

# El Gato

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL

A. Coven

## LGHS students advocate for Pride flag

by **Siyona Singhal** and **Nelson Kramer**  
*Humor Editor and Editor-in-Chief*

On Dec. 16, 2025, six LGHS students attended the Los Gatos Town Hall and bravely spoke in support of raising the Pride flag in June. Each student gave persuasive and impactful speeches that strengthened their fight for greater representation and inclusion in the Los Gatos community. The student's efforts led to the motion passing 4-1, showing that Los Gatos, along with many other Santa Clara County municipalities that have already raised Pride flags, is a safe and welcoming town.



LET'S TALK: Los Gatos legislators and residents discuss pressing policy issues.

When junior **Nova Jayaraj** saw a town council meeting scheduled for mid-December, she took action. Committed to youth involvement in local policy, Jayaraj set up an Instagram account to encourage students to participate in current and future local politics. During the meeting, the floor was open for public comment. Regarding her speech, she shares, "A big point that I was trying to make is that no matter what you believe, religion, whatever, that's not a justification for hatred. At the end of the day, I can't invalidate your beliefs, but the minute you start using that to put down another group, that's when I have a problem." Jayaraj and her peers, while not facing much personal criticism, didn't feel welcomed by the opposing crowd, which influenced how she delivered her speech. She notes, "I was angry that I was standing in the same pulpit that others stood at, and I was standing in the place where so many people had spoken hateful things. I was also frustrated that it took six high schoolers to get this passed."

Junior **Louisa Horwath** became involved with the event when Jayaraj reached out to her. Horwath was determined to join because, on a personal level, "I actually work with kids as part of my job, and a lot of those kids have faced this kind of oppression, so me being up there when they can't is very important." To prepare, Horwath wrote a speech, ensuring she voiced the emotional impact of her personal experiences. Overall, from this experience, Horwath realized that there is a lot of negativity in the LG community and is determined to stand against it.

**Eli Asheghian**, also a junior at LGHS who attended the meeting, explains that at first, "I honestly, I didn't really care whether there was a Pride flag in LG, but the fact that there was going to be resistance there made me angry." After the meeting, Asheghian was shocked by the sizable presence of Donald Trump supporters in Los Gatos and encourages students to be more aware of their rights and freedoms.

Six high school students walked into a Los Gatos Town Council meeting and actively participated in bettering the community. Many of them, including junior **Guy Shaham**, left feeling they had made a change. He reflects, "It felt good that our voices, us collectively, even if it was a small change, could make a difference in our community." These teens make clear to anyone who lives in or visits Los Gatos that all people are seen and accepted.



CONGREGATE: Council members gather at the LG Civic Center for meetings.

## JNHS puts on annual Japanese Festival

by **Fuyu Banno**  
*Graphics Editor*

LGHS's Japanese National Honors Society (JNHS) hosted its annual Japanese Arts and Film Festival (JAFF) on Jan. 24. The day included various performances, vendors, and ways for students and visitors to learn more about Japanese culture. All proceeds of the event were donated to Asian Women's Home, a domestic violence shelter located in Santa Clara that focuses on the Asian community.

JAFF is planned entirely by members of JNHS alongside the guidance and support of teacher **Kumi Kobayashi**. From recruiting the vendors to selecting the movie appropriate for the event, JNHS does everything.

The opening ceremony of the event involved a trivia game among JNHS members in which all of the questions were related to Japanese culture and language. Two performances followed: the LGHS K-pop Dance Club showcased two intricate and energetic dances to J-pop girl group Hana and boy band ZB1; and senior **Seoyoung Choi** sang two songs by J-pop artist Ayano Kaneko.

Alongside the performances, the alumni panel was a highlight of the event, inviting past officers of JNHS to talk about their experience in the club and in the Japanese program more generally; the panel also answered questions about life after high school. Graduates **Teodor Langan**, **Constantine Chen**, and **Miki Costedoat** participated in the panel this year.



SPEAK UP: Alumni panel answers questions at the annual Japanese Festival.

Outside the theater, students enjoyed onigiri and other foods and browsed around the various booths stationed throughout the halls. Vendors sold crochet items and bracelets; one table sold 3-D printed Daruma and Maneki-neko. Participating in JAFF for the second time in a row, the Pokemon table was bustling with activity throughout the festival. Students bought cards and opened them with anticipation and excitement. Students also enjoyed face painting, an activity especially popular among the younger kids who attended the event.



KON'NICHIIWA: Sophomore boys represent Japanese culture by donning kimonos.

Results of an art contest opened to anyone from LGHS followed. Voters chose among seven different entries, all following this year's theme of Feudal Japan. Senior **William Han** took third place, followed by second place for sophomore **Hanh Nguyen**, and senior **Reily Nguyen** took the first place prize with his drawing of a traditional swordsman.

The festival concluded with the main event of the day, the screening of the film, *A Silent Voice*. This 2016 film is an animated feature that follows a teen boy who tries to make amends with the deaf girl he bullied. With the girl's help, the boy comes to terms with his traumatic past, and a friendship develops between them.

As to the future of JAFF and JNHS, senior and co-president of JNHS **Wilber Huang** is optimistic: "I hope we will be able to bridge the cultural gap and age gap between seniors, freshmen, etc. I [also] hope that in the future we can have more fun events within our school showcasing the love and passion for Japanese culture to students of Los Gatos High School."

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courtesy T. De La Cruz

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courtesy flickr

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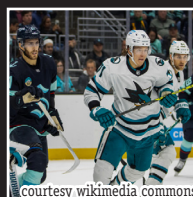
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courtesy wikimedia commons

# TOM: Spanish teacher Liv Johnson radiates creativity

by **Tori Schubert and Chloe Wilson**  
People and Culture Editors

Spanish teacher **Liv Johnson** strives to make a positive impact on every student she comes across, whether through teaching them about different cultures or simply making conversation in the halls. Johnson has taught Spanish at LGHS for a significant portion of her career and continues to learn more about the school climate each semester.

Johnson's favorite part of teaching is the students. As she enthuses, "All of you, you guys are the best, and every day is different." She adds that teaching gives her hope for the future: "You are all so kind, and you have the best hearts, which makes teaching the best job." Johnson shares, "My dad was a really creative person, and I think that my creative side comes from him." Johnson is known for innovative lessons that she and the rest of the Spanish department teachers put together for different class levels. She believes that it is important to keep students engaged and that it is a group effort to craft distinctive activities.

After graduating from college, Johnson taught middle school for ten years before moving to Barcelona. When she moved back to the U.S., she decided to come to LGHS to teach Spanish. As for her own educational history, she received her undergraduate degree and teaching credential at Chico State University and earned her master's in Educational Leadership at San Jose State University.

Beyond her classroom, Johnson participates in a number of extracurricular activities, remaining connected with her community



SMILE: Johnson and former students match t-shirts for festivities.

outside of school. Aside from teaching, her passions include travelling and painting. She explains how her love for travel was inspired by living in Chile and Spain: "I think living abroad was such an important part of my history and just shaped who I am." Additionally, she harbored a passion for painting after attending a yoga and watercolor hybrid class. Since then, Johnson has not been able to put the paintbrush down and loves to fashion portraits of her friends, pets, and colleagues. In her remaining free time, Johnson is writing a book entitled *The Abundance Diaries: Volume I*. She aims to educate others on teaching styles to

"spark an abundance mindset." Johnson writes of the importance of appreciating little things in life — even things that may seem like a chore — as they are truly a privilege. With such a positive attitude, Johnson thrives in her day-to-day life, holding gratitude for each moment she shares with others.

Teaching, painting, and traveling, Johnson is always eager to explore new things. As she points out, "The more you learn, the more you realize you have to learn." Wherever she goes, Johnson takes a lifelong learner mindset with her, embracing the adventures and connections she makes along the way.



OUTDOORS: Johnson picks fresh marigolds for Día de los Muertos.

# LGHS students attend notable music competition

by **Tanvi Ambekar**  
Opinion Editor

Every year, California invites the most talented high school musicians from the state to the California All-State Music Education Conference (CASMEC) in Sacramento, California. The 2026 conference took place from Jan. 15 to Jan. 19. To date, the conference remains one of the most exciting musical events for many California high school musicians.

In 2026, LGHS was honored to send five students to CASMEC, including senior **Nicolas Deschaux-Beaume**. The seven-year choir veteran was unable to attend last year but expresses excitement to be present this winter. He explains that because there is "a very selective audition process," CASMEC becomes a gathering place for the most talented of high school musicians. Deschaux-Beaume recounts how powerful of an experience it is to meet so many experienced singers.

Not only does CASMEC provide creative inspiration, it serves as the perfect opportunity for students to connect with like-minded peers. Junior **Angie Lam** attended the conference for the fourth time and fondly recalls how "it kind of feels like home in a strange way." She describes the other students as "[always] really passionate about

music" and willing to befriend each other despite only spending four to five days together. Sophomore **Cameron Strahs**, the only non-choir LGHS attendee of 2026, shares similar sentiments: "[It is] a chance for everyone to come to one place, make music, have fun, watch a few concerts, and then go [home]." Although he has attended the previous three CASMECs, he feels like the experience improves every year because of the rarity of seeing his friends both in southern California and at the conference.

Earning an invitation to this event is no easy feat, either. Strahs admits that he spends nearly two and a half hours practicing daily, while Deschaux-Beaume recalls how the choir program expects him to learn pieces at home to rehearse with the group during class time.

Despite its intense requirements, CASMEC is a place of growth for many performers. When asked about how the conference contributes to her leadership skills, Lam shares the story of a conductor she met a few years ago. The conductor, a shorter woman, had often been told that "she can't be a conductor at a... high level because she's not intimidating," which was evidently false. Lam expresses that seeing a woman with similar stature to herself achieve something so unlikely in a male-dominated field was inspiring.

Beyond being a simple meeting point for young musicians, CASMEC serves as the melting pot for performers' ideas, experiences, and friendships across California. Stories like Lam's reveal how the confidence students find at CASMEC continues to shape the way they lead, learn, and explore new opportunities in high school and beyond.



CHEESE: Strahs and band teacher Ken Nakamoto pose at CASMEC.

# LGHS Robotics perseveres

by **Siyona Singhal**  
Humor Editor

On Jan. 10, the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) officially unveiled its 2026 game, Rebuilt. Teams from around the world immediately gathered to analyze the rules, brainstorm strategies, and begin designing and prototyping their robots. At LGHS, Iron Claw has jumped headfirst into the season, working diligently as they prepare for the fast-approaching competition schedule.

Senior **Piper Robinson** plays a key role on the team as Hardware Manager, with her tasks including "mak[ing] sure that we're working cohesively with software, and that everything gets done on time." For Robinson, the biggest challenge of their new role is integrating first-year students and making sure the team stays on schedule, even when something inevitably goes wrong. Their initial thoughts on Rebuilt were that "it felt too easy, especially compared to last year's game, which had a lot more moving parts. However, I do think there's a lot of hidden complexity that we won't really find out about until we test more." Though the season has just begun, the team is facing some challenges: "We're getting stuck a little bit because there are a lot of things that people want machined, and our machining team isn't quite as fast as it was last year. I think we're also going to have some issues when it comes to prototyping, because we only have three more days left, and many teams still haven't even built or tested their prototypes."



MANUFACTURE: Senior **Sophia Bambas** works the machine.

In his second year on the team, sophomore **Adrian Hsu** has settled into his role as a member of the control system sub-team. Hsu comments that the differences between his first and second year on the team: "I'm definitely getting a lot more involved, not only in control systems, but in different aspects, like design as well. I feel like I'm actually learning a lot more than before." Since kickoff, Hsu has been enjoying discussing strategy ideas with others.

As the season gets underway, Iron Claw is focused on building a strong foundation through collaboration, testing, and problem-solving. Team members are working closely together to refine ideas, experiment with designs, and address challenges early in the process. With excitement and determination running high, Iron Claw is setting the stage for a competitive and successful season ahead.



COLLABORATION: Team members troubleshoot together.

# Rocha makes an impact

by **Arnav Singhal**  
Sports Editor

This past year the Los Gatos Saratoga Union School District (LGSUSD) appointed a new Superintendent, Heath Rocha, after former Superintendent Bill W. Sanderson abruptly resigned. Before his appointment, Rocha served as the Assistant Superintendent for eight years and the Chief Student Support Services Officer for the Carmel Unified School District for four years prior. After his nomination, he told the Los Gatos that this opportunity would allow him to "implement my vision for student services with great success, and I am eager for the opportunity to expand that success across the district."

True to his words, Rocha's actions have made a significantly positive impact. In January, the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) awarded him a spot on the National Superintendents to Watch list, a recognition highlighting outstanding superintendents. Rocha's highly communicative approach demonstrates his commitment to both education and transparency. Last year, just months after his appointment, he created student and parent advisory boards at Los Gatos and Saratoga High Schools. These committees advised him on the implementation of the district's approach to the California Phone-Free Schools Act. Now, classrooms on both campuses are required to

have a phone pocket, and teachers are required to collect phones at the beginning of each class period. Since the new policy took effect, both schools have seen rising levels of student engagement in the classroom.

Furthermore, Rocha has also addressed the district's response toward the mental health crisis among students post-pandemic. He led the establishment of Wellness Centers at each high school, which include school-based counseling services and activities for students to relieve the stress of classwork. His actions resulted in a 40% reduction in students feeling persistently sad or hopeless in the last four years. Consequently, parents' dissatisfaction with communication clarity dropped from over 50% to 9%, and families that reported a dissatisfaction with dialogue in the district dropped from 64% to 17%.



CONNECT: Rocha helps students at Saratoga High School.

Beyond being an inspiration to students, Alicia de Fuentes, the president of the Saratoga Music Boosters enthuses, "Our community is once again hopeful. We are engaged, collaborative, and mission-driven — and much of that is due to the steady leadership of Superintendent Rocha." For students across Los Gatos and Saratoga, Rocha's leadership has meant more than policy changes; it has meant growth as a community. If his first year is any indication, Rocha's vision for a better and more inclusive school district is only beginning to take shape. (Sources: LGSUSD, Los Gatos, NSPRA)



ENGAGE: Rocha converses with a former LGHS student.

# California District 11 representative race intensifies

by Sahil Muthukrishnan and Arnav Singhal  
Culture and Sports Editors

With longtime California District 11 Representative Nancy Pelosi announcing she will not run for her 21st term, San Francisco politicians are rushing to claim her spot in 2026. Scott Wiener, Saikat Chakrabarti, and Connie Chan are the most notable candidates early in the race. All three are currently canvassing and attempting to claim their spot for the primary election on Jun. 2.

Democrat and State Senator Scott Wiener currently serves District 11, which encompasses San Francisco and part of San Mateo. He served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for four years from 2011 to 2016. With his experience, Wiener is considered the race's most establishment-friendly pick. As of Jan. 20, on Kalshi, a federally regulated financial exchange market, Wiener leads the polls with a 75% chance of advancing to the primary election.

Saikat Chakrabarti, former chief of staff to U.S. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), is generating buzz as a leftist progressive candidate. Chakrabarti's professional career began when he served as the second engineer at Stripe, a financial



SPEAK OUT: Senator Wiener presents at a political march.

infrastructure service. In 2015, he transitioned to government, where he first campaigned for Senator Bernie Sanders. AOC then appointed him as her chief of staff in 2018, helping to broker the Green New Deal, a piece of national legislation aimed at tackling climate change and creating new jobs. Now, after achieving nationwide success, Chakrabarti is emerging from behind the scenes to run for his own national seat in San Francisco.

San Francisco Supervisor for District One, Connie Chan, is also making a splash. Born in Hong Kong and raised in San Francisco's Chinatown, Chan's deep roots in community organization and local government define her legacy. She began her career in politics as the legislative aide to former San Francisco Supervisor Sophie Maxwell in 2006, before transitioning to serve as a public safety aide for former San Francisco District Attorney Kamala Harris. Chan is committed to helping working-class residents and immigrant communities. She is now looking to utilize her municipal legislative experience to establish herself as a contender on the national stage.

Recently, the three contenders participated in the annual congressional debate forum. At the town hall, San Franciscans grilled candidates on their policy and plans, who in turn aimed to differentiate themselves from their opponents. When the candidates were asked if they would call Israel's actions in Gaza genocide, Chakrabarti and Chan readily raised their paddles in affirmation, while Wiener was apprehensive, flipping his paddle between yes and no repeatedly. Wiener felt his choice's effects almost immediately; just days later, he released a statement

clarifying his position and joining his opponents in adopting the term. The backlash suggests that the Israel-Palestine conflict might be an impactful issue for the race overall.

While each campaign is still budding, with candidates as qualified as these, the race for District 11's house seat is sure to excite. (Sources: Kalshi, Politicos, SF Chronicle)



SUNSHINE: Chan smiles for her professional headshot.

## Pruneyard Cinemas stays

by Abby Coven

News Editor

The beloved, dine-in Pruneyard Cinemas in Campbell will remain open after a previous announcement earlier this month that the doors would close for good on Jan. 25. A dispute with the owner of the Pruneyard Shopping Center over high rental rates prompted the closure. Just days before the closure, the movie theater reached an agreement with the landlord and shared the surprising news that both the movie theater and the Cedar Room lounge would stay open to guests.



SHOWTIME: Posters advertise the cinema's current films.

From 2018, Pruneyard Cinemas has resided in the historic Campbell theater building, following the closing of the Camera 7 company. The movie theater features comfortable recliners and built-in trays for meals, snacks, and cocktails servers deliver directly to the seats. Speciality menu items and themed drinks correspond to certain featured films. Voted Best Movie Theater in Silicon Valley by Metro in 2025, Pruneyard Cinemas have an adjoining restaurant and bar called the Cedar Room Bar & Lounge, which often showcases live music and entertainment. The Cinemas also host events like comedy shows, drag queen bingo, and is available for private parties and group showings.

Alleging unfair rent increases, the theater brought a lawsuit against the landlord in December. Pruneyard Cinemas has pointed to a range of market challenges that have negatively impacted them and the entire theater business. Nationwide, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down theaters overnight, leaving only a handful of drive-ins open for years. Even when theater chains, like Pruneyard Cinemas, reopened, pandemic realities like masks and contact-free ticketing made the experience less enjoyable and carefree. Moreover, people became increasingly reliant on watching at home and many new releases went straight to streaming services, which further contributed to the decline in movie attendance at Pruneyard Cinemas. The 2023 Hollywood writer and actor strikes hit the movie and theater industries again causing delayed or canceled films that left seats at the Pruneyard Cinemas unfilled.

Following the initial news that the Pruneyard Cinemas was abruptly closing, an outpouring of movie-goer support flowed in. Community members, customers, and the City of Campbell advocated against the closure, which helped pressure the landlords to reach an agreement and settle the lawsuit. Additionally, the neighboring shops and restaurants, relying on foot traffic by movie-goers, complained to the property owner in support of the theater.

With continued community support, Pruneyard Cinemas will remain in business for the time being. Watch for increased programming like more live music and special events and be sure to buy tickets for a show! (Sources: KRON, Mercury News, SJ Spotlight)



BOX OFFICE: The theater has a welcoming lobby area.

## Trump threatens oil law

by Lila Zamansky

Media Production Editor

California communities and environmental justice groups worked for years to enforce a law to prevent workers from drilling new oil and gas wells near residential areas; the law was passed in 2022. Now, these protections face a major legal challenge. Recently, President Donald J. Trump filed a lawsuit against California seeking to overturn a state law that restricts new oil and gas drilling near sensitive residential areas.

The law, Senate Bill 1137, establishes a 3,200-foot buffer zone for new oil wells in sensitive areas. These areas are called "Health Protection Zones" (HPZs) and include residential areas, like schools, community centers, parks, playgrounds, and other public spaces. However, existing wells near these residential areas can continue to operate under monitored restrictions.

Supporters argue that this crucial Senate Bill reduces health risk for the states' communities and exposure to pollution linked to drilling. On the contrary, federal officials claim that Bill 1137 unlawfully limits access to federally managed land. Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a lawsuit challenging Senate Bill 1137, stating the law is unconstitutional and strictly conflicts with federal authority to manage and lease public lands for energy development.



INDUSTRIAL: Oil processing plants refine the drilled oil.

Supporters of revoking Senate Bill 1137 believe it strengthens America's energy security and additionally protects Americans from higher costs. Attorney General Pamela Bondi declared, "This is yet another unconstitutional and radical policy from Gavin Newsom that threatens our country's energy independence and makes energy more expensive for the American people."

California officials have defended the law, explaining its grounding in scientific research that links proximity to oil and gas wells with increased risk of many health concerns. Studies reveal emissions released at these drilling sites can severely worsen conditions like asthma, respiratory illnesses, and water contamination.



WELL-DONE: A well withdraws oil from underground.

Additionally, the lawsuit reflects a broader conflict between President Trump and California leaders over climate and energy priorities. During both his first and current terms of presidency, Trump supported expanding oil and gas production, including proposals to increase drilling near the California coast. Surfrider Elliott Wright emphasized, "There are entire cities that rely on a healthy ocean...and spills would destroy San Francisco, San Diego or LA."

As the case moves through the court, its outcome has a lasting effect on the extent to which states can regulate energy development to protect public health. Gov. Gavin Newsom insisted that he would defend SB 1137 and protect the health of California citizens. For Californian communities living near oil and gas operations, the decision may determine whether buffer zone protections remain in place or are rolled back in favor of expanded drilling. (Sources: California Department of Conservation, LA Times, SF Gate)

## CA prisons introduce new VR recreational programs

by Gowri Sunil

News Editor

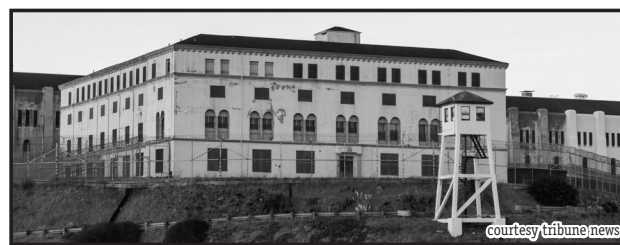
Recently, four California prisons partnered with CreativeArts, a nonprofit, to utilize virtual reality (VR) headsets in order to prepare incarcerated people for life after their release. Their goal carries the remarkable potential of providing inmates a temporary break from the confinement of prison walls in order to reintroduce them to a world that has changed immensely since their incarceration.

Founder Sabra Williams describes the VR headsets as "hope machines" for the inmates. The idea for the program stems from a prior theater-based initiative, through which Williams discovered that incarcerated individuals often felt like "they didn't belong, and that they only belonged in prison." As a result, Williams embarked on a new idea to help inmates with direct immersion in an ever-changing society.

Through VR, inmates have a wide variety of potential experiences, such as visits to places abroad as well as more practical scenarios, like job interviews and grocery store errands. Some

simulations even allow inmates to experience the practice of leaving the prison on their release date. For those in solitary confinement, the program can be especially impactful, offering a gradual reintroduction to social interactions and daily life.

Since the program's launch, the responses have been overwhelmingly positive. Jacob Smith, who has been in prison for 20 years, explained, "For a lot of us, the workforce has changed, and things are different with the application process."



REFORM: San Quentin Prison is among the four to incorporate VR programs.

Smith added, "It's a nerve-wracking experience going to sit in front of somebody and telling them why I'm good for the job."

In addition to alleviating anxiety, VR offers other mental health benefits, as confirmed by the American Psychological Association. The findings detailed that incarcerated individuals who viewed short nature videos experience less aggression and fewer disciplinary problems. Likewise, in California prisons using VR, reports found a 96% reduction in disciplinary violations among participants from solitary confinement, contributing to a safer environment for both inmates and staff.

Thus far, Williams noted the emotional impact of the programs as often immediate and profound. She shared, "So many times people would take off the headsets, and they'd be crying." Williams recalled one inmate ever remarking, "I never knew the world was so beautiful." Moments like these reinforce the importance of the program, which aims to provide inmates a smoother transition to a meaningful life beyond their incarceration. (Sources: ABC News, AP News, Independent Voter News)

- FBI seizes private data
- Astronauts land in the Pacific Ocean

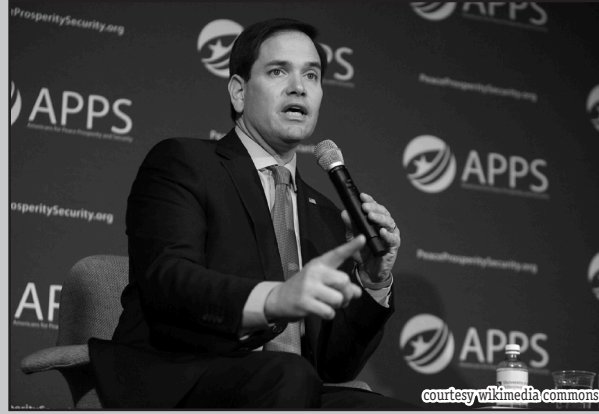
# The Trump administration halts immigration visas

by Sahil Muthukrishnan  
Culture Editor

The Trump administration suspended the United States's visa programs indefinitely for immigrants from 75 different countries on Jan. 21. The move is extremely controversial, though in line with many of the administration's other actions regarding on immigration, such as its freeze on immigration applications from 19 countries in December of 2025. The pause will target nations all across the world from nearly every continent. Notable countries include Brazil, Colombia, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, and Somalia. The administration recently honed its aggression on Somali immigrants specifically, after controversy in Minnesota regarding fraud and childcare credits.

Lawmakers' efforts have prompted immigrants to leave the country at record levels. The State Department reports it has revoked more than 100,000 visas since January of 2024. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) stated it has deported more than 600,000 individuals, with over 2.5 million leaving voluntarily. The suspension is not targeting temporary stay visas, such as those for education or temporary work, but is instead for foreigners seeking to live in the U.S. It is uncertain how long the pause will last.

Tommy Pigott, a spokesperson for the State Department, noted that the visas will remain suspended "while the State Department reassesses immigration processing procedures to prevent the entry of foreign nationals who would take welfare and public benefits."



ALL EYES: U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio takes questions at a conference.

The State Department has alleged that immigrants from these countries "take welfare from the American people at unacceptable rates." Experts take issue with these statements, as many barriers to entry for immigrants, such as five-year waiting periods for green card holders, prevent them from accessing public benefits like food stamps (SNAP), the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and non-emergency Medicaid. Furthermore, the Cato Institute found that immigrants used "21 percent less welfare and entitlement benefits than native-born Americans on a per capita basis in 2022," making the department's claims hold less weight.

With its efforts to limit immigration as a whole, both legal and illegal, the Trump administration is facing pushback. A recent AP News poll found that only 38% of Americans approve of the administration's immigration enforcement. This is down significantly from a previous 49% high last year. Historically, American sympathy for undocumented individuals who have been in the country for a long time is likely a driving force behind the drop. Since a majority of Americans, around 70%, support immigration when done through legal means, the administration's endeavors to restrict legal pathways may conflict with many who originally had shown their support. (Sources: AP News, Cato Institute, The Hill, NBC, NY Times)

## Crew-11 arrives from mission

by Tori Schubert  
People Editor

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)'s Crew-11 landed safely in the Pacific Ocean on Jan. 15, marking the end of a nearly half-year space expedition. With goals of exploration, plant and animal cell research, and preparation for future missions, Crew-11 made quite the impact throughout their 167-day trip on the International Space Station.

Departing from Florida's Kennedy Space Center on Aug. 1, Zena Cardman, Mike Fincke, Oleg Platonov, and Kimya Yui were prepared for a six-month mission. Although cut short due to undisclosed medical concerns, the four-person crew fulfilled many achievements throughout their 2,670 orbits around Earth. A NASA article explained the importance of their work: "Research conducted aboard the space station advances scientific knowledge and demonstrates new technologies that enable us to prepare for human exploration of the Moon and Mars." Members of Crew-11 took on various tasks involving plant cell division, viruses and their reactions to microgravity, moon landing simulations, and vision

tests to advance space technology. Additionally, the group tested strategies to increase the number of human stem cells. This is done by "reprogramming" blood and skin cells — a task made difficult by the gravitational qualities of Earth. If proven successful, scientists can use these stem cells to treat diseases, posing revolutionary solutions for the medical field.

The four astronauts behind these experiments brought with a wide range of spaceflight experience. Crew-11's expedition marked Fincke's fourth trip to space, collecting a total of 549 days of space travel, the fourth-highest days out of all NASA astronauts. However, for Platonov and Cardman, this was their first time travelling to space, and Yui's second. Coming from such a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, the combination made for a strong team, allowing them to share insights, collaborate, and build closer relationships. While Cardman and Fincke work for NASA, Yui comes from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and Platonov works for Roscosmos in Russia. Travelling 71 million miles, the crew quickly became comfortable with each other, teaching, learning, and bonding as a team. Administrator Jared Isaacman praised the members, noting, "I couldn't be prouder of our astronauts and the teams on the ground at NASA, SpaceX, and across our international partnerships." He further remarked, "Their professionalism and focus kept the mission on track, even with an adjusted timeline. Crew-11 completed more than 140 science experiments that advance human exploration."

Crew-11 has unpacked a plethora of possibilities regarding the futures of both space exploration and the medical field. These four astronauts became a dynamic team, willing to work hard, overcome obstacles, and challenge each other to reach new potentials, paving the way for future space exploration. (Source: NASA)



BLAST OFF: Members of NASA suit up for space departure.

## FBI seizes reporter's materials

by Julia Valencia  
Opinion Editor

On Jan. 14, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents raided Washington Post reporter Hannah Natanson's home after obtaining intelligence that Aurelio Perez-Lugones, a government contractor, had allegedly been sharing classified information with her. The FBI, following a search warrant, took Natanson's personal laptop, a company-issued laptop, her phone, and her smartwatch.

The case has drawn scrutiny online due to protections outlined in the Privacy Protection Act (PPA) of 1980, passed after the *Zurcher v. Stanford Daily* Supreme Court case. The PPA restricts police from searching and seizing materials related to a journalist's work. Unless they are suspected of being involved in a crime related to their research or there is an immediate risk of harm, which generally requires a subpoena instead of a search warrant, it is illegal for law enforcement to go through a reporter's home or seize journalistic materials. According to the NY Times authors Benjamin Mullin, Devlin Barrett, Charlie Savage, and Erik Wemple, the Justice Department's rules surrounding search warrants and subpoenas for leak issues insist that information "must be 'essential' and the government must have first made 'all reasonable attempts' to obtain it from alternative sources."

In addition to the raid, The Washington Post received a subpoena requiring the paper to turn over any communications between its reporters and Perez-Lugones. Matt Murray, The Washington Post's executive editor, addressed the incident in a message to staff, stating that investigators said the paper and Natanson were not the focus of the investigation. According to an FBI affidavit, Perez-Lugones had access to "extremely sensitive information" and had copied, printed, and taken notes on classified documents that he was not

authorized to have access to. "Nonetheless," Murray wrote, "this extraordinary, aggressive action is deeply concerning and raises profound questions and concern around the constitutional protections for our work."

The Justice Department has not answered any questions about why it did not approach Natanson or The Washington Post for cooperation or indicated whether it issued a subpoena to Natanson. Those actions would have allowed The Washington Post to contest the matter and protect any sources that were unrelated to the investigation. Natanson revealed that she had over 1,100 contacts on her devices, many of whom were federal workers, prompting concerns that the Justice Department may now have access to the identities of confidential sources.

Though the Justice Department has kept the contents and purposes of Natanson's files confidential, she has led investigations into the Trump administration's attempts to fire federal workers and reroute efforts into advancing his own agenda. The raid raises unresolved questions about how far the government can go in leak investigations without undermining legal protections for journalists and the press. (Sources: CNN, Freedom of the Press Foundation, NY Times, Washington Post)



SPOTLIGHT: The Washington Post building during investigation.

## Minnesota experiences political and civilian distress

by Nelson Kramer and Kat Littfin  
Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Editor

In December of 2025, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) expanded its operations into Minneapolis, Minnesota. These forays have been the organization's most significant and deadliest series of raids, targeting public centers such as schools, banks, and gas stations, and, most notably, arresting protesters off the streets. Nationwide, the reports of ICE raids are rising as the Trump administration and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) crack down on undocumented immigrants, further escalating operations in "high-risk cities."

In Minneapolis, the death of a 37-year-old woman sparked massive media attention. Agent Jonathan Ross fatally shot Renee Nicole Good, a poet and a mother of three, on Jan. 7. Officials claimed that Good attempted to ram into ICE agents with her car, but eyewitnesses to the event disputed this claim. DHS's claims allege that her death was a result of their officer exhibiting self-defense. An additional report disputes this further, saying that Officer Ross exhibited a 399-millisecond gap between the first two gunshots, which raised further questions about Ross's decision-making moments before Good's death.

This death ignited uproar among many residents of Minneapolis, as they took to the streets to protest against DHS and ICE. Among those protesters was intensive care nurse, Alex Pretti, whom ICE agents shot and killed on Jan. 24, only 17 days after Good's death.



SPEAK UP: Minnesota's streets fill with several civilian marches and protests.

Federal officers again claimed their actions were justified on grounds of self-defense, yet many organizations, including local officials and the American Nurses Association, have called for accountability. After the shooting, the administration labeled Pretti as a domestic terrorist. Many administration officials have pointed out that Pretti was a gun owner and accused him of brandishing a weapon at police officers and catalyzing the ensuing violence. However, in video footage of the incident, Pretti seems to be holding a cell phone like many others in his vicinity who were also recording the incident. In the days following Pretti's death, Trump has claimed that the killing was justified as he alleged Pretti was planning a massacre of ICE and DHS agents; no published evidence supports this claim other than the press releases of other Trump administration members.

After numerous exchanges with Governor Walz, Mayor Jacob Frey, and Border Czar Tom Homan, Trump claims that local leaders are resolving tensions in the city, but citizens of Minneapolis remain uncertain about what will happen next. This tumult has resulted in residents and citizens elsewhere calling for the impeachment of Kristi Noem, the United States Secretary of the DHS. For now, the city and its officials hope to put a stop to the turmoil caused by ICE and to recover from the damage it has inflicted on Minneapolis. (Sources: ANA, BBC, CNN, NBC, The Atlantic, Yahoo News)

- Iran protests their government
- U.S. voices desire for Greenland

## U.S. Special Forces capture Venezuelan President Maduro

by Annabelle Pan  
Graphics Editor

As the world celebrated the arrival of 2026, the United States armed forces executed the successful capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. The mission, named Operation Absolute Resolve, aimed to apprehend both Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, and bring them back to the U.S. to face federal drug trafficking charges.

Maduro succeeded Hugo Chávez, Venezuela's former president, in 2013 after Chávez died of cancer; Maduro declared himself the victor of two subsequent presidential elections. However, in 2019, the National Assembly of Venezuela denied Maduro's presidency,



PROTEST: The American involvement in Venezuela has caused outrage.

announcing that he had illegally assumed power. Following that report, more than 50 countries, including the U.S., refused to recognize Maduro as Venezuela's official leader. Maduro, like Chávez, participated in and protected an unlawful patronage system. In 2025, the U.S. Department of Treasury labeled Maduro as the leader of a drug trafficking organization called Cartel de los Soles. However, Latin American experts argue that the term is a figure of speech in Venezuela referring to a system in which drug money corrupts military officials. In addition, Maduro faces narco-terrorism charges for using drugs to finance the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, supplying them with weapons, negotiating cocaine shipments, and coordinating drug trafficking in other countries.

Ongoing tensions between the United States and Venezuela, which began with Chávez's election in 1998, culminated in the launch of Operation Absolute Resolve. In the months leading up to the operation's execution, Central Intelligence Agency informants working in the Venezuelan government gathered information and tracked Maduro's movements to guarantee its success. On the morning of Jan. 3, more than 150 military aircrafts launched from 20 bases across the Western Hemisphere to provide air support as Delta Force, the U.S. Army's counterterrorism unit, entered the compound in helicopters. The entire operation lasted approximately two and a half hours, from infiltrating the building to escorting Maduro out of the country. Delta Force flew Maduro and



CHANGE: Rodríguez presents to Latin American community members.

his wife to the USS Iwo Jima ship before sailing to New York. The U.S. suffered seven injuries but avoided any deaths, while 32 Cubans and more than 80 Venezuelans were killed.

Following Maduro's arrest, President Donald Trump stated the U.S. would help run Venezuela during its transition period. Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez is currently the interim president despite heavy suspicions of her involvement in drug trafficking. Maduro's arrest by the U.S. marks a significant operation in U.S. history and a major development in Venezuela's political situation, with new uncertainties about international relations and future policies. (Sources: AP News, CBS News, NY Times, U.S. Department of State)

## Iran protests result in deaths

by Abby Coven  
News Editor

On Dec. 28, 2025, massive anti-government protests erupted throughout Iran triggered by a collapsing economy, record-low currency, chronic water and energy shortages, and collective anger toward the theocratic government and its religious leaders. In response, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, directed a violent crack down with mass arrests, killings and communication blackouts. The protests do not appear to be subsiding after nearly a month.

More than 600 demonstrations have reportedly taken place across all 31 of Iran's provinces. The regime completely shut down the internet and international calls, but the death toll is still being determined by human rights groups both inside and outside the country. Currently, there is an estimate of at least 12,000 deaths, and potentially as high as 20,000. The numbers of detained individuals are believed to be approximately 24,700.

Iran has been in a severe economic crisis due largely to years of sanctions by the U.S. and European nations over its nuclear program. High unemployment, especially among young



ABLAZE: Iranian anti-government protests cause chaos.

individuals, and steep inflation have sparked public anger. In December of 2025, Iran's currency, the rial, experienced a sharp drop in value, driving up the prices of basic goods. Even shopkeepers, traditionally loyal to the regime, became upset and joined the protests. Iran's economic challenges were further exacerbated after Israel and the U.S. launched air strikes last fall.

The protests intensified and expanded to directly challenge the government. Protestors no longer believe its promises of a better life due to the regime's widespread corruption and mismanagement. Iranians are facing repression, censorship, and restrictions on personal freedoms. In fact, the last major protests occurred in 2022 following the death of a young woman, Mahsa Amini, by the "morality police" for not wearing her hijab properly. Anti-government protests lasted for days, with people pushing for greater women's rights and government reforms.

The current Islamic government in Iran has been in place since the 1979 Revolution, when the people overthrew the prior leader, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. At the time, an Islamic theocracy replaced the centuries-old Persian monarchy. Specifically, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and his more Western and secular-leaning government were toppled because of the unpopularity in his regime. Since then, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard has protected the regime in power.

Even in the face of the regime's brutal crackdown, the demonstrations reveal widespread discontent. Analysts believe that the regime's efforts to suppress public anger may work again this time, but its failure to address the Iranian people's widely felt, underlying concerns will only lead to future protests. (Sources: AP, NY Times, Skye News)

## Crane hits train in Thailand

by Britt Melinauskas  
National Editor

On a typical train course from Bangkok to Ubon Ratchathani, catastrophe struck when a construction crane fell on top of a passenger train mid-route on Jan. 14 in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. With 171 individuals aboard the train, AP News journalists, Jintamas Saksonchai and Wasamon Adujarint reported that at least 32 have died, with an estimated 60 individuals injured, and three passengers missing.

After the accident, Italian-Thai Development firm, the corporation responsible for the construction issues, claims they will accept "full responsibility" for the train collision, along with providing "full compensation and medical care" for the victims and families of the deceased. They also agreed to support the local authorities involved in the safety of the workers assisting the wreck. The rail accident reignited widespread anger towards the Italian-Thai Development firm, a co-contractor of the State Audit Building in Bangkok, which collapsed in March of 2025. In the incident, an 8.8-magnitude earthquake damaged the building, and 100 civilians perished in the breakage.

Both devastating disasters in the improved infrastructure have drawn attention to Italian-Thai Development's involvement in repeated projects that have gone awry, resulting in accidents and fatalities. Following the Jan. 14 accident, on the following day, Jan. 15, another crane collapsed on an expressway, killing an additional two people. As a result of the two episodes, Thailand's transport minister, Phiphat Ratchakitpraka, told reporters that the government will pause aboveground construction with unknown ideas of the root causes. As rescue workers examined the scene, many individuals reported that the secondary crane collapse crushed two vehicles, and it is unknown

whether there are any remaining survivors left to be found alive. Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul of Thailand said on Jan. 15 that the government would pursue legal action against those responsible.

Afterwards, he issued a statement: "This has happened multiple times, and it's the same contractors... I don't think the state would want this company to continue working." The high-speed rail line where the accident happened is part of a larger plan to connect China with Southeast Asia through Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei offered his condolences to Prime Minister Anutin following the crane collapse on the railway project, and expressed his commitment to full cooperation and transparency throughout the investigation. Zhang Jianwei has emphasized the importance of the project to the relationship between the two countries, and the new construction measures are paused until more stringent safety regulations are in place. (Sources: AP News, BBC, CNN, NY Times)



COLLAPSE: A train in Thailand crashes following crane fall.

## President Trump expresses his desire to acquire Greenland

by Atharava Pandey  
Sports Editor

Ever since President Trump was elected to a second term, he has continually expressed interest in Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory controlled by Denmark. Trump believes that Greenland's natural resources make it a vital U.S.



EXERCISE: NATO has been getting ready in Greenland.

national security interest, arguing that "if we don't do it, Russia or China will." Although President Trump has made repeated remarks about acquiring the island, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies have warned that if he uses military force, they would strongly reconsider their decades-long alliance. French President Emmanuel Macron even suggested that the European Union could activate its anti-coercion measure, which would allow it to block the imports of goods and services from the U.S.

Greenland has been a Danish territory for centuries. A major development occurred in 2009 when Denmark passed the Act of Greenland Self-Government, granting the island significant control over its domestic affairs. However, Denmark still maintains control over Greenland's foreign affairs today. Over the past few years, a strong independence movement has gained momentum in Greenland, highlighted by the release of the island's first draft constitution.

According to Rebecca Pincus, director of the Wilson Center's Polar Institute, "Greenland is important from a missile-defense perspective, from a space perspective, and from

a global competition perspective." There are also economic incentives, as rising temperatures due to climate change have made rare earth metals such as lithium more accessible. 80% of Greenland is currently covered by a rapidly melting ice sheet, improving overall accessibility and navigation within the area. Greater convenience can potentially create shorter and faster trade routes between Asia, Europe, and Africa, making Greenland a desirable international trade hub.

The United States could legally acquire Greenland with consent from the Danish government and agreement of Greenland's parliament. However, the island has strongly opposed this proposition. Greenland's Prime Minister (PM), Múte B. Egede, stated, "We don't want to be Danish, we don't want to be American, we want to be Greenlandic."

The White House has consistently declined to use military power. In fact, forcefully seizing Greenland would be a violation of the United States's history of recognizing national sovereignty. However, President Trump has stated that he wants to seize control over the island "one way or the other." Furthermore, he also threatened to impose tariffs on the European countries until a deal is reached "for the complete

and total purchase of Greenland."

While Greenland is clearly an advantageous location for trade and resources, the island has made clear its desire for freedom. Only time will tell how the President plans to acquire the island without violating the national precedents that have been in place for centuries.

(Sources: CNN, Council on Foreign Relations)



ANGRY: The PM of Greenland, Egede, voices his opinion.

- Decode the tricky alphabet puzzle
- Color in a cozy winter drawing

# GAMES

## Connections

|        |           |           |       |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| GO     | BUCKET    | CAST      | GLASS |
| POOL   | FIREWORKS | SLEIGH    | COW   |
| BALL   | THROW     | COUNTDOWN | DOOR  |
| GRAPES | CHURCH    | JUG       | FAR   |

C. Casal Montserrat



## WORD SEARCH

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

- Puzzle
- Logic
- Riddle
- Deception
- Misdirection
- Illusion
- Sudoku
- Maze
- Trivia
- Crossword
- Connections
- Pattern
- Solutions
- Brainstorm
- Cipher
- Decode
- Cryptic
- Strategy
- Sequence

I. Habib



## COLOR BY NUMBER



T. Chang

1. Dark Blue
2. White
3. Light Blue
4. Brown
5. Yellow
6. Red
7. Light
8. Green
9. Dark Green



## MINI CROSSWORD

|   |   |    |   |   |
|---|---|----|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |    | 3 | 4 |
| 5 |   |    | 6 |   |
| 7 |   | 8  |   |   |
| 9 |   |    |   |   |
|   |   | 10 |   |   |

S. Muthukrishnan

### Across:

1. What one might make at a dinner with champagne
5. Was in the present tense
6. One who might help a teacher organize files
7. What fans might do when their team scores a touchdown
9. Fibrous green that one might make chips from
10. First three letters of the baguette's homeland

### Down:

1. \_\_\_ Tock
2. Federal agency that regulates working conditions
3. What one does with a ship's helm
4. Sticky substance on Kevin's stairs in Home Alone
8. Fantasy creature with pointy ears



## Graphics Hunt

Look through the newspaper graphics and try to find all the items on this list. How many can you spot? (Hint: graphics are on pages 7-15!)

- Baby
- Gavel
- Glasses
- Pencil
- Pikachu
- Shoelaces

The letters "IT" (in a graphic, not typed out)

- Traffic Light
- Yogurt

A. Pan



RULES

SOLUTIONS



## ALPHABET PUZZLE

Why was the snowman rummaging through a bag of carrots?

- |        |        |       |
|--------|--------|-------|
| A = 4  | J =    | S =   |
| B =    | K =    | T =   |
| C = 6  | L =    | U =   |
| D =    | M =    | V =   |
| E = 8  | N =    | W =   |
| F =    | O =    | X =   |
| G =    | P =    | Y =   |
| H = 11 | Q =    | Z = 3 |
| I = 12 | R = 21 |       |

11 8 26 4 22

19 12 6 14 12 17 10

11 12 22 17 18 22 8

T. Ambekar

# EDITORIAL

EL GATO • THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONEWS.COM

- The LG community should realize transport effects

## LGHS students should avoid individual transportation

by **Tanvi Ambekar, Jane Wilde, Quinn Hathaway, and Advika Anand**  
*Opinion, Humor, Media Production, and Graphics Editors*

Every day, Los Gatos High School students must negotiate several traffic issues both arriving and leaving the school premises. This inconvenience is tied to a broader issue: while many students are stuck in their car and growing frustrated by the lack of movement, they are unknowingly contributing to a global climate issue. A possible solution to this predicament is the usage of both public and alternative transportation to deviate from the reliance on individual means of arrival. Due to environmental harms, students should utilize alternate forms of transportation, including taking public buses, walking, biking, and carpooling, to help alleviate before and after school chaos and take immediate action to counteract climate change.

Environmental factors emphasize the necessity of public transportation, with rising carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions detrimentally affecting the planet. Humans burning organic or fossilized carbon compounds within an oxygenic atmosphere releases CO<sub>2</sub>, and photosynthetic processes work to lower the levels of the emissions. But there continues to be excess gas, and that extra amount creates a phenomenon known as the “greenhouse effect,” resulting in increased ocean levels, higher surface temperature, and ocean acidification. Driving a gas-powered car is a major contributor to the abundance of emissions. The average passenger vehicle emits about 400 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> per mile. Currently, transportation creates more than a fifth of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, according to a study by the International Energy Agency. Over the span of a year, an individual passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Yet idling a car also adds to the negative impact. California enforces laws mitigating diesel vehicles’ ability to idle, but the legislature does not legalize idling in the average petrol-powered car. Many LGHS students sit for over thirty minutes during their commute to and from school with the engine running. Senior **Alice McKee** shares, “It takes me an hour to get home from the lot, and I only live about seven minutes away.” This excess time spent finding parking and waiting to exit burns exorbitant amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>, significantly advancing the greenhouse effect. The facts are simple: a car can carry several people, a bus can carry dozens

of passengers, and a train can carry hundreds. Utilizing public transportation works to mitigate the full extent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by decreasing an individual’s carbon footprint.

Many alternatives, such as carpooling and sustainable mobility options, offer significant benefits to the environment and the student population as a whole. Carpooling and active transportation also lessen the financial burden on families through the reduction of fuel costs, senior lot parking expenses, and upkeep of vehicles. Furthermore, active travel supports mental

and physical health, stimulating both the brain and the body. A study from the Universities of Copenhagen and Aarhus found a positive correlation between walking and cycling to school and the ability to concentrate. Junior **Pranav Sethuraman** explains why he chooses to bike to and from school daily: “The fresh air in the morning, and biking before school de-stresses me, as I get a break from the thought of schoolwork, classes, and tests.” These breaks from academics allow for increased attention when in class, as Professor John J. Ratey of Harvard Medical School confirms: “Memory reten-

tion [is all] about brain cells...changing, growing, and working better together...Exercise creates the best environment for that process to occur.” In terms of fitness, Walk Bike to School notes on its website that physical transport to and from school enables teenagers to incorporate regular physical activity while building strong bones and muscles, overall decreasing their risk of obesity. Ultimately, teenagers who arrive at school using active travel receive mental benefits through improved concentration and connections with peers, physical benefits through an overall increase in fitness, and financial advantages by saving money.

Multiple public transportation methods are available to high school students within the Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District. One of the most popular routes in the city is under the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), a major public transportation network that manages multiple systems across the Bay Area. Their Route 27, a nearly eight-mile-long route, connects Winchester Station to Santa Teresa Station. It halts at the LGHS bus stop six times before school begins, starting at 6:00 AM and running every 30 minutes. Buses departing from Santa Teresa Station pause at nine stops before arriving at LGHS, with Campbell and Monte Sereno’s stops including those on North Santa Cruz, Winchester, and more. Although bus stops do not exist at every intersection, taking the extra ten minutes to walk or bike to the closest stop can save students up to an hour spent in traffic. Loma Prieta Joint Union School District, a district located in the Santa Cruz Mountains near LGHS, also supports a daily school bus system for students who do not have access to the VTA system. This bus stops 12 times every morning, starting at 7:00 AM and reaching LGHS at 7:45 AM, offering affordable and convenient transportation for students who live farther away.

Both public and active transportation offer viable and vital alternatives that more members of the LGHS community should utilize to combat traffic as well as climate change. If all Wildcats are more considerate of their environmental footprint, it will result in less traffic congestion and significantly decreased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. (Sources: California Air Resources Board, Loma Prieta Union School District, MIT Climate Portal, NOAA, TheWalkingClassroom, US Department of Energy, USEPA, VTA, Walk Bike to School)



A. Pan



### FEBRUARY

| Sunday                      | Monday                | Tuesday              | Wednesday                                   | Thursday | Friday | Saturday              |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---|----------|--------|-----------------------|
| 1                           | 2<br>Groundhog Day    | 3                    | 4   | 5        | 6      | 7<br>Junior Prom      |
| 8                           | 9                     | 10                   | 11  | 12       | 13     | 14<br>Valentine's Day |
| 15<br>February Break begins | 16<br>Presidents' Day | 17<br>Lunar New Year | 18<br>Ash Wednesday<br>First day of Ramadan | 19       | 20     | 21                    |
| 22                          | 23                    | 24                   | 25<br>MOSAIC                                | 26       | 27     | 28                    |
| 1                           | 2                     | 3                    | 4   | 5        | 6      | 7                     |



A. Anand

1/29/26

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- LGHS needs to hire crossing guards
- Early college admission is elitist

# OPINION

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## Anand advocates for crossing guards at LGHS

by Advika Anand  
Graphics Editor



Every weekday morning from 8:00 to 8:30, students ages five to 18 scramble to leave their houses on time so they can navigate streets already crowded with impatient drivers. The commute alone is stressful, but for students heading to Los Gatos High School, it can also be unsafe. Because the route to LGHS passes several other LGUSD schools, traffic from multiple campuses flows into the same roads. This overlap only worsens congestion and increases the risk of accidents. The LGHS administration should take immediate action by hiring trained crossing guards at the crosswalks surrounding the school to minimize traffic, prevent accidents, and ensure the safety of students walking or biking to campus.

Even after drivers pass these schools, the traffic does not dissipate, but actually escalates. Approaching LGHS from Los Gatos Boulevard, traffic gathers again near the crosswalks surrounding campus. With so many students walking from Loma Alta Avenue or nearby neighborhoods, sidewalks and crosswalks become crowded: cars are forced to stop abruptly for

pedestrians, students rush to cross before the bell, and both groups grow increasingly frustrated. This combination of factors creates an environment in which a serious accident feels inevitable. While this issue has existed for years, the administration has not addressed it with the urgency it deserves.

Crossing guards are already a proven solution in the Los Gatos community. Near Fisher Middle School and the surrounding elementary schools, crossing guards are present every morning to manage traffic and help students cross safely. Their presence creates a structure so that cars know when to stop, especially in the absence of signals.



Students know when it is safe to cross, and traffic flows more smoothly as a result. At LGHS, however, students are often left to make judgment calls when crossing.

Beyond observation, there is also evidence that crossing guards reduce pedestrian accidents, especially during peak commute hours. According to Safe Routes to School, studies show that adult supervision at crosswalks increases driver awareness and decreases risky behavior from both pedestrians and motorists. High school students may be older than elementary students, but that does not make them immune to danger. In fact, because many LGHS students bike or walk independently, the risks can be even higher.

Ultimately, crossing guards have already proven effective at nearby schools. Hiring crossing guards at LGHS is a simple but realistic solution that would benefit students and drivers alike. The morning commute should feel safe and secure, and crossing guards will be the key to making this vision a reality. (Source: SRTS)

## Wilde rejects A24 marketing

by Jane Wilde  
Humor Editor



Like many others, Marty Supreme drew me in because of A24's seemingly incredible marketing. This includes Timothee Chalamet standing on top of the Las Vegas Sphere while yelling, "Marty Supreme Christmas Day," people following him around with ping pong balls for heads, and the continuous preaching to "dream big" as Marty himself would.

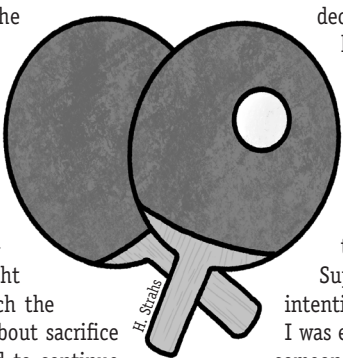
However, the marketing for the film preaches arrogance over ambition and needs to start encouraging others to dream big without putting others down to do so.

An ongoing theme in the film is Marty's adamant refusal to take no for an answer. Chalamet even went on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon to pitch the film, stating, "This is a movie about sacrifice in the pursuit of a dream... and to continue to believe in yourself, dream big, follow your dreams, and not take no for an answer. That's the spirit of Marty Supreme." When Chalamet preaches to never take no for an answer, he is referring to Marty's incessant sacrifices, including his committing several felonies, such as car theft and arson. The sacrifices Chalamet praises allude to the discarding of meaningful relationships and the choice of ambition over empathy and stability. He even leaves his pregnant girlfriend to play a ping pong match, insisting the baby is not his. Sacrifices

of this manner cross the line of ambition into the territory of arrogance and utter disrespect for others. Never taking no for an answer is not a particularly redeeming quality. When Chalamet markets the movie as fuel and inspiration, he is encouraging the public to behave like abusive, narcissistic lunatics and write their behavior off as dedication.

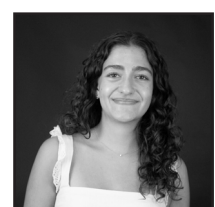
The marketing is not only harmful but also extremely misleading. One of the most prominent marketing tactics A24 uses is the distribution of "Marty Supreme Dream Big Fleece's" among A-list celebrities. One recipient is Michael Phelps, a man who desperately fought mental health issues and had to rise out of poverty to become the most decorated Olympic medalist in world history. The association A24 makes between driven, genuine legends and the shifty Marty Miser is misleading on several levels. The comparison suggests that viewers should idolize Marty, when in reality he should serve as a cautionary tale. After the many Marty Supreme jackets Chalamet gave out intentionally to hard-working dreamers, I was expecting to watch a movie about someone who doesn't put others down to achieve success and social mobility.

Admittedly, A24's marketing for Marty Supreme is impressive. It is unlike anything the public has seen before, but it is morally conflicting and conveys a problematic message. A24's marketing plan portrays Marty's shameful acts as ambitious or overly zealous determination. In order to avoid normalizing narcissistic tendencies, A24 needs to verbalize Marty's flaws instead of glorifying them as signs of ambition. (Source: The Tonight Show)



## Create more software jobs

by Kloe Adams  
Games Creator



Since the early 2010s, tech leaders have publicly warned that the U.S. economy and global technology leadership are at risk due to a weak showing of computer science

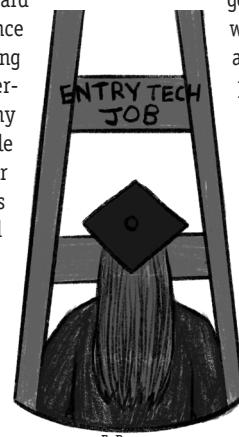
programs in high schools and a dearth of students studying computer programming. Silicon Valley promised kids that if they work hard and learn to code, computer science would be their ticket to a high-paying and high-status tech job. Furthering this narrative, tech company leaders such as Eric Schmidt at Google and Brad Smith at Microsoft said their companies were creating tech jobs faster than they could find skilled workers to fill them. And, while at the time, these promises for a successful future in tech seemed achievable, computer science graduates are struggling to land tech jobs in the current climate. United States-based tech companies must address the influx of eligible graduates by offering entry and junior-level positions straight out of university.

Among recent college graduates aged 22-27, computer science and computer engineering majors are facing some of the highest unemployment rates. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York reported that unemployment ranged from 6.1%-7.5% across the United States in 2024. For perspective, that is more than twice the

unemployment rate among recent biology graduates, which is just 3%. Moreover, in 2024, the number of undergraduates in the United States majoring in computer science exceeded 170,000 students. This number is triple the number of computer science students since 2012.

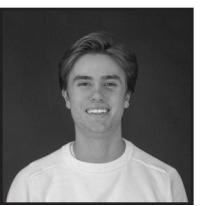
It is very clear that the marketing urging students to pursue computer science and programming is extremely efficient; however, tech companies are unable to offer enough jobs to address the supply of eligible applicants. Code is no longer the backbone of tech jobs as AI tools can generate their own code, meaning that kids who have spent their whole high school and college careers mastering computer programming are not needed. This is especially true in entry-level and junior-level positions, which remain a crucial stepping stone for new graduates to be considered for higher-level positions. Venture capital firm SignalFire found there was a 50% decline in new roles people started with less than one year of post-graduate work experience. There is a demanding pressure for post-grads to acquire advanced skills they did not learn in school to gain new "entry-level" jobs that require an advanced skill set.

There are still opportunities for new grads to climb the career ladder; however, it is much harder to even get onto the first rung. Therefore, it is the responsibility of tech companies to address the influx of graduates, the difficulties of getting a job out of school, and help them begin their climb to advanced positions which AI has not overtaken by creating new jobs. (Sources: CNBC, NY Times)



## Kramer calls to include trans people in the athletics debate

by Nelson Kramer  
Editor-in-Chief



It begins with a group of parents protesting outside a high school track and field meet, objecting to a transgender athlete competing against their daughter. What starts as an isolated event escalates into the normalization of discrimination against the transgender community.

Have we, as a nation, not learned from our past of hate and bigotry? Protecting the freedoms of any individual is a fight to protect these freedoms for all people. As a society, we must confront hate and violence directed at transgender people in athletics and beyond, fighting against the dehumanization disguised as civil and righteous protest.

As a cisgender male, it is clear that my individual perspective cannot capture the lived experiences of transgender people. But as I look out toward a country in outrage, with fireballs of hate speech flying from political catapults, I am struck by how

polarized our society is becoming. It goes without saying that trans athletes are human beings, deserving of dignity, fairness, and the opportunity to compete and belong. They desire inclusion and acceptance in athletic spaces and physical competition just like any other athlete, transgender or not.

Now playing out online and across college campuses nationwide, the debate sparks controversy for being used as political fuel to bolster "conservative" campaigns, but is it always a genuine question of fairness, or does the deeper discomfort with gender nonconformity often taint it? In recent news the Supreme Court upheld state laws that bar transgender participation in athletics setting a precedent for states to make these decisions unilaterally. Beyond the anger and indignation that often stem from bringing up transgender people in conversation, when it comes to sports, questions of fairness remain meaningful. The calls for solutions must be answered to ensure a civil future between opposing groups. We must create a space where people can set aside hostility and converse honestly. To debate

any topic, we need to include both sides of the issue. So why do we seem to exclude the transgender perspective? Why are their voices and opinions shut out? Their lived insight is critical to a conversation about inclusion. Society must set aside fears of transgender people selfishly "favoring themselves" in any discussion and instead recognize that building trust between both sides is critical when creating humane policies.

How can we start to have effective conversations on the topic of transgender people? How do we answer the question of what is fair? The answer is simple: we include those who are transgender from the start. There have been too few studies on hormone therapy's effects on athletes, and the conclusions are mixed. Research shows a range of answers with regard to the biological fairness of including transgender athletes in general competition. The truth is that we can't find an obvious answer to what is fair. Excluding transgender athletes until we have a "definitive" answer only guarantees that the rules and social standards we create will be incomplete, biased, possibly harmful, and ultimately unfair. Fairness is not something we find in a lab report; similar to our past civil movements, it's something we build through dialogue, empathy, and the willingness to understand experiences beyond our own. (Sources: Big Think, The National Library of Medicine, NPR, The Atlantic)



# Regulate CRISPR usage

by Tanya Chang  
Sports Editor



Over the course of several decades, people have considered the idea of editing human DNA to be scientifically impossible.

Books warn of genetically enhanced humans and societies divided by biology rather than opportunity. Today, that future is becoming closer. Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) allows us to make gene editing efficient. Originally, it was meant to help save people, but it is quickly shifting to alter personal traits. This raises ethical problems that society is not ready to face. Lawmakers and scientists must work together to enforce limitations on gene editing before CRISPR advances more quickly than our ability to prevent the consequences of it.

CRISPR has potential in the medical field. Researchers have successfully treated sickle cell disease and beta thalassemia by editing the faulty genes, creating a possibility for curing inherited disorders. According to the National Institutes of Health, gene editing could remove diseases that currently require intense treatment. However, this same technology which can heal can also be put to misuse. CRISPR does not separate between correcting harmful mutations and enhancing traits simply because they are more desirable.

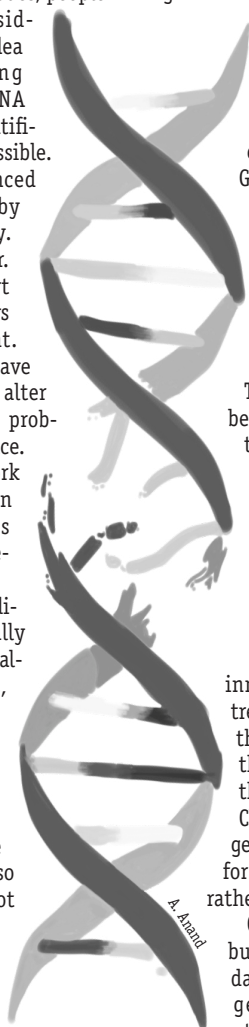
The dangers of unregulated gene editing became clear in 2018, when Chinese scientist He Jiankui announced the world's first gene-edited babies. His actions violated moral principals and were considered unsafe across

the world, yet they demonstrated how easy it is to cross limitations. Restrictions for CRISPR vary drastically across countries, allowing dangerous experiments to take place without the proper regulations.

In addition to ethics, gene editing also has biological risks. One mistake in mutation choice can create damaging changes, causing new diseases. Germline editing affects future generations where mistakes can't be fixed once the mutation is passed down. The World Health Organization has warned that changing DNA without a set limit could have unpredictable consequences for humanity. There are also serious social risks because if the wealthy gain access to gene editing, society could face a new branch of inequality rooted in biology. Enhancing intelligence, strength, or appearance could create even more pronounced social divide and lead to discrimination.

Critics may argue that placing limits on CRISPR will slow innovation and delay life-saving treatments. However, getting rid of this technology completely is not the solution; setting regulations that will be followed is sufficient. Clear restrictions can ensure that gene editing is used responsibly and for the benefit of all of humanity rather than personal profit.

CRISPR holds a lot of promise, but possibility without limits is dangerous. The future of human genetics should use ethics, not personal motive, as a guide. Acting now is the best way to ensure that scientific progress helps humanity rather than reshaping it beyond recognition. (Sources: AAAS, NIH, WHO)



# Abandon streaming services

by Isabella Langner  
Center Editor

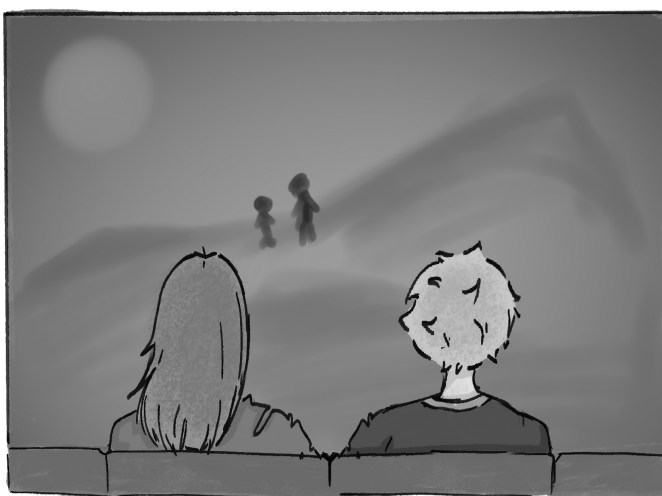


As streaming services such as Netflix, Disney+, and HBO become more popular, people have begun opting for at-home options instead of attending showings at local cinemas.

While there are many benefits to these media platforms, the main one being that they offer easy access, going to a theater provides an experience that cannot be replicated at home.

Instead of watching new movies on streaming services, audiences should prioritize attending movie theaters for an immersive experience in communal spaces.

Movie theaters play movies on a 50-foot screen and audio from speakers located all around the room. In a dark theater, movies become an experience that engages the senses and pulls you into the story more intensely than films on your 55-inch TV can. Additionally, movie theater popcorn, snacks, and drinks contribute to the overall experience. Instead of ordering takeout or getting up every five minutes to grab another Snickers bar, people can pile up snacks on their tray, recline in their chairs, and forget about the number of calories they are consuming.



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As a traditional part of the movie-going experience, audiences have an excuse to eat lots of candy and buttery popcorn.

When a movie plays on the big screen, nobody is able to pause, delay, or interrupt it, ensuring you are more invested and present. Experiencing a movie without turning your attention to your phone, a conversation in the other room, or letting your dog outside allows you to focus on the film.

Moreover, studios create movies with the intention of being watched with others. Seeing a film is traditionally an intentional outing where one can spend quality time with friends and family. Now, it has transformed into yet another experi-

ence people can enjoy without leaving their homes, continuing the trend of limiting communal spaces after the pandemic. Watching movies the way they were intended supports a dying industry of movie theaters and produces jobs in communities. We see

this in our own area, with the Pruneyard Cinemas almost closing due to "financial challenges that include the pandemic, writer and actor strikes, and the rising costs of operating."

Admittedly, there are many reasons to opt for streaming services. Some might want to put on a movie while doing another task, discuss the plot out loud with others, or simply experience a film without the effort of driving. Ultimately, audiences can still utilize these platforms, but they should strongly consider movie theaters when simply enjoying the newest film with friends or family.

# Pandey criticizes the glorification of early admission

by Atharava Pandey  
Sports Editor



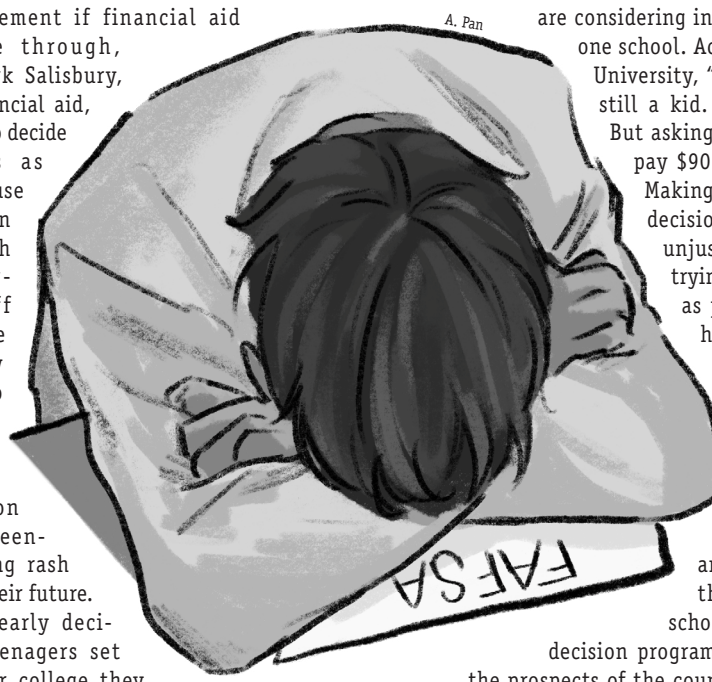
College admissions season is one of the most stressful times for many high school students. As students navigate this critical junction in their lives, it can feel as if the weight of the world rests on their shoulders. Searching for relief from this constant pressure, students are drawn to anything that promises certainty. Colleges

exploit this fear with the early decision program, a binding program that offers an early response but requires the student to attend if accepted. While this option may seem harmless at first glance, it conceals an pernicious injustice. Colleges should eliminate the early decision process because it provides an unfair advantage to wealthy students and pressures teenagers into making rushed decisions.

Early decision heavily favors wealthy students. Many students apply to numerous colleges in order to explore their best choices for financial aid. This access to options helps them leverage their application to make the best deal for their financial future. However, applying early runs the risk of committing to a university that might charge the student 90,000 dollars a year in tuition. Although colleges say they will let the student

out of the agreement if financial aid does not come through, according to Mark Salisbury, an expert in financial aid, "The school gets to decide what qualifies as too high." Because early decision entails so much financial uncertainty, well-off students are significantly more likely to benefit from its higher chances of acceptance.

Early decision also pressures teenagers into making rash decisions about their future. Because of the early decision process, teenagers set aside every other college they



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are considering in order to invest all their resources into one school. According to Eryn Schoenebeck at Boston University, "I'm only 17. At the end of the day, I'm still a kid. I get why schools do early decision.

But asking a 17-year-old to sign an agreement to pay \$90,000 a year is a really, really big ask." Making students commit to such a momentous decision at an extremely vulnerable time is unjust and exploitative. Colleges are simply trying to claim high-quality students as soon as possible to leech off their success and help their own reputation in the market.

Unfortunately, more schools than ever have started to offer early decision. The University of Michigan offered early decision for the first time this year, as did the University of Virginia. Yet applicants should be allowed to explore their options and pick the school that best matches their future plans, not just the first school that accepts them. Eradicating early

decision programs would benefit students and improve the prospects of the country's youth.

# Athletes deserve equal consequences for illegal drug use

by Kayla Mitchell  
Public Relations Manager



As professional sports become more competitive each season, top athletes increasingly seek any possible advantage to get ahead of the game. In response to the rising intensity and talent, doping scandals among elite athletes worldwide have emerged, threatening the integrity of sports. Although various sports and

individual leagues maintain their own regulations regarding the use of performance-enhancing drugs, organizations must respond equally to all doping cases and exposures. Sports organizations must enforce identical doping consequences for all athletes, regardless of their public status or competitive importance.

Athletes competing at high levels are rarely caught for doping because they familiarize themselves with the regulations placed on performance drugs by their sports organizations. As athletes are exposed for the use of banned substances, sports organizations determine the consequences, typically a ban that prevents the player from competing. As more doping cases emerge, a pattern of favoritism towards popular athletes who contribute to viewership or funding is becoming apparent.

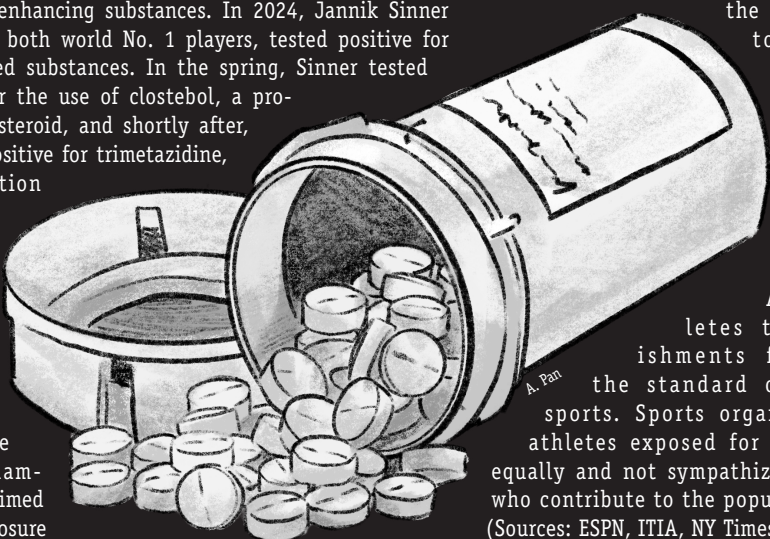
In most cases, organizations tend to reprimand influential athletes for shorter periods of time to maintain the attention they bring to the sport.

Competing in one of the toughest endurance sports in the world, influential tennis professionals have a history of abusing performance-enhancing substances. In 2024, Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek, both world No. 1 players, tested positive for the use of banned substances. In the spring, Sinner tested positive twice for the use of clostebol, a prohibited anabolic steroid, and shortly after, Swiatek tested positive for trimetazidine, a heart medication banned for its connection to improved stamina. The same year, aspiring young tennis player Goncalo Oliveira tested positive for the substance methamphetamine. He claimed unintentional exposure

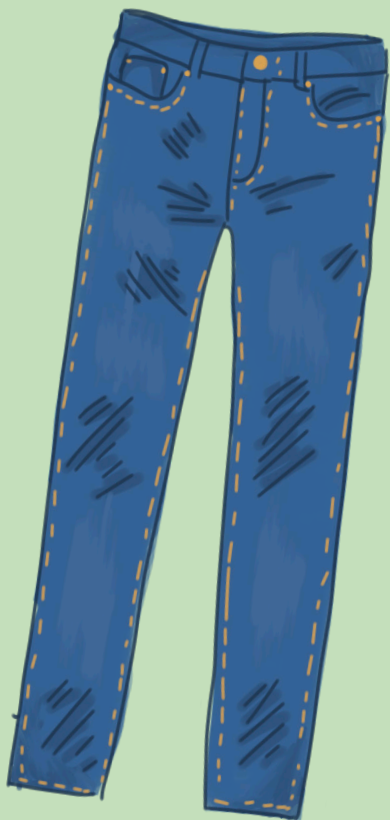
to the drug through contact, holding the same "no intent to cheat" arguments as Sinner and Swiatek. With support from high-profile legal teams and strong support from top-tier tennis federations such as the ATP Tour, both Sinner and Swiatek received short banishment periods, only missing parts of the season without Grand Slam tournaments, the biggest attractions to the sport.

With no funding for a high-profile legal team or institutional backing from federations, Oliveira faced a four-year ban from the sport, a length that could end a young career.

Allowing prominent athletes to receive lighter punishments for doping undermines the standard of equal opportunity in sports. Sports organizations need to punish athletes exposed for use of banned substances equally and not sympathize with high-profile athletes who contribute to the popularity and wealth of a sport. (Sources: ESPN, ITIA, NY Times)



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## WORST MARKETING FAIL

Aaanddd the worst marketing fail of the year goes to...the Sydney Sweeney x American Eagle "Great Jeans" ad! What was meant to come off as cheeky and cute instead translated into a eugenic message, leaving a lasting (negative) impression on everyone. Truly, they could not have won this award without the GAP Denim x Katseye collaboration, which followed shortly after and pushed "Great Jeans" to victory. This award is dedicated to the poor women around the world who developed body dysmorphia and tried to go blonde;  
you will be remembered.

**-Siyona Singhal**, Humor Editor

## BEST TOUR

The award for Best Tour goes to none other than the Eras of Trish: 35 nights of bliss and adventure with online personality Trisha Paytas. At the San Jose Civic, Paytas sang, danced, and cracked jokes about her fetus being the reincarnated late pope while eight months pregnant with her son, Aquaman. But between her flashy numbers and unique quips, Paytas took time to interact with the audience: complimenting outfits, answering questions, and even singing favorite songs by request. Paytas's commitment to putting on the best show possible makes her the obvious recipient of the Best Tour award.

**-Hayley Strahs**, Editor-in-Chief

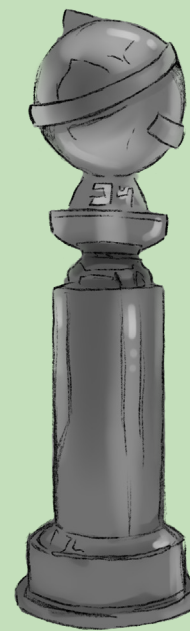


## MOST UNEXPECTED CELEBRITY COUPLE

In 2025, very few couples made public appearances; one key exception to this observation was the pair of Timothée Chalamet and Kylie Jenner. Though talented actor Chalamet and reality television personality Jenner were rumored to have started dating around 2023, their presence in the media this year has skyrocketed due to the release of Chalamet's new film, *Marty Supreme*. Their coupling has also sparked varied opinions on their surprising yet seemingly successful relationship. Both celebrities endured multiple breakup rumors but countered them by appearing together at various public events. Jenner's support for Chalamet's career is immensely apparent, especially when she wore a *Marty Supreme*-branded jacket to a New York Yankees game and a bright orange dress to the Critics' Choice Awards, paying homage to the film. These moments earned Chalamet and Jenner the Most Unexpected Couple Award of 2025.

**-Chloe Wilson**, Culture Editor

# de Awards



## BEST FEUD ON X

The drama in the music industry in 2025 was one for the books. Sabrina Carpenter's feud with the White House dominated the headlines. In early December, a music video supporting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) featured Carpenter's song Juno and quickly went viral on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. When the White House official X account reposted the video, Carpenter's response to it triggered a whirlwind of attention no one could have predicted. She called the use of her song "heinous and disgusting," citing ICE's "inhumane agenda." After her post racked up over 138 million views, the White House took down its post. This incredibly entertaining interaction between artists and the U.S. government captured the nation's attention, earning Carpenter and the White House the title of the Best Feud on X in 2025.

**-Arnav Singhal, Sports Editor**



## BEST SPORTS MOMENT

2025 was the year of the underdog. Many teams, such as the Oklahoma City Thunder in the National Basketball Association and Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League, captured their first titles in franchise history. Yet, perhaps the top sports moment of the year was Alysa Liu winning the 2025 World Figure Skating Championship. After stepping away from competing in 2022, Liu made a surprising return to the 2025 season. Her comeback exceeded all expectations, as she finished three points ahead of three-time defending champion Kaori Sakamoto to claim the title. This victory serves as a landmark in U.S. figure skating history, making her the first American woman to win the championship in almost two decades.

**-Atharava Pandey, Sports Editor**



- Hathaway recaps the Golden Globe Awards
- The Pitt returns for its second season

# CULTURE

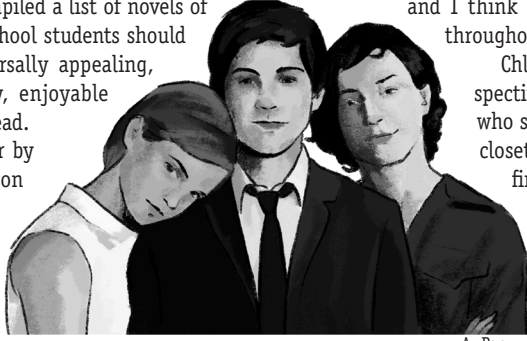
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## Littfin discusses coming-of-age novels

by **Kat Littfin**  
Editorial Editor

As high school students, we have the unique opportunity to read coming-of-age novels in tandem with our own growth. Reading this genre has often pulled me out of reading slumps or taught me valuable lessons about maturing. I have compiled a list of novels of the genre that I believe all high school students should read, as they are the most universally appealing, profound, and, most importantly, enjoyable

coming-of-age novels that I have read. The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Steven Chbosky will always be first on my list — it is worth the hype. The story feels intimate as Chbosky narrates the novel through letters written by the protagonist, Charlie. Charlie is a “wallflower” because he keenly observes the world around him and too often lets life pass him by, but as he enters



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high school, he begins to form friendships and deepen relationships that help him find himself. Charlie and his friends’ experiences span important topics, including strong friendships, abusive relationships, romance, mental health struggles, and identity. The novel has resonated with me in multiple ways since I first read it in seventh grade, and I think many teenagers can find solace and wisdom throughout its pages.

Chloe Michelle Howarth’s Sunburn features an introspective and intensely emotional protagonist, Lucy, who struggles to find her role in her community as a closeted girl during the ‘90s in Catholic Ireland. At first glance, the novel is a romance; however, the novel’s relationship illustrates the internal and external conflicts that affect Lucy’s small town: homophobia, covert sexism, poverty, loneliness, and religious conviction. I have yet to read a novel that captures a queer relationship between women so delicately. The way Howarth portrays protagonist Lucy’s uncertainty regarding

her future as she finishes school made this book really stand out to me as a second semester senior.

Dante and Aristotle Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Saenz is not a novel about the two philosophers, but instead about two Mexican-American teenage boys living in El Paso, Texas, with similarly unique names. The boys are opposites in many ways, with Dante being extremely sensitive while Aristotle is more grounded and sensible. Through their friendship, they explore parts of their identity they do not discuss with others: their Mexican heritage, masculinity, sexuality, and sacrifice. The friendship at the center of this novel is particularly touching as they both bare their souls to each other, which leads to a great deal of intimate reflection about the importance of growing up.

Coming-of-age fiction is such a quintessential part of high school required reading curricula because of the distinct period during which individuals solidify their morals, shed their innocent ignorance, and often experience turbulence in unpredictable ways. If you are struggling to find a new title or have resolved to read more in 2026, consider reading one of these novels.

## Valencia speaks on Broski

by **Julia Valencia**  
Opinion Editor

One of Forbes 30 Under 30 influencers in 2023 and a Time Creator of 2025, internet personality Brittany Broski is no stranger to being in the spotlight. Between her YouTube channels, Instagram, and TikTok accounts, Broski has amassed 15 million followers and over 200 million views. Broski first gained attention in 2019 on TikTok where she posted a short video of her trying kombucha for the first time, earning her the nickname “kombucha girl.” Since her initial fame, Broski has grown in popularity, and now consistently posts on her multiple social media platforms to her loyal followers, affectionately known as Broski Nation.

Though she considers herself a Texan, Broski lived in Arizona, Alabama, North Carolina, and South Korea before moving back to Texas in her childhood, and eventually, to Los Angeles, California, where she lives now. After graduating from Texas A&M University, Broski worked at a call center and then in trust and fund services at a bank, where she was subsequently fired when her boss found her kombucha video. Instead of continuing a career in finance, Broski took a sharp turn and decided to embrace her internet presence instead.

She began with her YouTube channel (@Brittany Broski) and once she gained a following, she started her podcast, the Broski Report, in May of 2023. Shortly thereafter, in July of the same year, Broski created Royal Court, her talk show where she interviews celebrities in pop culture.

As the sole host in the studio while creating the videos, and with no production crew, Broski’s stream-of-consciousness style on the

Broski Report allows her to discuss a unique combination of topics. In a singular video, Broski discussed the cultural impact of Shrek Two, Neoclassicism in the 19th century, and her Red Bull flavor of the week.

On her interview show, Broski is known for her unconventional and often shocking questions, a defining feature that has helped Royal Court stand out



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in an already oversaturated genre. Rather than relying on predictable talking points, Broski asks guests thoughtful questions, beginning with more absurd and humorous prompts, and ending with intentional reflections.

The genuine curiosity she has for her guests makes them open up in interviews, leading to more authentic conversations.

More recently, Broski launched her musical career, releasing a handful of covers of popular songs. In early January, she shared in an interview with comedian Caleb Hearon that she is working on original material with a small team. She spoke about how she has plans to release these songs in the near future, and is enjoying the creative process.

As Broski continues to grow beyond her viral beginnings, she has established herself as a versatile creator whose authenticity and imagination set her apart from others. Whether it’s comedy, interviews, or musical endeavors, Broski has solidified her spot as a lasting voice in internet culture. (Sources: Forbes, Rolling Stones, Time Magazine, YouTube)

## Zamansky reviews new Avatar: Fire and Ash

by **Lila Zamansky**  
Media Production Editor

16 years after the release of the original film, Avatar: Fire and Ash, the third iteration in the science fiction series, stunned audiences with its extraordinary animation, richly detailed characters, and complex plotline. The movie follows the protagonist, Jake Sully (Sam Worthington), and his family as they navigate life on the alien planet of Pandora, facing both personal losses and escalating conflicts.

The first Avatar film became a global sensation upon its debut in 2009, reaching the title of the highest-grossing film of all time. What set the film apart was director James Cameron’s ability to incorporate a powerful story with the most innovative technology and animation, including revolutionary visual effects and motion-capture techniques that forever changed modern filmmaking.

Avatar: Fire and Ash is no different from its predecessors, with millions of dollars invested into its production to expand cinematic boundaries. The movie was shot alongside Avatar: The Way of Water. This process took a decade to produce both films and required immense dedication from the cast and crew. Much of the movie was filmed underwater, demanding intense physical commitment from cast members. Actress Zoe Saldana, who plays Neytiri Sully, spent endless hours training to hold her



F. Banno

breath for minutes at a time. Additionally, the visual effects team worked for years to perfect Pandora’s landscapes, creatures, and immersive atmosphere, creating an extraordinary world.

Avatar: Fire and Ash continues Jake’s story. It starts as the Sully family grieves the loss of their son, Neteyam, who was killed at the end of Avatar: The Way of Water. The sky people or the humans remain fixated on greed and power, fueling ongoing conflict between themselves and Pandora’s native population, the Na’vi.

The Sullys face new threats, forcing them to confront darker aspects of Pandora and find new allies among other Na’vi. In search of survival, they encounter new Na’vi Clans, including the Ash People, led by Varang (Oona Chaplin). Varang is introduced as a fierce and vengeful leader who guides her people toward dark shamanistic practices while embracing human

technology, creating a striking contrast to the Na’vi’s traditional reverence for nature.

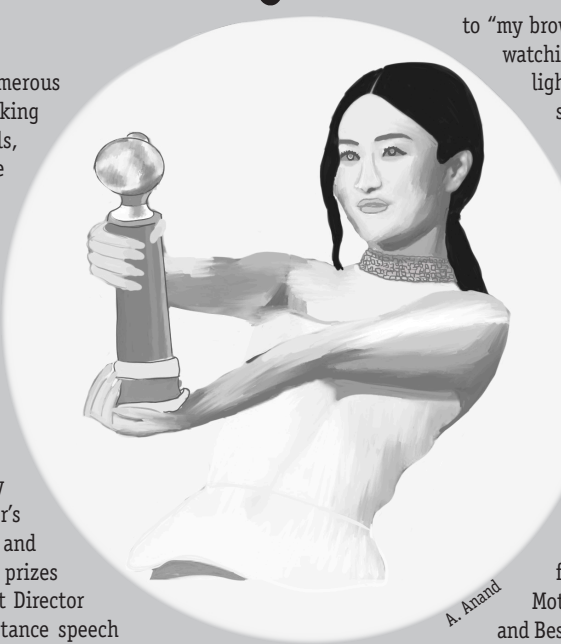
No longer a simple battle between good and evil, Avatar: Fire and Ash goes deep into complex themes such as moral complexity, internal conflict, and identity crisis within the Na’vi, displaying how fear and dominance can divide even the most closely connected communities. Environmental concerns remain a central topic, as the film continues to emphasize the unfortunate results of human greed and of exploiting natural resources for power and profit. (Sources: Avatar.com, National Geographic, NY Times)

## The 2026 Golden Globes most memorable moments

by **Quinn Hathaway**  
Media Production Editor

The 2026 Golden Globes highlighted numerous films and actors, with this year’s ceremony taking place at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California. Nikki Glaser emceed the event once again, kicking the night off with a controversial monologue, referencing A-list celebrities as a “list heavily redacted” and followed her quip by saying, “The Golden Globe for best editing goes to ...the Justice Department!”

The night cooled down after its mildly dramatic beginning, with Glaser handing out the first award for Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture to Teyana Taylor for her performance in One Battle After Another. The comedy won a total of four awards, including Taylor’s win, Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy, and the director Paul Thomas Anderson winning prizes for Best Screenplay - Motion Picture and Best Director - Motion Picture. Taylor dedicated her acceptance speech



A. Anand

to “my brown sisters and little brown girls watching tonight,” insisting that “our light does not need permission to shine.” Netflix also took home several awards: Adolescence won the Best Television Limited Series, Anthology Series, or Motion Picture Made for Television, with several of its actors winning awards for individual performances. Additionally, Netflix secured the Best Motion Picture - Animated with KPop Demon Hunters, marking Netflix’s second-ever win for that category.

The awards for Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy and Best Performance by a Female Actor

in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy both went to first-time Golden Globe winners: Timothee Chalamet and Rose Byrne. The Golden Globe Foundation previously nominated Chalamet for four titles, but the 2026 ceremony was his first win for his performance in Marty Supreme. In his acceptance speech, Chalamet commented, “My dad instilled in me a spirit of gratitude...[allowing] me to leave this ceremony in the past empty-handed...grateful just to be here. But I’d be lying if I didn’t say those moments make this moment that much sweeter.” 2026 was Rose Byrne’s first Golden Globes, despite previously receiving two Emmy nominations much earlier in her career. After being announced the winner, Byrne dedicated her speech to her family, highlighting how their support helped her earn the award.

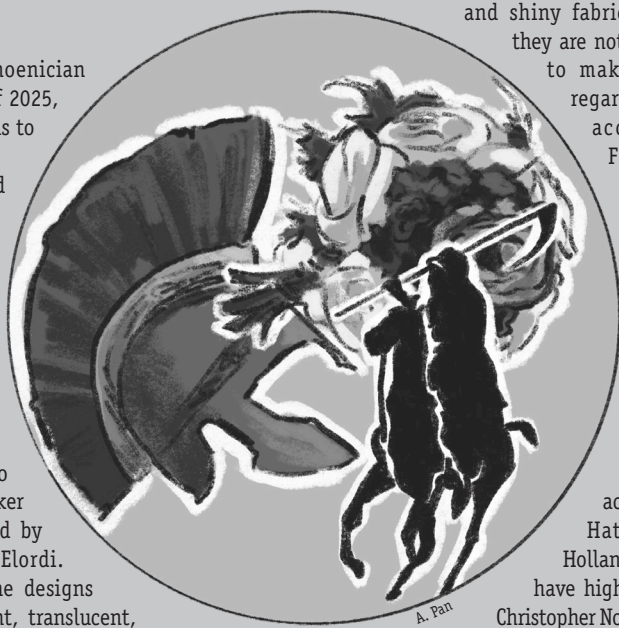
Glaser distributed many other categories throughout the night, including Best Original Song - Motion Picture (Golden from KPop Demon Hunters), and Best Motion Picture Drama (Hamnet). This year’s ceremony introduced a new award, Best Podcast, which went to Amy Poehler with Good Hang with Amy Poehler. Next year’s event is set to take place during January, with the Golden Globes’ producers revealing that they would like to see Glaser back as the host for a third year. (Sources: BBC, LA Times, NY Times, Time)

# Casal Montserrat discusses 2026's exciting movies

by **Claudia Casal Montserrat**  
People Editor

With iconic films such as *The Phoenician* Scheme and *Sinners* marking the end of 2025, I am ready for all of the movies 2026 has to offer. Here are just a few that stick out:

**Wuthering Heights**, set to be released on Feb. 14, has to be my most anticipated movie of the year. As a fan of the original novel by Emily Brontë and historical dramas, I was originally very excited for the release of this movie, but the casting and costume design have me questioning director Emerald Fennell's choices. 35-year-old Margot Robbie plays Catherine Earnshaw, a girl who only lives to be a nineteen-year-old. Heathcliff, who is discriminated against due to his darker skin and ethnic background, is played by Australia's (notably a paler) Jacob Elordi. Moreover, Jacqueline Durran's costume designs are stunning, often featuring iridescent, translucent,



and shiny fabrics with huge bows, but they are not cohesive and don't seem to make sense for the story, regardless of their historical accuracy. Additionally, Fennell markets the adaptation as a romance, the complete opposite of the source material. But even if just for the beautiful yet misplaced costumes, you will find me watching this film on Valentine's Day.

Featuring a star studded cast with actors like Zendaya, Anne Hathaway, Mia Goth, Tom Holland, and Robert Pattinson, I have high hopes for **The Odyssey**. Christopher Nolan's adaptation of Homer's

legendary epic follows Odysseus as he makes his way home after the Trojan War. Spoiler alert: it takes ten years. With such an amazing team of actors, I can't wait to see all of the portrayals of mythical monsters, especially Circe, played by Charlize Theron. Based on stills and the trailer, it seems Nolan continues to shy away from color, a choice I find particularly disappointing. The *Odyssey* is inherently fantastical, and the recent shift towards more monochrome movies for tonal reasons has become overdone; we need to bring back Technicolor. Nevertheless, this movie will replace the 1997 TV miniseries, and countless generations of ninth-grade English classes will undoubtedly watch it many times.

Feb. 20 marks the release of **How to Make a Killing**, which follows Glen Powell as he attempts to assassinate seven other family members to inherit twenty-six billion dollars. Based on the 1949 movie *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, this movie follows Becket Redellow, who was disowned at birth and will not rest until he inherits all of his family's money. With the trailer reminiscent of early 2000s movies, I'm excited to see Margaret Qualley and Powell embracing more action movie roles after *Top Gun*. This movie is my most anticipated thriller and comedy of the year and will serve as a nice palate cleanser after *Wuthering Heights*. (Source: IMDB)

# Pluribus impresses fans

by **Hayley Strahs**  
Editor-in-Chief

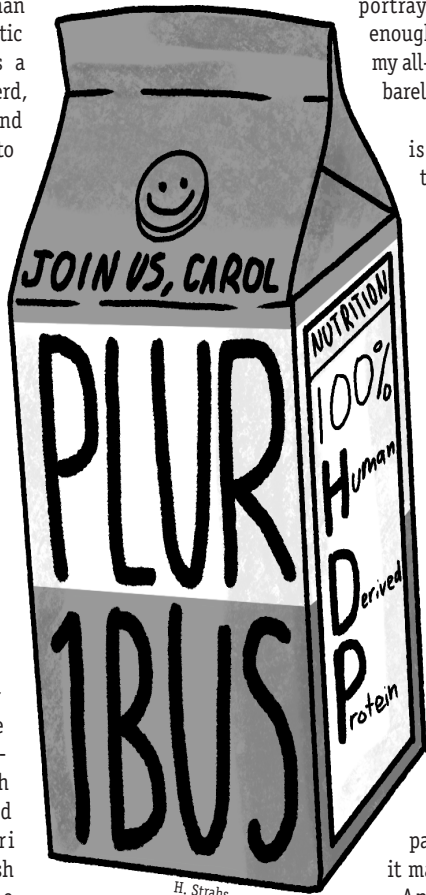
From Vince Gilligan, creator of *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*, new series *Pluribus* hit Apple TV+ at the end of 2025. The show follows Carol Sturka (Rhea Seehorn) after the rest of the world forms a hive mind, leaving her as one of 13 unjoined individuals on Earth. I initially disregarded *Pluribus*; I'm not a sci-fi fan. But the show is much more reminiscent of the eerie *Severance* than of the post-apocalyptic *The Last of Us*. As a speculative fiction nerd, I adored *Pluribus* and would recommend it to all readers of *El Gato*.

The show's pilot, *We Is Us*, might be my favorite episode of television ever, with the exception of *The We We Are*, *Severance*'s season one finale. While I acknowledge that there's an obvious pattern in the type of episodes I enjoy, *We Is Us* strays far from any television drama norms. Unlike most shows of the genre, *Pluribus* hired a choreographer who coordinated the hive mind's movements beginning with the synchronized swabbing of petri dishes. The petri dish scene is simultaneously haunting and exciting, keeping the audience on their toes while the focus shifts to Carol, a romance-fantasy writer from Albuquerque with a dry sense of humor and a distaste for her own books. Carol appears wry

and careless at first, but Seehorn's performance captures the grief, mistrust, and love that contribute to her character. Seehorn is especially excellent when it comes to fear; it's no spoiler that Carol is scared when the hive mind merges the rest of the world's consciousness. Though far from the main plot of the show, Carol's relationship with her wife, Helen (Miriam Shor), is often what grounds Carol during the hive's takeover. Without spoiling the show, Seehorn's portrayal of romantic love alone is enough to cement *Pluribus* as one of my all-time favorites, despite romance barely qualifying as a subplot.

While slow-paced, *Pluribus* is captivating. Details about the hive mind's purpose, abilities, and motivations are masterfully unraveled throughout the nine episodes, allowing the audience to theorize but always question each incoming scene. It's been weeks since I finished the show, and I still don't know what to make of the season one finale, *La Chica o El Mundo*. *Pluribus* plays with truth: what it is, what it isn't, and what it means to both Carol and the hive mind. In my mind, *Pluribus* is reminiscent of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, a speculative fiction exploration of the value of human life and individuality. Like *Never Let Me Go*, *Pluribus* isn't fast-paced, but what it lacks in action, it makes up for in suspense.

Apple has already renewed *Pluribus* for a second season, and I expect Gilligan's proposed seasons three and four to follow. *Pluribus* is a fascinating take on individuality and humanity, and I can't wait for what the series brings to the table next.



H. Strahs

# Pokémon reveals collab

by **Arnav Singhal**  
Sports Editor

*Pokémon*, a world-renowned Japanese cartoon franchise, is celebrating its 30th anniversary in January. Satoshi Tajiri developed the concept in 1996 with artist Ken Sugimori; it features cartoon creatures who possess supernatural abilities.

They bond with trainers, whom they battle alongside in an attempt to become "the very best that no one ever was," according to the theme song. The franchise began with the introduction of the 1996 Nintendo Game Boy games, *Pokémon Red* and *Green*.

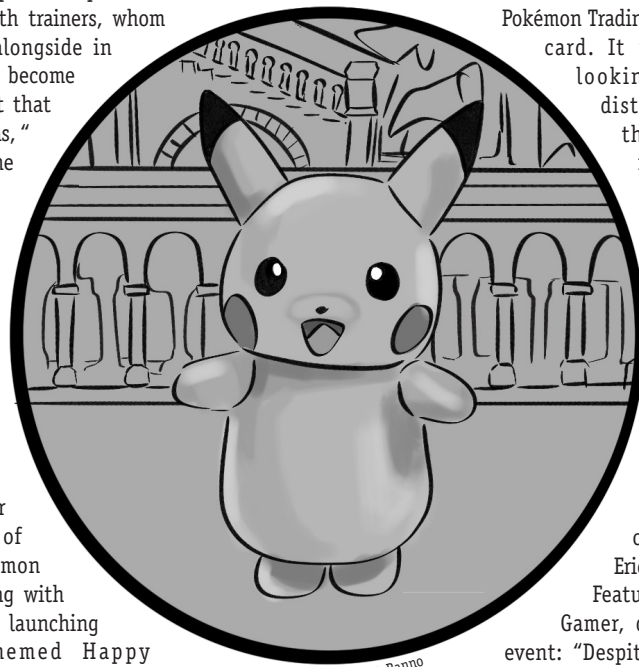
To honor its 30 years of success, *Pokémon* is collaborating with major brands, launching *Pokémon*-themed Happy Meals at McDonald's, T-shirts at Uniqlo, shoes with Adidas, and building sets with Lego. However, the most anticipated collaboration is the *Pokémon* Pop-up at the Natural History Museum in London.

The pop-up arrives at the museum on Jan. 26 and will run to Apr. 19. It will be located in the Museum's Cranbourne Boutique shop and themed after *Pokécology*, inspired by Yoshinari Yonehara's *An Illustrated Guide to Pokémon Ecology*, a best-selling Japanese *Pokémon* book. The Natural History Museum began hinting at the event in early September of 2025. On Jan. 7, it announced exclusive merchandise and the pop-up's opening date. This highly anticipated event is sold out, and walk-ins are not allowed.

The museum boasts the redecoration of iconic Hintze Hall as an homage to the grass-type *Pokémon*, *Ivysaur* and *Vicetreebel*. It allows guests to interact with nostalgic views from the *Pokémon* universe and buy exclusive merchandise. The pop-up promises visitors who purchase merchandise a commemorative oversized *Pokémon* Trading Card Game promo card. It features *Pikachu* looking away in the distance in front of the interior of the museum with *Pokémon* bones in the background.

Though the event remains highly awaited, many remain skeptical of its success due to the Van Gogh Museum incident in late 2023 when scalpers overran the museum. Eric Switzer, the Senior Features Editor for *The Gamer*, described the last event: "Despite sounding like a Ben Stiller sequel no one was asking for, the *Pokémon* riot at the Van Gogh Museum was the most shameful thing I've witnessed in the history of conspicuous collecting." The museum hopes to address scalpers by distributing the exclusive card widely at the event and allowing its purchase at select United Kingdom retailers on Jan. 30.

Though the critiques over scaling and crowd control linger, the *Pokémon* pop-up at the Natural History Museum stands as both a celebration of the franchise's enduring impact on pop culture across generations of youth and the franchise's dedication to science and conservation. (Sources: Britannica, House of Heat, Hypebeast, Natural History Museum, Nintendo Life, *Pokémon*, *The Gamer*, University of Washington)



F. Banno

# The Pitt returns for its second season to critics' acclaim

by **Jordan Park**  
Website Manager

**Warning: Spoilers ahead for The Pitt**

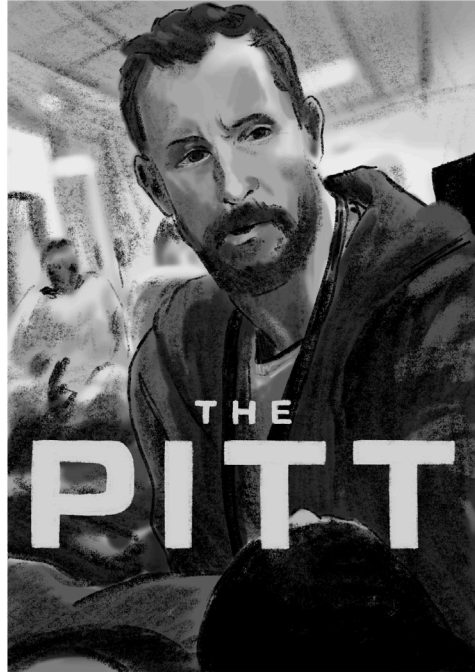
HBO's award-winning medical series, *The Pitt*, is back for a second season. The first episode dropped on Jan. 10, and weekly releases will continue until mid-April.

Season two picks back up in the overcrowded emergency department of Pittsburgh Trauma Medical Hospital, following Dr. Michael "Robby" Robinavitch (Noah Wyle) and a team of doctors and nurses through another relentless shift. This time, the season revolves around Robby's final day on the job before a three-month sabbatical. The premiere episode also features the return of Dr. Frank Langdon (Patrick Ball) after spending time in rehab. There's a ten-month time jump between seasons, but the show sticks to its original format, with each episode covering one hour of a gruelling shift. Season two also spans Fourth of July weekend, setting the stage perfectly for plenty of firework injuries and chaos.

Robby begins his day by training his replacement, Dr. Baran Al-Hashimi (Sepideh Moafi), a by-the-book attending who immediately shows her dislike of the nickname "the pitt." Meanwhile, Langdon's first day back is emotionally charged. Most of his co-workers welcome him back, though his return receives a tense reaction from Dr. Trinity Santos (Isa Briones), who informed hospital leadership of his addiction in the previous season. The premiere also sets up several addi-

tional storylines, including Santos handling a possible child abuse case and Dr. Melissa "Mel" King (Taylor Dearden) stressed about a malpractice lawsuit.

Unsurprisingly, episode one delivered phenomenal acting across the board, from the established cast to the patients they treat on screen. I also really appreciated a glimpse into the character development that has taken place between seasons. Dr. Dennis Whitaker (Gerran Howell), once a fourth-year med student, is now a fully licensed doctor tasked with training a new group of interns. Watching him pass along small pieces of advice, lessons he learned the



A. Pan

difficult way when he was in their shoes, felt wholesome and was a meaningful callback to season one. I also loved the introduction of Dr. Baran Al-Hashimi, whose presence immediately shakes up the dynamic of the emergency department. Her rule-following approach and Robby's more instinctive style are polar opposites, and the clash between their personalities is both interesting and entertaining to watch. Beyond individual characters, the episode as a whole offers a raw, honest look at the day-to-day realities of healthcare workers who are too often underappreciated. The show doesn't shy away from real-world issues, weaving topics like homelessness and the growing role of artificial intelligence in medicine into the narrative without feeling forced.

Critics have already offered great praise regarding the first episode as it debuted with a perfect 100% score on Rotten Tomatoes and an 8.3 out of ten on Internet Movie Database (IMDb). After such an impressive premiere, fans can't wait to see where the rest of the season goes. Catch a new episode of *The Pitt* every Thursday on HBO Max! (Sources: CNN, Forbes, IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes)

- Wilde critiques Stranger Things
- Melinauskas talks rewatching shows

# HUMOR

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## Zamansky and Chang explain their unique friendship

by Tanya Chang and Lila Zamansky  
Sports and Media Production Editors

Most friendships are built on trust and guidance. Of course, that excludes **Tanya Chang** and **Lila Zamansky**. Their friendship is solely based on ragebaiting, or more accurately, Tanya relentlessly ragebaiting Lila. Ragebaiting isn't just about provoking someone else's anger; it's a form of art, and Tanya happens to be the master of it.

I'm Tanya, and sarcasm is my middle name. Getting on people's nerves is something I specialize in. I'm particularly passionate about committing so hard to misinformation that the other person not only starts to doubt themselves but also reality. Now, don't be mistaken, I don't insult anyone; I just simply state things incorrectly with absolute confidence and wait until that timer hits zero. Watching the confusion, disbelief, and frustration build is peak entertainment. Dare I say it's better than watching someone do a TikTok with no audio.

Hello. I'm Lila, and alas, I'm the victim. I'm not an easily irritated person, even when Tanya says I'm chronically overstimulated. Don't trust what she says. I'm someone who has fallen victim to Tanya's habit of spreading fake news with extreme confidence. She will say something so blatantly wrong and stare me dead in the eye as I start to experience all five stages of grief.

Let me explain the ragebaiting process. It usually starts small. I will ask an innocent question, something practical, simple, right? No. Tanya has the audacity to pause, look at me, and give an answer that feels wrong but sounds official. In that specific moment, I can feel my blood boiling. What makes this worse is that I'm fully aware I'm being ragebaited. I will actively think, this cannot be true, while simultaneously reacting as if it is true. Tanya doesn't need to escalate. I do that part myself. And just when I reach my breaking point, she reveals the truth like it was all a harmless joke. I would like to say I learn from this. I don't. Tanya doesn't even push it; she just lets me sit there, marinating in confusion, until I inevitably crash out.

Tanya again, and I have got to share my proudest moment. On a random Thursday, Lila needed help turning on her MacBook. I took her laptop, stared at it for a good 30 seconds, and said, "You can't." This was, obviously, a total lie. "Yeah, it's just not possible," I followed up, keeping up the act. She froze. "WHAT?" she said, already spiraling. She was visibly overwhelmed, panicking over something that was completely fixable, and in my head, classical music was playing while watching her break down. Since I'm a good friend, I took the laptop back, fixed it in two seconds, and handed it to her. She was furious. I found it hilarious. All jokes aside, Tanya and Lila are very good friends, despite what others think. Yes, it may seem as though they have an intense hatred for each other, but they still like each other. For the most part.



A. Pan

## Sunil evaluates being left-handed

by Gowri Sunil  
News Editor

People assume the greatest fear of every kid is the dark or monsters, but in reality it's something much more frightening - having to share a fun fact about themselves. From circle time in elementary school to the first day of freshman year, my mind would go completely blank when it was my turn to share. While some kids easily announced rare talents or niche interests, I shuffled through my go-to basic answers, which included my favorite color, the super interesting fact that I had a dog, and my love for swimming. Yet, what I never realized for the first 14 years of my life was that my perfect fun fact had been right to the left of me all along, literally: my left hand.

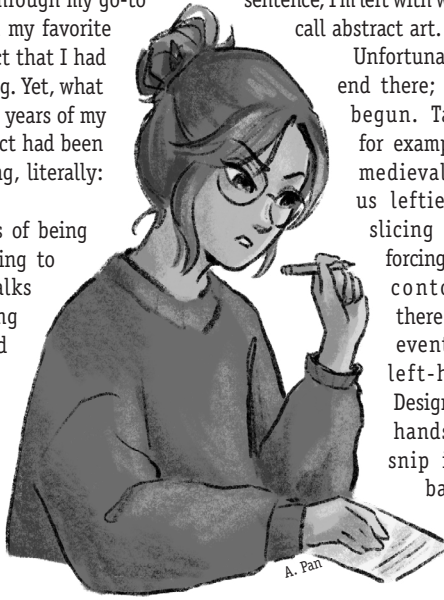
You always hear the pains of being short or the misery of applying to college, but no one ever talks about the struggles of being left-handed in a world designed for right-handed people. Though only 10% of the world is left-handed, it would be nice for the remaining 90% to consider the difficulties of learning the simplest hand maneuvers in reverse. So, as your left-handed El Gatan, I'm here to raise awareness to the daily torture and countless indignities that we face everyday.

One of the first challenges is convincing people I'm actually left-handed. With this news, most people either light up in amazement, demand proof, or worse, ignore in disbelief. The skepticism started early, in kindergarten, when my teacher assumed I was simply incompetent for not writing

my name properly. Ironically, her default motto for penmanship, "right hand, right way to go," made my circumstance a full-blown catastrophe.

Then, there's writing. Whether it's on a whiteboard or ink on paper, it's essentially a crime scene in progress. While right hands effortlessly move across the page, my left hand drags through the wet ink as if it's embarrassed by my own thoughts. By the time I finish a single sentence, I'm left with what some may charitably call abstract art.

Unfortunately, the struggles don't end there; in fact, they've barely begun. Take spiral notebooks for example. They are more like medieval torture devices for us lefties, with coils nearly slicing into your wrists and forcing your body into awkward contortions. And then there are scissors, the main event in the Olympics of left-handed gymnastics. Designed exclusively for right hands, scissors turn every snip into an upside-down battle against gravity, making me feel like I've actually slipped into the Upside Down with Mike and Eleven, though instead of fighting demogorgons, I'm facing off with office supplies. Yes I have a dog, I like to swim, and I love the color blue, but none of these things have ever demanded real resilience. My true fun fact is that I've spent my whole life pushing through a world that favors the right hand, using only my left. So far, I've managed to come out mostly unscathed...for now.



A. Pan

## STRAHS DISCUSSES RESOLUTIONS

by Hayley Strahs  
Editor-in-Chief

I am a fiend for New Year's resolutions. Every year, I make a strategic, well-thought-out list of goals to reach over the next 12 months. Usually, I follow through with my resolutions and pick up a new hobby or reorganize my room eight different times that year. Unfortunately, not all of my goals have made it past January, or even Dec. 31 of the preceding year.

For example, the first time I faced failure was at the naive age of ten, when I set a goal of making baked goods more often. If you asked ten-year-old me, I would have told you I loved to bake. I wouldn't have mentioned that despite my love, I only turned on the family oven every two months because of how much I hated doing the dishes. Before I knew it, I was 11 years old and we were counting down to 2018 without having done as much as put a single cookie in the oven. I still can't cook (excluding a mean rendition of scrambled eggs), and I still blame my fifth grade self for backing out of what should have been a simple task to achieve.

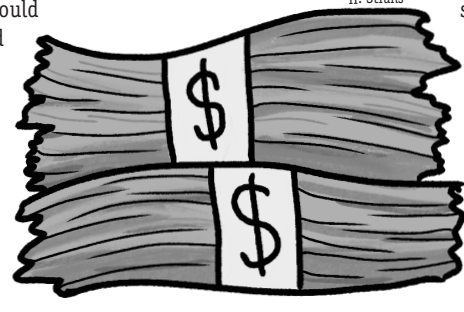
Flash forward to 2021: the height of the pandemic. My two main resolutions that year were to watch more anime and finish my Minecraft base. If that doesn't scream 2021, I don't know what does. I spent January through April binging The Promised Neverland, My Hero Academia, Ouran High School Host Club, and Erased before becoming obsessed with the notably non-animated Jane

the Virgin in May. And as for the Minecraft base? My friends and I shut down our realm in late February; the base will forever remain unfinished.

2023 was a throwback to my first ever resolution from 2015: running. It was at the top of my freshman year goals, just like it was in second grade. If walking the mile were a sport, I would be going D1. I'm not talking about the legit sport, racewalking; I'm talking about hauling my overweight middle school self around the Fisher track four times in the span of fifteen minutes. I didn't want to run a marathon or anything. I just wanted to run one mile straight, and I did...once!

Well, three times. I achieved (wait for it) a sub-11 minute mile. I was proud of my accomplishment, but one rude run-in with a classmate brought my attitude regarding sub-par time back to reality. I haven't run since.

Finally, in the big '25, I was going to get rich. Translation: I was going to invest in stocks. I still remember when one of my classmates bought a gaming PC in eighth grade because he took a chance on Radio Shack. My P.O.I. (purchase of interest) wasn't a computer but a mirrorless camera. The Sony A7iii was calling my name, but my wallet was calling me names for being broke. It should come as no surprise that I still don't have the camera, nor do I have any stocks. For the fabulous '26, I'm shifting my sights: I resolve to get my first credit card. With how important my credit will be in the future, I am hopeful that this resolution won't fall through like all the others have.



H. Strahs

## Wilde examines Stranger Things finale

by Jane Wilde  
Humor Editor

**Warning: Spoilers ahead for Stranger Things**

Alas, the iconic Stranger Things series has come to an end. All of us watched the finale in tears; some because they didn't want the show to end, but others (me) cried tears of agony because season five was about as horrific as Will Byers's bowl cut.

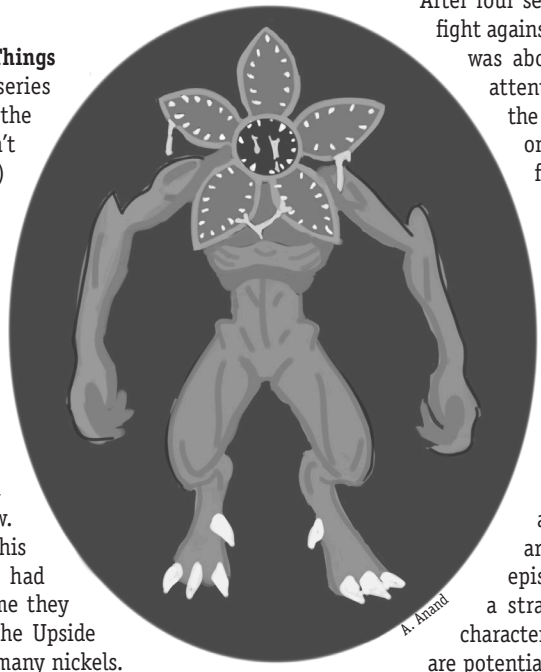
The thing that made the final season particularly painful to watch was the dialogue. Every bullying scene was straight from a 90s romcom. "Well, well, well if it isn't the traitor." What next, are you going to steal his lunch money and give him a wedgie? As if the cringy bullying cliches weren't enough, everything is an analogy in this show. "See this pen, imagine this is Will." "This record player is Holly." Enough. I've had enough. If I had a nickel for every time they used a microwave as an analogy for the Upside Down, I'd have two nickels. That's too many nickels.

After four seasons of anticipatory build up to the fight against Vecna, the battle scene in the finale was about as long as a Generation Alpha's attention span. Maybe I could've enjoyed the final battle more if I weren't so focused on the insane plot holes sprinkled every five minutes, including the lack of demogorgons. The infamous creatures are present in every battle, every season, yet when it's actually time for them to pull through, they're nowhere to be found. If you think that's bad, it gets worse. Do you mean to tell me that Nancy and Hopper took out half of the military with ZERO consequences??

Don't even get me started on "Conformity Gate." Imagine making a finale so underwhelming that fans are convinced there is a secret ninth episode. One bad season and suddenly a strategically placed exit sign and one character remarking Hawkins "feels different," are potential easter eggs for a secret finale.

Will's coming out scene took years off my life. Lasting about twice as long as the battle scene and approximately 14 hours before all of Hawkins is destroyed, Will decides it's the perfect time to tell everyone he likes boys. Meanwhile Holly is literally dying in the Upside Down with all the other kids. But NO, please Will, take your sweet time. Everyone is patiently waiting to hear vital news that will determine life or death, but is instead faced with the most predictable thing since sunsets. They're all staring at him like, we BEEN knowing this. To justify the timing of this announcement, Will claims Vecna was going to use this secret against him as if he were going to physically fight him with a pride flag. Don't get me wrong; coming out is essential to Will's character arc, but this scene was executed more poorly than someone in a broken guillotine.

They end the series where it began, in Mike's basement where they all play a whimsical game of Dungeons and Dragons. Per usual, Mike beats to death the ongoing metaphor of Dungeons and Dragons while insisting that there's a chance Eleven is still alive. She passed away along with the 200ml of botox in her face (seriously, she was serving face all season). It then pans to Mike watching Holly, Derek, and other middle schoolers as they argue over who gets to play whom in a game of DND, repeating the infamous cycle of Stranger Things. Who's going to tell Netflix we are not watching the children's spinoff?



A. Anand

# Anand and Hathaway navigate custom emojis

by Advika Anand and Quinn Hathaway  
Graphics and Media Production Editors

Have you ever been texting with a friend and found that neither words nor emojis can express the flow of emotion you're feeling? Rhetorical question: everyone has felt this way at least once. Sometimes, a person cannot relay pure ecstasy to its full extent by sending a smiley face emoji or a "YAY!!!". However, a sticker can fix this issue. That's right; creating a sticker from your favorite photo is the solution to all of your problems with conveying emotion over text. Any one person's camera roll can generate an infinite number of expressions. The possibilities are endless.

Everyone has favorite phrases, but we have favorite stickers. The easiest way to procure a blackmail-level photo is through Facetime, either yawning, sleeping, mid-talking, or other compromising. Then all you have to do is extract the sticker from the photo, and you have an embarrassing snapshot into your victim's homelife, condensed into a grimacing face on your keyboard.

Another typical victim susceptible to stickering is slightly older and infinitely more funny. A niche childhood photo, sent months ago during an all nighter, resurfaces in sticker form

when the conversation gets dry. Maybe it was you frowning at the camera at only eleven months old, or perhaps you were a chubby toddler splashing in a baby pool. Regardless, your not-so-little face will perennially haunt the group chat.

A separate yet equally amusing version of stickering is DIY emojis. These peculiar emojis are usually cheffed up on ProCreate, then distributed through Instagram Reels, thus creating a new sticker of your short-lived hyperfixation. A common target is a new meme: examples include "M-M flip it around Wicked Witch" or Labubus. An easy drawing turns into an emoji that could be mistaken as Apple-created, and all your friends are sure to be quick to add your art to their keyboard.

One final form of stickers is only for the most chronically

online people out there. Most likely the user of these stickers has at least ten hours of screen time daily and of those ten hours, eight of them are on Reels and TikTok. This is the type of sticker that makes you contemplate your age that is sounding a little too serious. Yep, we are talking about the AI baby sticker. We would dare to say every high schooler has either sent or received at least one copy of the infamous meme, and making a sticker was just a little too easy. It's okay, don't try to hide. We see you and accept you. If it encapsulates your emotions, then the sticker community supports your choices.

At the end of the day, stickers are a form of expression. Similar to texting and calling, they are a medium of communication: more specific than a text but less than a phone call. Just right for many teenagers in desperate need to convey their feelings in a time crunch. If you are an avid stickerer, spread the art. If you are a stubborn emoji user, congratulations!



## Gruetter and Mitchell share their top meals of 2025

by Sam Gruetter and Kayla Mitchell  
Editor-in-Chief and Public Relations Manager

At the end of each year, it is important for everyone to look back on their achievements and accomplishments. Whether we hit the gym a few times to fulfill our fitness promises, began a "healthy" diet featuring Dubai chocolate bars which are 50% green, or limited ourselves to one episode of Love Island a day, recognizing our growth matters (if it's our muscle or waistband). In honor of the new year and showcasing our biggest accomplishments, Kayla Mitchell and Sam Gruetter present our 2025 Eating Wrapped, where we were doing more unwrapping than wrapping.

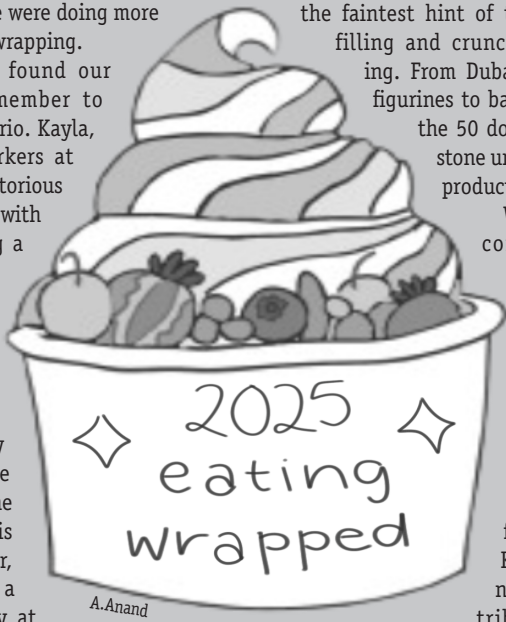
Last year, we found our long-lost third member to make our perfect trio. Kayla, Sam, and the workers at Yogurtland. The notorious duo began the year with hopes of achieving a "premium membership" at a local gym; but another life-altering establishment quickly misdirected our energy and fuel. We are still researching the specifics of how this transpired. Together, we achieved such a level of familiarity at the local Yogurtland that the workers stopped looking up at the ring of the entrance bell when we charged in at 9:50 PM each night, validating ourselves with an award after our remarkably uneventful day. Now, usually, people realize when an addiction has become too unhealthy. For us, that moment should have been when the Common Application asked for extracurricular activities, and Sam listed "Yogurtland Connoisseur" before even

considering her five-year volunteer job with the homeless. While that may not impress admissions officers, it is worth noting that being able to recall every Yogurtland flavor before even stepping through the door is a talent, and frankly, an underappreciated one.

Yogurtland was not the only franchise the dynamic duo terrorized through the 365 food-filled days of 2025; Kayla and Sam also took it international with the delicacy of Dubai chocolate. "Okay, you guys got a bar now and again. No big deal." Think again. Amassing a total of 100 hours of commuting time, we ravaged every single establishment that had the faintest hint of the sweet pistachio filling and crunchy chocolate coating. From Dubai chocolate Labubu figurines to back-alley handoffs of the 50 dollar bars, we left no stone unturned and no Dubai product unconsumed.

We didn't limit our consumption habits to just the real world, however, we also brought them into the digital world, most specifically TikTok shop. With the infinite possibilities of exotic snacks at our fingertips, Sam and Kayla are on a first name basis with distributors around the world. Remember when Pitbull said international love?

Last year, Kayla and Sam truly put the big in the big '25. Anytime a new delicacy graces the presence of Kayla's or Sam's social media feeds, establishments brace themselves for the immediate presence of a beat-up Honda Fit pulling into the parking lot. Our only resolution for 2026? Continue expanding our culinary palates.



## Melinauskas remarks on rewatching shows

by Britt Melinauskas  
National Editor

If someone were to EVER spark up a conversation with me, it would end with at least one of my favorite TV series. On average, I have watched all seasons of Grey's Anatomy, One Tree Hill, The Vampire Diaries, Gossip Girl, and Gilmore Girls more than four times. I am addicted to these five shows, and I can partially blame my addiction on my parents.

Any general biology class can confirm that an individual derives fifty percent of their DNA from each parent. From the fifty-fifty standpoint, my mom, as she influenced my obsession with romantic comedies and love stories and practically conditioned me into my television-obsessed lifestyle and addictive personality. At a young age, my mom started me on Little Women and Pride and Prejudice, the staples of period pieces and our conjoined love for Mr. Darcy. And once I start something, no matter what, I have to finish it to see where it goes, or just skip to the season finale. Even with the absolutely atrocious seasons seven and eight of The Vampire Diaries and the final two seasons of Gossip Girl, I trudged through, each time. People might consider it unhealthy, but as I am taking APUSH notes, baking desserts, or sinking into a long bath, HBO Max and Netflix are always on blast. The constant background noise is one of the top ten most comforting noises.

As my other and far less influential half, my dad continuously watches The Office and Seinfeld, as these are the repeats on Comedy

Central and the cure to all long work days. He absolutely despises it when I recommend a series to my mom because she then puts in her earbuds and remains in a static position until the show is over. My dad has the audacity to claim my shows are boring when, in fact, he's been watching the same two comedies, laughing at jokes he already

A.Anand

knows by heart.

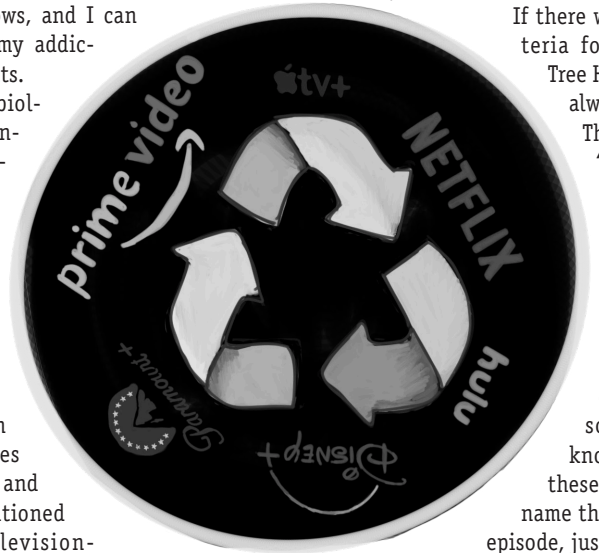
If there were a ranking criteria for my series, One Tree Hill will forever and always take first place.

The series truly owns "I Don't Wanna Be" by Gavin DeGraw with Lucas Scott's distinct intro walk-up dribbling the basketball into Tree Hill as its introduction. Please, someone, test my knowledge of any of these series, and I can name that exact event and episode, just maybe not Grey's

Anatomy, because I cried for weeks

after McDreamy died, and nothing in the show mattered anymore. Now, I understand the reasoning for continuing the series for viewers, but twenty-two seasons is a bit much now. There is such a thing as too many episodes. Meredith Grey just needs to attain her essential ending that concludes each opened plot twist.

I never really disclosed my reasoning for rewatching, but it is fairly simple; it is all part of a routine now. Grey's Anatomy is the constant reminder of my failure in life to not be in the medical field (my sister took care of that one). One Tree Hill serves as a source of pure nostalgia, Gossip Girl reinforces my desire to one day live on New York's Upper East Side, the Gilmore Girls is obviously correlated with autumn, and The Vampire Diaries is an off-and-on series for late-night binging.



# SINGHAL DETAILS HER STRUGGLE WITH BRAIN ROT

by Siyona Singhal  
Humor Editor

"Brainrotted." "Chronically online." These labels are tossed around like jokes, but few people pause to consider the reality behind them. No one talks about the daily challenges the chronically online face. What's effortless for others can feel nearly impossible for the professional scroller. As someone who's considered by many to be brainrotted and a master of scrolling, I feel qualified to educate the public on what it's actually like to be chronically online.

First, no one ever understands you. Try to imagine talking to your friends and pulling out the perfectly relevant reference just to be faced with silence and a side eye. Just the other day, I found one dollar in the back of my phone case and turned to my friend to sing "I got like hell money," and she just stared at me. I awkwardly sang it again, catching the eyes of spectators walking past us, and still nothing. If only the world knew how funny I really am. By the time I pull out my phone to show them the video I'm referencing, they don't even remember the joke. The only people who understand members of the chronically online community are other chronically online people.

There's an unspoken responsibility I carry as the token brainrotted friend. Someone has to stay up to date on the latest audios, trends, and internet lore. If I don't scroll, who will? You see me bringing up a niche reference and getting everyone to laugh, but what you don't see is the hours of work that go into it. Oh, you want to go

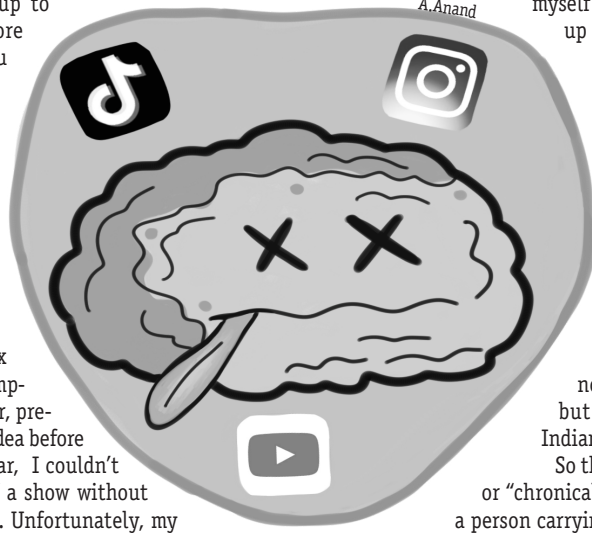
to bed before midnight? Well, too bad you have to stay up until you're up to date on all the Floptropica lore and can recite the "Will you wear wigs" interview with Elijah Wood word for word. The biggest beef steak you can make is missing an important pop culture moment and tarnishing your reputation forever.

This lifestyle comes at a cost. My attention span is absolutely decimated. Sometimes I sit in class wishing I could put my teacher on 2x speed. My brain is constantly jumping from one thought to another, preventing me from forming a full idea before moving on to the next. Last year, I couldn't even sit through an episode of a show without playing Block Blast on the side. Unfortunately, my ex-friend **Hayley Strahs** took a photo of me doing this and sent it to the whole El Gato group chat. My parents refuse to pay for Netflix without ads, and I often find myself spending the

one-minute ad break scrolling. One time, I challenged myself to actually watch the ads instead of picking up my phone. I couldn't do it.

Scrolling is not all bad, though. There are so many memes out there that have changed people for the better: for example, the recently found "but, why?" penguin. When I first saw that video, I almost cried. When he was found dead, I actually sobbed. The "but, why?" penguin is more than a random mammal; it's a symbol of dedication and represents a refusal to give up on your dreams. On top of that, chronically online people are full of so much random knowledge. I may not be able to get a good grade in math, but I can tell you all the steps to making Indian rocket soda.

So the next time you call someone "brainrotted" or "chronically online," remember: behind the screen is a person carrying the heavy burden of cultural awareness. Pretend to understand their references, laugh when they bring up 365 buttons, and support them when they keep yelling "city boy" while you're trying to have a normal conversation.



- Olson looks to a future in design
- Olivella succeeds in the soccer pitch

# PEOPLE

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## Freshman Sprich cultivates passion for marine biology

by **Julia Valencia**  
*Opinion Editor*

Entering her second semester of high school, **Maya Sprich** is no stranger to hard work and dedication. This freshman seeks constant activity, particularly playing one of her many sports, spending time with friends, or reading whatever she can get her hands on.

Sprich is on the JV basketball team and recounts one of her favorite memories being “at the pasta feed. It was really fun to hang out with Varsity.” After the basketball season is over, Sprich plans to join either the lacrosse team or the swim team, both sports she has competed in previously. Athletics play an especially meaningful role in her life; she follows in her dad’s footsteps and participates in practically every single sport he has ever played. As she points out, “It’s something we have in common and bond over.”



Her family spends one month every summer in Santa Cruz, a place that helped spark and nurture her love for the ocean. Surfing, one of her favorite pastimes, is something that Sprich does a lot in the summer; her dad taught her to surf when she was six.

Giving insight into how she views the activity, Sprich explains that “people think that you have to be really good at surfing, like that you have to be the best and go to competitions, but honestly, it’s just fun to have time out in the ocean. It could be a flat day, and you could just be lying on your board, but you would still have a good time.”

As she looks towards her future, Sprich aspires to learn more about the ocean, saying, “I have wanted to be a marine biologist for most of my life.” As for what Sprich wants to do after getting a degree in marine biology, she shares, “I want to be out scuba diving, surveying the kelp forests, and discovering new

things.” Sprich remarks that as she has gotten older and is beginning to take her sea-based interest more seriously, she realizes the importance of protecting the ocean, saying that “people really don’t understand that an ecosystem underwater is just as lush as any forest on land. There are millions of species coexisting and working together to keep the habitats alive, and it would be such a shame to let those die.”

Sprich has been a part of the Junior Guards lifeguard program in Santa Cruz since she was six. Now older and more experienced, she has the opportunity to be part of their youth-aid program every summer as an assistant instructor to the head lifeguards, helping guide and support the kids in Junior Guards.

When she is not at the beach or on the basketball court, Sprich can be found hanging out with her friends, enjoying a book, or bedazzling random objects in her home. Through her dedication to sports, passion for the sea, and creative spirit, Sprich continues to balance her many interests while building a strong foundation for her future.



photos courtesy M. Sprich

## Jin thrives in academics, volleyball, and community outreach

by **Gowri Sunil and Lydia Liu**  
*News Editor and Public Relations Manager*

Student-athlete **Emma Jin** is taking on her second year at Los Gatos High School with focus and enthusiasm. Her academic schedule includes Pre-Calculus Honors, Chinese 4 Honors, Digital Photography, English 10 Honors, AP European History, Spanish 3, and Chemistry. Chemistry earns the honor of Jin’s favorite class, especially piquing her interest through labs and cultivating her passion for science. Not one to shy away from hard things, Jin shares her motivation for tackling such demanding courses: “I wanted to challenge myself to take the most rigorous workload that I could. I like to keep myself busy.” She points out her key to success with managing a busy schedule: “I keep a planner



courtesy E. Jin

where I keep track of everything each day and my goals. I love checking things off, especially seeing what I’ve accomplished each day.”

Outside of her academic goals, Jin aspires to excel on the volleyball court and commits her athletic efforts to her volleyball team. Jin specifies that what drives her ambition is “improving in my club. I hope that our club can do well, and go to nationals.”

As a returning member of the Los Gatos High School Girls’ Volleyball Team, Jin led the junior varsity team to win second in league. Towards the end of the season, Jin joined the varsity team in their postseason CCS matches and looks forward to another two years of competing alongside her teammates.

Away from the classroom and court, Jin pursues a variety of passions, from playing the piano — a hobby she began at five years old — to cooking and reading, which she hopes to continue doing for entertainment rather than just for

school assignments. In addition to her current pastimes, Jin focuses her studies on working towards medical school, with the ultimate goal of becoming a plastic surgeon. She shares, “It’s the perfect mix of my two passions: science and beauty,” adding that “it would be a dream to start my own practice someday.”

Apart from her wide range of interests, Jin is also making an impact on the LGHS community through her new club, Students For Food Security. The club is dedicated to addressing food insecurity in the Bay Area, in which Jin notes, “There’s a misconception that everyone here has enough to eat, but about 10% of people in the Bay Area are food insecure and rely on food stamps. With recent SNAP cuts, many food banks are stretched to the limit, and neighborhoods are in crisis mode.” The club plans to run food drives, fundraisers, and volunteering initiatives to raise awareness for those in need. Jin aspires to create a club that will not only make a lasting change but also encourage a supportive environment where she hopes “everyone in the club will feel like we’re achieving something together and see the difference we can make as a team.”

While balancing academics, athletics, and community service, Jin takes on every challenge with enthusiasm and drive, striving not only to excel but also to make a meaningful impact on those around her.

## Hou wins competitions OLSON PURSUES A FUTURE IN DESIGN

by **Atharava Pandey and Ivan Habib**  
*Sports Editor and Website Manager*

Balancing school with badminton and other interests, junior **Eric Hou** still makes time to have fun this year. Despite his busy schedule, Hou manages to put his best foot forward and take advantage of every opportunity.

Hou is currently taking seven classes: Orchestra, AP English Language and Composition, French 4 Honors, AP Chemistry, AP Statistics, AP Physics C, and AP US History. When asked how he balances all his classwork, Hou claims that the work is not as bad as it seems, even with his tendency to procrastinate. He maintains that his carefree attitude allows him to avoid feeling overwhelmed with all his commitments. Hou particularly enjoys math, attributing this fact to his family: “My brother did a lot of math as a kid, and my dad also really likes math. So I kind of just followed their footsteps.” Hou plans to major in math, specializing in either quantitative finance or math research, as he is fascinated by the patterns of mathematical processes and their numerous applications.

Excelling in many STEM-related competitions, Hou has pursued his interests beyond the classroom. In particular, Hou participated in the Canadian Astronomy and Astrophysics Olympiad (CAAO), placing in the top 14. This olympiad is an individual problem-solving assessment that consists of practical and theoretical concepts at an advanced level. Hou’s CAAO performance earned him the opportunity to take part in the Canadian national training camp for astronomy, where he and 14 others flew to Canada for three rigorous days of lectures, assessments, and workshops. Reflecting on his involvement, Hou explains, “I am not going to lie. Everybody was a lot better at astronomy than me but I think it was a good, fun experience.” Hou is interested in potentially pursuing olympiads at



courtesy E. Hou

the international level in the future, hoping he can qualify for one of the STEM ones, such as math.

Outside of the classroom, Hou can be found smashing birdies on the badminton court. Hou says, “I like to play badminton in my free time a lot, actually. It is a good way to reset.” He enjoys both the camaraderie with the team and the competitive aspect. Hou was a member of the varsity team last year and believes he has improved significantly over the offseason, putting him in a strong position to win more games this year.

When facing tough times, Hou consistently reminds himself: “To not be too serious sometimes and be more relaxed. I think if you are stressed out about something, you won’t do well in it.” He believes it is important to balance your work with fun to avoid burnout. Across hard classes, important astronomy competitions, and badminton tournaments, Hou gives it his all and rises to every challenge.

by **Megan Saul**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

With the finish line in sight, senior **Jasper Olson** is starting off his final semester at Los Gatos High School with a bang. He’s got it all: passions for both athletics and academics, and the drive needed for him to power his way to graduation in June.

For the fourth year, Olson is playing on the LGHS Boys’ Soccer Team. Since the age of four, Olson has spent countless hours on the field, dedicating himself to the sport. Although he started out playing recreational soccer, Olson quickly climbed the ranks to more competitive teams and leagues. He has played for Liverpool FC International Academy, Bay Area Surf Soccer Club, and Los Gatos United Soccer Club. For his senior year, he is only playing on the school team, leading as a left winger. Olson explains, “My favorite part of being on the team is the pasta feeds. On the school team, you kind of have a tighter bond with your teammates because you see them every day at school, and you do extra stuff to bond with them. And then club, it’s kind of more like a routine and not as much of a family as high school soccer.” With a strong start to the season, Olson hopes to capitalize on the team’s current momentum and make it to the Central Coast Section (CCS) Championships. He notes one of the team’s assets, stating, “We have a strong team. We have a young team as well, lots of freshmen.”

When it comes to school, Olson sketches his way to the top. As a child, Olson sent in one of his drawings of a ninja to Budsies, a company that turns kids’ drawings into physical stuffed animals. Budsies sent Olson a stuffed animal of his design, filling his bedroom with his own art. He is now furthering his passions for graphic design by taking the class Graphic Design Lab with **Alexander Czech**,

whom Olson describes as a great teacher. As it is a workshop class, he prints and presses his designs onto T-shirts.

When applying to colleges, Olson created graphic design portfolios to highlight his current projects and work over the years. For California Polytechnic State University, his brother’s college and his favorite, he designed a new book cover for *The Great Gatsby*. He shares, “It’s fun, but it’s a lot of work.” Olson hopes to stay in state for college and major in graphic design. Looking further into the future, he eventually wants to make advertisements for companies, capitalizing on the intersection of business and graphic design.

Olson’s interests far transcend the canvas and soccer field. Additionally, he likes to go golfing, explaining, “It’s just nice because it’s relaxing, sometimes.” His favorite kinds of trips are to the snowy mountains and the beach, where he can enjoy both snowboarding and surfing. Meanwhile, he is soaking up all that LGHS has to offer during his final months here, while the LGHS community is wishing he would stay for longer.



courtesy J. Olson

# FRESHMAN OLIVELLA EXCELS ON VARSITY SOCCER TEAM

by **Siyona Singhal**  
Humor Editor

Though only in his freshman year, **Samuel Olivella** has already made a lasting impression on LGHS and is sure to continue to do so.

The transition to Los Gatos has been an adjustment for Olivella, who previously attended C.T. English, a much smaller school. Coming from a tight-knit environment to a large, fast-paced campus initially felt overwhelming, but Olivella has embraced the challenge and found his place in both academics and athletics. Among the classes he is taking, Olivella's favorite is Manufacturing Technology because "it's very hands-on and better than sitting in a class listening to a teacher lecture." His favorite project in the course has been a Japanese-style pagoda box. Olivella is also taking Introduction to Engineering Design, sharing, "CAD [Computer Aided Design] is something that I am interested in, so that's fun for me." Olivella particularly enjoyed the tower project, where students



had to design a small cardboard tower to hold as much weight as possible, challenging students to design, test, and improve their structures. About his own structure, Olivella admits, "Mine wasn't great, but I enjoyed the process of fixing the problems through CAD." Olivella expresses that

he is interested in going into the engineering field in the future and has always loved problem-solving applications.

Outside of his classes, Olivella is on the LGHS Boys' Varsity Soccer Team. Olivella began playing soccer when he was three years old, and he explains what inspired him: "My older brother really got me into soccer. He played, so I grew up watching him play. Soccer has always been a big part of my household; we watch soccer games all the time, so I've always been in the world of soccer." Before coming to

LGHS, Olivella played soccer for C.T. English, noting that even though the team wasn't great, it was still a meaningful experience

for him. This year, Olivella is stepping into a more competitive environment, playing left-winger for the school. So far, Olivella's favorite parts of the season are the pasta-feeds "because the seniors are so funny. It was a little intimidating at first because they're so much bigger, but I knew they were nice." Olivella hopes that the team makes it to CCS, which would be a dream come true for him: "I saw my brother play in CCS and was like 'Oh my gosh, I want to do that.' That would be perfect in my opinion." Olivella's personal goal this season is to be a good teammate and help his team in any way he can. To him, this means focusing on scoring, assisting, helping defensively, and not bringing any of his teammates down.

Olivella emphasizes the importance of putting yourself out there, advising incoming freshman: "Don't be afraid to talk to people. If it doesn't go well, you don't have to keep talking to them. Just see who you can meet, and you'll click with somebody." As Olivella continues to grow at LGHS, it is clear that this is only the beginning of a successful high school career.



photos courtesy: S. Olivella

## Raghupathula gives back to his community

by **Advika Anand and Quinn Hathaway**  
Graphics and Media Production Editors

Avid chess player and part-time lifeguard, sophomore **Ritvik Raghupathula** balances an advanced course load, competes in both water polo and swimming, and pursues a multitude of extracurricular activities. This year, Raghupathula

aspires to maintain his 4.0 GPA while improving his water polo skills.

Raghupathula has swum since he was 13 years old and played water polo for the past two years. As a child, he always enjoyed the ocean and being in the water, prompting him to try swimming. However, Raghupathula did not enjoy the solitude of swimming, so he decided to try water polo, as it incorporates more teamwork. Raghupathula plays wing, a position which has taught him perseverance, as he notes, "because as one of the smallest players in the pool, I have to overcome

bigger people tackling in water." Along with playing for the school water polo team, Raghupathula participates in the Los Gatos Club and San Jose Express during the offseason. As for swimming, Raghupathula continues to compete for LGHS in both the 100m and 200m IM, 50m and 100m Freestyle, and 100m Breaststroke.

Raghupathula's academic load for this school year consists of Pre-Calculus Honors, English 10 Honors, AP European History, Chemistry, Orchestra, and Spanish 3. He explains that he manages these courses through Canvas, organizing and utilizing his Google Calendar to display events.

Pre-Calculus Honors challenges Raghupathula, but he finds that completing an abundance of practice problems helps to ensure his comprehension of the topics.

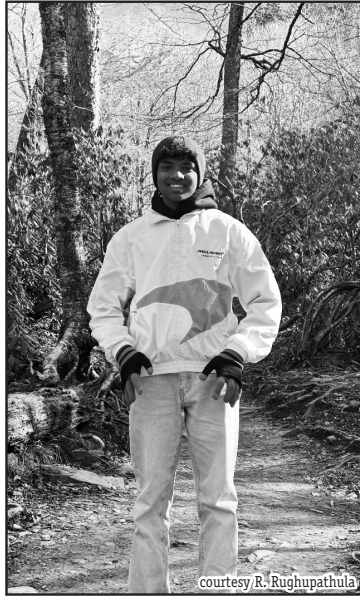
Since middle school, Raghupathula has played the violin and participated in orchestra. He especially enjoys performing classical pieces, with his

favorite pieces being Vivaldi's fast-paced works. Orchestra is also a team, Raghupathula explains, saying, "To make music, you have to work [together], so everyone has to play their part."

In addition to his other extracurriculars, Raghupathula dabbles in philanthropy. His favorite organization to volunteer for is Sacred Heart, as he explains, "I like to hand out the food to the people because it makes me feel more connected to my community. I also get to see the impact I have [on the recipients] face to face." A separate volunteering opportunity for Raghupathula is in the

wildlife realm where he spends time caring for animals at Animal Assisted Happiness. In total, Raghupathula has volunteered over 100 hours this year alone and continues his search for new ways to help his community.

Raghupathula may seem at ease, but it is all due to his time management skills. His rigorous academic load, coupled with his many athletic and philanthropic commitments, make for a packed schedule, but he says that he enjoys the constant activity. Ultimately, Raghupathula's ability to balance both ambition and passion shows his drive for doing the things he loves.



courtesy: R. Raghupathula

## Behnami gears up for basketball season

by **Jordan Park and Isabella Langner**  
Website Manager and Center Editor

Athletic is an understatement when it comes to senior **Hanna Behnami**. A multi-sport competitor, Behnami has played club soccer for nearly a decade and is currently co-captain of the Los Gatos High School Girls' Varsity Basketball Team, where she plays forward. Reflecting on the team's season so far, Behnami notes its ups and downs, "but we've been back on the come up with league play starting again, and hopefully we get another league title."

Beyond competing, Behnami is involved in a multitude of leadership and mentorship roles connected to athletics. She is co-president of the LGHS Women in Sports Club, which is in partnership with the local non-profit, Bay Area Women's Sports Initiative (BAWSI). "We basically want to help promote and increase awareness of women in sports," Behnami explains. "We do that through volunteering with BAWSI, and then also just advocating for women in sports in general, and educating the people at our school." Through the club, members regularly volunteer with BAWSI, helping out with sports clinics. Behnami describes the events: "It's mainly basketball, and they're just two-hour sessions where we go to a college campus. Then we run about four drills in rotating sets, and then once that's done, we take [the girls] to a women's college basketball game, and they get to cheer on the players and see basketball at a different level."

Behnami also coaches flag football. Since she started, the league has grown from five to eight teams, as the sport gains popularity in the Bay Area. Behnami shares, "It's quite fun. I have a lot of returning players from my team last year, and then a couple of new additions...I think it's just really great to be able to give back to the sport that I did play before, and see kids enjoy such a new sport." Whether it's coaching, volunteering, or leading, Behnami values the impact she makes, adding, "I get a sense of, not accomplishment, but it's rewarding to be able to give back to these girls."

She also dedicates her time to serving her community, volunteering at O'Connor Hospital for the past two years. Her job consists of managing the front desk and overseeing patient admissions and discharges. Behnami reflects, "It gives me more insight as to how a hospital runs, the whole layout of it, and how precise you need to be." Additionally, she has interned at the Los Gatos Orthopedic Sports Therapy Clinic. These experiences have helped her explore her passion for medicine, as she plans to major in Kinesiology or Human Biology, hoping to receive a Doctorate of Physical Therapy and eventually open her own sports therapy clinic.

Aside from her focus on sports and extracurricular activities, Behnami also prioritizes her academics, taking all AP classes this year. "I definitely think whoever said senior year was the easiest lied," Behnami shares. She also harbors a talent for music and has played violin and piano for over a decade. With strong leadership skills, years of volunteer experience, and impressive athletic abilities, Behnami is certain to see success in her future, in any path she chooses to follow.



courtesy: H. Behnami

# Greenstreet runs toward a successful future

by **Britt Melinauskas**  
National Editor

While others struggle to navigate their route in life, junior **Elise Greenstreet** briskly perseveres to the next marker in each endeavor with passion and vigor.

Greenstreet's devotion to her various pursuits is noticeable in her course load, as this year her schedule includes AP U.S. History, AP Biology, AP Calculus BC, Honors Wind Ensemble, AP Language, and AP Physics. With her plans to major in biology, Greenstreet shares that one path she hopes to pursue is stem cell and regenerative medicine. Her interest in the field becomes especially clear when she explains, "Stem cell and regenerative medicine is one of the last unresearched fields, and the last wild frontier of science." Even though she is only in the planning stages of her career, Greenstreet speaks with undeniable enthusiasm, recognizing that "there's so much that can be done to help so many people."

Greenstreet's community efforts include her involvement in the MOSAIC (Making Our School An Inclusive Community) Club, as well as constructing and establishing outdoor community fitness equipment. At Los Gatos High School, MOSAIC produces monthly presentations on issues that influence the LGHS community, such

as inclusivity, hoping to educate students on resources to utilize as a self-actualizing individual. Specifically, Greenstreet aims to make MOSAIC applicable and functional to all people and teach mechanisms for a healthy school and lifestyle balance.

In addition to her work with school outreach programs, Greenstreet also designed the small fitness wheels found throughout Los Gatos parks after securing a 1,500 dollar grant from the town council. With this initiative, she has made a powerful contribution to the community, helping transform the town into a more active and welcoming space.

Greenstreet runs cross country and track for Los Gatos High School, and her athletic career so far is filled with nothing but impressive achievements. She has already qualified for the state championships four times, twice in cross country and twice in track, an achievement that reflects her competitive drive. At the Arcadia Invitational track meet, her relay team won the 4x400m during her freshman year, and she has since recorded the fastest split on the relay for back-to-back seasons. Among her proudest accomplishments is ranking as the seventh-fastest freshman in all of California in the

800m. Her accomplishments are driven in part by the bonds she's built through athletics, as she explains, "In cross country and track, you really work with other people to get faster. You're working with them in your workouts, and obviously, in relays, you're working together as a team. That's helped me a lot with shaping myself."

When she isn't assisting community outreach, tackling rigorous academic courses, or demonstrating her athletic prowess, Greenstreet channels her creativity into knitting, painting, and reading. No matter the challenge, Greenstreet turns struggles into opportunities to flourish.



photos courtesy: E. Greenstreet

- NBA surprises its fans
- LG Dance Team shines on stage

# SPORTS

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## New teams rise to success as the NFL season comes to an end

by Atharava Pandey  
Sports Editor

The 2025-26 NFL playoffs have been among the most competitive in recent years. This year marked the first postseason since 2008-09 where neither Tom Brady nor Patrick Mahomes was part of the competition. This resulted in a level of parity that fans have not seen in a long time.



PLEDGE: New York Buffalo Bills player takes a knee for the U.S. National Anthem.

Wild Card Weekend, the opening round of the playoffs, started with the Los Angeles Rams beating the Carolina Panthers 34-31. The Panthers were underdogs in this game, but the fight they put up demonstrated their effort. Next, the Chicago Bears pulled off an astonishing comeback over the Green Bay Packers, winning 31-27. Early on, the Packers had a 21-3 lead, but the Bears' offense scored an unbelievable 25 points in the fourth quarter, and as a result, advanced to the next round.

Sunday kicked off with the Buffalo Bills beating the Jacksonville Jaguars 27-24. This was a tightly competitive game, with both teams taking turns scoring in the fourth quarter. However, Jaguars quarterback, Trevor Lawrence, threw an interception at the end, which ended up being the difference in the game.

The San Francisco 49ers pulled off an unexpected victory over the Philadelphia Eagles, winning with a score of 23-19. Despite multiple injuries, including George Kittle tearing his Achilles midgame, the 49ers found a way to defeat the opposing team and advance to the next round. Wild Card Weekend closed out with two blowouts: the New England Patriots defeating the Los Angeles Chargers 16-3, and the Houston Texans beating the Pittsburgh Steelers 30-6. These matchups set up an enthralling divisional weekend.

Widely regarded as the most competitive weekend of the playoffs, the divisional round once again lived up to the hype. The weekend started with the Buffalo Bills losing to the Denver Broncos 33-30. The game was closely fought, but when Josh Allen threw his second interception of the day, the Broncos put an end to the game by scoring a field goal. Next, the Seattle Seahawks mauled the San Francisco 49ers 41-6. The game opened with the Seahawks scoring a punt return touchdown, a mark that the 49ers would not surpass the entire game.

The Patriots defeated the Houston Texans 28-16. The Texans' defense tried to stay strong, but their quarterback, CJ Stroud, threw four interceptions, which was too much to overcome. The round closed off with the Los Angeles Rams beating the Chicago Bears 20-17 in an overtime thriller. The Rams kicked a field goal to end the Bears' season.

On Championship Sunday, the Patriots defeated the Broncos 10-7 in a low-scoring game, while the Seahawks beat the Rams 31-27 in an offensive showdown. This sets up a rematch of the 2015 Super Bowl.

Overall, this year's NFL playoffs featured many close games and high-quality showdowns. It will be exciting to watch which team will ultimately come out with the Lombardi Trophy. (Sources: ESPN, NFL)

## Knicks claim the NBA Cup

by Sahil Muthukrishnan  
Culture Editor

The National Basketball Association (NBA) conducted its annual NBA Cup from late October through December. The results surprised many, with some high-ranked teams exiting early and others outperforming expectations.

The tournament had two stages: group play and knockout rounds. Group play saw teams drawn into groups of five in their conference. They then played four "Cup Night" games, one against each team in their given group. The six teams with the best record from each conference, along with two wildcard teams, then advanced to knockout play. There, they played single-elimination games in three rounds leading to the finals. The quarterfinals were played in the higher-seeded team's arena, while the semifinals and finals were played in Las Vegas.



DRIBBLE: Brunson quickly weaves through his opponents.

In the Western Conference, the Oklahoma City Thunder, Los Angeles Lakers, and San Antonio Spurs won their groups, with the Phoenix Suns securing the wildcard spot. In the East, the Orlando Magic, Toronto Raptors, and New York Knicks advanced, and the Miami Heat clinched the wildcard.

The quarterfinals went somewhat expectedly, with higher-seeded teams performing well. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander's Thunder easily handled the Suns in the first round, blowing them out by almost 50 points. The Spurs also handily defeated the Lakers 132-119 despite Victor Wembanyama's absence due to a left calf strain. The Magic snuffed out the

Heat 117-108, with Desmond Bane exploding for 37 points. Finally, Jalen Brunson's spectacular 35-point performance assisted the Knicks in beating the Raptors 117-10.

The semifinals saw more excitement with both top-seeded teams facing upsets. The Thunder lost to the Spurs 109-111 in a close game between the two defensive-minded teams. The loss came despite an admirable 29-point performance from Gilgeous-Alexander. Wembanyama also played well, with a 22-point and nine-rebound showing. Needless to say, the game was an exciting watch. The Knicks defeated the Magic more decisively, 132-120, with a 40-point, eight-assist game from Brunson. Karl Anthony-Towns also performed exceptionally, with 29 points.

The Knicks and Spurs met each other in the tournament's final, with both teams delivering tremendous efforts. The game remained very close for the first three quarters, going back and forth. OG Annunoby showed fans that while he might be known for his defense, he is no slouch on the attack, with 28 points and nine rebounds. Ultimately, the Knicks pulled away in the final quarter, outscoring the Spurs by 16 in the fourth. Jalen Brunson took home the NBA Cup Most Valuable Player (MVP) Award and cemented the previously shaky-looking Knicks as legitimate contenders.

The 2025 Emirates Cup surprised many with its thrilling gameplay. While it might not rival the excitement of the playoffs just yet, it certainly kept fans engaged during the season's lull. (Sources: ESPN, NBA)



CROSSOVER: Wembanyama prepares himself for a smart play.

## Celebrini guides the Sharks

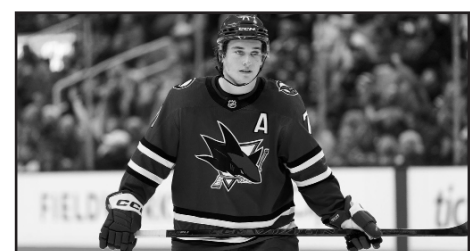
by Tori Schubert and Lila Zamansky  
People and Media Production Editors

Guiding the San Jose Sharks out of a tough year, star forward Macklin Celebrini continues to lead the team to an impressive beginning to the 2025-26 season. For the previous two seasons, the Sharks finished last out of all the teams in the National Hockey League. However, they have seen great success this year, with a current record of 25-24 and a total of 51 points, earning them a second-place wildcard ranking. This is a formidable achievement for the Sharks as they placed significantly higher this year compared to previous years, allowing for further progression in the league.

Celebrini quickly demonstrated his love for the sport as seen through his passion in each game he played. Raised in Vancouver, Canada, his parents fostered Celebrini's passion for ice hockey at a young age. He shared, "I started skating, like any kid would, just skating laps at a public rink. Then once I had a stick in my hand, it was game over." Celebrini attended Boston University, playing ice hockey alongside his brother, Aiden Celebrini.

Before his college career at Boston College, Celebrini first played in the NHL as a member of the San Jose Junior Sharks AAA program. He only played for one season from 2019 to 2020, before his college career. In 2024, Celebrini, the first pick in the NHL draft, officially signed a three-year contract with the Sharks. Their father Rick Celebrini, director of sports medicine and performance for the Golden State Warriors, had the privilege of being close to his son Macklin after he was officially drafted onto the Sharks team. Celebrini expressed his gratitude for both his parents, stating, "Their lives have been centered around helping us succeed and doing everything they can to help us achieve our goals."

Both teammates and coaches value Celebrini as a crucial attribute to the San Jose Sharks on and off the ice. He has an impressive record as the leading scorer of the Sharks with 48 assists and 24 goals.



GOAL: Celebrini prepares himself to score the game point.

One of Celebrini's most memorable games from this season was his four-point game against the Calgary Flames on Dec. 17. He scored a strategic two goals as well as assisting two more, leading to a 6-3 victory.

Celebrini is one of the select few players on the team chosen to be an assistant captain. When asked what his definition of a good leader is, Celebrini stated, "Someone who always sets the example. Your actions have more say than your words. I think what you do speaks volumes. Also, having the right timing and [knowing] when to say something." Additionally, Celebrini is one of the few handpicked players on the Canadian team for the Olympic Winter Games this February. Coach Ryan Warsofsky noted Celebrini's immense achievements and opportunities, explaining, "He's able to deviate from all the stress and the high-pressure situations on and off the ice." Channelling his composure on the ice, Celebrini is prepared to guide the Sharks to success. (Sources: ESPN, NBC, NHL)



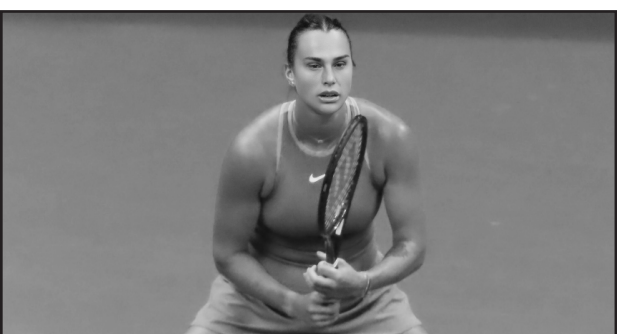
ROAR: The SAP Center fills with tumult from the Sharks fans.

## Sabalenka and Kyrgios compete in the Battle of the Sexes

by Kayla Mitchell  
Public Relations Manager

After six months of anticipation, tennis fans from around the world got to experience the match of their lifetime. Aryna Sabalenka and Nick Kyrgios took to the court last month taking its inspiration from the famous 1973 Battle of the Sexes tennis exhibition match. The exhibition match brought excitement and attention to the game of tennis, as a top female and male player faced off in only the second official mixed-gender match in history.

The iconic Battle of the Sexes tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs is a landmark event for women in sports. The co-ed exhibition match was a movement for women's rights,



DEUCE: Sabalenka positions herself firmly and aims to win the match point.

showcasing the capabilities of female athletes and highlighting the necessity of equal pay for professional tennis players. King won the match 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, a decisive victory and a cultural phenomenon during the women's liberation movement. In December of 2025, Evolve, a management agency, organized a modern take on the historic match. Sabalenka, the current No. 1 and four-time Grand Slam champion, faced Kyrgios, a player with a career high singles ranking of world No. 13 and an Australian Open doubles champion.

The event took place at the Coca-Cola Arena in Dubai, providing an entertaining and engaging atmosphere for nearly 17,000 tennis fans. To guarantee an intense matchup between the players and add a fun twist to the game, the professionals played with modified rules. The court was specially customized to be almost 10% smaller on Sabalenka's side of the net, and each player was given one service each point. The special rules were meant to encourage competitive points and eliminate any male advantages typically seen in men's tennis, such as fast-paced serving and movement advantages due to physicality. After an intense battle, Kyrgios won the match in straight sets 6-3, 6-3. Reflecting on the event, Kyrgios stated, "Seeing us out here tonight truly is a spectacle and is a stepping stone forward in the game of tennis." Both players walked away from the match-up pleased with the success of the event and the appreciation it brought to the sport of tennis.

While the exhibition event was supposed to be an exciting event for tennis fans, controversy has sparked in response to the co-ed matchup, modified rules, and the event's actual intentions. In particular, world

No. 2 Iga Swiatek publicly stated that she refused to watch the Dubai contest, arguing that women's tennis is successful on its own without gender-based singles matches for attention. In response to the backlash, Sabalenka responded, "It wasn't about proving something to anyone. It was about showing that tennis can be really huge and we can bring a lot of attention to the exhibition match, which usually never happens." With the true intention of the match bringing excitement to the tennis world, not to compare to the impact of King's win in 1973, the players have no regrets for participating in the showcase. (Sources: BBC Sports, ESPN, Sky Sports, Tennis.com)



LOVE: Kyrgios winds his arm back and drives the ball deep cross-court.

# Los Gatos basketball kicks off an eventful new season

by Kloe Adams

Games Creator

Taking the new year by storm, LGHS Girls' and Boys' Varsity Basketball demonstrate fierce dominance on the court. Girls' Varsity Basketball's record is 11-5 overall and 4-1 in league; both teams are in second place in their bracket. Rooting their success in their team camaraderie, senior **Rita Zhou** states, "Our team culture is really good. When you're an underclassman on the team, all the upperclassmen watch out for you and make it a very inclusive environment."

Boys' Varsity Basketball's record is 12-4 overall and 3-1 in league. The underclassmen on the team are demonstrating vast talent in their debut year at LGHS. Freshman **Oliver Evans**



BUCKETS: Senior **Lola Cuevas** prepares to drive through Monta Vista's defense.

may be smaller than other guys on the court, but that only motivates him more. "Every day in practice, I have to work harder than everyone else because I'm smaller, but it has definitely built good character," Evans comments. When reflecting upon the team as a whole, Evans says, "Boys' varsity is not the biggest team, so [we] really have to use teamwork and come together to outperform other teams." Evans remains excited for the next three years at LGHS and hopes to only get better and eventually play at the collegiate level. Another freshman, **Milos Grabovac**, is also cementing his legacy on the team. Starting each game alongside his upperclass teammates, Grabovac is experiencing a more fundamental version of basketball, explaining, "High school basketball is definitely more strict on how you play and how you work together as a team, while club basketball is more loose." With more teamwork involved, there is more team bonding; whether it is going to Sweet Pea's Cafe after practices or hanging out at a teammate's house, they are always together. Grabovac is striving for first-team all-league and a CCS title during his high school career.

LGHS basketball is not the only thing on fire; the student section seems to get bigger and better every game, constantly bringing support and energy to the team. On Dec. 12, 2025, students arrived decked out in their favorite holiday gear, featuring Santa hats and Grinch onesies. Beyond demonstrating impressive school spirit, the student section also brought an entertaining mix of Christmas



ANKLE BREAKER: Zhou crosses up her defender and gets a point for her team.

carols and holiday themed chants. Senior **Nico Bianchi** led these chants coincide an enormous speaker, which blasted winter classics like All I Want for Christmas is You by Mariah Carey. Bianchi comments on bringing spirit to the student section, saying, "Our goal is to create a positive environment and make sure people have a good time while also supporting the team."

If you want to see a lively student section or watch freshmen dominate the court, come to the next Girls' and Boys' Varsity games on Feb. 3 and Feb. 6, respectively!

(Source: MaxPreps)

## Track trains hard in offseason

by Atharava Pandey

Sports Editor

The 2026 Los Gatos High School track and field season is soon to be underway. Athletes have already begun practicing and gearing up during a rigorous preseason schedule that includes intense workouts and conditioning. After a strong showing from both teams last year, the LGHS track and field now looks forward to contending for the Central Coast Section (CCS) title.

Senior **Pau Chandran-Moles**, a 400-meter sprinter for the varsity team, is heading into the spring season with clear goals. Chandran-Moles has to partake in many difficult workouts, including hill sprints, all-out laps around the track, and strength training to continue generating more power from his legs. When asked about his main focus in preseason training, Chandran-Moles says, "Just working on my form. Getting comfortable with the mechanics and

being ready. The earlier you get out there, the earlier you are thrown into the fire." Chandran-Moles advises new runners who struggle with conditioning issues such as shin splints to get out on the track as soon as possible. He believes training before the season is instrumental in overcoming these issues and having a productive season.

Junior **Vir Karu** is also excited to spring into a new year. As a jumper, Karu competes in events like the triple jump, which requires athletes to sprint down a runway before completing a hop, a step, and a jump in pursuit of maximum distance. Karu shares his enthusiasm as he prepares to start competing this year, saying, "Besides competing, getting new marks, and hopefully getting a new personal record, I am excited to meet my competitors from other schools and learn from them." He emphasizes that although track is often perceived as an individual sport, success depends on teamwork, building bonds with teammates, and pushing one another to improve.

Despite losing many seniors, this year's track team is looking strong and ready to compete for CCS. According to Chandran-Moles, "The team lost a lot of critical members last season, especially on the distance side. However, there are a lot of fresh reinforcements this year, and the team has depth." Depth on a track team is particularly important, as injuries are common and a good team requires people to step in and perform as needed. Bringing in new people on a regular basis also helps ensure the team's success does not plateau. Karu believes, "Track, while demanding, is a great sport filled with a bunch of great coaches and people. Each person who tries track will enjoy at least one of the many events."

The track and field team has practiced hard over the preseason and looks to achieve new milestones this upcoming season. Be sure to attend some track and field meets this spring to show your support!



DUBS: LGHS Boys' Track 4x400 team poses after placing gold.

## Indiana wins national title

by Megan Saul

Editor-in-Chief

The Indiana Hoosiers recently became the 2026 College Football Playoff's (CFP) National Champions. With an overall record of 16-0, Indiana University Bloomington rose from being an underdog to the biggest name in college football. The National Championship game took place at the Hard Rock Stadium, located in Miami, on Jan. 19. Although faced with a close game against the University of Miami, Indiana still won the game with a score of 27-21. This was the first time that Indiana won a National Championship in football.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) season commenced on Aug. 23, but before that, ESPN predicted that the Texas Longhorns, Penn State Nittany Lions, Clemson Tigers, Georgia Bulldogs, and Ohio State Buckeyes would dominate the 2025 season. Ohio State was coming off a successful season, becoming the CFP National Champions of 2025. Throughout the course of the season, some of these teams met expectations while others fell short.

From 1969 through 2023, Indiana routinely held a losing record, with only 13 winning seasons out of 55. Indiana's success this season can be attributed to the team hiring a new head coach, Curt Cignetti, two years ago. With Cignetti, Indiana has had two straight winning seasons, going 11-2 and 16-0. This year marked the first time a team has had a perfect season since the Yale Bulldogs in 1894. Referring to the team's Cinderella story, Cignetti stated, "I think that's a fact. If you look at the record since Indiana started playing football and relative to the success we've had the last two years, we've broken a lot of records here in terms of wins, championships, postseason games, top-10 wins. It's been surreal."

Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza was

a significant contributor to the team's victory. This season, Mendoza earned the Heisman Memorial Trophy, the most outstanding college football player award, beating out trailblazing players like Jeremiah Love, Diego Pavia, and Julian Sayin. The CFB also named Mendoza the Offensive Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the championship and teammate Mikail Kamara the Defensive MVP. Following the championship game, Mendoza declared, "I would die for my team. Whatever they need me to do. They need me to take shots, the front or the back, whatever it is, I'm going to die for my team out there, and I know they're going to do the same for me. That's what makes us so close, that's what makes us national champs and so special."

Indiana's win highlights the third consecutive year that a team in the Big Ten Conference has won the National Championship. Winners of previous years include the Michigan Wolverines in 2024 and the Ohio State Buckeyes in 2025. While fans in Bloomington are soaking up its first National Championship, players are already preparing to enter the 2026 National Football League Draft or the transfer portal. With an unexpected and thrilling season now complete, fans are eagerly awaiting the next season. (Sources: ESPN, Sports Illustrated, USA Today)



SECOND DOWN: Indiana #15 passes the ball before a tackle.

## Los Gatos Dance Team says farewell to its seniors

by Sam Gruetter

Editor-in-Chief

Transitioning from Friday night lights to shiny basketball courts, the LGHS Dance Team is shaking things up with new routines and performances during the coming winter months. They are marking an eventful semester for both graduating seniors and returning underclassmen alike. During the football season, dancers performed at halftime, bringing energy and enthusiasm to both the crowd and the team. LGHS Dance's final football performance took place on Nov. 14 at Helm Field.

With almost no downtime, dancers immediately began preparing to perform at halftime during boys' basketball games. As opposed to their bold, sweeping movements during football season, dancers perform

more intricate, detail-oriented routines due to the closer proximity of the audience, as highlighted in their recent routines. Senior **Avery Gaylord** comments on the stylistic transition between performances, noting, "We try to make our dances jazz, but more spirited as well as making basketball dances more hip hoppy. We also do less floorwork for basketball." The team took to the court on Jan. 16 for the boys' basketball game against Palo Alto.

The '25-26 dance team has three captains, seniors **Mariella Thimot**, **Chiara Browder**, and **Mina Hilal**, as well as co-captain senior **Ava Feldman**. During her junior year, Hilal was also a co-captain, and she is excited about this role on the team. She notes the personal significance of her achievement, saying, "Being a co-captain last year and a captain this year has been a great learning experience about leadership, and I've had so much fun with the team." Including captains, the team has a total of six seniors, rendering their Nov. 6 senior night and football game a particularly emotional and memorable event. In honor of their final year on the team, the underclassmen made posters and the seniors choreographed their halftime performance, to Can't Hold Us by Pitbull.

Most recently, the dance team held a pilates fundraiser to raise money for the community, including aid for those suffering from mental illness, cancer patient rehabilitation, child care, and swim lessons for neurodivergent children. The event took place in the LGHS dance studio, and the team required a 20-dollar donation from community members for an hour-long pilates class led by local YogaSource instructor Leroy Thomas. In total, the team raised almost 1000 dollars for their chosen nonprofits, marking this as a notable success for their annual fundraiser.

While in past years the team has focused exclusively on performing, head coach **Annika Jackson** and other staff members are looking to compete in the coming years, making the future of the LGHS Dance Team that much more exciting and hopeful.



MEMORIES: LGHS Dance seniors bid farewell for the last time.



SAY CHEESE: The dance team radiantly smiles after their performance.



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SPORTS  
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# POM: Ale Munneke looks to pursue her soccer interests

by Kayla Mitchell and Kat Littfin

Public Relations Manager and Editorial Editor

Standout senior athlete **Ale Munneke** is enjoying her final season of soccer at LGHS before continuing her athletic career at Stanford University. As a senior, Munneke sets a high standard as both an accomplished student and star athlete. As she prepares to begin her next chapter at Stanford University, Munneke plans to study mechanical engineering while exercising her passion for soccer on the women's team. With her inspiring drive and determination, Munneke is making an impact on the Wildcat community.

During her time at LGHS, Munneke has challenged herself to balance a tough academic workload while training as a high-level soccer player. Munneke credits her mom for inspiring her hard-working mindset: "Ever since she was young, she has worked very, very hard, and she's a role model I can look up to." As a family-oriented person, Munneke makes sure to prioritize spending her downtime with her family, preferably watching TV with her sisters or skateboarding with her dad.

Munneke's soccer career began when she was just three years old, thanks to her father. In her words: "[Because] we were living in Texas," and there was not much else to do, "he tried to make me busy with sports." Munneke tried out many different sports before eventually sticking with soccer because of her natural aptitude and

thorough enjoyment of the sport. As her soccer career continued and Munneke improved, she realized she would have to move out of Houston for better recruitment opportunities. During her sophomore year, Munneke's family moved to California, where she first joined the De Anza Force Soccer Club, the LGHS Varsity Soccer Team, and ultimately connected with the Stanford Women's Soccer Team.

On Jun. 15, 2024, as a rising junior, Munneke received an email from Stanford, where they expressed their initial interest in her. From there, Munneke began the arduous process of recruitment that involved getting in contact with coaches and continuing to play her hardest at games the Stanford soccer staff attended. After club team playoffs that same summer, Munneke describes the beginning of when the recruitment began to get serious: "I got out of Pre-Calc, and I saw an email from head coach [Paul] Ratcliffe." Ratcliffe expressed continued interest in recruiting Munneke and wanted to get on a call. That Friday, Ratcliffe officially offered Munneke a spot on the team. "I said yes on the spot," Munneke explains. "If I ever got an offer from Stanford, my answer was always going to be yes."

As Munneke prepares to take her next steps as a part of the women's soccer team at Stanford University, she is cherishing her moments with friends and teammates at LGHS. Excited to begin her collegiate career and continue to pursue her passion for soccer, Munneke looks ahead

with the goal of playing professionally. As an exceptional athlete and student, Munneke truly deserves all the success she's worked so hard to achieve.



courtesy A. Munneke

COUNTER-ATTACK: Munneke prepares to dribble and pass ball to an open teammate.

# Los Gatos wrestling stays on track for a historic season

by Chloe Wilson

Culture Editor

The Los Gatos High School wrestling team continues its renowned legacy of standout seasons, placing three players in the top 15 of California's overall rankings in their respective weight classes. Sophomores **Luke Schoch**, **Michael Terrell**, and **Wesley Hayden** have taken the reins after the loss of last year's upperclassmen. Schoch is ranked No. 12 in the 126 weight class, Terrell is No. 9 in the 144 weight class, and Hayden is No. 13 in the 150 weight class.

Hayden has performed extremely well this season; he placed fifth at the Robert Arballo Tournament and eighth at the Reno Tournament



SQUARE UP: The two wrestlers get ready to face off in center of the ring.

of Champions, both of which are prestigious tournaments. Additionally, Terrell narrowly missed placing at Reno; however, from head coach **Greg Varela's** perspective, Terrell unofficially finished among the top eight. As Varela explains, "There was some confusion with the [scorer's] table and how the scoring went. When it was all said and done, they took away four points from him. And he eventually ended up losing in overtime. When I reviewed the tape later in the day, it was just a complete error, a mistake." Though Terrell may have been wronged during the tournament, Varela points out that Terrell took the loss well and demonstrated the Wildcats' resilience throughout the season.

When referring to one of their toughest tournaments, junior **Liam Buzi** says, "I learned that there is always room to improve, we can always get better and grow when there are challenges." He also points out, "Wrestling is tough when you first start, but it is definitely worth sticking to it." Buzi's dad introduced him to wrestling, and he started in seventh grade. After any tough loss, Buzi explains, "Our coach talks to us and explains the things we did wrong, but we always focus on the future and work on the specifics which we can use in the next tournament."

Additionally, the team consists of many underclassmen, like freshman **Colton Hayden**, who also started wrestling in middle school. He shares that when the underclassmen are struggling, "The upperclassmen just tell us that they have been there before, and you have to find a pace that works for you during matches." On team chemistry, Hayden says,

"We never miss weight, and we all share the same goal of making it to some high level of wrestling, so we all collaborate." Buzi adds, "I would say we have pretty good team chemistry and we are very connected." This shared mindset that the players have exemplifies their motivation to continue their successful season.

Despite some seniors leaving, the team understands that they all have the opportunity to step up and build off the talent they have. The Wildcats have had a very successful season so far, and since 2018, they have won the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League De Anza Division championship every year. Looking to continue this goal, the team will stay motivated and pursue their success. (Source: Los Gatos)



photos courtesy N. Lindstrom

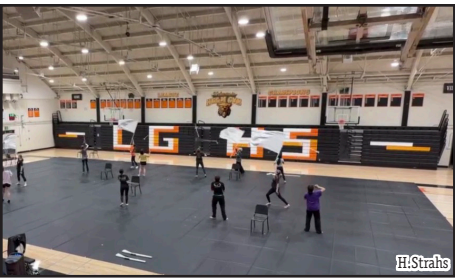
TAKEDOWN: One wrestler tackles the other to the ground, ending the fight.

# LG Winter Ensembles start Soccer plays impressively

by Hayley Strahs

Editor-in-Chief

Performing layered music and graceful dance moves, the LGHS Winter Ensembles have officially begun their 2026 season. Winter Guard competitions are in full swing, and Winter Percussion remains hard at work preparing for their first show on Feb. 7.



FLAGS UP: The Los Gatos Winter Guard raises its equipment.

This year, Winter Guard's show is titled Love: A Phenomenon and features the song We Got Love by Teyana Taylor. Freshman **Rita Livshits** dives into the show's meaning and overall message: "In hard times, love can rise above. Any type of love can really bring us all together." By contrast, Winter Percussion will be performing Coven, an exploration of cult rituals and peculiarity. The set features Toxic by Britney Spears's iconic melody in the second movement.

For the LGHS Winter Ensembles, the three-day MLK weekend was anything but a break. Both groups held respective mini camps, or short intensives. Color guard senior **Natasha Harnish** describes the three eight-hour rehearsals as "long days to continue working on our performance [in order to] perfect it." In addition to performing the show's choreography, the group spent time

drilling technique and trying trick tosses — complex variations of basic maneuvers intended to wow judges. On the percussion side of things, sophomore drumset player **Nolan Kappen** explains his weekend-long goal of "cleaning the second movement and learning more technique and getting better at my instrument." Over February break, both groups will participate in a second, shorter mini camp to finish their shows.

On Jan. 24, Winter Guard attended the California Color Guard Circuit (CCGC) Evaluations at James Logan High School. Prior to the first competition, Winter Guards from across the Bay Area appear at evaluations for unscored feedback. Sophomore and guard captain **Cleoko Chan** elaborates, "The judges tell you, 'oh this concept looks good' and [possible] improvements." With their next competition — CCGC Independence at Independence High School on Feb. 7 — fast approaching, Winter Guard is hard at work finishing the last quarter of their show.

While winter percussion competitions have yet to begin, the group is still rehearsing tirelessly. As the season continues, Kappen aims to "memorize the rest of the show and get together with people and do sectionals." Sectionals, which usually take place at tutorial or after school, are student-led practice sessions in addition to their fourteen hours of structured rehearsals. 2026 marks winter percussion's second year back after a lack of funds suspended their 2024 season. Boasting plenty of new members and a team of committed staff, Winter Percussion is returning to its former glory.

On Feb. 7, Winter Percussion will debut Coven at the first Northern California Percussion Alliance competition of the year at Fremont High School. Winter Guard will compete in CCGC Independence on the same day, and CCGC James Logan the following Saturday.

by Jordan Park

Website Manager

Now halfway through the season, the Los Gatos High School Girls' and Boys' Soccer Teams are finding both their rhythm and success on the field. With impressive performances and building momentum, the teams are setting themselves up for a strong finish.

The varsity girls' 9-1-3 overall record reflects their chemistry, work ethic, and talent. Though still early in league play, the team remains undefeated. Their first league match on Jan. 3 against Los Altos High School proved to be a tough test, but the Cats prevailed with a 2-1 win. The following games against Mountain View High School and Homestead High School told a different story, ending in dominant 8-1 and 6-0 victories for the Cats. Their toughest league opponent so far has been Palo Alto High School. On Jan. 15, the two teams faced off in an electrifying matchup, with the opening whistle setting the tone for an intense game. Los Gatos scored first off an impressive play by junior **Teagan Kaefner** and an amazing finish from sophomore **Bella Cain**. Palo Alto responded with a late first-half goal to even the score. A second goal by junior **Darcy Armstrong** put the Cats back in the lead, but Palo Alto was able to equalize once more. Equally crucial to the team's performance throughout the game, juniors **Avery Edson** and **Noe Wedemeyer**, along with freshman **Mariana Nanez**, formed a solid back line, often dribbling up the field to initiate and join the team's offensive plays. Despite giving it their all, the Cats walked away with a 2-2 draw. Reflecting on the game, senior **Leighton Ozawa** says, "It was definitely disappointing, how the game ended, but



J. Park

OFFSIDES: Both teams pause for a quick stoppage in play.

now we're familiar with their style of play and will be ready the next time we see them."

The varsity boys are putting together an equally outstanding season with an overall record of 6-3-2. In their first two games of early January, the team secured comfortable wins over Los Altos and Saratoga High School, finishing 2-0 and 3-1, respectively. On Jan. 8, the boys faced off against Mountain View, currently first in the league, and despite a strong effort against this tough opponent, fell 3-1. Their next match against Homestead ended in a hard-fought 2-2 draw. The team quickly recovered, securing a 1-0 victory over Palo Alto on Jan. 15. With top scorers senior **Max Lees** and freshman **Samuel Olivella** leading the attack, the Cats have the talent and scoring power to stay competitive as league play continues.

Having already shown their resilience and determination, the teams are ready to take on the second half of the season with confidence and focus. Be sure to come out and support the teams against Homestead on Feb. 3! (Source: MaxPreps)