adaptation, in which the person suffering from the disorder becomes used to the cycle. When one begins waking up past noon, the lines blur between AM and PM, and eventually even the days blur together. Exacerbating the problem, the absence of any actual work to keep one's life structured degrades people into a mindless dopamine fiend. You forget the person you were before the break

and morph into an entirely different being, devoid of all responsibility and full of apathy. The third stage is reflection, where people, despite attempts to drug



themselves with copious amounts of melatonin, realize the mistakes they've made as they try to fix the problem they have created before school resumes. As the first day back looms over their head, they reminisce about what it felt like to be a functioning human being with a normal circadian rhythm. Fueled by shame and fear, they may begin to google "How to fix sleep schedule" or "How to fall asleep faster." Attempts to rehabilitate begin, with the subject setting alarms for 7:15, 7:10, 7:00, and 6:40 (for good measure).

The final stage is the reality check. Despite one's best efforts, they somehow hit snooze on all five alarms they set. The world is dark and unforgiving, and the early morning air feels like betrayal. You stumble through your morning routine, fueled by caffeine and regret. It's a cruel reminder of the paradise you once knew during the break—a world where sleep was plentiful, mornings were nonexistent, and TikTok was your closest companion.

And so, the cycle continues, waiting to repeat itself until Ski Week.

Nelson recounts snowboarding fails

by Katie Nelson
Center Editor

A casual day trip to the slopes always brings its fair share of adventures and challenges. My family's day trips almost always involve an eclectic mix of routine, chaos, and hilarity.

First, my siblings and I wake up bright and early. At that moment, I just want to go back to sleep, but I force myself out of bed and begin putting on my multi-layer outfit. We eat a nice, fulfilling breakfast: about an entire protein bar. I waddle out of my cabin to the car, and then we begin the one-hour drive to Sugar Bowl.

Once we are about 20 minutes away, the most dreaded moment of the day arrives: putting on my snowboard boots.

It sucks all the life out of me, and I think I burn a day's worth of calories trying to squeeze my foot in the small opening. After nearly overheating from the burst of effort, I get the rest of my equipment, having a heart attack every time I fish around in my bag and can't immediately find my gear. Leaving my mittens at our cabin two years ago was a scarring experience.

We spend the next few hours on the slopes, where something interesting always happens. One time, my siblings and Dad decided to try out some new runs. It was snowing hard and the visibility was low, but the fresh, untouched powder on the outskirts of the mountain was calling to us. To this

day it was one of the best runs ever; we flew down the mountain and nothing could stop us, except a cliff. I stopped hard, nearly running into my brother up ahead. In front of us loomed a huge, rocky drop off. We had nearly launched ourselves off of it. We

then had to all take off our snowboards and trudge back up through the deep powder to another route further up the mountain. The trek took forever but the entire thing was worth the way my mom's jaw dropped when we told her about our thrilling experience.

There are also experiences that aren't funny at the moment but are when later recounted, such as my brother almost losing his snowboard last year. He was strapping himself into his snowboard once we got off the lift, and for some reason, he completely took off the bindings to readjust. Before he could even react, his snowboard started sliding at top speed down the mountainside. He ran after it, only to trip and fall on his face. It was an iconic moment that could have ended very poorly with a lost snowboard, but luckily he retrieved it at the bottom of the mountain.

There are also those traumatizing times where the fall hurts so bad you just want to be done for life. It happened twice last year where the last run on the last jump of the terrain park resulted in my falling face first in the snow. Once, I wasn't sure if I could go on the rail, but I thought, "I'll try it, it can't be that bad," and sure enough, my butt landed right on the metal and my tailbone was bruised for nearly two months. I have not attempted a rail since then.

While sometimes sacrifices must be made for a perfect day on the slopes, I cannot wait for the next couple months of snowboarding adventures.



KRAMER RANTS ABOUT SHOPPING OPTIONS IN LOS GATOS

by Nelson Kramer
Humor Editor

I have been fortunate enough to have spent my entire childhood in the town of Los Gatos. Looking back on all the memories I've made with friends and all the joys that being here has brought me, Los Gatos has proven itself to be a great place to grow up. As reality sets in and I start to face adulthood, I find myself reflecting on my past. In this, one stark realization has become apparent. Los Gatos is going downhill.

To be more specific, over the years, we have seen countless stores and restaurants close. From Powell's Sweet Shoppe to C.B. Hanigan's, the townspeople of Los Gatos have been put through an astronomical amount of emotional trauma. Maybe these foreclosures were due to economic hardships within the small business communities or crotchety landlords; I have no idea.

In hard times, we must stay positive. But when you swap out a cafe that serves delicious food for another goshdarn eyewear store, one has to question who is in charge of curating the stores in Los Gatos. I mean, Powell's

Sweet Shoppe closing and then another stupendously more expensive candy shop opening is one thing. But if my count is correct, we have six eyewear stores in this town, and only one of them employs a practicing optometrist!

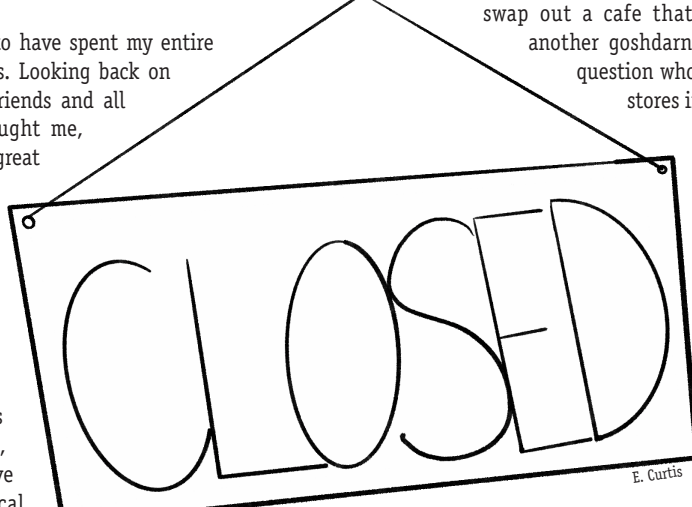
I am ashamed to announce that the next addition to this list might have been my fault. I complain almost weekly

about how we have too many boba stores in this town with the new addition of Boba Guys. In that, I may have manifested for one of them to close because just recently, Share Tea shut its doors permanently. Even though it was pretty apparent that

this was bound to happen due to their non-existent food menu and Tea Fermata being their fiercest competition, the proximity of Share Tea to the high school was unbeatable. And even though one may argue that Boba Guys might be an even faster walk, you won't catch me dead in there for the sole reason that it's honestly underwhelming. I mean, if you're going to lead us to believe that the shop is going to open three years prior to when it actually did, you're just a phony. I don't support businesses that disseminate deception.

My last point rings true for anyone who practices self-control with their spending. Can we stop opening stores that overprice everything by at least a hundred percent? When it comes to the boutiques of Los Gatos, they get a slight pass. Partly because I don't know how much their rent is and also because I don't want an angry mob of butt-hurt white women and Santa Cruz bohemian hipsters on my front doorstep. On the other hand, if you think that I am going to stand here while someone practically defaces the image of this town by turning a once beloved bike shop into a faux Italian market where a single slice of cheese runs me 20 dollars, you must be living on a different planet.

My call to action for the town of Los Gatos is to count your days! At this point, we are way too far down the sinkhole to rely on a town council that spends its time debating whether or not we should let college students play pickleball (the loudest sport ever) at two in the morning. The answer is no, we should not.



- Hines shines in photography
- Price explores passion for aviation

PEOPLE

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KAEFER SHOWCASES IMPRESSIVE SOCCER SKILLS

by Sam Gruetter and Jordan Park
Opinion and Sports Editors

Sophomore **Teagan Kaefer** continues to shine both academically and athletically as she progresses through her high school career. Kaefer began playing for LGHS soccer her freshman year, becoming one of the few freshmen to make varsity as a starter, an impressive honor. In Kaefer's freshman year, she played an instrumental role as a midfielder in the team's success and eventual victory in the Central



Coast Section (CCS) Division 3. She continues to compete for the varsity team in her sophomore year. Kaefer described her experience playing at the high school level: "It's a lot of fun. I feel less pressure because you're playing with people from your school."

However, her success on the LGHS soccer team is only one of her many athletic accomplishments. She also regularly participates in the National Team ID camps at the Olympic training center, where she competes with a diverse group of girls from the northern portion of the U.S. Attending her first camp in eighth grade, Kaefer has continued to play at a highly competitive level with her club team, MVLA, and ID camps. While the camps host an extremely rigorous training schedule, they also prepare players for the recruiting process and familiarize them with high-level coaches by conducting a series of interviews. "At the camp in San Diego, we had one-on-one interviews with the coaches, which is kind of scary because they would ask you a bunch of questions, but they're all really nice," Kaefer noted about one of her first conversations with a coach.

Regarding her college recruitment process, Kaefer plans to stay relatively local while not limiting herself to California schools. She

explained, "I want to go somewhere on the West Coast, so I'm looking at a lot of schools in California, Oregon, and Utah. I've done a bunch of college ID camps, starting last year but more now. I've done three since the beginning of the school year." In February, Kaefer had two additional camps for Oregon and LMU. Having visited numerous schools, Kaefer has plenty of options to pursue. However, when asked about her preferred destination, she said, "Cal Poly, UCSD, and Oregon are my favorites so far, but I don't have a dream school."

Halfway through her second year at LGHS, Kaefer is taking a variety of classes, most of which she thoroughly enjoys. With such a demanding sport, Kaefer devotes much of her time and effort to training. On the off chance she has a bit of extra free time, she embraces her more creative side. "I like drawing stuff, just like random design elements," Kaefer said. "I don't really paint that much, but when I do, I like landscapes. I like cartoons, coloring, and drawing, but I like to do it with pens." Unstoppable on the field and in the classroom, Kaefer is shaping up to be a true leader and role model, inspiring peers with her relentless work ethic and passion for excellence in everything she does.



photos courtesy of Kaefer

HINES EXCELS IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART

by Ainsley Northrop
Editor-in-Chief

A talented artist and photographer, senior **Connor Hines** brings unwavering dedication to all of his endeavors. Whether painting, drawing, filmmaking, photographing, screen printing, or even dabbling in ceramics and glass blowing, this senior does it all.

Hines's passion for art began when he was just two years old, begging his parents to use their camera. He explained, "On my third birthday, my grandparents got me a little green point and shoot camera." Since then, Hines has grown both technically and creatively, with his favorite photography subjects being landscapes, wildlife, and flowers.

Typically, Hines uses his photography as a starting point for his drawings and paintings. One of Hines's favorite pieces is a charcoal drawing of three penguins with covered eyes, representing light pollution.

Hines considers joining Yearbook a turning point in his creative expression: "Instead of just photographing nature, I was documenting people and school events like spirit rallies...It's a different perspective." Now an Editor-in-Chief, Hines does everything from teaching the class how to use InDesign to proofing the yearbook's roughly 400 pages.

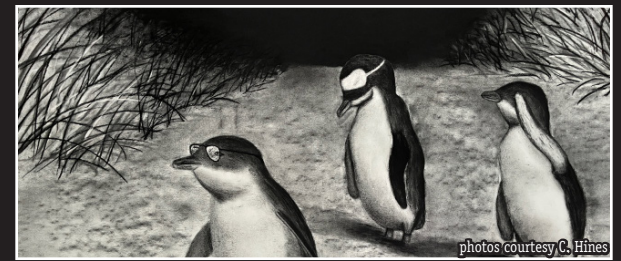
Much of Hines's artwork relates to the environment, a topic he feels passionate about. This year, through the LGHS Photography Club he founded, Hines created a calendar with their nature photography, selling it to raise \$2,039 for the Sierra Club. This past summer, Hines attended the Rhode Island School of Design's five-week Pre-College Program. He elaborated on the experience: "I made a 25-image handmade photo book about humans' impact on the environment, and right now, I'm working on an AP portfolio with a [similar] theme."

Last year, LGHS held an art show in which Hines displayed two pieces. The first, City of Penguins, is a social commentary on capitalism's environmental impact, reimagining penguins as businessmen on Wall Street. A reading from AP US History on North American bison populations inspired Hines's second work: "It's an oil painting on a wood panel depicting a herd of bison shrinks as it comes to the foreground, coming to a skeleton, and then rising up to a single bison. Each of the bison are wood burned. The piece is about how bison nearly went extinct [yet] they've begun to rebound." Hines deemed the exhibit an opportunity to show his peers what he cares about, adding, "I think that part of what inspires me to create art is sharing it with the world."

Outside of art, Hines enjoys spending time with friends and listening to his favorite artists, Elton John and The Weeknd. Additionally, Hines devotes a large amount of time to tennis, playing for the LGHS Varsity Boys' Tennis Team and volunteering to teach weekly classes.

Hines referenced several of his inspirations, including metaphorical realism artist Vladimir Kush and environmental photographer Chris Jordan. He also expressed particular gratitude for art teacher **Mark Yanowsky**, photography teacher **Emily Christie**, tennis coaches Coach Todd, Coach John, and Coach Caryn, and his parents, whom he deemed a "big part of my support structure."

Wish this kind-hearted and passionate senior luck as he continues his art journey into college and the future. Be sure to check out his work or even visit his portfolio website, connorhines.com.



photos courtesy of C. Hines

LANGNER SHINES IN MULTIPLE SPORTS

by Isabella Langner and Kloe Adams
People and Editorial Editors

One semester into her first year of high school, freshman **Kate Langner** has made her presence known. When she is not at Starbucks getting a strawberry acai lemonade and roasted pepper egg bites, you can find Langner on the court shooting threes and serving aces.

Langner started off an impressive year at LGHS when she made the Girls' Varsity Volleyball team as a freshman playing outside hitter. The team had a successful season where they finished second in league, qualifying for CCS playoffs in the Open Division and Division 1 CIF playoffs. Langner reflected on her first season with gratitude for her teammates: "Some of the teams I've been on haven't been that close, but our team clicked immediately. Our games were always really high energy, and so were the practices." Langner described how their chemistry assisted them on the court, inspiring them to play better due to their connection. Another person who had a positive impact on Langner during the volleyball season was her coach, **Nicole Ciari**. Langner said, "She always has a positive attitude and would help us individually. If we were ever down in a set, the coaches wouldn't put too much pressure on us. They would always remind us that we should be having fun and we play better when we're not stressed."

She began playing volleyball when she was thirteen, participating in summer camps at Vision Volleyball Club. At the end of the summer, Langner's mom convinced her to try out for the team due to her height. After a grueling week of tryouts, she made the top team in her age group at Vision, a club

that is ranked in the top 50 in the nation. Langner added, "I had no expectations when I tried out. I didn't think I was going to make it because I barely had any volleyball experience. I think they saw my height and my potential." From there, Langner began dedicating most of her time to her club team. With two-hour practices three times a week and travel tournaments to places like Reno and Salt Lake City almost every weekend in the spring, Vision proved to be a massive commitment. Langner described, "The coaching style in the club is very different from school. They push us a lot harder and are a lot more critical. It's a lot more intense, but I think both coaching styles are good."

In addition, Langner also made the Girls' Varsity Basketball Team directly after the LGHS volleyball season wrapped up. She made the transition alongside senior **Nicole Steiner**: "She helped me with basketball expectations and answered all my questions." Langner described the basketball team as "more intense than volleyball, but our coach is really good at keeping us on track and motivating us." She added that similar to the volleyball team, the seniors do a good job including and helping the lowerclassmen. Langner looks forward to the CCS playoffs at the end of the year, feeling that their team is prepared to play the tough competition.

Although she is just a freshman, Langner seems to do it all. Despite constantly being on the move, Langner makes time for school, sports, friends, and most importantly, her Starbucks addiction.



courtesy of Langner

Chen succeeds in debate club

by Owen Fugit
Editor-in-Chief

In his second-to-last year of high school, junior **Cody Chen** faces challenging classes and a tight schedule packed with time-consuming activities, such as heading the Debate Club and playing viola for the San Jose Youth Symphony (SJYS). On top of everything, the former archery star finds time to build communities online and sleep longer each night as part of his New Year's resolution.

Chen spends much of his time as an officer in the Speech and Debate Club, focusing mainly on debate. Chen planned on joining Debate in sixth grade; however, he stated, "I walked into the room, and there was a bunch of people there, and I just walked right out. I'm not doing this, there's just too many people here." Chen pointed to COVID-19 as a cause for joining the debate team a year later, noting how "[COVID-19] probably helped a lot, because it's online, so I wasn't as scared of social interaction. And then, I just kind of got into Debate." Since joining in seventh grade, Chen has competed in various debate events and will attend a tournament in Union City soon.

At school, Chen takes several advanced and AP classes, with his favorite being AP Chemistry. He explained that AP Chemistry was one of his most challenging classes, but he enjoyed the labs, such as one where "you take a penny and you kind of

coat it in zinc and you make gold. That's really fun." In his free time, Chen practices his music for the SJYS, an ensemble he has been a member of for over five years.

Chen does not play any sports currently, though he did practice archery for several years before pausing to focus on school. Chen explained the reason he began archery: "The Hunger Games and Minecraft. Oh yeah, I was great at archery in Minecraft."

Archery competitions, as Chen shared, are entirely different from many other sports due to their individual nature. He noted that there is "not really as much of a distinction between state competitions and national tournaments. You sign up." Chen's favorite aspect of archery is shooting outdoors. He explained, "The target is up to 40 meters away. And then when you release...so many things could go wrong, and at that distance, you can't really see where your arrow goes. So the moment when you walk up to the bale and you see your arrows landed where you want them to be, I think that's one of the most rewarding moments that you can have."

Whether firing arrows and winning competitions, making new scientific discoveries in AP Chemistry, or performing with the San Jose Youth Symphony, Chen is always working on something. But even though he loves archery, he cannot find the time to practice during his junior year. However, he mentioned that "once college applications are over, I'm looking at just taking the bow out, brushing off the dust, and just having fun."



courtesy of Chen

James Price embraces his academic-and-aviation-filled lifestyle

by Britt Melinauskas and Isabella Langner
Sports and People Editors

As an aviation enthusiast and aspiring pilot, sophomore **James Price** showcases his deep devotion to his engineering pursuits and interest in aeronautics. And as both a photographer and an athlete whose top priority is learning, Price constantly strives for self-improvement while eagerly embracing all opportunities.

Beyond his studies, Price engrosses himself in aviation photography, as he plans to enter a military branch in future years. He commented, "I have quite a few friends who are pilots, so I am interested in the Air Force." In his spare time, Price is working on earning his pilot's license: "I've done two lessons so far, and I need fifty hours to get my pilot's license, and I practice at the Reid-Hillview Airport." With his prolonged interest in aircrafts, Price's preferred flight model to photograph are the F/A-18 Super Hornets of the Blue Angels. His ultimate goal of becoming a skilled pilot



motivates Price's precision in and commitment to his endeavors, allowing him to persist through challenges with unwavering dedication. Despite his intense focus on aviation, Price said that his proudest achievement in photography so far has been the pictures he took at the LGHS Homecoming football game.

When Price is not immersed in his airborne lifestyle, he enjoys his Manufacturing Technology class, where he constantly engages in hands-on activities. Price explained the reason behind his interest in the class this year: "We are currently working on building a lamp, which is a culmination of what we learned last year. So it's welding, wood-working, metal, and other combined concepts." He plans to continue Manufacturing Technology throughout his four years at LGHS.

Price is not just an aspiring engineer but also an athlete. He competes in the 400-meter dash for the LGHS Track and Field team, joining many of his close friends in the sport his freshman year. He shared one of his most memorable moments thus far: "When I asked my coach to put me on an event and he put me on hurdles. I said that I'd never run hurdles before, but he said I would be fine."

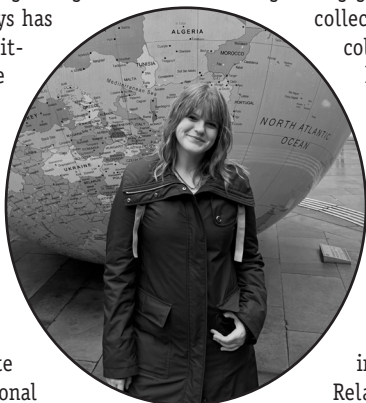


Another passion of Price's is fixing and modifying cars. He does this with his dad, whom he described as his biggest role model: "He taught me a lot of the stuff that I am into. So he's a good example, and he knows how to do a lot of the stuff that I like doing." One of their most recent projects was a truck to which they added a built-in shower. Price's love for cars often mixes with his love for photography, as he often features pictures of cars on his photography instagram: picsfromaprice. This sophomore is already making an impressive mark on LGHS with an active and eclectic mix of interests and activities. For Price, the sky is literally the limit.

ROMBAKH DETAILS HER PASSION FOR TRAVEL

by Emery Curtis and Megan Hastings
Graphics and Public Relations Editors

If you ever find yourself lost, senior **Aleks Rombakh** is a great person to have by your side. Whether it comes to navigating college, school, or tutoring, she always has a map to guide her, both literally and figuratively. She can attest to this through the numerous maps lining her bedroom walls, hung and pasted above her bed. Each is a reflection of her love for geography and the world around her. As the president of the Model UN club, Rombakh constantly researches and keeps up to date with the dynamics of international relations and policies, affirming, "My goal is to major in international relations."



Her academic and personal interests also merge with her exploration of linguistics, a passion that only grew stronger when she studied abroad in Turkey. Rombakh explained, "It allowed me to immerse myself in a different culture completely. Although I don't necessarily remember everything about the language when I studied there, I still walked away with so much fascination for the country."

She is also deeply connected to her Ukrainian and Russian heritage. She tutors at the Russian Institution of Mathematics, where she has the opportunity to practice her native tongue. Her parents are of Russian and Ukrainian descent, having moved to the US in the late 90s, and Rombakh feels a strong tie to both cultures. Rombakh reflected, "I would love to return to Ukraine one day." She added, "I want to travel more, experience different places, and eventually study in the UK, where I can explore both my academic interests and my favorite musi genre, Brit pop."

Outside of academics, Rombakh is interested in collecting maps from various sources featuring areas from all over the world. She stated that GeoGuessr, an online geography guessing game, is the origin of her niche collection. Discussing her growing collection, she said, "Last year, I had maybe seven antique maps, but I have 58 right now, and they're all, these very old, interesting maps."

Her love for geography and history correlates with her plans after high school. With her eyes set on St. Andrews in Scotland, Rombakh anticipates majoring in Economics and International Relations. In Scotland, the program will allow her to earn a master's. Determined to further her education and her personal interests, Rombakh is poised to make meaningful contributions to international policy and cultural understanding in the future.

For Rombakh, the world is something to discover, comprehend, and relate to rather than merely a place to live. With curiosity and tenacity, she is forging her own path, via her interest in linguistics, her collection of old maps, and her goals in international relations.



MATHUR TACKLES HIS FIRST YEAR AT LGHS

by Siyona Singhal
News Editor

In his first year at LGHS, freshman **Aditya Mathur** is making his way through challenging classes, robotics, orchestra, and rowing. Even though his schedule is jam-packed, he still manages to make time to watch Mission Impossible and eat pizza.

Mathur is taking multiple demanding courses including English 9 Honors and Algebra 2 Accelerated. When asked how he liked LGHS, Mathur commented, "LGHS is nice, and all my classes have been super fun and exciting." Though he is only a freshman, Mathur can't wait for his graduation ceremony. Mathur is taking a seventh period and has three electives: Spanish 2, Robotics, and Orchestra.

Mathur is a passionate member of the LGHS orchestra where he plays viola. He remarked, "I played trumpet in fifth grade and didn't like it so I decided to try out orchestra, and I've been playing since then." Mathur's favorite part of being in orchestra is the opportunity to participate in many competitions. When Mathur played in the Fisher Middle School orchestra, he went to the California Music Educators Association (CMEA) competition where they placed third. This year, Mathur has enjoyed playing concertos from his favorite composer, Vivaldi. He added, "Concerts can be nerve-wracking but once you get over that, they're fun."



In addition to his love for viola, Mathur enjoys rowing and is finishing his second year of the sport. He began rowing after being inspired by many of his friends who already were on the rowing team. Practices occur every day except Saturday, alternating between land and water days. His team went to regionals last year after capping off a successful season. Mathur's favorite part of rowing is "winning competitions and hanging out with my friends."

As a member of the LGHS Robotics team, Mathur has enjoyed learning about engineering. Because he hopes to one day major in electrical engineering, he joined the control systems sub-team, the subteam in charge of wiring the robot. Mathur has been practicing the wiring on a prototype throughout the year and looks forward to wiring the actual machine. The best part about robotics is "the community for sure. Everyone is super fun and interesting to talk to." His favorite moment so far has been the team's potluck to celebrate the start of their competition season.

Despite his packed schedule, Mathur continues to excel in his first year at LGHS. The freshman is balancing academics, music, sports, and robotics. With his enthusiasm and passion, Mathur is creating a strong foundation for a successful high school journey and a solid base for the rest of his professional life.

CHLOE HSIA LEAPS THROUGH HER JUNIOR YEAR

by Kat Littfin
News Editor

Junior **Chloe Hsia** is grooving her way through the rest of this school year. As a dancer, co-vice president of the K-Pop Dance Club, choir singer, Instagram foodie, and proud LG student, Chloe is deeply involved in many facets of the LGHS community.

One of Hsia's claims to fame includes her popular Instagram account with over 800 followers where she posts her dances and a plethora of stories of the assorted foods and meals she eats. She often rates and writes about a variety of mouthwatering foods. When she started posting food reviews, Hsia noticed: "All of a sudden people started DMing me. They were like 'Where did you get all this food? How is it so bougie? Where did it come from?...' So now I [post] to make my friends jealous." Though it started as a way to tease her friends, her Instagram stories attract many users. Hsia recommends Maestro's and a Cupertino sushi place called Kura, but most of all, she loves her grandparents' cooking.

Hsia has also been a choir student since sixth grade. She joined on a whim but decided to stick with it despite having a negative experience with her first choir teacher. Now she sings in the LGHS Women's Choir. She described choir as "pretty fun" and added,

"It's definitely getting busier, which was very unexpected ... but I'm still doing it because I like singing and being with friends." Recalling her favorite choir memories, she said, "Honestly, just singing with everyone ... bursting out laughing ... It's that sense of humor and community that's really nice."

Though Hsia feels passionate about food and choir, her biggest passion is dance. She started dancing when her family saw a poster advertising a dance studio at the Westgate Shopping Center that caught her attention. When she joined the studio at six, dance captivated her. Now, Hsia has been dancing for ten years and loves it. Despite drama in her old studio, Hsia persists in her art. Hsia views dance as her "getaway," expressing that "it's my happy place. It's where I go to forget about anything that happened at school. Forget anything I'm mad about. It's just nice to unwind in a way by just dancing." After recently transferring studios, she loves attending competitions with her team and feels incredibly close and comfortable with the girls she dances with. Bringing her passion for dance to the school, Hsia joined the K-Pop Dance Club (KPDC) in her freshman year. Hsia said that her affinity for K-Pop started around the time she came to LGHS, so the club seemed like a perfect fit, allowing her to nurture her love of dance. Founded by LG alum-



nus **Tyler Lee**, the KPDC is a club for anyone interested in dance and K-pop. The club often performs at school events including rallies and talent shows. They performed on Saturday, Jan. 18, at the Japanese Art and Film Festival and have upcoming performances against other high schools this year.

Dancing through life, Hsia continues to follow her passions and become an impactful member of the Los Gatos community.



- NFL playoff games kickoff
- LGHS cheer starts their new season

SPORTS

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Ohio State secures College Football Tournament Championship

by Megan Saul
Culture Editor

With many changes to the College Football Playoffs format this year, the competition has been like no other. In the past, teams played in a four-team playoff format. The top four teams played in the semi-finals on New Year's Day as a part of either the Goodyear Cotton Bowl, Vrbo Fiesta Bowl, Capital One Orange Bowl, Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl, Rose Bowl, or All-State Sugar Bowl. They then went on to compete against each other for the championship. This year, 12 teams compete in the playoffs, including the five conference winners and another seven highly ranked teams determined by the College Football Playoff Selection Committee. There are four different rounds within the updated playoffs: the first round with seeds five through 12, quarterfinals where the top four teams play the winners of the first round, the semifinals, and eventually the finals, totaling 11 games.

On Jan. 9, the Notre Dame Fighting Irish played against the Penn State Nittany Lions at the Orange Bowl. Notre Dame won the game 27-24, allowing their season to continue. Stand-out players for Notre Dame include quarterback Riley Leonard, running back Jeremiyah Love, and wide receiver Jaden Greathouse. On the opposing team,

quarterback Drew Aller, running back Nicholas Singleton, and tight end Tyler Warren put up a good fight. The Texas Longhorns and the Ohio State Buckeyes played in the second semifinal game, the Cotton Bowl Classic, on the following day, Jan. 10, which was different from the format of the past years, where both played on the same day. Ohio State came out of the game victorious against Texas. Winning 28-14, Ohio State continued to the finals. Quarterback Will Howard, running back TreVeyon Henderson, and defensive end Jack Sawyer had outstanding performances, as did Texas quarterback Quinn Ewers, running back Quintrevion Wisner, and running back Jaydon Blue.

On Monday, Jan. 20, Ohio State and Notre Dame played for the College Football Playoff National Championship trophy in Atlanta, Georgia. Ohio State came out on top, winning with a score of 34-23. Following the game, Howard said, "I don't have the words, man. They've changed my life in more ways than I can say, man."

After the conclusion of this new College Football Playoff format, many teams and viewers have had mixed feelings about the success of this new system. For example, this new playoff format positively affected some teams, such as Ohio State and Notre Dame, while it hurt Oregon, the number one seed going into the playoffs.

As the contract for this year's playoff expires after this season, officials may make more changes to the format for next year's playoffs.

(Sources: College Football Playoff, ESPN NCAA, NY Times)



LET'S GO BUCKEYES: The Ohio State Buckeyes warm up together before their game.

NFL playoffs start with a bang

by Atharava Pandey
National/World Editor

The NFL season is quickly coming to a close. With Wild Card Weekend done, the remaining teams look forward to the next round. The Chiefs and Lions both had byes for Wild Card Weekend. As two teams that had solid regular seasons, they will be hoping for the same in the postseason.

The Washington Commanders pulled off an incredible win against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, winning 23-20 with a game-winning field goal. This was their first playoff victory since the 2005 NFL season. They played high-risk football, going for the fourth down five times. Commanders quarterback Jayden Daniels, who is in his rookie year, threw two touchdown passes and 268 yards.



RAMS READY: Los Angeles Rams celebrate their touchdown.

The Los Angeles Rams dismantled the Minnesota Vikings 27-9. The Vikings had a 14-3 record, so a Rams victory seemed unlikely. However, the Rams defense played spectacularly, sacking Vikings quarterback Sam Darnold nine times. Quarterback Matthew Stafford had a good game as well, throwing for 209 yards and two touchdowns. The Rams have Super Bowl experience. Although not the favorite, they are definitely a team to watch out for.

The Philadelphia Eagles beat the Green Bay Packers 22-10 in their Wild Card game. The Eagles defense played very well, causing Packers quarterback Jordan Love to throw three interceptions. Although their offense looked shaky, the Eagles scored when it mattered and won. The Eagles believe they have a fair chance of reaching the Super Bowl.

The Houston Texans shocked the Los Angeles Chargers 32-12. Many people believed that the Chargers would easily beat the Texans, making the result all the more shocking. The Texans started off slow, ending the first quarter behind 6-0. Yet, the Texans managed to dominate the rest of the game. The defense was particularly surprising, as they caused Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert to throw four interceptions. The Texans will aim to keep proving their doubters wrong in the future.

The Baltimore Ravens beat their divisional rivals the Pittsburgh Steelers 28-14. The Ravens lived up to expectations. Running back Derrick Henry had an impressive game, rushing for 186 yards and two touchdowns. Ravens quarterback and MVP candidate Lamar Jackson, who is known for choking in the playoffs, had a good game, throwing for 175 yards and two touchdowns.

The Buffalo Bills destroyed the Denver Broncos 31-7. The Broncos scored a touchdown on their first drive but could not capitalize on their momentum. Similarly to the Ravens, the Bills are also known for their playoff troubles. Quarterback Josh Allen had an astounding game, throwing for 272 yards and two touchdowns. The true challenge for the Bills lies in front of them.

The NFL playoffs are shaping up to be very exciting with teams looking to achieve glory and shake off past failures. It remains unknown which team will lift the Lombardi Trophy. (Source: ESPN)



FAKE OUT: Ravens star Lamar Jackson hands off the ball.

Unrivaled league makes waves

by Chloe Wilson
Humor Editor

Following the end of a historical WNBA season, players Breanna Stewart and Napheesa Collier have started Unrivaled, a new women's 3x3 basketball league. Typically, during the off-season, WNBA players have to travel overseas to find competition and make additional income, but this offseason, these circumstances will change with 36 of the top players staying in the US. Some of the investors in this 35 million dollar league are Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps, Milwaukee Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo, South Carolina women's basketball coach Dawn Staley, USC star JuJu Watkins, and U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff.



DOMINATE: Unrivaled cofounder Breanna Stewart gets award.

The inaugural season will start on Friday, Jan. 17 in Miami, Florida. With the 3x3 style, the Unrivaled president of basketball operations, Luke Cooper, said, "This game is rooted in how you would play basketball as a kid on a black top, there's flow. There's pace. When you are watching, it feels like you are watching basketball...it's not a gimmick." The season is eight weeks long, with players practicing and playing in a custom-built facility. In comparison to the WNBA's 94-by-50 court, the Unrivaled players will compete on a 49.2-foot by 72-foot court, which is different from the WNBA's 94-by-50 court. Additionally, it varies from the Olympic 3x3 half-court which is 36-by-49 feet.

Though Unrivaled is a revolutionary league, it is not the first alternative to the WNBA. Athletes Unlimited, a 5x5 league that debuted in 2022, will hold its fourth season from Feb. 5 to Mar. 2 in Nashville, featuring 29 out of 40 players with experience in the WNBA. Unrivaled, however, looks to set itself apart with different salaries, resources, and styles of play. This league stands as the first to compete with the WNBA in terms of salary and amenities. In 2024, the average WNBA salary was around \$119,500 dollars and the high was around \$242,000, but the average salary of Unrivaled will be \$222,222. Additionally, the players get equity in the league along with their salary. "I give a lot of credit to these players," Cooper said. "They took a risk."

Unrivaled will play most games on Fridays, Saturdays, and Mondays. Tnt or TruTV will show two games a night with former basketball star Candace Parker anchoring a studio show during the broadcasts.

Unrivaled houses players in no-cost two-bedroom apartments and also provides them with rental cars. The Unrivaled facility has a weight room and a glamour room. Additionally, the facility has content creation rooms. Rae Burrell, a player for the Los Angeles Sparks said, "They've been taking great care of us as far as just the facility, I mean the facility has been great having meals and everything for us. Always having snacks and the fridges are always stocked." (Sources: AP, ESPN)



DIME: Unrivaled cofounder Napheesa Collier passes the ball.

Tennis stars Sinner and Swiatek are caught in doping controversy

by Kayla Mitchell
Media Production Editor

Recent doping scandals of top Women's Tennis Association and Association of Tennis Professionals players are detracting from the excitement of the 2025 Australian Open. As more top athletes from around the world are caught for banned substance abuse, the talk of unfair play and the need to punish top athletes have overshadowed the tournament. While the tournament draw looks as thrilling as ever, fans have a reason to be disappointed with some of their favorite players.

Positive doping tests involving two of tennis's biggest stars are causing controversy among top players on the tour. Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek, both players who spent the 2024 season at the top of the tennis rankings, tested positive for a banned substance last season.



BASELINE: Tennis superstar Jannik Sinner hits a skillful forehand game winner.

Last March, Sinner, the No.1 player on the ATP tour, tested positive twice for using clostebol, a steroid that athletes use to increase athletic performance. The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) did not suspend Sinner for his positive test results after Sinner's team explained that the presence of the drug was due to a product used to treat a cut on the hand of Sinner's physiotherapist. The ITIA cleared Sinner of any fault, but the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) later appealed the decision. The failed tests, given ample time periods apart, and the tennis federation's stripping Sinner of points and his prize money from recent tournaments showed the seriousness of his situation. Sinner's future in the sport is now uncertain; he could face a two-year ban if the appeal is successful in April.

Iga Swiatek dominated the tennis field in 2024 and held the spot as World No. 1 for most of the season. After winning a bronze medal at the Olympics last year, Swiatek failed an out-of-competition test when testers found the banned substance trimetazidine in her system. Swiatek formally admitted her violation and accepted the one-month suspension as a penalty. The professional player's suspension wasn't extremely severe because ITIA accepted her explanation that the use of the drug was completely unintentional, and the contamination of her nonprescription medication, melatonin, that she took to help her sleeping issues caused the positive result. The ITIA dropped Swiatek's case after her suspension passed because of its seemingly harmless effects compared to other cases.

Players on the ATP tour, especially Nick Kyrgios and players who previously struggled with positive tests, have become vocal in their

disapproval of how tennis authorities have handled recent doping cases. Kyrgios stated, "Two world number ones both getting done for doping is disgusting for our sport. It's a horrible look. The tennis integrity [is bad] right now, and everyone knows it, but no one says anything, it's awful." Retired athletes and current tour players are also speaking up about the unfairness of competing against Swiatek or Sinner and commenting on their lenient punishments. It has been difficult for fans to focus on the tennis aspect of the 2025 Australian Open as the players themselves seem highly concerned about recent testing issues. (Sources: AP, The Conversation, ESP, Fox Sports)



RIGHT BACK AT YOU: Top ranked player Iga Swiatek prepares to return the ball.

Vohn debuts in alpine skiing after recovering from injury

by Margo Rawlings
Editor-in-Chief

After five years in retirement, all-time great Lindsey Vohn has returned to alpine ski racing. Vohn was the first woman to win a gold medal in downhill skiing at the 2010 Winter Olympics and three consecutive World Cup overall championships from 2008 to 2010. As one of the most decorated skiers alive, Vohn won eight World Cup season titles in downhill as well as five for super-G. She holds 82 World Cup wins, just four shy of Ingemar Stenmark and 17 below record holder Mikaela Shiffrin, who surpassed Vohn in 2023.



WORLD CUP CHAMP: Vohn holds up trophy as the 2010 skiing downhill victor.

In 2019, Vohn announced her retirement due to an extensive list of injuries. Throughout her career, she endured several serious injuries; at the 2013 World Championships, she suffered from a torn ACL, MCL, and a broken right leg. Shortly after, she faced a second ACL injury, disqualifying her from the 2014 Winter Olympics. Then, in 2015, she fractured her ankle; in 2016, she fractured her knee along with her arm; and in 2018, she tore a ligament in her knee and fractured it. However, in 2024, after undergoing partial knee replacement surgery, she announced her plans to rejoin the US Ski Team in Colorado. She said, "It feels so amazing to be back. I can't tell you how big of a difference it makes to be able to ski without pain. It's a completely new world for me. I haven't felt this good in 15 years, so I'm excited to be back."

Competing in the FIS (Federation of Skiing) Fall Festival in Colorado made Vohn the oldest female competitive alpine skier of all time at age 40. She finished 24th out of 45, just 1.44 seconds behind the winner. Vohn then made her way back into the World Cup circuit through a wild card entry. The FIS allows highly decorated retired skiers the chance to return to competition, but they receive later starting positions, making competition more challenging.

Vohn competed on Jan. 11 in St. Anton, Austria, in her first downhill competition in six years and finished sixth. The following day she placed fourth in the super-G, displaying her continued dominance in the sport. Her fourth-place finish came just under a month after her first World Cup race in St. Moritz, Switzerland,



IN ACTION: Vohn rockets downhill, carving through the snow swiftly.

where she finished 14th in the super-G. Vohn commented on her performance in St. Anton saying "I feel a little bit more confident and comfortable in downhill than I do in super-G, and I know this hill really well, so I knew the challenges that it had today and with the snow conditions, where I needed to execute. I still made a couple of mistakes, I know I can be faster. But I think for the first downhill race in six years, it was a pretty good start."

What was once a far-off dream to compete in the 2026 Winter Olympics in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy is looking more and more realistic for Vohn. She explained, "I've tried to keep everything in perspective and not set goals too high, but ultimately if I can make it to Cortina, that would be my goal."

(Sources: Bleacher Report, CNN, NY Times, Olympics, USA Today)

Softball preseason kicks off

by Britt Melinauskas
Sports Editor

Following the Los Gatos High School Varsity Softball team's triumphs last year as Santa Clara Valley De Anza League (SCVAL) champions and their first-ever appearance in the Central Coast Section (CCS) Open Division, the LG Wildcats are preparing for pre-season with a desire to build upon their previous successes. Last year, the varsity team ended with an impressive 12-0 record in the league and an overall record of 19-7. This year's captains, seniors **Addison Sorto**, **Lily Young**, and **Robyn Young**, hope to help the team surpass their high-achieving expectations. Sorto — a first baseman, third baseman, and catcher — commented, "Last year was the first time we've been in the open division for CCS playoffs, and we lost in the first round. So hopefully, this year, we can get past the first round if we make CCS." Equally impressive, the junior varsity team ended 18-3 and as a top team in the league with a 13-1 record in standings.

The Los Gatos Girls' Varsity Softball team featured numerous All-League Team participants, including senior **Annika Norquist** and sophomore **Ava Norquist** as Co-Most Valuable Players, junior **Grace Tucker** as the Offensive Player of



BATTER UP: LG Varsity Softball celebrates a play.

the Year, senior Lily Young, senior **Ria Sharma**, and junior **Tessa Lilienstein** as Second Team All-League Players, and senior **Clare Torres** as All-League Honorable Mention. Similarly, seven JV team members received All-League Team awards. Those awarded First Team All-League Players include sophomore **Keira Kelly**, junior **Megan Long**, sophomore **Kendall Feichtmeir**, and sophomore **Danica DeSantis**. Sophomore **Cate Zeman** and sophomore **Haley Betti** received Second Team All-League Players. Finally, junior **Madison Cook** obtained an All-League Honorable Mention.

LG softball's primary focus this year is reaching peak performance before the coaches finalize rosters and focus on team cohesiveness. To achieve these goals, Coach **Jim Johnson**, Coach **Brooke Binkley**, and Coach **Randy Frey** have placed a central focus on pre-season conditioning. Junior **Olivia Sickels**, a standout second baseman and a key contributor to the LG varsity squad, leads the team in on-base percentage and stolen bases. Reflecting on pre-season so far, Sickels stated, "Pre-season training has been fun. We only get to work out with four people each day, but working out with the teammates I play on the field with will definitely be good for our team chemistry. Training has been weights and cardio, and we have tryouts soon, so we are prepping for those as well."

LGHS softball aims to progress through the upcoming season and has set high expectations among each other to build momentum collectively. Junior **Sophia Krish**, an exceptional pitcher and center fielder, stated, "Our team's goals are to work together as a team since we lost several seniors last year and build a good team, but also be successful on the field." She expressed that the team culture is crucial to advance as they have in previous years. Make sure to cheer on your LG Wildcats as they take on the upcoming season!

(Source: MaxPreps)

TGL defies all expectations

by Megan Saul
Culture Editor

Tomorrow's Golf League (TGL) is pioneering the game of golf by using cutting-edge technology to curate a ground-breaking golfing experience that combines the traditional outdoor event with simulated indoor play. Started by world-renowned golfers Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy and TMRW Sports CEO Mike McCarley, TGL consists of six teams playing various courses within the SoFi center. First airing on Jan. 7, TGL has the potential to revolutionize golf in terms of the team atmosphere.

The league has six different teams, each with four players, representing various cities and parts of the country. For example, the local team is named the Bay Golf Club. The players for this team are PGA tour golfers Ludvig Åberg, Wyndham Clark, Min Woo Lee, and Shane Lowry. Other teams include Los Angeles Golf Club, Boston Common Golf, New York Golf Club, Atlanta Drive GC, and Jupiter Links Golf Club. In a two-hour match, two teams play 15 holes against each other in different formats while simultaneously competing against the shot clock. For example, one match consists of two separate sessions, nine holes of triple-doubles and six holes of singles play.

Golfers compete in the SoFi Center, an arena built on Palm Beach State College solely for TGL. During the construction process, the roof collapsed, pushing the league's starting date to 2025. The stadium features a 64-foot x 53-foot simulator screen powered by Full Swing and an automatic green that officials can adjust to mimic the actual hills and imperfections on the hole.

The latest match drew in one million online viewers and 1,500 in-person audience members of all ages. The golfers interacted with the fans

by tossing balls into the stands and energizing the crowd. The golfers' interactions were also more lighthearted and lively than in traditional golf matches. McCarley shared, "They're on a team, so they're having more conversations with each other. They're having real reactions with each other that they wouldn't have in an individual event. The team nature of it and the prime-time piece of it intensifies the drama."

Another way in which TGL differs from the regular PGA tour golf is the point system. Similar to the way in which the National Hockey League keeps track of points, TGL uses a point system where a winning team earns two points, a tie is one point, and a loss does not earn any points. After the regular season concludes, they will hold a four-team playoff of an elimination and a best-of-three round. So far, throughout the first two matches, the Los Angeles Golf Club and the Bay Golf Club have earned two points. Be sure to tune in next Tuesday on ESPN or ESPN+ to see how the rest of the season goes and what the future of golf might hold!

(Sources: ESPN, GOLF, TGL Golf)



TEE TIME: Tiger Woods admires his shot on the course.

Next Level Girls' Flag Football season commences

by Isabella Langner
People Editor

This year, Los Gatos High School began its inaugural season of Next Level Girls' Flag Football. The sport of girls' flag football has gained popularity across the United States, spreading throughout Los Gatos as well.

Next Level Sports is a program that originates in the Bay Area but has locations nationwide. It offers basketball, volleyball, and flag football leagues for kindergarten through eighth grade. Specifically at LGHS, Coach **Mark Krail** and Coach **Chad Purcell** run the program. Next Level has offered boys' flag football for six years, and the girls' league



FACE-OFF: Young flag football players prepare to start the game.

is making its debut this winter. Previously, Next Level allowed girls to sign up for the boys' league. Now, with a league of their own, young girls can pursue a sport that hasn't been easily accessible.

For nine weeks, elementary and middle school kids attend practices and games on Sunday for two hours: one hour of practice and one hour of game time. Teams span from six to 15 members, and players can request to join on the same team as friends to foster productive and enjoyable environments. The most unique part of Next Level is that the head coaches for the LG youth teams are LGHS students and players. At LGHS, players on the LGHS boys' football and girls' flag football teams are given the opportunity to help kids learn how to play and love the sport. Assisted by a parent coach, student coaches run almost the entirety of practices and call offense and defense during games. Freshman **Jenna Webb**, quarterback for the LGHS Girls' Varsity Flag Football team and coach for Next Level Girls' Flag Football, commented, "I am so happy they created a girls' league because it gives them an opportunity to play to their best abilities and not never get the ball because guys won't throw to them."

The creation of a girls' league in Next Level followed LGHS's first girls' flag football team's successful season in the fall, with a record of 24-2 and tying for league champions. Other high schools in the area have also started a girls' program within the past year. For the 2025 winter season, five Next Level locations in the Bay Area offer flag football for girls, with eight sites nationwide. Junior **Hanna Behnami**, a coach for Next Level Girls' Flag Football, shared, "I am delighted to be a part of the inaugural season of girls' flag football and I think it's an amazing opportunity for young girls to excel in such a new sport. Having been

just recently brought into high school sports, I think it's going to set them up for success."

The girls' program at LGHS filled up quickly, with only a few spots remaining in the second-grade league. Beginning on Jan. 12, the Next Level Girls' Flag Football is already bringing so many young girls together and into the sport of flag football. Already proving to be successful, girls' flag football continues to grow steadily across the country. (Source: Next Level Sports)



TEAM HUDDLE: Players gather for the coin toss before the game.



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Winter Guard and Percussion prepare for 2025 season

by Hayley Strahs
News Editor

Recently, the LGHS Winter Guard and Winter Percussion programs began rehearsals for their 2025 seasons.

After a year-long hiatus, Winter Percussion is back, and members are ecstatic to return to the activity. In Winter Percussion, the front ensemble, comprised of large mallet instruments, and drumline merge to perform a themed show combining marching, dancing, and advanced musical techniques. Sophomore marimba and vibraphone

player **Ellenore Hammer** remarked, "For front ensemble, which gets drowned out by the winds [during marching band], you can hear us, and we're featured more." Similarly, Winter Guard is a continuation of Color Guard with a greater focus on dance technique. Both winter ensembles perform indoors, unlike the outdoor marching season.

During Winter Break and MLK Day weekend, members of both groups attended their first and second three-day intensive Mini Camps to kick off the season. Through in-depth technique lessons, brand-new choreography, and team-building exercises, Winter Percussion and Winter Guard worked tirelessly to complete the opening portions of their respective shows during the first camp and their middle sections during the second. As a longtime percussion member, senior **Ryan Jiang** stated that his season-long goal is "to try and build up the program again, and just to have fun [because] it's my last year."

Along with new staff, Winter Guard recently adopted a new practice structure. Members begin each rehearsal with a 30- to 60-minute dance class. Coach **Mario Barron** explained, "I feel like [dance class] allows us to check in with ourselves before we grab any [equipment]...there's a lot of coordination and physics related things that can relate to [flags] and other equipment." These formative drills are vital when it comes to performing *You're Such a Dream To Me*, Winter Guard's show featuring R.E.M. by Ariana Grande.

For both groups, competitions are just around the corner. Sophomore guard member **Lance Blakeney** described competitions as "stressful, fun, and exciting." Blakeney is looking forward to "performing a really cool show and...getting to do flag." On Jan. 25, Winter Guard will perform at the California Color Guard Circuit (CCGC) Evaluations to determine their division for the rest of their competitions, including CCGC Independence on Feb. 8 and CCGC James Logan on Feb. 15, both of which Winter Percussion will also attend.

With rehearsals in full swing and two Mini Camps under their belts, the LGHS Winter Ensembles are more than ready to take on their respective seasons.



DANCE PARTY: Winter guard members practice for an upcoming performance.



IN THE ZONE: Senior **Lucy Sinclair** rehearses a dance routine during practice.

POM: Ashley Childers commits to Cornell University

by Katie Nelson
Center Editor

Senior **Ashley Childers** continues to be an undeniable threat on the LGHS Girls' Varsity Basketball team. In the midst of her fourth and final year on varsity, Childers continues to propel her team to success with her talent and leadership, paving the way for another successful season for the program.

Childers's love for basketball started from a young age when she began playing in the National Junior Basketball (NJB) league in third grade. She continued all throughout elementary and middle school, never wavering in her love of and commitment to the sport. She added that many of the girls on the high school team have played with her since NJB, contributing to their chemistry on the court and close friendships. Childers described the environment on the high school team: "We are all super close. We've made a lot of fun memories, and I am excited to make more before the season ends."

Childers elaborated that her senior season has been bittersweet, knowing it's her last year on the team: "It's sad that it's my senior year and I will never get to play with any of these girls again, but I try to make the most of it by enjoying every moment in the games and practices. Especially us seniors [because] we've been playing together for so long."



JUMP-SHOT: Childers beats an opponent and goes up for a two-point shot.

This season, Childers hopes the team will continue their dominant league performance and win CCS. She said that her favorite memories have been going undefeated in league the last two years and winning CCS her freshman year, so she hopes to help recreate

those memories for her younger teammates by pushing them to excel in the postseason.

Next year, Childers will continue her athletic career as a D1 athlete at Cornell University. She said that while the recruiting process is tough, she "can't wait to play basketball at the next level." Giving advice to those looking to play a collegiate sport, she recommended, "Work hard. One of my favorite quotes is 'The only place that success comes before work is in the dictionary.' If you want to play in college, work harder than anybody else." Childers said that having the opportunity to play D1 basketball has been her greatest sports accomplishment, and that she is "looking forward to competing in the Ivy League and getting a great education."

The sense of joy and dedication Childers, fondly called Chilly, brings to practice every day creates a positive environment for the high school team. Coach **Sara Quilici-Giles** described Childers's personality and maturation as a player: "I love Ashley's sense of humor and how competitive she is. Every year since Ashley was a freshman she has continued to really grow and improve year after year...to see her confidence over the last year in particular has been so special!" Determined to make her last season on the high school team count, Childers is prepared to give everything to continue the remarkable legacy the girls' basketball program has built in the last few years.

LG cheer season resumes

by Kat Littfin
News Editor

This semester, the Los Gatos High School cheer team plans to shift from focusing on football during the fall semester to cheering for basketball and setting their sights on nationals.



GO CATS: The LG cheer team performs at a school rally.

After the football season, the cheer squad must prepare new cheers and dance routines for their performances at basketball games. Freshman and JV member **Kelly Huang** said that the team must learn "all-new routines" for the games, changing the pace of the team after coming back from their break. Varsity cheerleader and junior **Kate Fulkerth**, who has been a part of the varsity cheer team since her freshman year, stated that the basketball season is one of the most enjoyable parts of the year. She shared, "[I get to] spend time with my friends... and spend the time I have left with the seniors." The girls cheer for JV and Varsity Boys' Basketball and at times will cheer for the girls, so look out for their performances if you plan on attending a game.

competition team must prepare for numerous meets around the state after winter break. Not all members of the varsity and junior varsity teams are on the competition team, but many choose to take up competitive cheer in addition to cheering at rallies and sporting events. Members of the competition team have to attend additional practices and work hard on producing routines for multiple events. The squad competes in the Medium Novice Show Cheer Division. In past years, the competitive cheer squad has displayed success and placed highly at many competitions in their division. At last year's nationals, they won sixth place for their fight song and eighth place in show cheer.

On the weekend of Jan. 10, the LGHS competitive cheer team attended Deer Valley High School for a competition against several other school teams. Junior **Maddy Cook**, who is on both the varsity and competition team, pointed out, "The team would have placed first...we didn't get first because some of our tricks were too advanced," meaning that some of the stunts the team performed were too complex for them to be scored fairly against the other teams in the division. Although the team had their first-place title stripped, Cook still considers the competition a success for the team. The squad also performed at Central Coast Section (CCS) at Independence High School on the weekend of Jan. 17. Scores and rankings of the competition are pending. Once the regular competition season is over, the team will set its sights on nationals, which take place in Disneyland. Cook and many other cheerleaders regard nationals as the most enjoyable part of the season.

Wish the cheer team luck as they continue to advance in their competitive season!

LGHS soccer continues

by Sam Gruetter
Opinion Editor

The LGHS Girls' Varsity Soccer team has had an outstanding first portion of their season. From having a record of 1-16 three years ago, to winning all of their games in the top division, De Anza, the girls have made impressive progress in such a short time frame. In their most recent match against Palo Alto, the girls won with a final score of 4-0. Junior **Alessandra Munneke** scored two header goals, with the delivery of a perfect cross played by sophomore and captain **Abby Nelson** on the wing. Freshman **Paige Purcell** scored another goal by volleying a shot into the top corner, concluding the match with a win for Los Gatos. Junior **Leighton Ozawa** described the course of the season thus far, saying, "We have had an extremely successful season, as a result of the team's hard work and chemistry. I think we will continue this momentum for the rest of the season." Their other triumphs include a 2-0 win over Gunn, a 3-0 win over Santa Clara, and a 3-1 win over Los Altos. In their most recent game on Jan. 17, the girls tied against Mountain View, with a final score of 0-0. Despite the 0-0 outcome, the girls had many close goal-scoring opportunities, with Nelson frequently lofting balls to Munneke, who delivered excellent shots in return. The girls are moving into the rest of their season with a 4-0-1 record.

The LGHS Boys' Varsity Soccer team has had a more difficult season. In their first league game against Fremont on Jan. 3, they ended with a 1-1 tie. However, they were able to turn their luck around in their following game on Jan. 8 with a 3-1 win against Santa Clara. Despite impressive



GAME TIME: Senior **Isabella Ramos** dribbles up the field.

effort and perseverance, the boys were unable to secure a win in their next two games against Los Altos and Palo Alto, where they ended with a 0-3 loss versus Los Altos and 1-2 loss versus Palo Alto. In their game against Santa Clara, the boys' team pulled through after a 1-1 tie at halftime, with senior **Keegan McTighe** and junior **Max Lees** scoring all three of the goals in the match, demonstrating themselves as instrumental components in the team's success. On Jan. 17, the boys played Mountain View, coming away from the match with a 2-0 win, increasing their record to 5-3-1. Many of the opponents of the boys' varsity team have led extremely successful seasons, making them both formidable and challenging competition.

Whether you go to watch the boys' or the girls' soccer games, you are guaranteed a well-played and impressive game from both sides. With games on Wednesdays and Fridays, both teams have many games to come, so make sure to check them out at their next game against Santa Clara on Jan. 29! (Sources: MaxPreps)