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2026 SENIOR ISSUE



Adored educator Kristi Grasty retires from LGHS

by Megan Saul
Editor-in-Chief

Known throughout the Los Gatos High School community for her warm demeanor and enthusiastic personality, beloved Assistant Principal **Kristi Grasty** is signing off. She has decided to retire after three decades of contributing selflessly to LGHS through her roles as a teacher, coach, and administrator.

Since the beginning of her career, Grasty has been interested in writing and journalism. After briefly pursuing a path to becoming a lawyer, she received a scholarship to study in Germany, where she realized her passion for teaching and the process of learning. After studying in various parts of the world, Grasty returned to the Bay Area, where she grew up. Although her career is within education, Grasty explained, "A lot of what I end up working on has some overlap with the law." She continued, "There is an underpinning of all that I'm interested in. There is also a lot of writing and communicating you do as an educator. So, I feel like I've chosen the right profession, and you can do a lot with it. So really, I've found such a rewarding career. No regrets."

Grasty has held an administrative role at LGHS for the past 17 years. These roles include assistant principal in all domains and principal for five years. She expressed, "I just try to be helpful. It's like an act of service to work in education, so wherever I'm needed, I've tried to help." Grasty has found the most meaningful part of all of these roles to be working closely with students in a variety of contexts,



SING ALONG: Grasty and her colleagues pose during the 2019 Lip Dub.

including the Leadership class and the Green Team, stating simply, "That's the joy of education." Part of this joy includes initiatives that Grasty has implemented that are outside the box and create positive change. Particularly, Grasty detailed the school's food service transformation and its major influence on our community and those nearby. By engaging in back-and-forth communication about the issue and the best way to reach the solution, Grasty and the other organizers created a solution where LGHS students have access to free, delicious meals during the school day. Referring to this collective effort, she explained, "Nothing in education you do alone. It's always in partnership and collaboration with passionate students and staff."

In retirement from LGHS, Grasty plans to continue her involvement in education through teaching. After earning her doctorate in 2023, she has been teaching at the college level at the University of California, Santa Cruz and San Jose State University. Now, she looks forward to teaching new teachers. Grasty reflected, "I feel like I've come full circle. Now I can motivate, inspire, and help teach people just starting in the profession. I'm probably going to continue doing that."

Grasty is leaving enormous shoes to fill at LGHS. She concluded, "It's a really special school, and it's been a joy to be a part of. I'm very honored to have worked here for as long as I have, so I'm going to miss that life force that is Los Gatos High School." Likewise, the school will miss her calming presence, devoted care, and constant kindness.



SAY CHEESE: Grasty and her daughter, **Erin Grasty**, smile for a picture.

Beloved science teacher Cathy Messenger signs off

by Nelson Kramer
Editor-in-Chief

Coming to the end of each year means saying goodbye to some of our beloved staff here at LGHS; this year, we lose one of our best. For 21 years, the inspirational **Cathy Messenger** has taught at Los Gatos High School, and during that time, she has made significant strides in improving our science department while leaving a meaningful impact on the rest of our campus.

Messenger's path to becoming a high school teacher wasn't always clear. After graduating from UC Davis with a biochemistry degree, she went straight to work in scientific research at Livermore Labs and then moved into medical diagnostics shortly after. One thing has been apparent throughout her career: Messenger has always been drawn to teaching. Starting out training people in the field, then volunteering as an elementary science teacher, and finally building a strong legacy at LGHS, guiding people through the fascinating world of science has always been her calling.

When Messenger got her first teaching job at LGHS, she felt like she had won the lottery. Destiny led her down a funny path as she was recommended for the job on a whim, freshly out of cancer treatment. She found her place in a tight-knit community, fortunate

enough to have a well-funded science program with room to grow; Messenger found the place where she would come into herself. The community here is unlike any other; as she enthused: "It is phenomenal in terms of how much we support each other; whether in just learning a new curriculum, arranging schedules so you can watch another teacher teach your course, or what we do when there's a bad thing that happens to one of us."

Messenger co-founded and led the Advanced Science Research (ASR) course, a class where students could bring their own ideas to the table from day one and perform guided scientific research throughout the entire year. For this course, teaching meant inspiring, guiding, and letting students shine on their own. Messenger won awards at the state level for her influence in this course and her effort in providing students with access to self-guided work and research. It's no surprise that many students used their findings to continue their research in college and beyond, demonstrating the class's effect on so many LGHS alumni.

The torch that she picked up seven years ago from former AP biology teacher **Steve Hammack** she has carried valiantly, adding to the curriculum and improving it in her own ways. At the heart of all her work and teachings is a passionate pragmatism: "You're

living at a time that you need to be STEM literate. It's too big a force in your lives to just blindly accept what's going on around you." She also believes that collaboration and connecting with others are both essential to learning, and that is just part of the remarkable legacy she leaves to our school, to our science department, and to our community.



CONGRATS: Messenger celebrates graduation with two ASR alumni.

LGHS staff hosts the Follies

by Kat Littfin
Editorial Editor

Fractured Follies is an annual variety show that the faculty at LGHS put on together to entertain their students and the broader LG community. This year, the performances took place on May 21 and May 22 in the Prentiss Brown auditorium.

As the show dates were approaching, the enthusiasm among students and staff was palpable. Senior **Lylie Cheri**, who has been on the tech crew for the show for the past four years, pointed out one of her favorite traditions the night of every performance: "The crew is always invited on stage for the last two songs. We just dance along with the teachers. It's so fun." Outside of the crew, the LGHS teachers and staff were entirely responsible for putting on the show. **Paris DeSoto** organized and directed the event, aided by producer **Chris Chiodo** and emcees **Kurt Kroesche** and **Kevin Rogers**.

Teachers across several departments opted in to perform many skits that they prepared and rehearsed for weeks. **Melissa Rofer**, a new teacher at LGHS this year, described her experience as a Fractured Follies rookie: "I went to see [DeSoto] and all the other staff in the show last year when I was long-term subbing, and I was hopeful that I would be here next year so I could participate as well." She emphasized that the experience has been somewhat nostalgic as she was a part of the theater program at LGHS during her high school years. Rofer exclaimed, "I love dancing and being silly and having fun, so I was excited to do that with my peers."

Along with new teachers, two retiring teachers also took part in their last Fractured Follies performance. **Cathy Messenger**, who is finishing her final year at LGHS, was initially apprehensive about being a part of the show: "Even though I was really nervous to be up on stage, I tried it and had way more fun than I thought I'd have. The big part of it is actually connecting with teachers and other departments you don't see most of the time." Assistant Principal **Kristi Grasty** also performed in her final show after having been a part of it since its inception. Grasty reflected that she is in awe of "the energy that all these amazingly talented peers of mine bring at the end of the year, when it's arguably the most hectic...It's a way we give back to students and say our farewell to seniors. It embodies the best of our school."



SHINING STARS: LGHS staff rehearses their performance.

Outside of the show's entertainment value, this year's Follies will also benefit the San Jose Firefighters Burn Foundation. According to Fire Captain Mike Moses, E8A, an executive board member of the organization: "Every dollar raised goes directly to burn survivors who are being treated at the burn unit at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose...Burn injuries leave physical scars, but the emotional pain and suffering often take a lifetime to overcome. The foundation is honored to be recognized by the 2026 Fractured Follies." Principal **Dave Poetzinger** described the show as a "celebration of our family this year" and a way to capture what it means to be a Wildcat.



ON BEAT: The Fractured Follies crew practices together.

Music ensembles perform

by Sahil Muthukrishnan and Fuyu Banno
Culture and Graphics Editors

The LGHS Music Department hosted its annual music cookout on May 16. The event featured each ensemble's final concerts, dinner, and heartfelt farewells. It was an emotional occasion, as members said goodbye to seniors and showed their hard work off to friends and family. Additionally, the departure of Band Director **Ken Nakamoto** added to the day's impact. The ensembles performed a combined piece at the beginning of the night, followed by individual performances.

Before the concerts, the department hosted a community cookout. Students filled up on burgers, hot dogs, and snacks while enjoying each other's company for the last time of the year. **Brianna Kopman**, a junior in the Mixed Choir, shared, "Community has always been a big aspect of music, so it's nice to branch out and see members of the whole music department, not just choir."

One special aspect of the event was the combined first piece of the night, *Adventures of Coomoo and Jomoo*. The Music Department partnered with composer George Shaw and the Sing Me a Story Foundation for this piece. The song is based on the story of Coomoo and Jomoo, written by siblings Lily and Charlie, the latter of whom tragically deals with childhood cancer. Reflecting on the value of the performance, sophomore cellist **Alvin Wu** stated, "I think the final product was amazing, after all, it was for these two kids, and I think it's very inspirational."



CRESCENDO: The LGHS groups perform after the cookout.

On the front lawn, the orchestra launched into its final performance of the year. Chamber Orchestra started the night with *Hoe Down*, followed by the Philharmonic's arrangement of *Rhapsody in Blue*. All ensembles joined to play a version of *Die with a Smile* by Bruno Mars and Lady Gaga, with director **Armeen Ghafourpour** on the drum kit. Finally, the ensemble ended the evening with Chamber performing the main *Star Wars* theme.

The band performed in the large gym, with standouts from their set including *Lord of the Hammer*, arranged by junior **Toby Horton**, and *Deep River* by Benjamin Thorne. Junior **Anya Agarwal**, a member of Wind Ensemble, commented, "Mr. Nakamoto has been a really good teacher, and we are definitely gonna feel his absence next year." While his students and fellow faculty members will undoubtedly miss Nakamoto, they are also excited for his future at Baylor University, where he will pursue his master's degree.



IN SYNC: The entire LGHS choir ensemble sings together.

The Choir department shared various pieces with their audience, with some notable ones including: *Both Sides* by Joni Mitchell, chorally arranged by Kirby Shaw and performed by the Mixed Ensemble; the tenor-bass choir's *Brothers Sing On*, an enthusiastic romantic era arrangement; and *Power*, composed by senior treble choir member **Evangeline Ishak**. All members combined to finish with *Tomorrow*, from the musical *Annie*, bringing a night of fun and excitement to a close.

The year's final performance was a success, through an evening of meaningful music and fun arrangements. The LGHS music program continues to evolve, becoming a place for fond memories and community growth.

The freshman class finishes the annual May Fun Run

by **Tanvi Ambekar**
Opinion Editor

As the school year draws to a close, LGHS's freshmen class embarked on what many upperclassmen deem the most exciting yet dreaded event of the year: the Freshman Fun Run (FFR).

The FFR is a yearly event which the LGHS Health & Fitness Department organizes, spearheaded by **Shannon Minyard**, the department's chair. LGHS requires freshmen to take Health & Fitness, which includes units on swimming, health education, and running. This running unit lasts until the end of year and culminates in the FFR, a five-mile run spanning the best of Los Gatos's hiking trails. The FFR course begins at the LGHS track's starting line and continues off campus onto the Los Gatos Creek Trail. From there, students run along the LG Creek Trail up to the Lexington Dam and then to St. Joseph's Hill, which connects to the Jones Trail that leads students past a meadow and back to campus.

The freshman had been hard at work since March, doing both strength training and conditioning to prepare for the event. As freshman **Miriam Berenbaum** elaborated, "We've started going off campus recently, and we're slowly building up more



READY, SET, GO: Runners begin Fun Run on LG Creek Trail.

and more distance in shorter amounts of time." She pointed out that because the buildup was intentionally slow, it was important not to miss a day. Each day marked a small milestone, so if students missed too many days, their first run after returning was extremely difficult.

Regardless of this, many kids found joy in the training process. Freshman **Elior Ohriner** admitted that "just being able to hang out with friends where we live and stuff outside the school" made the training worth it. "It's a lot of work, but it's kind of rewarding," he said with a smile. Reiner added that "[it's nice] to see how far you've gone." Although the off campus runs were long, usually between two and four miles, their routes included the scenic portions of the LG Creek Trail and St. Joseph's Hill. Additionally, freshman **Blythe Gabriel** recalled that "running with my friends improves the experience overall" because she could feel the improvement as the weeks continued. Although "it gets kind of difficult when it's hot and humid," the FFR is a way to measure success and enjoy with friends.

Another exciting aspect of the event was the team themes. Students got to choose their groups, a costume, and team name for the day of the FFR. When asked about her favorite part of the prep, freshman **Isabelle Chan** acknowledged that planning costumes had been the best part: she and her friends dressed up as minions. The team costumes, while usually minimalistic, helped make the tiring event more enjoyable for excited students.

In the words of sophomore **Ada Dawson**, "[Freshmen] should just enjoy the Fun Run because it's a memorable experience. When you look back in a few years to 9th grade PE, this is what you'll remember." Every year the FFR is an unforgettable part of the freshman experience, and no matter how challenging it may be, it inspires the next year's students to face it head on.



CHEESE: Freshman runners pose for a duo picture.

LG hosts signing day event

by **Kayla Mitchell**
Public Relations Manager

On May 11, Los Gatos High School hosted a signing day ceremony for committed seniors on campus, honoring 24 LGHS student-athletes across 13 varsity sports. The event provided an opportunity for family and friends to celebrate the hard work of their athletes and fostered a strong sense of community throughout the LGHS athletic program.



ARRANGEMENT: Student athletes set up on front lawn.

At the beginning of lunch, these seniors gathered on the front lawn, each of them greeted by a decorated table. The athletes sat in a wide circle as friends and family moved around the lawn congratulating them and taking pictures. Los Gatos athletic director **Ken Perotti** announced each committed athlete, recognizing their future school and collegiate sport as the crowd cheered. Reflecting on the event, Perotti elaborated, "I am always blown away by what our students accomplish and by how successful they are not only in their chosen sports, but also in the classroom. Their dedication, work ethic, and commitment to excellence truly represent the very best of Los Gatos High School." Following the ceremony, the students gathered on the front steps for a group photo and concluded the celebration with dessert.

A heartwarming aspect of the ceremony was the attendance of multiple high school sports coaches who came to support their athletes. LGHS football coach **Mark Krail** attended to honor eight former senior football players committed to competing in football, baseball, and track at the collegiate level next year. Krail commented, "It's

very uplifting to see all of the excellent student-athletes, but also it's an opportunity to thank and congratulate the parents of the athletes." LGHS tennis coach **Justin Stenger** also attended the event, emphasizing the importance of supporting these students who have dedicated their time to the school's many sports: "These athletes have poured their hearts into our athletic program over the last couple of years so showing up to support them on this special day is an important acknowledgement of their hard work."

The signing day ceremony also provided a unique opportunity for LGHS parents to celebrate the success of their children. On top of decorations provided by the school, parents and family members showed up sporting university shirts, hats, flags, and other merchandise, which added even more joy to this festive occasion. This year's celebration was especially meaningful for school administrator **Amy Gaustad**, whose son, **Preston**



SNAPSHOT: Signed athletes pose on the front steps.

Drolette, will be attending Point Loma Nazarene for soccer next year, was a part of the celebration: "For the first time, I experienced the ceremony not only as an administrator, but also as a parent. Watching Preston reach this milestone made the event deeply personal. As a proud mom, it was incredibly special to see his years of commitment, resiliency, and determination recognized." While the day celebrated student-athletes, it also served as an emotional moment of reflection for parents.

With parents, friends, and coaches coming together to honor and celebrate the hard work out of these outstanding students, the signing day ceremony also celebrated the meaning and spirit within the larger Wildcat community.

LGHS drama performs

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

As the school year comes to a close, the LGHS Drama Department has been busy. In March, LGHS's thespian troupe attended the California State Thespian Festival, a prominent theater competition held at Pomona College in Claremont. Freshman stage technician **Tre Caruso** described the event as "eye opening"; he loved witnessing "everything from prop building to stage combat to directing." Caruso originally signed up for the Stage Tech elective to fill his Visual Arts credit, but he quickly fell in love with building sets and props. At the festival, Caruso received a Superior Score in Property Design for a telescope prop he made, qualifying him for the International Thespian Festival in June.



PLACES: The Addams Family ghosts deliver a stellar show.

Soon after arriving at LGHS, Drama and Stage Tech teacher **Benjamin Brotzman** took LGHS's thespian troupe, an after-school theater club, to the next level. Going forward, Brotzman wants students to be "locked into what [the Thespian Troupe] is, what it should be, what it can be, and just showing [students] what kind of potential this group has." While the group is "still in its growing phase," Brotzman hopes to establish and expand its presence within younger classes and the community as a whole. Regarding his Drama and Stage Tech classes, Brotzman reflected on students' enthusiasm and drive: "Students jump in with both feet and really try to do their best work and have a good time at the same time."

On May 14, students continued a long-standing LGHS Drama tradition: the one-act. Every year, students direct and produce a one-act show following the conclusion of the Spring Musical. Less than a week after Hadestown closed, auditions for an abridged version of *The Addams Family* were in full swing. Senior and director **Morgan Lum** specifically chose *The Addams Family* for



BREAK A LEG: The Addams Family cast dances onstage.

the one-act because "a lot of people are familiar with the franchise, the music is really fun, and you can do a lot with the costumes." The *Addams Family* musical follows the family's reaction when the stoic Wednesday Addams — sophomore **Lyla DelaOssa** — brings home the normal and cheerful Lucas Beineke — sophomore **Ren Milos** — and introduces him as her boyfriend. The show is dance-heavy, and senior **Alisa Freeman** had a blast choreographing it. Freeman has been dancing for nearly fifteen years, but *The Addams Family* was her first time choreographing. She shared, "It's really fun to be able to take everything I've learned as a dancer and apply it and teach others and share my love of dance." Despite the spooky ghost ensemble and dark aesthetic, the show's dance numbers are lively.

Between the revival of an official Drama class, the growth of LGHS's thespian troupe, and numerous successful performances, the LGHS Drama program had a productive and eventful year, with many more to follow. Be on the lookout for audition information for next year's shows!

Rob Moore hosts town hall meeting for local students

by **Claudia Casal Montserrat**
People Editor

Los Gatos Mayor Rob Moore and his team of five interns invited local students from all over Santa Clara County to participate in his Youth Town Hall event on May 17. This occasion was designed to be a gathering for all ages 13-20 to connect with each other and local experts to learn and discuss issues pertinent to that age group.



PANELIST: Jayaraj introduces her background in local advocacy to attendees.

The gathering began with a panel discussion involving prominent figures, including Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple; Bido Baines, El Camino Health Vice President of Operations; Dr. Karina Kloos, Executive Director of the Stanford Democracy Hub; Patrick Ahrens, California State Assembly member; and LGHS student advocate, **Nova Jayaraj**. Discussions ranged from Kloos describing the dangers of apathy in a democracy to Jayaraj speaking about her extensive involvement in activism. When panelists were asked how they approached problem-solving and persevered through hardship, Wozniak recommended always thinking of solutions while grappling with issues, and Ahren suggested remembering the rationale behind what you choose to do and be a part of.

After lunch, the students and speakers were split up into seven breakout groups. Each section tackled a different subject: government, healthcare, finance, education, climate, social justice, and technology. LGHS junior **Georgina Cobb** was one of the facilitators for the government breakout group, where Kloos advocated for using research to inform policies and practices,

while Los Gatos Assistant Town Manager Katy Nomura spoke about how to disagree and argue in a constructive manner. At the end of the discussion, Cobb gave students some advice: "Adults want to help us get involved; you just have to take the first step and introduce yourself."

The event ended with local institutions and clubs setting up booths for students to walk by and visit. The lineup included the LGHS House of Hope Club, Grassroots Ecology, the Owed Soap nonprofit, Open Space Authority, and the Silicon Valley Wildlife Group. Students interacted with booth representatives and learned about local organizations and their advocacy efforts. While many of them focused on preserving California's ecosystems, other booths discussed topics like finance, voting registration, and letters to councilmembers.

With over 200 students attending and such strong panelists, Mayor Moore's first-ever Youth Town Hall was a significant success. He had been working on the event for 3 months, and his hardwork surely paid off. For any adolescents looking to get inspired and involved, keep an eye out for next year's event.

- FACT replaces APUSH course
- FEMA panel debates agency cuts

NATIONAL

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Alabama attempts to implement an alternate voting map

by Kloe Adams
Games Creator

The Supreme Court cleared the path for Alabama to use a new voting map for midterm elections. Previously, a lower court blocked Alabama's voting map, which featured only one majority-minority district, on the basis that it violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. However, the Supreme Court threw out the lower-court hearing and sent the dispute back to the lower court for another look. Supreme Court Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, and Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented from the decision. Sotomayor argued that the court's order was "inappropriate and will cause only confusion as Alabamians begin to vote in the elections scheduled for next week."

The dispute began when Alabama enacted a new congressional map following the 2020 census. Data from the census revealed that racial diversity in Alabama increased, with the share of white residents falling from 68% to 64% over the prior ten years, while Alabama's Black population grew by 3.8% over the same period. To account for the population shifts, the Alabama legislature modified the existing districts. A group of Black voters and civil rights organizations went to federal court, arguing that the new map violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Specifically, the map spread Black voters in southern



ORDER, ORDER: SCOTUS ruling alters Alabama's racial biased voting map.

Alabama across three congressional districts, leaving them a minority in each. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act specifically prohibits practices or procedures that discriminate based on race, color, or membership. The district court agreed that the map likely violated Section 2 and barred Alabama from using it. This ruling required Alabama to redraw its map to include a second majority Black district. The Supreme Court upheld that decision in the 2023 Supreme Court case, *Allen v. Milligan*.

The Supreme Court's recent ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais* provides a main point of argument for Alabama's legislature. On Apr. 29, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that Louisiana's 2024 congressional map, which included a second majority-Black district, was an unconstitutional racial gerrymander. Alabama hopes to use this ruling as support for its congressional map, which would include only one majority-Black district. Attorney General Steve Marshall of Alabama commented on the recent ruling, saying, "For too long, unelected federal judges have had more say over Alabama's elections than Alabama's voters. That ended today."

Alabama set its primary election for May 19, but Kay Ivey, the state governor, signed legislation allowing for new U.S. House primaries if courts order the state to use different congressional districts. (Sources: AP News, CNN, NY Times)

TDPs spark advancements

by Ivan Habib
Website Manager

Development and transportation of new medicines and experimentation techniques remain limited by the fragility of cells, proteins, and other biological mechanisms. These delicate materials must be kept refrigerated and in a variety of other preserving conditions. Recently, a group of researchers at the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago published a study demonstrating preliminary successes in demonstrating how using tardigrade proteins can protect cell membranes allowing for increased durability, even in typically hostile conditions.

Tardigrades, known colloquially as "water bears," are small, eight-legged aquatic animals about one millimeter in length. They are one of the most resilient creatures known to scientists, able to survive extreme conditions from freezing to boiling temperatures, high pressure, radiation, and even the vacuum of space. By entering a dormant state

known as a tun, the internal cellular structures are preserved, despite external conditions. This dormant state relies on a class of proteins called Tardigrade Disordered Proteins (TDPs). These proteins allow cellular structures to persist under extreme dehydration, radiation, and temperatures because of the ways they contort to mitigate damage and preserve internal structures even at very low metabolic rates.

The team of researchers at the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago, found that the preserving properties of TDPs could be effectively transferred to other cells for better preservation. Andrew Ferguson, a co-author of the research from the University of Chicago explained that "we used molecular modeling to show why CAHS12 causes a protective behavior within synthetic cells." They discovered a mechanism in the attraction that allowed cells to maintain near-perfect structural integrity even under extreme dehydration.

As the project was supported by the U.S. Army Research Office and the National Science Foundation, there is much interest in potential applications in the Army. Dr. Stephanie McElhinny, the Army Research Office program manager, expressed her aspirations that "cells that can be dried, transported without the need for cold chain management, and then reactivated on-site, could produce critical resources, such as medicines or fuel, at the point of need." The team's discovery has other far-reaching implications in efficient storage and cheaper manufacturing, even at room temperature conditions. The authors of the paper noted, "This discovery opens up synthetic cell applications in bioengineering, cold-chain-independent biomanufacturing, and adaptive biointerfaces," and expressed a hopeful view on integrating other tardigrade proteins for efficient preservation in the future.

(Sources: Nature, University of Michigan)



courtesy flickr

ON THE MOVE: Water bear glides through tested substance.

FEMA alters federal spending

by Julia Valencia
Opinion Editor

President Donald Trump appointed a panel that is making a push to change the way that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) functions, proposing cuts that would limit the extent to which the agency could help and would place more financial responsibility on states. The FEMA review council, which Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth led, suggested financial restrictions on May 7, mainly criticizing FEMA's long-term recovery attempts and partisan efforts.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed Executive Order 12127, which was initially designed to combine civil defense and disaster preparedness under one organization. In 2003, FEMA became a part of the Department of Homeland Security following the Sep. 11, 2001 attacks. FEMA leads the federal response to disasters that overwhelm local authorities, supporting communities during and after an emergency. They work to prepare areas that are in high-risk zones and cover costs to make affected communities livable again.

At the beginning of his second term, Trump suggested that FEMA should "go away" entirely, to which the panel quickly advised against, and recommended an updated program instead. In the FEMA panel's 75-page report, they made numerous recommendations, mainly focusing on redirecting funds meant for long-term recovery (permanent infrastructure repairs, housing recovery support, economic recovery support) to immediate response of areas dealing with disaster. They emphasized a shift of responsibility from the federal government to the individual states and claimed that states should have the ability to decide where relief funds go instead of having to follow strict federal guidelines.

The panel's decision is coming at a time of extreme uncertainty for natural disasters in the

future. Climate change continues to affect the nation, with the U.S. spending more than one hundred billion dollars in 2025 on damages. Scientists speculate that the planet will likely experience a particularly strong El Niño weather pattern later in 2026 and into 2027, mainly bringing extreme rainfall. Despite this, the panel continues to suggest budget cuts, like in July of 2025 when FEMA suggested cutting one billion dollars of disaster preparedness and homeland security grants. Additionally, FEMA lost roughly a third of its full-time staffers due to firings, retirements, and resignations by May of this year, placing a strain on the functionality of the organization.

As the FEMA review panel begins implementing certain decisions and advocating for more changes, Americans must pay attention to these revisions and understand how they could impact society in the future.

(Sources: CBS, CNN, FEMA, NPR, NY Times)



courtesy flickr

IN ACTION: FEMA's presence prompts discussion over its policies.

Florida's different history course provokes debate

by Advika Anand
Graphics Editor

Florida implemented a new high school United States history course designed to compete with the nationally recognized Advanced Placement (AP) program. Florida's governor, Ron DeSantis, and the state's education leaders support the initiative, which reflects an ongoing debate over how American history should be taught in schools. Supporters say the course offers a balanced, patriotic view of the nation's past, while critics argue that it reflects a politically motivated reinterpretation of history.

The new class is part of a state-developed program called the Florida Advanced Courses and Tests (FACT). These courses are intended to provide college-level instruction similar to AP classes and may offer college credit at Florida universities. In addition, these courses aim to provide students with an alternative to AP courses that the College Board administers.

Florida officials say the new U.S. history course emphasizes the cultural and intellectual foundations of the United States, particularly its roots in Western and English political traditions. The curriculum also highlights the influence of Protestant religious ideas on the country's founding principles. Teachers may encourage students to read religious and philosophical texts that shaped early American thought, including writings connected to the Protestant Reformation. Another distinctive

feature of the course is its recommended textbook by historian Wilfred McClay, *Land of Hope*. The book presents a narrative that emphasizes



courtesy wikimedia commons

POSE: Governor Ron DeSantis explains the shift from APUSH to FACT in Florida.

American achievements and ideals, and supporters have described it as a corrective to critical interpretations of U.S. history. McClay has said his work does not ignore racism or injustice but treats these events as departures from the nation's founding principles rather than defining characteristics.

The creation of the course follows several years of tension between Florida officials and the College Board. State leaders have criticized some AP programs for allegedly promoting ideas connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and critical race theory. Florida's Department of Education said the FACT framework was designed to provide an option that avoids those perspectives and focuses more strongly on civic knowledge and national identity.

However, historians and educators have raised concerns about the new curriculum. Some worry that presenting American history primarily through a patriotic lens could minimize the significance of systemic racism and other complex historical issues. Critics argue that students benefit from examining both the nation's achievements and its shortcomings to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the past. The course is expected to begin as a pilot program in Florida high schools, potentially launching in the fall of this year. If successful, it could expand and become a long-term alternative to AP U.S. History within the state.

(Sources: NY Times, Truthout, WINK News)

- Hantavirus causes panic
- U.S. and Iran discuss oil trade

Cruise ship passengers test positive for the Hantavirus

by **Tori Schubert and Jane Wilde**
People and Humor Editors

Medical officials examined around 18 people from the MV Hondius cruise ship regarding their positive tests for the Hantavirus. The ship went to Antarctica and Argentina just days before passengers became incredibly ill. 18 people who were on the cruise during the rare outbreak are under observation in medical units in Nebraska and Atlanta.

The cruise ship held 147 people, now returning to 23 different countries, following their arrival in Spain on May 10. Passengers were transported home using military flight systems, in hopes of reaching suitable quarantine environments or biocontaminant units. Among those voyagers were 17 Americans, including two Californians, one of whom is a Santa Clara County resident. The World Health Organization (WHO) will be monitoring cruise members for symptoms and has advised a 42-day quarantine, although not declaring it mandatory.

Hantavirus is a rare, yet lethal disease that is typically transmitted through rodents and rarely affects humans. However, the Andes virus, the strain of Hantavirus found on the ship, is the only type to be transmitted through humans. Thus, when the first passenger of the MV Hondius became ill, the virus infected

nine people aboard the ship, resulting in three deaths as of May 11. Jake Rosmarin, an American passenger quarantined in Omaha, spoke to NBC News regarding his isolation experience, stating, "I'm happy to be in a place where I know we are well cared for, and if anything happens, we have the medical attention that we need." There are currently 11 confirmed cases in various countries in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. In the Americas, the disease has led to cases



DECONTAMINATE: Medical personnel board the MV Hondius to help passengers.

of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), damaging patients' lungs. Those who develop HPS have an expected 38% fatality rate, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Despite the panic arising in citizens as more information is released, Dr. Erica Pan, State Public Health Officer and California Department of Public Health director, explained, "Unlike influenza and COVID-19, years of experience in South America have shown that this Andes Hantavirus rarely spreads between people." Additional reports from the WHO note that the public risk for Hantavirus is currently low.

Trump responded to the outbreak, telling PBS, "It's been around for a long time, people are very familiar with it." His administration is not actively doing anything at the moment regarding the outbreak; however, they have assured the public that the situation is under control and far from reaching other states. Although much uncertainty remains, the WHO is working with officials across the globe to navigate the next steps. They are currently aiming to improve early detection and evaluate possible treatments for the Andes strain. Until then, the WHO recommends the public to maintain proper hygiene and utilize rodent control, as administrators continue to trace and monitor symptoms. (Sources: CDC, CNN, NBC, PBS, World Health Organization)

Philippines impeaches its VP

by **Quinn Hathaway**
Media Production Editor

The Philippines House of Representatives impeached Vice President Sara Duterte for a second time on May 11, upending Philippine politics ahead of the upcoming presidential election. Duterte was sworn into office in 2022 under the current president, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., with whom she had allied herself. However, the duo split political pathways a number of years ago, and a series of heated exchanges followed, though they remained in office together. Duterte's first impeachment occurred in 2025, after she claimed to hire an assassin to kill Marcos should someone murder Duterte herself. The case went through the Senate, as is routine with cases against officials in the Philippines and the U.S., but Duterte petitioned it on the grounds of constitutionality, and the Supreme Court declared the impeachment unconstitutional. The Senate shelved the case, and Duterte continued to serve as vice president until the latest claim against her.

The current impeachment questions Duterte's financial affairs, calling out "unexplained" wealth and misuse of government funds. Duterte and her supporters are pinning the case on Marcos and his family, as he is constitutionally confined to a one-term presidency. However, lawmakers in favor of the impeachment appear to have serious concerns about her acquired wealth, tracing back to her time as Mayor of Davao in 2019 and continuing through her roles as education secretary and vice president. The Anti-Money Laundering Council presented evidence against Duterte, alleging that she engaged in transactions inconsistent with her annual net worth.

The House voted on May 11, with 257 votes in favor of impeachment, greatly exceeding the minimum amount of a third to proceed with the trial. Despite the House's negative polling against Duterte, the Senate hosts a large pro-Duterte bloc, mostly due to her father, Rodrigo Duterte, the former Philippine president. Though the past president is currently facing a trial in the Netherlands for "crimes against humanity," the family name is a Philippine legacy. Another factor that may affect the Senate's vote is the recent leadership change: the newly elected Alan Cayetano, a well-known ally of the Duterte dynasty. The public saw this change as suspicious, as the prior president, Vicente Sotto III, publicly vowed to put Duterte on trial, and the board promptly voted him out of office, the same day the impeachment proceedings commenced.

Jean Encinas-Franco, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines, confirmed, "The manner in which the impeachment trial will play out before the public will shape how voters will look at her candidacy." Duterte's 2028 election bid is riding on whether or not she is convicted. (Sources: BBC, PBS, NY Times)



DEBATE: VP Duterte shakes hands with Fumio Kishida.

Labour Party holds election

by **Jordan Park**
Website Manager

The May elections in the United Kingdom have significantly reshaped the country's political landscape and raised new questions about the future of Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his governing Labour Party. The elections marked the biggest electoral test for Starmer since taking office, and the results revealed growing frustration from a wide array of voters.

Millions of people across Britain voted in local council elections in England as well as parliamentary elections in Scotland and Wales. The results were a major blow to the Labour Party as voters expressed dissatisfaction with issues ranging from economic inequality to immigration policy. The clearest winner of the elections was Reform UK, a right-wing populist party led by Nigel Farage. Reform U.K. gained more than 1,400 municipal council seats across England, establishing itself as a growing political force on the British right. At the same time, Labour also lost support from many left-leaning voters. Critics voiced concerns over economic inequality, the government's approach to immigration, and their stance on Palestinian rights.

Many progressive voters instead backed smaller parties such as the Green Party, the centrist Liberal Democrats. In this election, the Green Party also gained notable ground, securing over 250 seats on councils. Green Party candidates proposed policies of a wealth tax for the wealthy, rent control, and the nationalization of water companies. Their pitch was mainly targeted to young voters, and reporters have compared it to a similar strategy of Mayor Zohran Mamdani of New York. One possibility for the Labour Party is to welcome Andrew Burnham,

the mayor of the Greater Manchester area, back as a lawmaker, which would encourage supporters of Burnham to support Starmer for at least a few more months. Another possibility is that Starmer eventually changes his mind and announces his resignation, allowing Labour to begin selecting a new leader as quickly as possible.

The results have increased pressure on Starmer within his own party. Dozens of Labour lawmakers have publicly urged Starmer to announce a timeline for his resignation so the party can begin choosing a successor. However, Starmer has encouraged them to formally challenge his leadership if they truly had enough support. Under Labour Party rules, they would need to unite at least 81 lawmakers to trigger a leadership contest. Still, his political future remains uncertain. The Labour Party will have to call another general election by 2029, but it could do so earlier if it thinks that would be an advantage. Now the party will have to decide who will replace Starmer when the time comes. (Sources: BBC, NY Times)



ADDRESS: Prime Minister Starmer delivers speech.

U.S.-Iran conflict reaches stalemate with ceasefire

by **Atharava Pandey**
Sports Editor

The conflict between the United States and Iran has been one of the main talking points of global news over the past few weeks, as this conflict entails major ramifications for many countries. In particular, the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important oil bottleneck, remains a point of contention, as it carries approximately 82% of the crude oil reaching Asian markets, including China and India.

When the United States and Iran agreed to an initial ceasefire on Apr. 7, it seemed like the conflict would soon end for good. However, on Apr. 8, Israel launched a surprise massive air strike on Lebanon, with more than 100 airstrikes in a span of ten minutes. Israel argued

that Lebanon was not included in the ceasefire. The two sides then met in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Apr. 11 to reach a peace agreement, but came to no consensus. After further negotiations on Apr. 17, the U.S. and Iran opened the Strait to commercial vehicles, recognizing its importance in global politics. However, Iran closed the strait less than a day later, claiming a breach of the ceasefire. In retaliation, the U.S. blockaded the strait and fired on Iranian cargo ships attempting to evade the blockade. Finally, just hours before the ceasefire was about to expire, President Donald Trump extended the deadline on Apr. 21, but maintained, "We're not going to open the strait until we have a final deal."

On May 1, Iran sent the U.S. its proposal to end the war, a treaty that President Trump was not satisfied with. Iran wanted the U.S. to lift its blockade of the strait before any face-to-face negotiations, as well as to postpone nuclear negotiations to a second phase of talks after a permanent ceasefire was reached. However, President Trump has firmly maintained that Iran cannot have nuclear weapons, so this proposal ultimately failed.

Tensions significantly escalated on May 7, when Iran launched missiles, drones, and small boat attacks on U.S. warships while they were passing through the strait. In response, the U.S. reported it had struck Iranian military sites. Trump referred to the incident as a "love tap," emphasizing that the ceasefire was still in effect. A major development in the war occurred when Iran finally sent a reformed proposal on May 9, which Trump reportedly described as "totally

unacceptable" and "a piece of garbage." While the exact details of the proposal are not publicly known, media reported that Iran has asked for formal recognition of its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, as well as full sanctions relief.

It is safe to say that the war is currently at a stalemate. The president seems to have grown more impatient and frustrated with these peace talks and declared that "the ceasefire is on massive life support." There are soon to be major developments in this conflict between Iran and the United States. (Sources: BBC, CNN, Council on Foreign Relations, NY Times)



PROTESTS: The ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran is under severe strain.

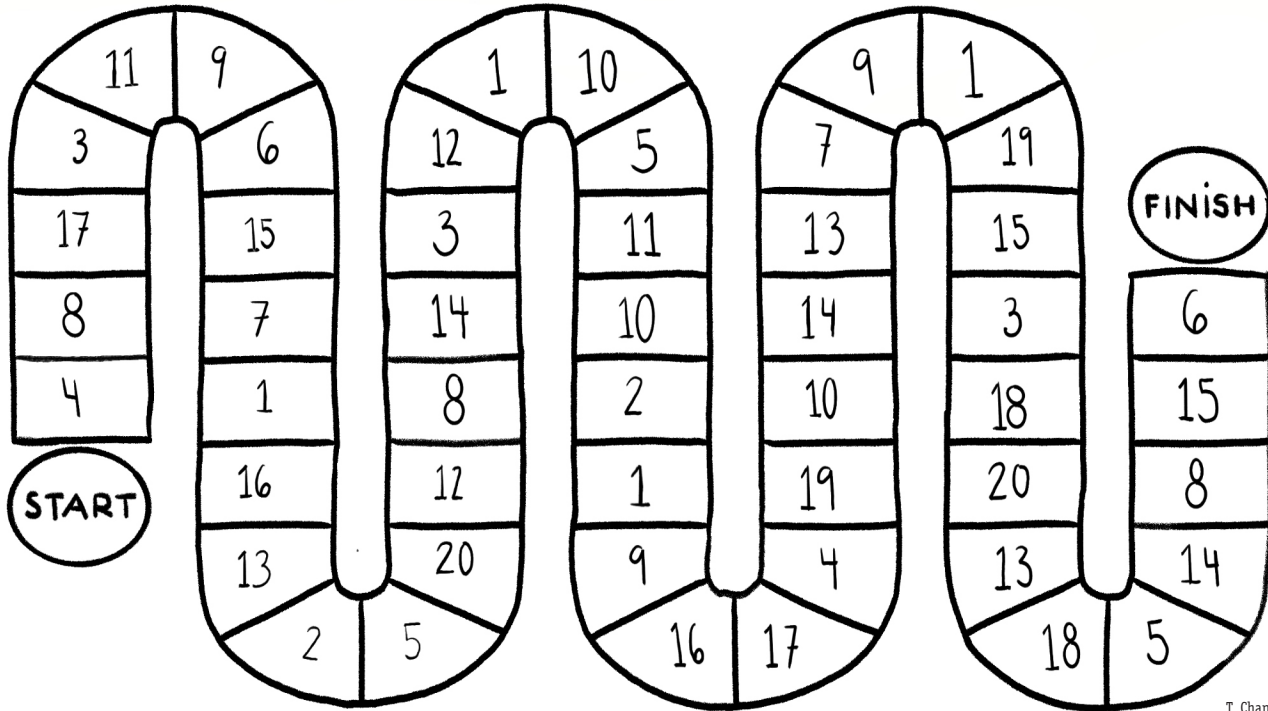


SPEAK OUT: Activists protest against the Iran-U.S. war in Berlin and Europe.

- Play the El Gato board game
- Grab a friend and play Meow Libs

GAMES

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1. Read a local article
2. Find a graphic drawn by A. Anand
3. Follow El Gato on Instagram (@elgatoweb)
4. Find an article with two images
5. Read a sports article
6. Find an article written by Nelson Kramer
7. Do five push ups
8. Read a culture article
9. Find an article written by Siyona Singhal
10. Find a graphic drawn by A. Pan
11. Read an opinion article
12. Find a graphic drawn by F. Banno
13. Read a culture article
14. Find an article written by Tori Schubert
15. Find an article with one image
16. Look for a colored page
17. Find three articles written by the same person
18. Follow El Gato on TikTok
19. Give an El Gato to a random person
20. Move back three spaces
21. Do 20 jumping jacks
22. Check out the center page

T. Chang

CONNECTIONS

LEAD	STOVE	SCORPION	FALLS
JUPITER	WELLS	RAM	CRAB
SPRINGS	SODA	RADIUM	MERCURY
LION	BANKS	ASBESTOS	STOMACH

C. Casal Montserrat

Meow Libs

I felt 1) _____, so I went to the beach. I took a 2) _____ to the closest one. When I got there, I set my 3) _____ bag down and laid out a towel. I also took out my 4) _____ and 5) _____. After not sleeping the night before because I was stressed about 6) _____, I closed my eyes for 7) _____. I dreamt of (a) 8) _____ until a 9) _____, woke me up. I sat up and began reading 10) _____. I saw dolphins 11) _____ in the water. I watched for a while before leaving to buy a 12) _____ at the local shop. At 13) _____, I left the beach and went to 14) _____, where I spent the rest of my night. That was a 15) _____ day!

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Emotion | 7. Length of time | 13. Time |
| 2. Vehicle | 8. Noun | 14. Location |
| 3. Adjective | 9. Something loud | 15. Adjective |
| 4. Object | 10. A book | |
| 5. Object | 11. Present participle | |
| 6. Cause of stress | 12. Object | |

M. Saul

SPOT THE 5 DIFFERENCES



A. Pan

S. Muthukrishnan

	1	2	3	4	5
6					
7					
8		9		10	
	11		12		
		13			

CROSSWORD

- Across:
1. State of existing
 6. Student's largest stretch of vacation
 7. Indefinite article for words starting with a vowel
 8. What vacationers might do in Lake Tahoe
 10. Freud's theorized primal state of mind
 11. What one might call a day of spending at shops
 13. What college students throw after four years

- Down:
1. Things you might sleep in when staying in a cabin
 2. Acronym for a physics principle involving magnetic fields and electric charges
 3. Small mischievous creature
 4. Acronym for the Patriots' home region
 5. Things a student might be worried about going into finals week
 6. What the scoreboard displays during an NBA game Victor Wembenyama plays in
 9. Acronym for the international system of organizing patents
 10. Acronym for the individualized public student plan
 12. Student supervisor in college dorms



RULES

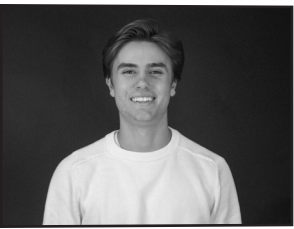


SOLUTIONS

SENIOR MEMORIES

EL GATO • WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2026 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONEWS.COM

• El Gato seniors share their favorite high school memories



Nelson Kramer

Although I have so many great memories from high school, the one that I always come back to is the **APUSH final test score prediction** video I made. Dimwittedly, I thought that I had unlocked the secret to taking MCQ tests from the Heimler Guide to Multiple Choice Question Tests and decided I was better off not studying. After predicting that I'd ace the test, I ended up with a 45 % in the grade book and never looked back. Thank you to APUSH for teaching me to be a gritty person who pushes through failure; I dedicate all my future success to you.



Megan Saul

As everyone says, but you won't believe until it actually happens, your time in high school will feel like both the longest and shortest years ever. While I have many standout memories from the four years, the best memory of my high school experience has to be **winning CCS in field hockey** my senior year. The excitement leading up to this victory throughout the season matched the energy of the final. I remember running onto the field after the game clock ticked to zero, more out of breath

from exhilaration than during the many runs throughout the season. I'm happy to have won, but now, I'm even happier to say that I am an LG field hockey alumna. This will forever be a standout memory and my last before I became a NARP (non-athletic regular person).



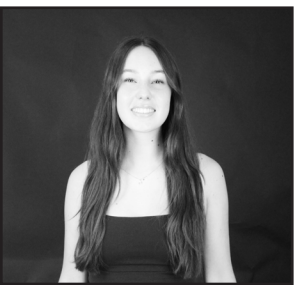
Jane Wilde

When I started high school, I was a quitter. Seriously — name a sport, and I've tried out, made the team, played a season, and quit. This was not a matter of laziness but rather a result of my inability to find "my thing." That changed when I received my **El Gato acceptance** letter during sixth period, my sophomore year. I remember opening it like it was my acceptance to Hogwarts or something, anxiously waiting for the class to begin. From my first El Gato picnic to annual white elephant celebrations, each memory represents how I finally found my passion and community. So while there are too many good memories to count, I'm glad knowing my favorite ones were made in pressroom 505.



Kayla Mitchell

Accepting that, in just a few short months, you will be separated from your best friends feels almost impossible. Once the second semester of senior year began, every moment I shared with my friend group felt far more meaningful. On quiet nights when we just wanted to enjoy being with each other, we always loved **driving up into the mountains** to watch the sunset. When we visited our usual spot during second semester, running around the field and laughing as we jumped on each other felt incredibly bittersweet. One night, we rode down the hill together, listening to Ribs by Lorde, quietly giggling at each other, our eyes brimming with tears. It was such a happy moment, one where we truly appreciated our time together before we all move forward into the next chapters of our lives.



Jordan Park

The best moments of high school always seemed to happen when I wasn't expecting them. One Friday, my friend and I drove to Capitola on a whim to watch the **sunset at the beach**. We grabbed pizza at Pleasure Point and sat on a bench overlooking the ocean. The sky that night was unreal. It was so vibrant and beautiful, and I just remember feeling really grateful to be there. I don't know what was in the air that night, but I don't think I've ever laughed that hard in my life. Afterward, we went to Marianne's Ice Cream and somehow ended up crying laughing in their dining area. I couldn't tell you what was so funny, but I remember my stomach hurt from laughing so much. To this day, thinking back on that night makes me smile.



For me, nothing defines LGHS like our semiannual spirit rallies. But unlike most proud Wildcats, I don't watch from the stands. I'm out there on the track toting an instrument I have no idea how to play. I learned the **Brass Chaos** routine during my sophomore year and had the honor of teaching it to the new generation for this year's Spring Rally. Unlike our frequently-skipped halftime performances during football season, Brass Chaos draws positive attention to band kids and gets the crowd excited when we put on blindfolds and somehow don't hit the people next to us...usually. Nevertheless, Brass Chaos is my favorite silly yet stable tradition that started before I got to LGHS and will continue long after I leave.



Hayley Strahs

When trying to think about a single, favorite memory, all I see is a montage of my high school career, a flashback to **every hang out with my favorite people**. Throughout the year, my friends and I have gone through multiple phases: hacky sack, imposter, and keep it up. Whether junior **Sydney Wilson** is chucking a hacky sack point-blank into someone's face or senior

Leilah Bakhtiari is getting techy with the soccer ball, I derive all of my favorite memories from the friends who feel like family.



Kloe Adams

As my El Gato nickname "On a walk" from last year suggests, my **daily walks during classes** towards the end of the year will always be my most cherished memories from high school. All of a sudden the school environment becomes fun, casual, and friendly when the air gets warmer and AP tests end. Instead of sitting in stuffy classrooms with no task, I'd always text a friend to meet up with and take a walk around campus. These walks were refreshing, but most importantly, they let me connect with the people around me, whether it was through an invigorating debrief or casual conversation. I am eternally grateful to my teachers for ignoring my twenty-minute "bathroom breaks."



Isabella Langner

Entering high school, I was so unbelievably terrified of ending up friendless and unhappy. In the home stretch of my junior year, when my physics class went to **the Exploratorium**, I realized how truly irrational that fear was and regained a sense of childlike wonder. On the trip, I spent many hours with the new friendships I had forged in the grueling flames of AP Physics class. It was so much fun to laugh openly with my peers and play with bubbles like we did when we were younger. I have carried the happiness I felt at the Exploratorium throughout my senior year to remind me not to take myself so seriously and to treasure the friendships that have supported me in so many ways.

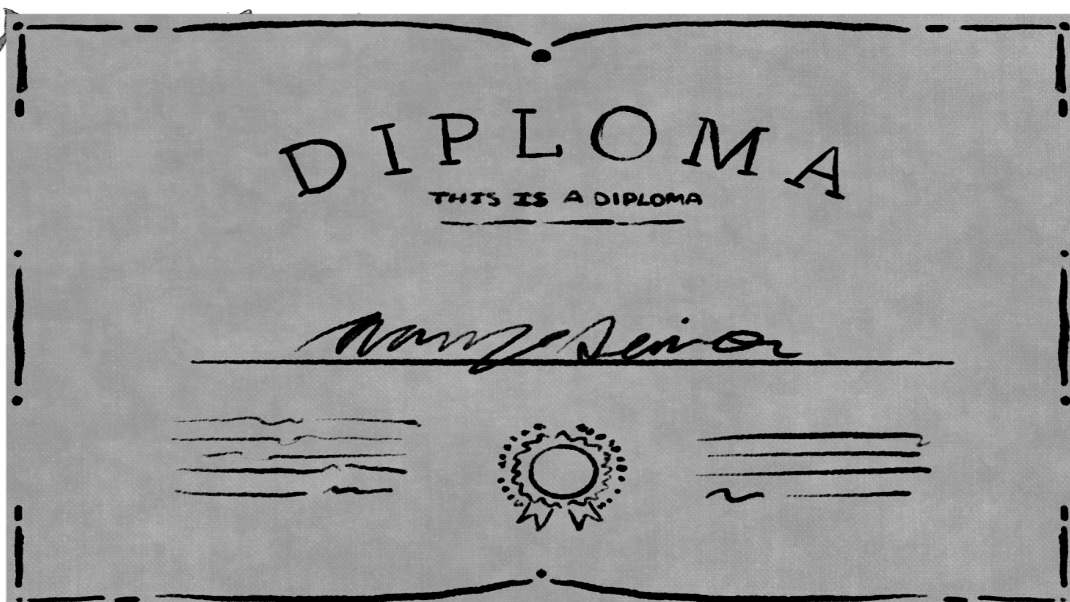


Kat Littfin

A lot of people tell you that high school will be the best four years of your life. For me, it has definitely been the worst. However, in between the endless AP classes and college stress, I have found good moments that I will always cherish and appreciate. For example, after my junior year APUSH exam, Mr. Hardiman let us **hang out on the front lawn**. Two of my friends and completely random classmates all started a game of kickball, which devolved into all of us kicking a ball in the air and chasing each other, something that felt reminiscent of our childhoods despite our seventeen years of age.



Sam Gruetter



Congratulations, Class of 2026!

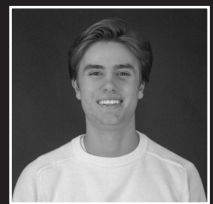
- Nuclear energy is the future
- In-person offices need to come back

OPINION

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Kramer discusses an antidote for disconnection

by Nelson Kramer
Editor-in-Chief



I felt alone for a long time. Picture my average day in junior year: burnt out beyond belief and feeling more disconnected than ever. I think back and can only blame my AirPods and my iPhone, which played music constantly and showed me endless amounts of content. It was the one day I forgot my “social device” and left my phone at home charging that I realized the thing I was missing was right in front of me. My miserable headspace was a result of my bad habits, and now that I sit here today a year later thinking back on my experience, it is more clear than ever that I was not alone in this struggle. The fabric of our modern world is shaped around all types of isolation. My downward spiral of antisocial behavior went against human nature. The device that was supposed to connect me to the world stood in the way of my happiness.

There are many reasons our generation is the most disconnected humans have ever been, and while social media and mobile devices may not tell the whole story, their role in this disconnection is irrefutable. Mobile devices have changed how we work and

collaborate, but the disconnect they create has eroded critical human qualities that help us become fully functioning social beings. Disconnection is spreading at an alarming rate, and its impact is real. According to social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, rates of depression and anxiety in young adults ages 12–17 in the U.S. have nearly doubled from 2010 to 2019. How have we let this generation become the most depressed, the most anxious, and the most suicidal? The problem might be with technology, but the solution is human.

The day I forgot my phone, I walked across campus and caught the eyes of many, some even saying hello and greeting me by name. I felt the power of being seen face to face. The same feeling is not hard to recreate. After all, it doesn't take being fearless to make a change; it takes courage. Although it's not as simple as putting down our addiction and walking away from our devices, we must remember that connecting with our peers in person and getting to know new people is more valuable than any algorithm created to simulate it.

Stepping into connection takes being vulnerable. Turning away from our addictions, our antisocial behavior, our comfortable numbness to the world around us, and facing the fact that living is hard can feel like you are exposed to the elements with no protection. The solution has always been human. It's the same social behavior that separated us from our insular Neanderthal counterparts 40,000 years ago; it takes being open.

Dr. Van Sloan conducted a study aimed at discovering what factors make some people “well-liked,” with results showing that likability overall comes from being open to liking others. Every person you pass with a phone in their face craves the human connection they are so deprived of, which is a key reason why being open is such a powerful skill to develop.

I won't pretend that there is a perfect cure for an issue with as much nuance and prevalence as our generation's tendencies toward being disconnected, but oftentimes, it's the small interactions we allow ourselves to have and letting ourselves be vulnerable to the reality that life is hard that can help us make steps in the right direction.

(Sources: National Institute of Health, The Atlantic, Time)



Invest in nuclear energy

by Tanya Chang
Sports Editor



As climate change worsens, countries are continuing to search for solutions that reduce pollution while still producing sufficient energy for everyone. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar power can be helpful, but they are not always reliable because they depend on weather conditions. However, there is a solution that can produce sufficient energy without releasing copious amounts of carbon dioxide in its process: nuclear energy. Countries should be more open to investing in safer nuclear technology while enforcing strict safety regulations so nuclear power can be used responsibly for renewable energy in the future.

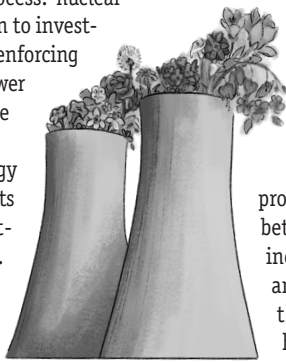
A major advantage of nuclear energy is its ability to produce mass amounts of electricity with minimal resulting pollution. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, nuclear power plants do not release carbon emission while generating electricity, making nuclear power a cleaner energy than fossil fuels. Nuclear plants are also more reliable because they can run continuously, unlike solar panels or wind turbines that only work when the sun or wind are present. This steady source of energy supply is a significant development because it allows reliable access to electricity to those who depend on it daily.

However, some critics strongly point out the negative, even deadly effects of nuclear energy. It can lead to disasters like the Chernobyl disaster

and the Fukushima's Daiichi nuclear disaster, both of which destroyed power plants and caused a temporary pause of cooling systems. Both disasters resulted in a significant loss of human life, caused serious damage to the environment, and forced many people to evacuate the surrounding areas. These events provoke fear about what could happen if something similar occurs. Critics also worry about the radioactive waste that can remain dangerous for many years and is difficult to store safely. This reinforces worries surrounding the risk of nuclear energy and its alternatives.

Even though these concerns are significant and justified, nuclear energy is progressively becoming safer. New models contain advanced safety systems that will automatically shut down when identifying a problem. The International Atomic Energy Agency explains that newer designs have a reduced chance of accidents like proven before. Scientists are developing better ways to manage nuclear waste, including long-term storage facilities and recycling methods that reduce the risk of danger. While experts have not improved nuclear energy to perfection, the advanced technology makes it a more realistic solution than in the past.

Nuclear energy is not flawless, but it is an important option to consider in the fight against climate change. Instead of rejecting it completely, countries should focus on making it safer and more efficient. By combining nuclear power with renewable energy, the world can move toward a cleaner and more reliable energy system. (Sources: International Atomic Energy Agency, U.S. Department of Energy, World Nuclear Association)



Get rid of cringe culture

by Siyona Singhal
Humor Editor



Most students are familiar with the concept of aura points. People view simple actions, such as walking around with an open backpack, negatively, while they praise small moments like catching a falling pencil. However, aura points ultimately seem to function as another way to judge people for behaving differently and to reward conformity. As social media gains a larger role in people's lives and conformity rules actions, society needs to reject cringe culture and promote individuality.

Cringe culture is defined as mocking “cringey” content, or videos that people deem as embarrassing and worthy of being made fun of. People put together YouTube compilations, film reaction videos and overrun comment sections with horrible remarks shaming the creator. Throughout 2021, worldwide Google searches for the term “cringe” were at an all-time high. In fact, there is an entire subreddit dedicated to it, titled r/cringe. The page boasts over 120,000 weekly visitors and features the tagline, “When it just hurts to watch.”

People often direct cringe terms towards the LGBTQ+ community, plus-size creators, and neurodivergent influencers; simply put, people who

don't fit the bill for typical. They face so much hate and bullying that they often stop posting and have to delete all social media to escape the torment. Even after leaving the media, people create memes out of creators that get shared and are used for months or even years. One of the most prevalent examples of this was TikTokker Rizzi. Rizzi was a plus-size woman of color known for her comedic skits. In 2025, she took her own life after relentless mocking and cyberbullying. Her story stands to show how online criticism translates into real life and leads to tragic consequences.

Overall, these actions display one idea: there is one way to exist, and if you don't conform to that way of life, you will be mocked. As time has gone on, this idea has trickled from social media into the lives of adolescents globally. Students are so scared of being called cringe that they often hold themselves back from opportunities that they want, such as joining a certain club or participating in an event. Further, peers are making fun of students who are different more and more. In the U.S., over 50% of students report being cyberbullied (a record high), and most of the harassment includes name-calling.

Society needs to take more action to preserve identity and agency. As trends, memes, and fads gain popularity, people's sense of self is disappearing. However, diversity and differences in thinking are what make everyone unique. (Sources: National Bullying Prevention Center, The Itchican, The Oracle, Vogue)



Politicians should not be giving medical advice

by Abby Coven
News Editor



The second term of the Trump administration marked the most significant resurgence of measles in three decades. The current spike is projected to be the highest in history. Republican-led states are weakening school vaccine mandates, emphasizing “medical freedom” and parental choice over established public health guidance. These policies have created regions of undervaccination where measles can spread rapidly even though the U.S. officially “eliminated” the disease in 2000. Partisanship has exacerbated the breakdown in our society's longstanding consensus around public health. To win back the public, we must separate science from politics to ensure the safety of our nation. Trust will remain broken and lives will be tragically lost without institutional protections to keep the message consistent and the research independent.

Public health developed from early sanitation reforms like clean water and waste disposal to a science-based profession centered on microbiology and laboratories. Major achievements over the past century include widespread vaccination, leading to the eradication of smallpox, improved food safety like pasteurization, and greater infectious disease control through antibiotics.

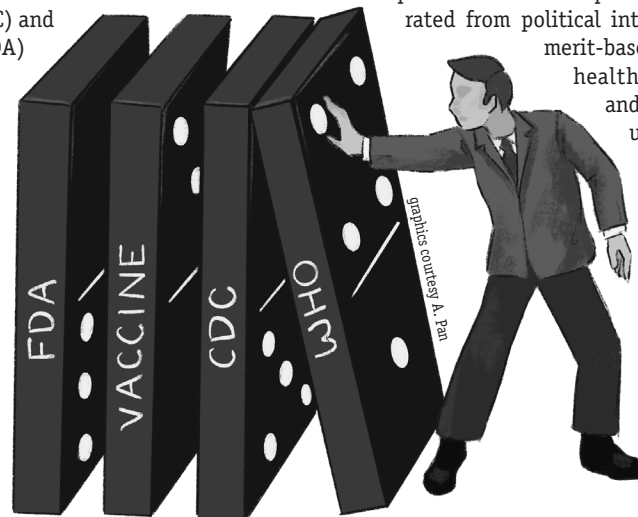
Additionally, major health institutions emerged to coordinate responses to health threats. The World Health Organization (WHO) has a global purview of preventive medicine while the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are the leading national public health agencies in the U.S.

Yet, in spite of these remarkable advancements, a significant number of Americans have lost faith in the field of public health and related institutions. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation study found that by “2025, a majority of Americans expressed low confidence in major institutions like the CDC and FDA, driven by perceptions that advice was politically influenced or failed to consider economic and social impacts.” Confidence in public health agencies and policies now fluctuates significantly based on political affiliation of the administration in charge, all of which is intensified by the overload of misinformation.

To attain a healthy society, we need to build back trust in nonpartisan frameworks on public health when making

important medical decisions. Reliance on science-based and data-driven public health cannot be rebuilt without structural protections that keep scientific expertise separated from political interference. Legislating merit-based leadership in public health agencies, oversight and whistleblower bodies, utilizing nontraditional messengers like faith leaders and local clinicians, and normalizing uncertainty inherent in scientific evolution are potential approaches. Politicians' increasing distrust in medical science and promotion of misinformation is having severe consequences on our nation's health. Without institutional safeguards that keep science insulated from politics, we will not be able to reverse this trend.

(Sources: APHA, KFF, Pew Research)



Stop doing fake research

by Ivan Habib
Website Manager

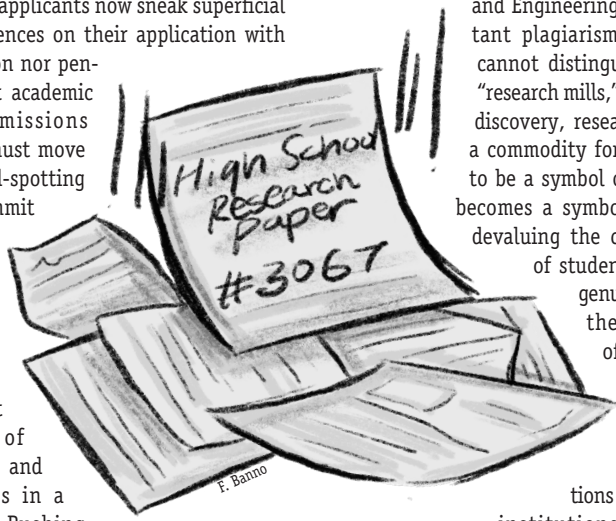


The United States' undergraduate college admissions process has become increasingly selective, placing immense pressure on students to be "impressive" enough to earn entrance into elite universities. This has facilitated the rise of the predatory college admissions industry, incentivizing students to do research. However, many applicants now sneak superficial research experiences on their application with neither detection nor penalty. To protect academic integrity, admissions officers (AOs) must move beyond keyword-spotting and instead commit to properly verifying these research experiences. By definition, research is the advancement and creation of new knowledge and understandings in a specific field. Pushing these boundaries, especially in scientific fields, requires first meeting the boundaries with knowledge extending far beyond curriculum. For example, in math and physics, the earliest prerequisites include Linear Algebra, Stochastic Calculus, and Differential Equations, all of which are absent in standard high school courses.

Predatory programs and journals have risen as a means to financially exploit students' desperation for an impressive credential. In turn, these programs often do not truly offer research experiences and rather, prey on apparent prestige. The

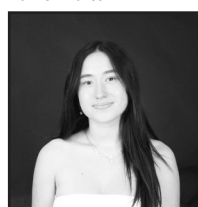
University of Pennsylvania reported that over one-third of their accepted applicants claimed some form of research experience, with a vast majority having published authors as mentors. Former USA Physics Team coach Kevin Zhou criticized this emphasis on high school research, explaining, "How do you get a research mentor? Your options are to be very lucky, have family connections, or to pay \$10,000 to a summer program." In a similar fashion, he also brings up the unverifiability of research, which recently resulted in a scandal involving people exposing the winner of the International Science and Engineering Fair for blatant plagiarism. When AOs cannot distinguish between "research mills," and genuine discovery, research becomes a commodity for sale, ceases to be a symbol of merit, and becomes a symbol of wealth, devaluing the contributions of students who have genuinely pushed the boundaries of their field.

While legitimate student contributions do exist, elite institutions' obsession with the key-word "research" incentivizes dishonest reporting. The problem, at the root, is the expectations of these elite universities. To rectify this, AOs must become literate in the red flags of research, including predatory journals and false mentorship mills. By verifying the depth of student involvement and the legitimacy of the publishing venue, universities can reframe research as a valuable learning experience rather than a hollow, expensive stepping stone. (Sources: Greg Re, Kevin Zhou, UPenn)



Reprioritize in-person work

by Jane Wilde
Humor Editor



After Covid-19, the labor force culture has continued to shift from in-person to remote work. While some argue the pandemic has created more efficiency in the workplace by offering Zoom

calls and communication online, people must consider that it is detrimental not only to the workplace's efficiency, but to the mental well-being of employees. Because of this, in-person work should be the default option.

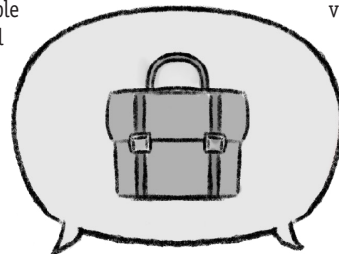
Humans are incredibly social creatures. Even the most casual, commonplace conversations accumulate and make a significant impact on our well-being. That is why face-to-face interactions are imperative to one's mental health and work performance. According to Science Direct, excessive numbers of remote workdays (more than three days a week) increase the likelihood of loneliness and depression. The percentage of co-workers who feel they know each other personally before Covid was 80%, but it has now dropped to 67%. This is a clear reflection of the isolationism remote work promotes and implements into people's daily lives.

Our nervous systems love familiarity; they crave routines and structure, whether that means a rigorous work schedule or a simple skincare regiment every night. Research in neuroscience confirms that

routines give us something safe and familiar to cling to. Not only does remote work throw off routine, but it fosters an environment of spontaneity that causes stress and unnecessary planning. Instead of the workplace giving you structure, you're forced to create your own. This directly impacts productivity, collaboration, and efficiency.

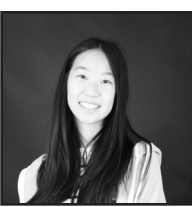
In order to thrive as a team, in-person communication is essential. While Zoom can be efficient, the frequent lags and loss of in-person conversations are a gateway for miscommunications and disagreements. A Harvard Business School study concluded that remote work reduced efficiency and lowered camaraderie and understanding among colleagues. Leslie Parrow, a leadership professor at Harvard Business School, wrote, "While technology makes it possible to invite more and different people to virtual meetings, the lack of spontaneous 'huddle time' — quick post-meeting conversations to process what just happened — can leave some attendees in the dark about nuances and next steps."

Although there are certain trade-offs you must make when deciding if you want to work remotely, those choices are up to the individual. However, from a wellness standpoint, the trade-offs are not worth the mental consequences. In order to ensure your team is working to their fullest potential, real-life communication is necessary. While companies continue to offer hybrid and fully remote jobs, employees should consider choosing in-person work to avoid perpetuating the isolation Covid caused. (Sources: Harvard Business School, Science Direct)



Modern video advertisements require stricter regulations

by Annabelle Pan
Graphics Editor



With most free digital media apps and websites comes a constant flow of advertisements. Spotify Premium, Netflix Premium, and Youtube Premium all promote an ad-free watching experience for anyone willing to pay a monthly or yearly subscription. However, to encourage subscribers, many streaming services lengthen advertisement time for non-paying users, and some of these products are not age appropriate.

Youtube, in particular, has recently increased the amount of unskippable commercials per video. Youtube needs to shorten the length of its ads and ensure age-appropriate content in commercials so that viewers can enjoy their videos.

Youtube has heavily increased the length and number of advertisements shown to viewers, augmenting their revenue at the expense of viewers' time. Of Youtube's total revenue of 62 billion dollars in 2025, advertising generated more than 40 billion dollars, a ten percent increase from the previous year. Although Youtube has seen significant gains in earnings, viewers endure

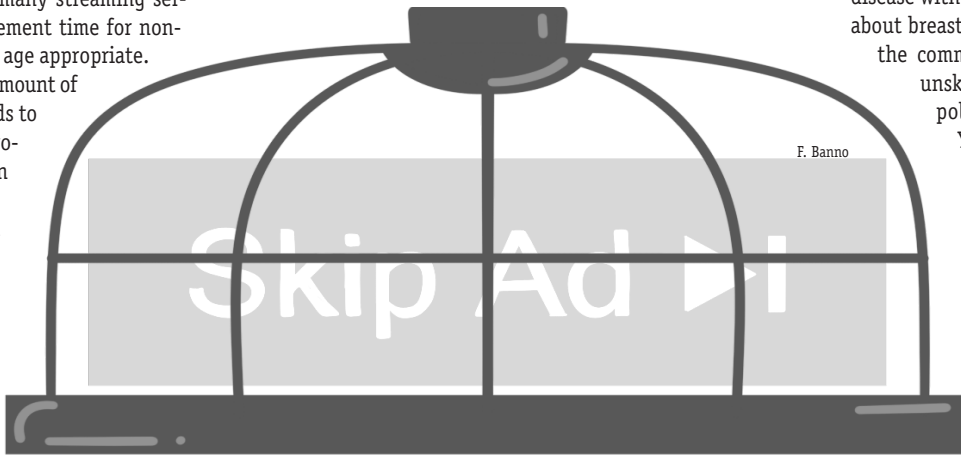
worse experiences as a result. Often, viewers watching Youtube on a TV must sit through four different advertisements spanning over a minute before returning to their desired content, just to repeat the experience after twenty minutes. Commercial length increased for users on phones, iPads, and computers as well, with an average unskippable time of ten seconds in 2023 and 30 seconds in 2025. Instead of encouraging platform users to support creators' content, Youtube's ads discourage long-form engagement while promoting Youtube Shorts,

which feature fewer and shorter commercial breaks. Youtube needs to focus on providing a more productive watching experience instead of forcing constant unrelated advertisements.

Furthermore, quite a few of Youtube's ads are inappropriate, especially when inserted into media targeting children. While many ads merely promote household products, stores, or websites, some are not suitable for younger audiences. For example, Youtube recently brought back the "Bent Carrot" ad from Xiaflex, a commercial about Peyronie's disease with terminology about male genitalia. Another recent ad was about breast cancer, but instead of focusing on spreading awareness, the commercial zooms in on inappropriate locations during the unskippable portion. Commercial breaks also feature several political campaigns and videos promoting certain laws.

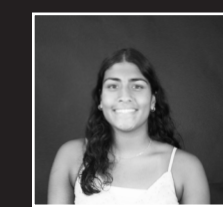
Youtube allows the same ads to appear in any age-range targeted content unless the viewer is on Youtube Kids, which includes heavy restrictions on features like comments and content type. Additionally, Youtube Kids is only designed for kids twelve and under, so most viewers that deserve content protection do not receive it.

Instead of incentivizing viewers to buy their subscription, Youtube should monitor the ads they allow on their platform to protect younger viewers and shorten commercial length for improved viewer experience. (Sources: MediaPost, NY Times, Statista)



Sunil emphasizes the hazards of factory farming

by Gowri Sunil
News Editor



Stretching back to the 1970s, the American meat industry has employed mass production tactics, known as factory farming, to amplify their profits while keeping cultivation costs low. The farmers primarily use cows, chickens, and pigs that

are selectively bred and experience immense physical pain through the process. Although these practices raise ethical concerns, long-running debates like animal testing cruelty have proven the concerns over animal treatment barely lead to actionable change. However, over time, factory farming also harms humans and the environment. Policymakers must implement stricter rules for factory farms since they lead to antibiotic-resistant bacteria, pollute communal water sources, and increase greenhouse gas emissions.

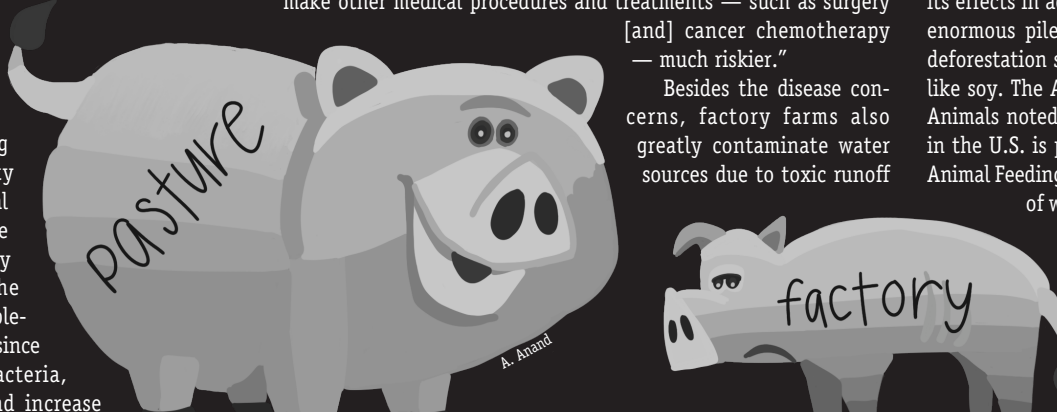
Factory farms frequently give animals antibiotics in order to prevent the quick spread of diseases in their heavily crowded areas. By overusing antibiotics, bacteria become resistant to this medication; this resistant bacteria grows and directly spreads to humans since they eat the meat. Resistant bacteria is extremely dangerous since it makes treating common illnesses more difficult while potentially leading to the outbreak of deadly pandemics. Furthermore, according to the World Health Organization, the antibiotic-resistant bacteria "make other medical procedures and treatments — such as surgery [and] cancer chemotherapy — much riskier."

Besides the disease concerns, factory farms also greatly contaminate water sources due to toxic runoff

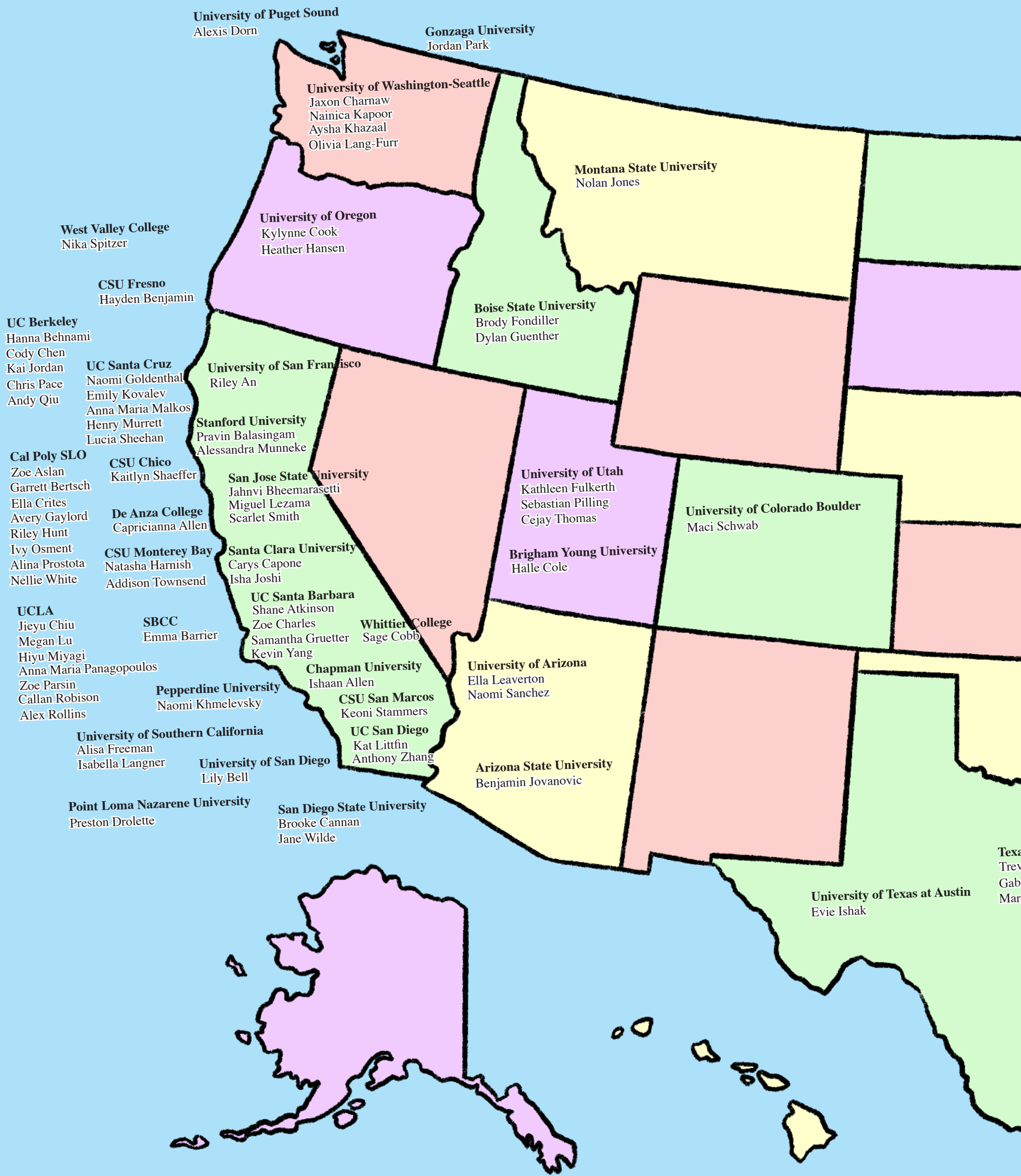
caused by huge quantities of manure and chemicals like nitrogen and phosphorus. The animal excrement transports harmful organisms like Escherichia coli (E. coli) and salmonella, leaving nearby communities to use these polluted water sources.

Additionally, factory farms contribute to global warming. According to the World Animal Protection, factory farms produce 11% of the total carbon emissions in the world. While all cows release methane, the large number of livestock amplifies its effects in addition to the large amount of nitrous oxide from enormous piles of manure. Moreover, factory farms heighten deforestation since the farms need to create land for feed crops like soy. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals noted that "nearly 50% of corn and 70% of soy grown in the U.S. is produced to feed animals raised in [Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations]. Those crops consume vast quantities of water and require enormous amounts of fossil fuels and pesticides, all of which adds to the environmental footprint of the final product."

Factory farms are meant to feed humans, but instead they deliver dangerous diseases and harm the earth, making strict guidelines from policymakers a necessity. (Sources: ASPCA, Human League, WHO, World Animal Protection)



EI Gato 2020



6 Senior Map



McGill University
Lylie Cheri



Trinity College Dublin
Matilda Luton



University of Edinburgh
Natalie Schubert
Hayley Wong

- Euphoria season three puzzles viewers
- Malcolm Todd rises in popularity

CULTURE

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The Devil Wears Prada returns to screens with new sequel

by Gowri Sunil
News Editor

Almost 20 years after the iconic Devil Wears Prada movie broadcast the fashion industry to the world, the sequel, Devil Wears Prada 2, revisits a completely transformed industry.

Much of the original cast returns for the sequel, including Meryl Streep as Miranda Priestly, Anne Hathaway as Andy Sachs, Emily Blunt as Emily Charlton, and Stanley Tucci as Nigel. Additionally, the sequel brings in new members, including Simone Ashley as Priestly's new first assistant, Luci Liu as Sasha Barnes, Justin Theroux as Benji Barnes, and B.J. Novak as Runway's new corporate executive. The first movie was released in 2006, back when fashion magazines dictated the trends. The editors-in-chief, like the cold and intimidating Priestly, played powerful roles in the process, making jobs under them, like at Runway, especially demanding. The original Devil Wears Prada movie reflected this environment, and dove into the ambition and consequent personal sacrifices of the Runway's workforce. On top of its portrayal of the demanding and toxic work environment, the original film also created famous lines like "Florals?

For Spring? Groundbreaking" and "A million girls would kill for this job," lines that have been permanently woven into pop culture.

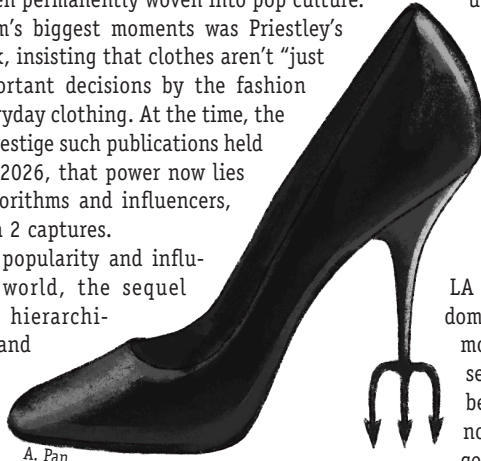
One of the first film's biggest moments was Priestly's cerulean sweater remark, insisting that clothes aren't "just blue" but instead important decisions by the fashion industry that shape everyday clothing. At the time, the dialogue reflected the prestige such publications held in culture. However, in 2026, that power now lies in the social media algorithms and influencers, which Devil Wears Prada 2 captures.

With social media's popularity and influence on the fashion world, the sequel moves away from the hierarchical aspect of Runway and instead focuses on the challenges the new era of fashion brings to traditional magazines like Runway and

their staff. The move opens with Andy Sachs now as a reputable journalist, no longer working under Priestly. However, when Sachs is unexpectedly laid off, she reluctantly returns to work at the Runway, where Priestly is facing problems of her own. When threats to the magazine's future arise, the two work together to salvage Priestly's relevance in the transforming industry and Sach's job. The Radio Times describes the setting as one where "the print magazine is tanking; numbers are down, it's nearly all gone digital, and everything is about clicks."

Already, the new film has found immense success, and the LA Times notes that the movie has so far made \$77 million domestically and \$233.6 million globally. In addition, the original movie encountered a major surge in viewers in the run-up to the sequel's release. The Devil Wears Prada 2 has viewers hooked before they even step into the theater. Beyond its undeniable nostalgia, the movie resonates with its response to the current generation's idea of the fashion world.

(Sources: LA Times, Radio Times)



A. Pan

Kahan releases a new album

by Quinn Hathaway
Media Production Editor

Noah Kahan secured his first number one album on Hot 200 with his new release, The Great Divide. Kahan released the 21-song compilation on Apr. 24, marking his fourth main studio album. Kahan's fanbase received the collection of songs warmly, pushing track two, Doors,



A. Pan

in a photograph...I'm always on my own." Some songs even extend full blame onto whoever

Kahan lost. Dashboard details, "Change your zipcode, turns out that you're still an a-hole," stating that distance cannot fix a person, if the person is already long gone.

At its essence, the phrasing of the album's title, The Great Divide, demands

an explanation of the rift that grew between Kahan and some other entity, whether that be the boy on the album cover or maybe a lost love. The collection's title track, The Great Divide, encapsulates Kahan's deep-seated confusion of the distance between the two. Kahan states, "You know I think about...my deep misunderstanding of your life," relaying his pain of not being able to provide the proper empathy for his lost connection. The entire song is a ballad to the hole in Kahan's heart, though at the root, he wishes, "I hope you settle down, I hope you marry rich," continuing the note of positivity in a time of sadness previously seen in Haircut and others.

Overall, The Great Divide is an ode to someone long gone, leading some to believe that it is full of misery and melancholy. Yet, Kahan manages to weave those feelings into catchy choruses and upbeat tunes, even if the lyrics hold pain beneath the surface. This unique ability turns listening to the album into a cathartic experience, a musical translation of the oxymoron that is living a life with constant pain. Kahan's tour will start on Jun. 11 in Orlando, Florida and continue through Dec. 17.

The anthology is a continuation of Kahan's personal musical style, with deep tones ranging from bassist croons to high falsettos. Some tracks have faster beats, such as Haircut and Deny Deny Deny, though the lyrics have an underlying sadness. In Haircut, Kahan remarks, "At least I got soul still, even if I'm in a bad place," highlighting seeing life through a positive lens despite its undulations. Similarly, Dan highlights a close friend, as Kahan remarks, "And I'm so glad we're here, 'Cause I'm with my best friend Dan now." Fans speculate that Dan is the boy on the album's cover, and a reference to Kahan's childhood friend.

However, in true Noah Kahan-style, many of the new songs also dip into the sadder aspects of Kahan's heart. Porch Light features mandolins, creating a unique accompaniment that permeates Kahan's intense wording: "Poison spreading to my lungs, I ain't holding breath, ain't holding any faith at all." This sense of hopelessness continues through several other tracks on the album, including the soulful mourning prevalent in All Them Horses: "Oh, everyone looks happy

The Black Keys drop new music

by Tori Schubert
People Editor

On May 1, renowned blues and rock band The Black Keys released a new album, titled Peaches! This marked their 14th studio album, succeeding No Rain, No Flowers, which premiered in August of 2025.

The band consists of Dan Auerbach on guitar and vocals and Patrick Carney on drums. However, the duo worked alongside Kenny Brown on drums, Eric Deaton on bass, and Jimbo Mathus on guitar and keyboard for the production of Peaches!. The Black Keys first announced their newest album in February, along with their Peaches 'n Kream World Tour '26. They debuted in Florida in late April and will travel through various countries until mid-October. Their tour includes destinations in England, Germany, Turkey, Spain, the Netherlands, Nova Scotia, and more, allowing the Black Keys to develop their album's popularity worldwide.

Peaches! includes a track list of ten songs, featuring catchy titles such as Where There's Smoke, There's Fire and Who's Been Foolin' You. The new releases posed an opportunity for the Black Keys to expand their style while maintaining the signature sound that audiences know and love. The band drew inspiration from British artists, including Junior Kimbrough, Ike Turner, and others, producing an album that showcases their rock background. Additional motivation sparked from Auerbach's father's diagnosis with terminal cancer.

Carney recalled, "It was a heavy time. And I thought, well, maybe this would be a good time to give [Auerbach] something to work on for a couple of hours a day where he didn't really have to think too much...I think we were kind of subconsciously, or maybe

Dan was consciously making something for him." Auerbach brainstormed a list of songs to emulate or draw ideas from, and the group recorded about 15 tracks in four days.

The Black Keys soon began the official process, reverting to their prior customs of no rehearsals and few overlays, recording each song with the musicians together in one room. According to cleveland.com, "Carney and the band members sometimes were hearing songs for the first time during recording." Peaches! marks the Black Keys' first album recorded and produced by Carney and Auerbach since 2006. With limited takes, the band maintained a raw, authentic sound, immediately attracting fans of multiple music genres. You Got To Lose attained third place on Billboard's Adult Alternative Airplay chart, within days of the album's release, reflecting the band's popularity and audience.

With enthusiastic listeners, the Black Keys have furthered their success with their new release, maintaining their popularity for over 25 years. The duo shows no signs of slowing down, promising additional productions and performances still to come. In the meantime, Peaches! is here to keep fans occupied and entertained.

(Sources: Cleveland.com, Pitchfork, Rock and Blues Muse)



F. Banno

SINGHAL REVIEWS EUPHORIA SEASON THREE

by Siyona Singhal
Humor Editor

Euphoria is known for its bold visuals, heavy themes, and amazing soundtrack — or is it? After a four-year hiatus, season three premiered on Apr. 12, and episodes come out every Sunday. With season three of Euphoria fully underway, many fans have expressed dissatisfaction with the released episodes and are left wondering what went wrong.

Rumors of rifts between the cast and creator, Sam Levinson, have only grown since its return was confirmed last autumn, and Barbie Ferreira (Kat Hernandez) chose to depart from the show due to creative differences. Furthermore, musical artist Labrinth declined to work on Euphoria because he felt disrespected during the production process. Labrinth's music was an iconic part of Euphoria, and fans definitely notice and mourn his absence.

Beyond the lackluster soundtrack, viewers are also disappointed in the aesthetic changes of this season. This season is noticeably missing the iconic purple and glittery makeup and theme, a staple of the show. Fans

have criticized HBO for firing Petra Collins, the photographer and filmmaker whose photography inspired the show and originated the purple aesthetic. The first season resonated because, along with its stylization, it felt emotionally honest. It gave space to discomfort without losing sight of humanity. Season three, however, often feels more concerned with being provocative than being meaningful. The intensity is still there, but without the same sense

of purpose. The show feels less about drug abuse and emotional relationships and more about making people mad. Season three doesn't seem like the same show as the first two seasons. Rue Bennet, once the emotional core of the show, is now constantly stuck between high-stakes moments and fast-moving plot points. People are also calling this season incredibly misogynistic. Every character is somehow involved with sex work, whether it's Rue working at a strip club or Jules Vaughn becoming a sugar baby. Women seem to be painted as only being able to succeed through the sex industry. When the girls on the show are not being mistreated or treated like cattle, they act in cartoonish ways and embarrass themselves, especially Cassie Howard's character. She is handing away her dignity like it's candy and continues to annoy fans to no end, similar to past seasons. The show paints her as a shallow woman whose entire value is her body. The season's finale will air on May 31. While there are no confirmed plans for season four, it is not entirely impossible. HBO seems to want the show to continue, but many actors, including Zendaya, have not expressed interest in signing on to another season. Until then, fans are hoping that the season gets better soon and will go back to the epic drama it once was.

(Sources: The Guardian, Vogue)



F. Banno

MALCOLM TODD ANNOUNCES NEW PROJECT TO EXCITED FANS

by **Chloe Wilson**
Culture Editor

Rising star Malcolm Todd recently announced his fourth studio album, releasing on Jun. 5. The singer dropped two singles that will appear on the album already, including *Breathe* on Mar. 14 and *I Saw Your Face* on Apr. 23. The two songs have already turned into hits, with *I Saw Your Face* reaching two million streams on Spotify in its first 24 hours of release.

Todd started his career by going viral on TikTok in 2023 for his singles *Roommates* and *Art House*, and later signed a deal with Columbia Records and released his first album, *Sweet Boy*. His first song to enter the Billboard Hot 100 was *Chest Pain* (*I Love*), a 2024 single that was also greatly popular on social media. Todd's music is addictive and unique, blending pop, indie, and R&B. Additionally, he has a heavy internet presence, interacting with fans and uploading relatable videos.

Todd is currently projected to perform at music festivals like sold-out *Outside Lands* in San Francisco and *The Osheaga Festival* in Montreal, Quebec. His past tour, *The*

Wholesome *Rockstar Tour*, concluded in September of 2025 when the artist had nine million monthly listeners on Spotify.

Currently, Todd has over 23 million listeners. A consistent theme seen in interviews with Todd is the tendency to put his all into his lyrics and music. He shared, "You just want to be making the music for yourself and trusting that that's what they will love." He also gained notoriety for his quirky music

videos, with creative and well-known references to illustrious movies like *The Notebook*, where instead of 365 letters, he sends daily Instagram DMs.

Todd grew up in a household full of creativity. His sister, Aubrey Hobert, gained immense popularity in 2025 with hit singles like *Bowling Alley* and *Sue Me*. Furthermore, his father, Tim Hobert, is an executive television producer for shows like *Scrubs* and *The Middle*.

Relating to the beginning of his music career, Todd received a bass for Christmas at age 16; during the pandemic in his junior year, he taught himself to play and started a garage band. He shared this interest with his close friend Charlie Ziman, who is now a collaborator of Todd's. He explained, "In senior year, we would just go make a song together in between choir practice and school ending. We made my first EP in two months. We just sat there, made six songs, and put them out." Todd gained inspiration from artists like Omar Apollo and Kali Uchis and covered music from Steve Lacy and Dominic Fike.

Malcolm Todd's rising stardom displays his commitment, dedication to his art, and creativity. Todd gathers inspiration from famous artists while diving into individuality. His new album is sure to be a smashing success. (Sources: *Atwood Magazine*, *Daily Northwestern*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Line of Best Fit*)



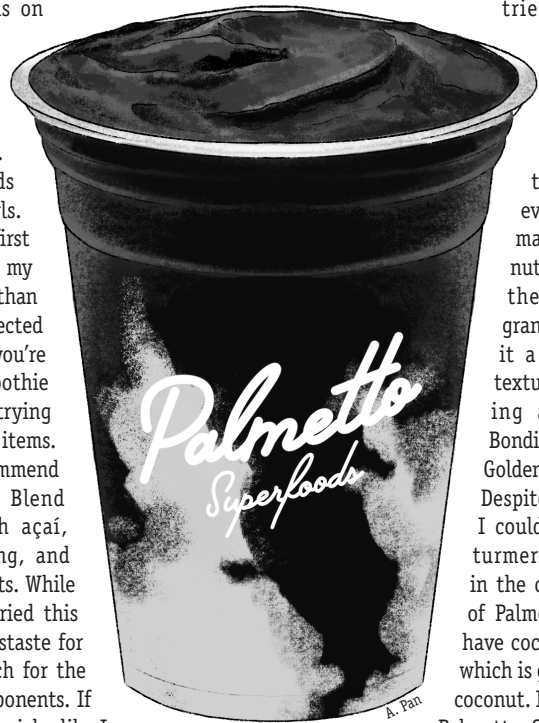
F. Banno

How to order at Palmetto

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

Calling all smoothie slurpers and açai aficionados! Palmetto Superfoods recently opened locations in Los Gatos and Santa Cruz just in time for summer. As a longtime fan of their Santana Row location, I've tried the good, bad, and ugly options on the menu. With my years of expertise, here is my (very subjective) guide to Palmetto Superfoods.

Palmetto Superfoods is known for its bowls. When I visited for the first time, I opted to build my own concoction rather than try one of their pre-selected combinations. But if you're completely new to smoothie bowls, I recommend trying one of their signature items. For breakfast, I'd recommend the "Bom Dia" A.M. Blend bowl, complete with açai, coconut, chia pudding, and cinnamon steel-cut oats. While I haven't personally tried this bowl because of my distaste for chia seeds, I can vouch for the other three main components. If you're also moderately picky like I



A. Pan

is 100% worth the 50-cent upcharge. Granola and toppings are pretty self-explanatory, and I don't feel the need to share my go-tos and preferences. Play around, and feel free to take anything off that you don't like.

In addition to bowls, Palmetto Superfoods sells smoothies. From what I've tried, I am not a fan. My first Palmetto smoothie was the *Blue Bondives*, which tasted wonderful even though I normally dislike coconut. Unfortunately, the smoothie has granola, which gives it a strange, seedy texture. After throwing away my *Blue Bondives*, I ordered the *Golden State Smoothie*. Despite all its flavors, I could only taste the turmeric and coconut in the concoction. Most of Palmetto's smoothies have coconut milk bases, which is good if you enjoy coconut. I don't. Moreover, Palmetto Superfoods runs like sweet. Their smoothies and bowls are more like desserts rather than meals, so take note when ordering your breakfast. It is worth mentioning that while I haven't tried any of them, Palmetto has some protein-oriented items meant to be full meals.

With a new location in Old Town, Palmetto Superfoods is an ideal spot for a decadent lunch or an afterschool pick-me-up if you order strategically. Hopefully, this review opened your eyes (and taste buds) to the world of smoothies and bowls. Happy sipping!

(Source: Palmetto Superfoods)

Watch these 2000s shows

by **Claudia Casal Montserrat**
People Editor

Whether it's to fill up summer vacation or to relax after a busy day, 2000s TV shows are the perfect distraction from the summer heat. Here are some of the best.

Gossip Girl: This show follows the scandalous lives of some of New York's most privileged high school students. Chaos ensues on the Upper East Side when an anonymous blogger named *Gossip Girl* begins airing out these teens' drama. Known for its iconic fashion, memorable moments, and portrayal of elite families, *Gossip Girl* is a great vehicle to live vicariously through its characters.

The OC: As Ryan Atwood, a troubled teenager, is taken in by the wealthy family of his public defender, he must learn to navigate through the culture shock that comes with suddenly becoming a part of Los Angeles's most affluent circles. His newfound friendship with his adoptive brother, Seth Cohen, as well as his new relationships with best friends *Marrissa* and *Summer*, are the main catalysts as Ryan overcomes his traumatic childhood throughout his character arc. With its dynamic and frequent plot twists, continuous drama, and lovable characters, this dramatic show should be your next binge.

How I Met Your Mother: This sitcom is about Ted Mosby as he tries to find love in the streets of New York, surrounded by his friends. This show is a personal favorite of mine to pick a random episode and just watch, thanks to its unforgettable scenes and running gags. Although the series revolves around Ted's life, his friends are often more noteworthy. *Barney* (Neil Patrick Harris) has exceptional humor and significant

character development. *Cobie Smulders* plays Robin, an independent, career-focused Canadian pop star turned journalist, who is a much-welcome addition to the cast.

Supernatural: In this 15-season-long series, Sam and Dean hunt monsters as part of their family business. When Sam and Dean were infants, their mother died from a monster that hung her from the ceiling. Since then, it has been the mission of the brothers and the father to hunt their mother's killer. The duo goes to hell and heaven as they die and reincarnate multiple times. With stand-out episodes including *Bloody Mary* and the *White Woman*, this show is eye candy for lovers of everything to do with ghosts and monsters.

Vampire Diaries: Another brother duo, *Stefan* and *Damon*, vampires, move to a new town, and both fall in love with the same girl, *Elena*. A predecessor to *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, this series has a very similar aesthetic to *Twilight* and centers the brothers' relationship with *Elena*.



A. Pan

Known for its opposite heartthrobs and constantly changing plots, this is ideal for those interested in fantasy, the supernatural, and the long-running.

Modern Family: This sitcom follows an extended family living in Southern California. The show consists of three families led by *Mitchell* and *Cameron*, *Phil* and *Claire*, and *Gloria* and *Jay*. Throughout the show's eleven seasons, *Modern Family* explores the lives and identity's of each of the family members throughout their everyday challenges and triumphs. If you are looking for a comfort watch filled with laughs, this show is for you!

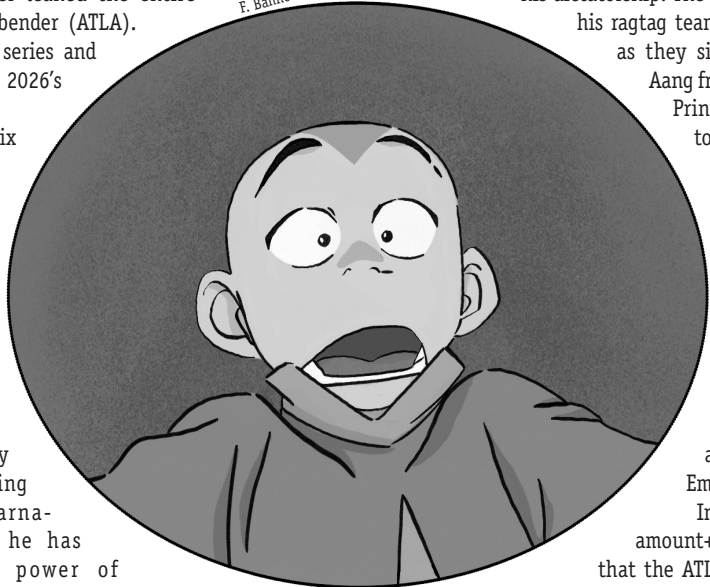
Hacker leaks upcoming Avatar: The Last Airbender movie

by **Tanvi Ambekar**
Opinion Editor

On Apr. 13, an anonymous X user leaked the entire Paramount+ film *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (ATLA). The movie is based on the iconic TV series and was originally anticipated to be one of 2026's most popular films.

The original TV series aired on Netflix between Feb. 21, 2005, and Jul. 19, 2008, spanning a total of three seasons and 61 episodes. ATLA is set in an Asian-influenced martial arts world made up of people from four districts: the *Fire Kingdom*, the *Water Tribes*, the *Earth Kingdom*, and the *Air Nomads*. Each group has superhumans, dubbed *Benders*, with powers that allow them to manipulate their nation's corresponding element. The story revolves around *Aang*, the last living *Airbender* and the latest reincarnation of the *Avatar*. This means he has the potential to harness the power of all four elements.

In this fictional world, the *Fire Nation's* ruler, *Fire Lord Ozai*, seeks to take over all four nations and bring their people under his dictatorship. The show follows *Aang* and his ragtag team of teenage prodigies as they simultaneously protect



F. Banno

Aang from *Fire Lord Ozai's* son, *Prince Zuko*, and scheme to overthrow *Ozai* before his ultimate take-over. The original TV show was a hit; it garnered 5.6 million viewers on its best-rated showing and has won awards such as the *Annual Annie Awards*, the *Genesis Awards*, and the *Primetime Emmy Awards*.

In February of 2024, Paramount+ officially announced that the ATLA film would come to theaters on Oct. 6. However, just a few

months before its release, the company decided to cancel its public release and make it available exclusively to Paramount+ members. The public was extremely disappointed and angry, and many fans theorized that this anger directly led to the leak in Apr. 2026.

A few months before the movie leak, X user *ImStillDissin* started releasing two-minute clips of the *Avatar* movie onto the platform. He said that since it was to be exclusive to Paramount+, he did not think it was a big deal. However, soon after his clips began reaching a very wide audience, a friend from his internet hacker days reached out and sent him a copy of the entire movie. This hacker friend worked in a circle dedicated to pirating unreleased movies and selling them to the highest bidder.

The leaked movie immediately gained traction online. It features the adult version of all the original ATLA characters, and many fans were excited to access the movie without having to pay for Paramount+. Nevertheless, Paramount+ animators, voice actors, and directors expressed their disappointment that the movie they had been working on for so long was publicized so anticlimactically.

Paramount+ continues to take down videos containing clips from the movie, but thousands of edits remain online as the movie's popularity continues to grow. It remains to be seen how effective Paramount+'s copyright strikes will be, although a complete online eradication seems unlikely. (Sources: *Avatar Wiki*, *Deadline*, *The Hollywood Reporter*)

- Strahs critiques Hazbin Hotel
- Singhal details Socratic seminars

HUMOR

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Littfin explains TikTokker Tyler Catastrophe

by Kat Littfin
Editorial Editor

During my two years in El Gato, I have realized that even though my screentime is often far too high for someone who should be more focused on other things, I am usually not the most chronically online person in the class. However, when Tyler Catastrophe appeared on my feed, and I asked several fellow El Gatans if they had heard of him, I was met with weird looks and confused laughs. If you, like my classmates, have not heard of Tyler Catastrophe, TikTok's newest semi-phenomenon, I have done enough deep dives to give a surface-level explanation of the enigma that is Tyler Catastrophe.

I vividly remember my first encounter with Catastrophe when my TikTok feed spat out a painfully long video of the fellow singing a song a cappella from a band called Lovejoy. I was only vaguely familiar with the band, as I knew of the lead singer, Wilbur Soot. I never really liked Wilbur Soot; if I were to describe his music, I would say he sounds like any random British guy you could find on the side of the street. His lyrics were always cringeworthy and annoying. When someone like Tyler Catastrophe then decides to cover such a song, the layers of cringe grow exponentially. From my research, I learned that Tyler Catastrophe had considered himself a semi-professional musician, as he sang

in a chorus and played trumpet, but only before an apparent motorcycle accident. At first, I wanted to give him grace because he asserted that his accident made it very difficult for him to sing, but he is always quick to say that he is now even better than he once was. I definitely would not want to hear what he sounded like before his accident. An accident is certainly not something to joke about, but Catastrophe explained that while on his "motorcycle," he "totaled" a Lexus with his body. Internet sleuths quickly uncovered that



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not only was Catastrophe riding a moped, but he was also found at fault for the accident, and the Lexus that hit him incurred little to no damage. Why Catastrophe would make up such obnoxious details is unknown, but it follows a pattern of his delusions of grandeur.

Catastrophe's Lovejoy cover video is not only cringey because of his suboptimal vocals, but he also begins the video by stating that it is his unofficial audition to become the second vocalist for the band. This is when some people who fell down the Tyler Catastrophe rabbit hole realized he actually has a deep infatuation with the band's lead singer. Not only had Catastrophe started a GoFundMe to pay for his move to Brighton, where Wilbur Soot resides, but he has also repeatedly defended Soot even amidst accusations of abuse and stated that he believes if Soot got to know him, he would want to date him.

While the internet is full of people who lie and have inflated egos, I think Tyler Catastrophe is definitely one of the most overconfident and consequently hilarious people I have encountered. I very much recommend researching him in your next TikTok deep dive if you haven't already.

STRAHS SHARES THOUGHTS ON HAZBIN HOTEL

by Hayley Strahs
Editor-in-Chief

About two years ago, I was home sick for a whole week and looking for something to watch. After binging all of Heimler's AP Euro review videos three times over, I needed a change of cinematic pace. In my feverish state, I happened upon Hazbin Hotel. I should've clicked away, but the idea of the show resonated with me. Hazbin Hotel is set in the Underworld, and my headache-fever combo was sent straight from Hell. Over the next few days, I proceeded to consume eight episodes of pure torture under the guise that "it gets better," according to 30-year-old basement dwellers on TikTok.

Hazbin Hotel had so much potential. If I remember correctly, it follows Charlie Morningstar — the daughter of Lucifer and Lilith — as she attempts to rehabilitate sinners at the unsurprisingly named Hazbin Hotel. In theory, the show should offer some valid religious critiques regarding hypocrisy and extremism within certain religious sects. Unfortunately, the writers are incompetent. You'd think that, in creating a show about biblical characters, the writers would have at least skimmed the book itself. You'd be wrong. Hazbin Hotel doesn't even know what it's critiquing and instead appeals to wannabe edgelords who use Character AI a little too often.

Maybe I'm being a little too hard on dear old Hazbin. To make things fair, I'll let you read a few quotes and make the judgment yourself.

Here's the first quote: "##### #### ##### ## #####." This might as well be the second, third, fourth, and most other quotes in the show. These characters swear like sailors, if sailors stubbed their toes every thirty seconds and used Tumblr religiously.

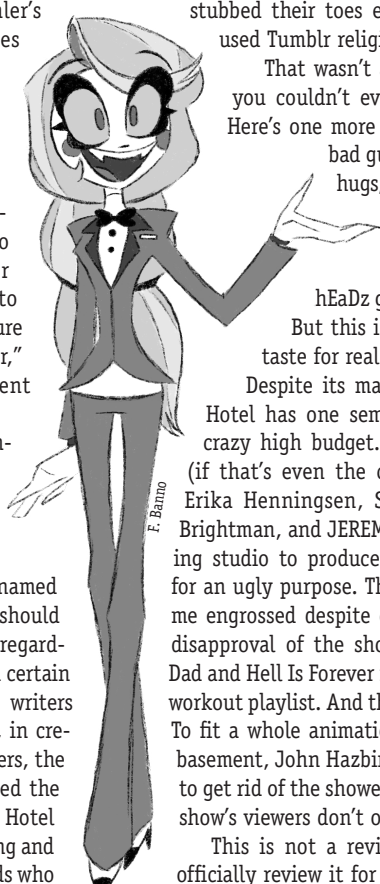
That wasn't a fair start to our game; you couldn't even read the first quote! Here's one more snippet to judge: "I'm a bad guy who didn't get enough hugs, now where's an innocent child to sell crack to?"

I admit, this would've made the Le CrAcK-hEaDz group chat giggle in 2019.

But this is 2026, and I've grown a taste for real comedy like South Park.

Despite its many, MANY flaws, Hazbin Hotel has one semi-redeeming quality: its crazy high budget. Somehow, John Hazbin (if that's even the creator's real name) got Erika Henningsen, Stephanie Beatriz, Alex Brightman, and JEREMY JORDAN in the recording studio to produce some beautiful bangers for an ugly purpose. These songs are what kept me engrossed despite constant congestion and disapproval of the show itself. Hell's Greatest Dad and Hell Is Forever may or may not be on my workout playlist. And the animation? Wonderful. To fit a whole animation studio in his parents' basement, John Hazbin (not his real name) had to get rid of the shower, an appliance which the show's viewers don't often utilize either way.

This is not a review of Hazbin Hotel. To officially review it for El Gato, I would need to undergo the cruel and unusual punishment of rewatching the monstrosity. To those looking for an adult cartoon to pass the time, stay far away from Hazbin Hotel for your own sake.



F. Banno

AMBEKAR DETAILS CAMPUSES

by Tanvi Ambekar
Opinion Editor

As high schoolers living in Silicon Valley, most LGHS students have worried about where they will go for college. There are many factors that high schoolers take into consideration when choosing a college: distance from home, DoorDash availability, and the party scene are all relevant details. However, I'd like to draw attention to an often overlooked aspect of university selection — the aesthetic of the college campus.

Yes, I know half of high school students tour college campuses before they even know what a GPA is, but they seriously overlook the importance of these tours. Not only does the layout of a campus determine how fast you'll have to bike to your 8 AM Scandinavian Art History lecture, but it also determines how much you're

allowed to brag to your grandparents about your college. Who cares if the fountain in the center is rusted and spews sewage; as long as it has that century-old cupid statue with the dramatic backstory, it's fair game to boast about to your extended family. If you bring them to see the college under the guise that you'll get accepted, you need to make sure there are adequate buildings, sports facilities, and beautiful parks to show off. Never mind that

the fields are bare and snowy for eleven months out of the year; as long as the trees are green on July 8, from 3:00-6:00 PM, you're set.

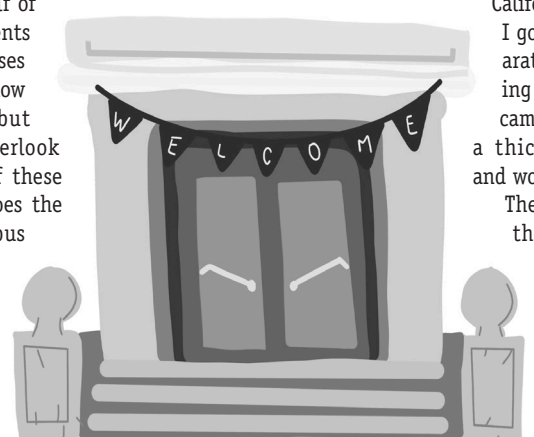
Case in point: every single college east of Missouri. I've toured exactly two colleges up until today, and from what I can tell, every East Coast college is just a relic from the 18th century.

My primary example is Harvard University, which I visited in December of 2025. I've heard winter is the best time to visit the East Coast, yet not even two minutes after I stepped out of the airport, I wanted to get right back in and fly back to

California. I'm pretty sure I got frostbite three separate times while walking around the Harvard campus, despite wearing a thick coat, ski gloves, and wool socks.

The main problem with these colleges is that since they're so old, they all look the same. I also visited MIT, and I genuinely couldn't tell the difference between it and Harvard; they're both just collections of red brick buildings separated with boring cement pathways and perfect green lawns. The only difference between the two schools was that MIT students were wearing wire-rimmed glasses and carried thicker textbooks.

Long story short, if you're choosing a college right now, be selective. Because if it starts snowing on July 7, the day before your family is supposed to visit, your worst fear may come true — embarrassing yourself in front of your great Aunt Helen.



A. Anand

PAN OVERCOMES HER INTENSE FEAR OF HEIGHTS

by Annabelle Pan
Graphics Editor

After eight long years of denying my fear of heights, I have moved on to my next stage of grief: bargaining. If I can't erase my trauma through suppression, then I shall compromise with the fear instead.

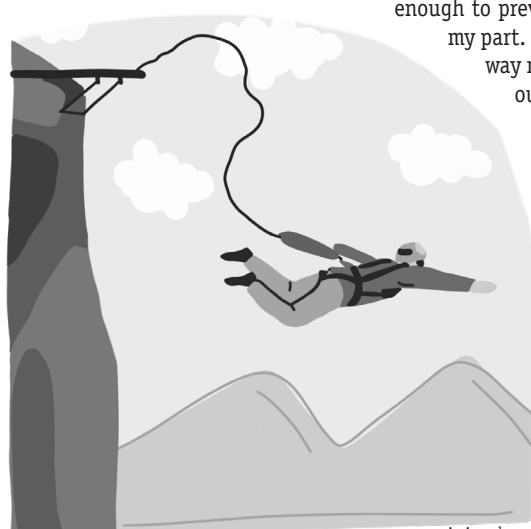
The first trade-off I made with acrophobia, my irrational fear of heights, was on rollercoasters. I agreed to go on Great America's Gold Striker so long as I never had to go on rides with upside-down portions. Horrible decision. I assign full blame to my sister for manipulating me into that harrowing experience. The wooden support beams sounded ready for retirement, and I was prepared to plummet to my death. The only good thing that came out of my suffering is that I can now control, or rather ignore, the screaming and crying of my stomach on moderately intimidating rollercoasters and drop towers.

My second deal was much more successful. I decided to give in to the intrusive thoughts that compel me to lean over the railings of multi-story buildings in return for a promise never to look out a

glass elevator again. Hanging dangerously off a balcony is a perfectly safe thing to do since the railing is tall enough to prevent any clumsiness on my part. Let's not talk about the way my heart starts jumping out of my chest when I lean too far forward.

The point is that my second bargain was an overall win; those glass elevators are menaces to my sanity.

My third agreement with acrophobia was a bit extreme, but it will be the most successful. I say "will be" because I have yet to test my theory. Recently, I committed to going bungee jumping with some friends. I made a



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committed to going bungee jumping with some friends. I made a

long list of reasons why this is a good idea. Number one: It would be fun. Number two: Think about the Never Have I Ever potential. Number three: Although bungee jumping requires falling through the sky, I won't actually hit the ground. Well, the equipment might break, or I might smack into a tree, or a mountain could suddenly form and stab me in the face — let me just stop myself there before the regret kicks in.

Anyway, let's return to my list of reasons before I back out of this compromise. Number four: I'm not actually scared of heights; I'm only scared of falling and dying. Bungee jumping will be a great way to convince myself that high places do not equate to plummeting to my death. Number five: I would get to collect some blackmail as I watch my friends screech the whole way down. You might be thinking this could backfire on me when they record my experience instead. Fear not, I have already taken that into account. I don't scream out loud when I'm scared of heights. I just squeeze my eyes shut and internally insult my past self. Clearly, bungee jumping is the perfect solution to all my problems.

Warning: I would not recommend trying any of my compromises with acrophobia; they only work if you lie to yourself. Everything said above holds no practical use since I only entered my bargaining phase to deny that I was in denial.

CHANG AND ZAMANSKY CRITIQUE MATH OPTIONS

by Tanya Chang and Lila Zamansky
Sports and Media Production Editors

Growing up, kids immerse themselves in many experiences: playdates, intense rounds of hopscotch, or day-long visits to the neighbor's house. Each kid has different recollections from their childhood; however, one collective memory we guarantee that any kid would get triggered by is these three infamous letters, I...X...L. If you're not familiar, IXL is an academic nightmare where math practice tortures. Think it ends there? Of course not, why would you ever think that, because our town has so many places for math tutoring? If you outgrow one place, don't worry, you just get to go to another.

In middle school, teachers tell their students that IXL will be a fun learning activity that takes 10-15 minutes tops. Being the innocent child you are, you believe it, but don't be fooled

by their gaslighting. It's all fun and games until you are on your second-to-last question and you get one, ONE question wrong, and it brings you back down to zero. You think no worries, I will just answer the other questions right. NOPE. When you get a question right - if you're lucky enough-it will raise your score by a single microscopic point. This quick "10-minute IXL" turns into a five-hour crashout while abusing the Chromebook that only has two pixels.

Now do NOT get us started on the Russian School of Math (RSM), Mathnasium, or Kumon. We both have endured too much trauma from these math establishments that have scarred us forever. Let us first describe what a day was like as an RSM student. Did we say RSM? Sorry, we meant Hell.

Picture this: you get out from the most diabolical day at school, and all you can think about is an afternoon snack. But guess what? When your parents pick you up looking like they've reconnected with nature for a bit too long, they

casually inform you about the two extra hours of math tutoring. Lucky you. You walk into the building and look around at your "peers," who look unhealthily frightened. Great, now get ready, your two-hour algebra two session is about to start. As you walk in, you are greeted by the mustard yellow walls, and double lucky you, your teacher has such a thick accent that is borderline incomprehensible. You already don't understand anything that you're learning, and to make matters worse, you can't even comprehend what she is saying until she spontaneously calls your name (in the most mispronounced way) and asks if you could answer a question. You obviously get it wrong, and then she decides it's time to slime you out and yell at you in gibberish. You honestly contemplate if you should just throw your desk at her. Now it's time for a pop quiz. You fail because again, you are taking tenth-grade math as a sixth grader.

We acknowledge that this may only account for some for a select group of children who endured this, but our voices need to be heard. So the next time you encounter someone facing one of these horrendous experiences, you can do one of two things: give them a pat on the back to reassure them, or, our preference, laugh and point because you are glad you're never going to be doing that again.



A. Anand

Singhal pokes fun at Socratic seminars

by Siyona Singhal
Humor Editor

Every high school student has to take English for all four years. This means that, sadly, every student has experienced a Socratic seminar once in their life. Kids either love or hate Socratics; I love them because I'll take yapping over writing an essay any day. However, despite my preference for the seminars, I have had some really bad experiences with them.

Let's start with freshman year.

I will never forget when we were doing a Socratic about a coming-of-age lesbian novel, and someone kicked off the questions by asking, "Is anyone part of the LGBTQ community?" The room went silent, and everyone looked at each other, waiting to see if anyone would respond. Despite being a part of the community, I stayed silent simply because of how uncomfortable I already was. However, after we got over that little bump, it was actually a great seminar. Everyone was sharing; it was pretty wonderful - until someone started trauma dumping, which contributed to the already awkward experience. Other than that seminar, my freshman year try-hard self was so good at participating and racking up as many tallies as I could. Alas, it was only downhill from there.

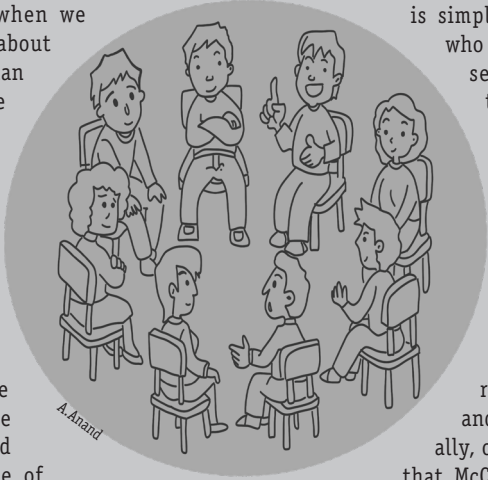
Oh, sophomore year. I can't say I survived every class discussion, but I did make it through every seminar with minor casualties. I remember blacking out every time I would raise my hand and praying that I didn't say anything stupid. I think the reason I never

felt too embarrassed was because I was so used to being humiliated in that class. Whether it was our dumpster fire of a debate or my cultural artifact project (I said that beloved children's show Jessie hated Indian people and Ravi deserved better), I was used to getting shamed in front of my peers. Saying some random stuff during a seminar was nothing compared to struggling to read Julius Caesar in front of everyone.

Junior year has been rough, but it's not my fault! My AP Lang class

is simply full of people who dislike me. In one seminar, we were talking about Chris McCandless from *Into the Wild* and I mentioned that I thought he was not a selfish person. Two speakers later, someone raised their hand and just said, "Actually, on page 56, it says that McCandless was selfish, so Siyona's wrong." Everyone was dead silent, and no one knew how to continue from there. On top of that, taking an AP class means having people who love participating and are jumping out of their seats to participate despite having spoken 12 times already. Let's just say I'm working on my listening skills this semester.

Socratic seminars are something everyone has to experience once. It's a rite of passage to struggle through a sentence and end up repeating the same thing that five people before you said, but this time in a different font. Just remember, if you can talk your way through a seminar on a book you haven't read, you can talk your way out of anything.



A. Anand

Gruetter and Mitchell plan summer

by Sam Gruetter and Kayla Mitchell
Editor-in-Chief and Media Production Editor

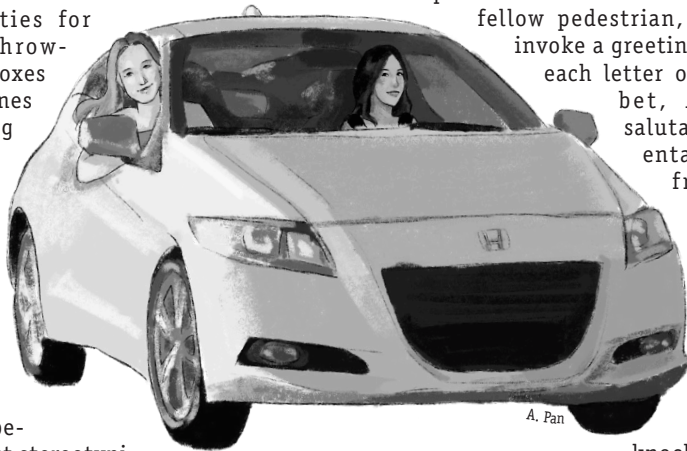
Sept. 2, approximately 17 weeks away, will mark the separation of two tectonic forces. After meeting in elementary school and forming a unique connection that can only be described as extremely chaotic and dangerous to those around them, **Sam Gruetter** and **Kayla Mitchell** (we'll see how long those last names remain different) will be forced to separate by the next chapter in life: college. Since California and Connecticut are farther apart than either of us can drive without crashing, we are developing an immutable summer plan to make the most of our last weeks together.

In our fourteen years of friendship, we have managed to perform almost all of the most common bucket list activities for friends: throwing juice boxes at power lines and trying to murder each other for a year straight before reconvening. So, because we have already experienced most stereotypical hangout activities, we have decided this list needs to reach a new level. Our first endeavor is practically a survivor mission. Our brilliant idea is to enter a forest with minimal supplies and simply live off the land. Reconnecting with our roots, if you will. And what could go wrong? If we don't get out, we don't have to be separated for college.

For any juniors studying for a challenging physics final, our next journey is a perfect example of the Doppler effect. You're sitting at a red light when you hear

a faint buzzing behind you. Suddenly, a small Honda Fit zooms by with a screeching, off-key chorus, and then the sound fades as it speeds away. Question: Why does the noise get so loud? Answer: shorter wavelengths and the fact that neither of us can sing in tune. While we frequently find ourselves zooming around holding chaotic dance parties in the car, this summer we're turning it up a notch. Instead of respectfully lowering the volume at red lights to avoid embarrassment from fellow drivers, we're turning every stoplight into a full-on mosh pit. Direct eye contact with strangers is required. Our goal? Make every passerby as uncomfortable as possible to derive the most fun for ourselves. On the same note, we aim to play a little game called an alphabet walk. As we encounter each fellow pedestrian, we plan to invoke a greeting titled with each letter of the alphabet, A-Z. These salutations would entail anything from a traditional "Good morning" to something a bit more unorthodox, like "Knock, knock. It's me."

While these methods for getting closer may seem unorthodox to the outside world, we would both counter that our methods are key, defining factors of our tight-knit bond. Everybody called the guys from Brokeback Mountain "weird" and "gay" for spending prolonged amounts of time away from their wives on a mountain. Alone. Together. In a tent. Unlike them, as we go our separate ways, 3,000 miles apart, nobody will be able to get to know one without knowing about the other. Kayla and Sam, signing out.



A. Pan

Park recalls German exchange student's interesting stay

by Jordan Park
Website Manager

Next month marks the four-year anniversary of the summer a German exchange student lived at my house. In honor of Lenart (like Lenard but with a T), I figured I'd revisit some of the more memorable moments from his stay. All of this is, of course, in good fun.

Maybe this is just me being petty, but I feel like I should mention that I found out he was coming approximately three days before he landed on American soil. Thanks, Mom and Dad. Lenart wasted absolutely no time establishing his routine, which revolved heavily, almost aggressively, around yogurt. I'm not exaggerating when I say this guy could eat half of one of those Costco-sized tubs every single morning. No granola, no fancy toppings, just yogurt and some fruit. At a certain point, I stopped questioning his breakfast choice and just started respecting it. I mean, Greek yogurt is all the rage right now, and it looks to me like he knew that before the rest of us did.

Another key part of his daily routine was lunch, which, according to Lenart, meant one thing: McDonald's. Every day. Without fail. It didn't matter that we had a fridge full of food or that there were 50 other restaurants within a five-mile radius. He was dead set on McDonald's. I understand the appeal of cheap fast food, but this was bordering on obsession. Eventu-

ally, we felt obligated to gently introduce him to the concept of alternatives, so we took him to Chipotle. That ended up being a turning point. From that moment on, he was hooked.

Another nonnegotiable for Lenart was surfing. By the end of the summer, he was basically a Santa Cruz local. I never saw him surf, but I thought he was pretty good. He proved me wrong one afternoon when my mom received a text from Lenart saying that he was at the Emergency Room after his board hit him in the head. Poor guy had to get like seven stitches. He had to wait a week before he could go back into the water, but back into the water he went.

Toward the end of his stay, Lenart wanted to thank us for hosting him, which was genuinely nice. He told us he was

going to prepare an authentic German meal, and we were all pretty excited to see what that would entail. What followed was a carefully arranged spread of soft pretzels, an impressive assortment of cheese, pickles, and various cold cuts. It looked legit. The only slight complication came when we realized that one of the meats he had included appeared to be raw bacon. There was then a brief moment where we all silently wondered if this was a cultural difference or a food safety gamble. Regardless, the gesture itself was great, and we appreciated the effort, though we may have strategically avoided the bacon.

He also made a very committed effort to teach us German, which we were very enthusiastic about for the first five minutes. After that, it mostly turned into us repeatedly asking him to say random words and phrases in German, which I'm sure got a bit old. I may not remember the German phrases he taught us, but I will never forget the sheer volume of yogurt he devoured.



A. Anand

- Fan moves forward to college and beyond
- Robinson builds video games

PEOPLE

EL GATO • WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2026 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONNEWS.COM

Tri-sport athlete Ozawa majors in environmental science

by **Tori Schubert and Lila Zamansky**
People and Media Production Editors

Senior **Leighton Ozawa** flourishes in various athletic and academic fields while setting the course for a successful future. Ozawa, a three-sport athlete, participates in field hockey, soccer, and lacrosse, is enrolled in five AP classes, and is involved in a multitude of extracurricular activities.

In the fall, Ozawa played on the field hockey team, proving to be a crucial element on the defensive and midfield lines. Starting her career as a freshman, Ozawa would never have predicted the impact field hockey would have on her life. Looking back on the values she gained from the program, Ozawa described the rigor and discipline: "I learned just how much effort and time you have to put into things to actually see a difference." Carrying her defensive and athletic abilities with her throughout the year, Ozawa is a crucial member of the LGHS soccer team. She has been



playing competitive soccer since the age of seven with Los Gatos United. She showcased her love of the two sports on both fields, along with the strong team dynamics, resulting in a Central Coast Section championship for field hockey as well as soccer.

Adding on to her sports repertoire, Ozawa is the team captain of the Los Gatos Girls' Lacrosse team.

Beginning as a freshman, she has thrived in the sport as a defensive player, bringing intensity and positivity to every game and practice, striving to uphold a strong team spirit. Describing her experience as a captain, Ozawa elaborated, "I try to push people to do their absolute best. Our team chemistry is really special. We have a lot of different age groups, and we have gained a really strong bond." Her athleticism, dedication, and leadership have not gone unnoticed as she earned the Ed Howell Award: Outstanding Three Sport Athlete, following her success in field hockey, soccer, and lacrosse, all four years of high school.

Ozawa further triumphs as a student, taking a variety of rigorous courses, including AP Government/Honors Economics, AP Psychology,

AP Biology, English 12, AP Spanish, and AP Calculus AB. Ozawa holds the greatest passion for her math course, although she noted that it is also her most challenging class. Her course load and love for STEM influenced her decision to commit to the University

of Wisconsin-Madison after recently visiting the campus. She plans to pursue environmental science. Ozawa's enthusiasm for the subject developed during her junior year AP Environmental Science course, explaining, "I have always felt very connected to nature, as a lot of my activities are outdoors, like sports, surfing, walking, and basically everything I do."

Her leadership skills extend beyond athletics, as Ozawa takes part in the National Charity League. She is currently serving as the Vice President of Culture for her final year in the organization. Overall, Ozawa proves herself as a role model through her outstanding work ethic and determination, emphasizing the importance of both athletic and academic drive.



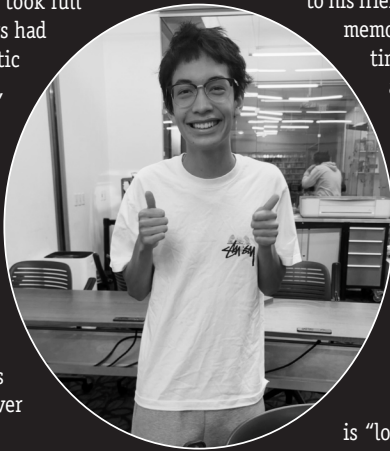
Fan enjoys his final days as a student at LGHS

by **Atharava Pandey and Arnav Singhal**
Sports Editors

With graduation approaching, senior **Henry Fan** can confidently step across the stage knowing he took full advantage of everything his high school years had to offer. Fan's laid-back attitude and pragmatic approach shape everything that he does, keeping him present in the moment, while still allowing him to enjoy what he has worked so hard for.

Fan is currently taking a rigorous course load of five classes: AP Calculus AB, AP English Literature and Composition, AP Psychology, AP US Government and Politics, and AP Spanish Language and Culture. From his full school day, Fan jokes that his favorite part of the day is lunch, explaining, "It is the only time I am ever free from class."

One of Fan's major interests has been business. In his freshman year, he joined the Entrepreneurship Club and has remained a member throughout his four years of high school. Fan commented



that the club was his first exposure to business and inspired his desire to pursue it upon graduation. Fan also has a passion for speech and debate, joining in his sophomore year after finally giving in to his friend, senior **Trevor Cheng's** request. His best memories from the experience include spending time with friends and cracking jokes. Fan also mentioned an interest in exploring his surroundings. While most students would be at home soundly sleeping in their beds, Fan recalled being out and about investigating the streets of Los Gatos. He enjoys going outside at night, when the town is calm and sharply contrasts with its usual bustling atmosphere. Often, he invites his friends to join, as they explore areas such as Vasona Lake Park.

Eying the near future, Fan mentioned that he is "looking forward to getting out of school" and has "never been looking forward to anything more" than graduation. While he has not committed to any college, he is confident that wherever he goes, his outgoing personality will continue to shine.

Looking back on his years in high school, he reflects that his biggest inspiration was Jimmy McGill from the famous TV show *Breaking Bad*, a character he describes as "an imperfect man trying to survive in a harsh world."



Fan finds himself in the same way, not trying to be perfect but going through life as it flows. Fan summarizes his outlook in the phrase, "it's not that serious," something he treats as his life motto. While it may look simple, his mindset has allowed him to maintain a harmonious balance, embrace his individuality, and achieve

a perfect GPA. He advised anyone looking to do the same to embrace new challenges: "It doesn't matter where you begin. All that counts is where you finish." If there's one thing that Fan is certain about, it's that he follows his own path, and that's more than enough.

Prostota explores art

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

As her senior year of high school comes to a close, **Alina Prostota** is jumping further into the art world, specifically within graphic design. Prostota has been an artist ever since she can remember, but decided she wanted to pursue it professionally in her sophomore year, when she used Adobe Illustrator for the first time in Yearbook. Since then, she has expanded her portfolio tenfold while volunteering for the LG Music Boosters. From social media posts to T-shirts, Prostota has been the program's design expert for the past two years. Along with being a little nervous, Prostota felt proud seeing over 100 marching band members wear the shirts she designed, explaining, "I'm really glad to have a part of myself be in the music program permanently."

In addition to her professional endeavors, Prostota is active within the arts programs at LGHS. Having taken Art 1 with **Thad Smith** and Art 2-4 with **Mark Yanowsky**, Prostota has worked across a wide range of traditional media. She got to use her favorite, oil paint, in her AP Art portfolio centered around religion and the moral teachings of the bible. Moving from Art 1 to more advanced levels was difficult, but rewarding for Prostota. She elaborated that "since [Mr. Yanowsky] knows that you're not just taking the class for an elective credit, [he takes] your art a lot more seriously, but it's really nice." This year, Prostota decided to enroll in Graphic

Design 1 to build her portfolio and hone her skills before college. She explained that taking the class "kind of helped me get some of the basics that I might've missed when watching YouTube tutorials."

When she wasn't behind the canvas this year, Prostota was hard at work for Yearbook. As an editor-in-chief, Prostota spent hours running the class and checking pages for errors. Despite "the stress and struggle to get the book done" in the last few months, Prostota reflected fondly on the class's community and opportunities. Prostota's love for art extends beyond just the visual. Prostota recently completed her final season of Winter Guard after starting in the activity in her freshman year. She described leaving as "bittersweet" because of the relationships she forged with her teammates and coaches.

As she prepares to matriculate at Cal Poly SLO in the fall, Prostota is facing a unique challenge: packing and transporting her Garfield paraphernalia. Ever since drawing the feisty feline on the first day of seventh-grade Zoom art class, Prostota has been a Garfield superfan. She will take "whatever fits" of her Garfield collection to college, but her top priority is a year-late birthday gift, a huge crocheted Garfield stuffed animal. With the powers of Garfield and Adobe on her side, Prostota is psyched to open this new chapter of her life. Cal Poly doesn't know what's about to hit it.



SLOVER EXCELS IN VOLLEYBALL

by **Jane Wilde**
Humor Editor

Division III University of California, Santa Cruz Volleyball commit **Sean Slover** is setting up for success this year on the court and in the classroom. Slover's interest in volleyball began in middle school when his sister, **Hannah Slover**, first introduced him to the sport. "I always watched her play tournaments," he said. "We also have a volleyball net in our backyard, so she would have friends over to play, and I would join." Shortly after, Slover started playing his own tournaments in club volleyball for Bay to Bay's 18-1 team.

Slover has been on the high school team since freshman year and went into his senior year elected as co-captain alongside teammate and fellow senior **Reily Nguyen**. Stepping into the leadership role was no small feat for Slover. However, because he and Nguyen have been on the team together since freshman year, he says they work exceptionally well together as co-captains. Referring to what his favorite aspect of being a co-captain is, he said, "Having people look up to me, and when people ask me for advice or help on different skills."

Slover loves high school volleyball for several reasons, one being because it "feels like another family." His favorite memory with his team is when they defeated Santa Cruz High in the open Central Coast Section and qualified for Norcals. Before games, the tight-knit team listens to In and Out

by Lud Foe and spends time in the team room. They are involved in many bonding activities, including after their senior night, where they had a meal and underclassmen gave heartfelt speeches.

After graduation, Slover plans to continue his volleyball career at UCSC while studying business management with hopes of going into the sales field.

One of the biggest reasons Slover chose UCSC was the team atmosphere. "I really liked how the team looked on the bench. The whole team seemed really good," he said. In addition to the athletic opportunities, Slover was drawn to the natural beauty of the campus as well as its proximity to home. Slover remarked that he liked being close to home because his parents could come watch games.

Slover is not shy to try all the things Santa Cruz has to offer; as he pointed out, "I'm just excited to be close to the beach, and to go mountain biking." In addition to learning to mountain bike, Slover is interested in getting into surfing. "I don't really go to Santa Cruz often, so it's kind of a new area to me. So it'll be fun," he said. Outside of volleyball, Slover enjoys golfing at Los Lagos and Deep Cliff as well as playing beach volleyball.

Despite an overuse injury that sidelined him for the last few weeks of his senior season, Slover remains proud of what he and the team have accomplished this year, including defeating one of the league's top competitors. From the court to the classroom, Slover has a bright future ahead of him.



Piper Robinson thrives in all their creative endeavors

by Fuyu Banno
Graphics Editor

Senior **Piper Robinson** takes their creativity to the next level, coming up with ingenious ideas, learning how to blacksmith, and looking toward the future with big aspirations.

Robinson has always immersed themselves in rigorous courses throughout their time at LGHS, and senior year has been no exception. Robinson currently takes AP Literature, AP Japanese, AP Physics C, Economics Honors, and AP Psychology. They especially enjoy AP Psychology due to its fascinating content as well as their teacher, **Kevin Rogers**.

Exhibiting exceptional talent in the classroom, Robinson also thrives the most in LGHS's robotics team, Iron Claw 972. Robinson first decided to join robotics in their freshman year through an interest in programming, but ultimately became a machinist, in charge of creating the physical parts of the robot.



Robinson quickly rose through the ranks, attaining the title of captain their junior year, and becoming a Hardware Director this year. In this role, Robinson's responsibilities included overseeing that the team completes tasks promptly as well as making sure the hardware team is working cohesively with software. This year, the robotics team placed third in District Championships and second place in the Daly Division at World Championships.

For Robinson, creation is not constrained to the classroom. Beyond school, Robinson interns at a makerspace where they are involved in visual art work such as blacksmithing, stained glass work, and screen printing. Robinson discussed how the skills they have accumulated as an intern connect to their upcoming goals: "I kind of want to get to the point where

I can sell my work, but that's pretty far in the future." Robinson intertwines innovation in their hobbies as well. As an avid gamer, Robinson currently works with their friends to fabricate a video game, enjoying the challenge and creativity that come with the work. The game, Hypnos, involves tower defense, and elaborate detailing throughout the software.

Armed with a sharp mind and keen imagination, Robinson prepares for their new chapter in life in Maryland at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). Robinson plans to study Computer Engineering, a choice stemming from their interest in programming, the hands-on skills they have accumulated on Iron Claw, along with influence from their dad's computer engineer background. Based on previous interest during their makerspace internship, Robinson looks forward to JHU's visual arts minor and their jewelry-making class.

When Robinson travels across the United States to pursue their college career, many things will remain consistent, including their work ethic, drive, and creative spirit.



Kabir Khanna pursues D1 golf

by Megan Saul
Editor-in-Chief

Remember the name of senior **Kabir Khanna**, as you are likely to see it on the PGA tour a few years from now. After four years on the LGHS Boys' Golf team and many more dedicated to the sport as a NorCal Junior golfer, Khanna is headed off to Indiana University next fall. His academic capabilities mirror his proficiency on the course, setting him up for a successful future as a Hoosier.

Khanna began golfing as soon as he could. At the age of two, he started playing the sport, following in his father's footsteps. He expressed, "He brought me to the sport, and I'm grateful for it." Since then, Khanna has continued to play consistently, at increasingly more difficult levels. Various competitions have brought Khanna to many courses across the state. He noted that his favorite is Torrey Pines in San Diego for its location overlooking the ocean. Khanna has placed highly at tournaments and events with the Junior Golf Association of Northern California, gaining avid recognition from the local golfing community.

Although golf is commonly an individual sport, it becomes a team activity for Khanna during the LGHS Boys' Golf season. He is a leader and captain of the team and a standout player in LG's golf history, having broken the school record with six under par in 2025. Although tournaments and school season are extremely different, with tournaments being a lot more stressful, Khanna enjoys them both. He shared that what continues

to bring him back to the course is "seeing the ball go into the hole. It just makes me happy." During the school season, which recently concluded at the start of May, Khanna enjoyed being around others who share his passion. He said, "I wish we had won the league, but it was a lot of fun."

Next year, Khanna will attend Indiana University Bloomington, where he will be a part of the prestigious Kelley School of Business and the school's Division 1 golf program. Although he is not yet an official member of the team, he explained that the team's coach, Mike Mayer, intends to give him a spot as a preferred walk-on. At Kelley, he plans to major in finance, furthering his passion for investment banking. After many years of working towards a future in college athletics, he accomplished his goal thanks to endless hours of practice and a disciplined attitude. Although he hasn't yet met his new teammates, he has visited the course and is excited to improve his golfing skills.

With only a few weeks left at LGHS, Khanna is both stressed about his future steps as well as excited for what is to come. If looking for Khanna, it's safe to assume that he's at a golf course, whether playing another hole or on his third hour hitting balls at the range. Don't distract him, though, as he is focused on sinking his next stroke into the hole.



Martynova prepares for her future at MIT

by Kat Littfin
Editorial Editor

Diana Martynova hacks the system as she channels her energy into STEM interests, artistic pursuits, and fencing. The multi-talented senior is committed to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for biological engineering and will be fencing for the school's team next fall.

Martynova's career at LGHS has been full of accomplishment and exploration into the subjects that interest her. Her curiosity in STEM-oriented pursuits began in sixth grade, as she described: "I saw a YouTube video that showed a prototype of this device that could go into your arteries and clean out cholesterol, so that sparked my interest in biological engineering and biological sciences." Since then, Martynova has taken an interest in classes such as biology and physics. These courses have influenced her career aspirations in a field that combines biology and engineering concepts. "I hope to work with medical institutions to build medical devices that could aid doctors with surgeries and make surgeries safer, faster, and more affordable," she explained.

In addition to her academic classes, Martynova takes Art at LGHS and was recently featured in the LGHS electives exhibition in April as one of the students who constructed a thesis-based portfolio — a portfolio centered around a complex theme. Martynova expressed that despite her affinity for more technical fields, "I also really like my creative side." She has been working on her art portfolio based on how technology, and specifically

social media platforms, affect youth and teenage development. She explored how "technology influences behavior, and the internal and external tension it creates." Through her portfolio, she combined her knowledge of scientific disciplines with her creative spark. Additionally, Martynova is an accomplished pianist, having just finished the last level for the Certificate of Merit, a standardized evaluation program for piano in California.

Outside of school, Martynova has poured many hours into fencing at the Academy of Fencing Masters. Martynova has a very rigorous fencing schedule, admitting that it is time-consuming but worth it: "I think it's less about the competition aspect, more that going there is kind of my home away from home. I have such a good community there." Moreover, she has learned invaluable lessons from fencing, especially from her coach, who encourages a growth mindset by encouraging her to view mistakes as "a feature, not a bug." Martynova emphasized that she also values the travelling aspect of fencing, as she can meet fencers from across the country and even the world. One of her favorite recent fencing memories has been traveling without parents with an older fencing teammate, and ice-skating when visiting Cleveland, Ohio.

In terms of her academic career at MIT, Martynova hopes to work with professors on research and teach in foreign countries. She aspires to pursue either a medical or a master's degree. No matter which path she chooses, Martynova's multi-faceted successes and drive are sure to take her far in life.



ANNETTE BASSANI CONCLUDES HER VOLLEYBALL CAREER

by Claudia Casal Montserrat and Nelson Kramer
People Editor and Editor-in-Chief

Hard worker and star student **Annette Bassani** is off to an exciting four years at Boston University. Her dedication and willingness to learn new things have gotten her far, and as she continues her studies, she would like to focus mainly on STEM. Overall, finishing off her second and final semester as a senior has been extremely rewarding.

Bassani has spent years knowing she has wanted to build things. As a kid, her dream job was to be an inventor, but now, as a senior in high school, she has chosen a focus in biomedical engineering. Bassani is ready to start this new chapter of her life in Boston and take advantage of the hustle and bustle of the city, as well as the abundant biotech industry. When she first visited Boston, she knew she loved it. As she remarked about her winter trip east, "I was dying and really cold, but I was smiling the whole time."

Science being at the core of her interests, Bassani noted that throughout her high school career, working her way through LGHS science programs, it has been inspiring to see different types of science intersect. From broad concepts taught in her AP Environmental Science and AP Biology classes to the importance of studying things on such a small scale in AP Chemistry, the connections are endless.

A long-time athlete, Bassani began playing volleyball during middle school. Her first experience with the sport was at a beach volleyball summer camp. As she recounted, "On the very first day, my arms hurt so bad that I started crying. Somehow that didn't deter me, and I ended up falling in love." She was only more motivated to play the sport after being turned away from the sixth-grade school volleyball team. From there, she taught herself the skills and practiced with the roof of her garage, drawing inspiration from players like Justine Wong-Orantes and Lexi Rodriguez. From there, she joined one of the top clubs in the Bay Area, Mountain View Volleyball Club, and qualified for nationals in Reno.

Bassani now leads the Girls' Varsity Volleyball team as their strong and compassionate captain. She reflected on the years spent in volleyball, noting that the sport has a lot of mental components that some might argue outweigh the physical. Regarding the importance of teamwork within the sport, she pointed out, "The super cool thing is that volleyball helped me practice relying on other people, especially if I'm struggling with something."

Even though Bassani has excelled in the classroom and on the court, she knows the transition ahead is no small feat. She advises the students who walk this campus after her to find their study spots early, build good habits, and most importantly, be open to change, wherever they may encounter it. In the few weeks she has left at LGHS, Bassani is sure to look back and see the lasting impact she has made here on campus.



- LGRC reflects excellence this year
- Track and field concludes its season

SPORTS

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LGHS lacrosse ends its dominant season on a high note

by Lila Zamansky
Media Production Editor

After an eventful season, Los Gatos lacrosse comes to an impressive close. With training, consistency, and victories, both the boys' and girls' teams have shown significant growth this spring.

The LGHS Boys' Lacrosse Team ended the 2026 season with an undefeated league record of 8-0, making them number one in the Pacific Coast Athletic League (PCAL) with an overall record of 13-6.



courtesy J. Natividad

CRADLE: Hong fiercely drives past her opponents, ready to pass the ball upfield.

They hold an impressive 52nd ranking in California. To make their way to the top of the league and state, they faced some fierce competition. The team recently played Stevenson High School, defeating them 8-7, and Palo Alto High School, 8-6. They also beat Palma High School, the second seed in the league, on May 7 with a swift 11-4 victory. Throughout the season, there have been impressive top scorers who carried the team to victory, including seniors **Zach Gouldrup**, **Ben Reilly**, and sophomore **Justin Buran**.

To continue their triumphant season, the boys progressed to the Division I Central Coast Section (CCS), entering the tournament as the seventh seed. In the first round, they faced intense competition against the second seed and eighth team in the state, Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, but the Wildcats lost to the Gators 2-16 in a hard-fought battle.

Similarly, the LGHS Girls' Lacrosse Team had an eventful 2026 season, coming in third in the Santa Clara Valley League (SCVAL) with a record of 9-3. They finished their league games off strong with impressive victories against Wilcox High School, 13-3, and Saratoga High School, 13-7. Although the girls' season had a rocky start, the team quickly turned it around. As a sophomore defender, **Laurel Collins**

stated, "Our team over this season has improved so much. On defense, we have grown through talking more. On offense, we work together through plays at practice and masterfully execute them at games."

During CCS, the girls' team met the third seed, Woodside High School, in the first round of the tournament on May 11. Despite impressive goals from junior **Darcy Armstrong** and senior **Jisoo Hong**, the Wildcats lost 10-13. Reflecting on the loss, junior **Sora Lockheimer** describes the season as, "Very successful even though we lost in CCS." She added, "I feel like we had a very good run and I cherished every moment."

In practice and on the field, the girls' lacrosse team chemistry has thrived. Senior **Jamie Manning** elaborated, "I think over the season the team has really come together through our communication, and we have a stronger bond. It has been such a great experience getting closer to these girls and games like Gunn, where we lost to them earlier in the season and were able to pull out the win." Both teams this season remained resilient, pushing them towards success.

Without a doubt, Los Gatos lacrosse had an unforgettable season. Stay tuned as the program continues to train and develop its players to dominate in the years to come. Go Wildcats!

LG softball advances to CCS

by Abby Coven
News Editor

Hats off to the LGHS Girls' Varsity Softball Team, who won the De Anza League. Ranked 41st in the state and third in the Central Coast Section (CCS), the Wildcats headed to the CCS Championships after winning 14 games by more than six runs this season and maintaining a 12-0 record in league play.

The varsity team lost only its second game in the season to Valley Christian High School on May 4. Then they bounced back with four wins against Saratoga High School, Los Altos, Homestead, and Mountain View. They beat Saratoga 6-3, with junior **Cate Zeman** scoring two hits. Junior **Kendall Feichtmeir** also scored two runs and stole one base.



STRIKE: Norquist pitches a strong ball to her teammate Betti.

When the Wildcats beat Los Altos on May 8 with a score of 11-2, junior **Ava Norquist** struck out seven batters over six innings. With her 0.457 batting average, senior **Grace Tucker** had two runs, three runs batted in (RBI), and one stolen base. Senior **Olivia Sickels** leads the team with 11 stolen bases, one run, three RBIs, and a stolen base.

The girls went head-to-head with Homestead, winning 8-1 in their last away league game on May 13. Senior **Tessa Lilienstein** and junior **Haley Betti** carried the team with two RBIs each. Junior **Danica DeSantis** also shone with two hits out of her three at-bats. Norquist earned a perfect 0.0

earned run average (ERA) over the six innings she pitched and hasn't given up more than two walks in 12 consecutive appearances.

On May 11, Tucker, with her coaches by her side, celebrated her commitment to Dominican University of California at the LGHS Signing Day. In addition to Tucker's commemoration, the team's last home game was on May 15. The Wildcats hosted Mountain View, winning 6-0, and honored this year's graduates with a special Senior Night. Sophomore **Alyshia LaPlante's** speech to senior **Lilienstein** highlighted core memories and her strong contributions to the team. Junior **Meredith Harris** and **Zeman** addressed the major impact senior **Kylynn Cook** had on the season. During the game, Norquist pitched a no-hitter. Sickels went 3-for-4 with two stolen bases, three runs, and two doubles.

Tucker finished the season with 37 runs, 43 hits, and 41 RBIs. Feichtmeir had a season on-base percentage of 0.472, and Norquist's earned run average was 1.40. As for home runs, DeSantis had a season high of six, and Tucker had five. This season, Sickels had 13 total stolen bases along with 33 runs.

The team's season comes to a close, ending with an incredible 24-2 record. The Wildcats continue to be CCS-bound; playoffs started on May 23, and the top two teams face off on May 30. Their first game is on May 21 against Mitty. Through their incredible season, this historic team has so many things to celebrate.



photos A. Coven

HUDDLE: The team gathers together to discuss the game plan.

Baseball reflects on its victory

by Lydia Liu
Public Relations Manager

The Los Gatos Wildcats baseball program is ready to make a deep postseason run this spring. With the regular season nearing its end, the hard work put in over months of preparation is now showing up in their record. Sitting at 22-3 overall with a 15-1 mark in league play, the team has established itself as one of the top programs in the Central Coast Section (CCS), currently ranked sixth in the section standings.

The players credit the cohesive culture within the program for the team's success. "What makes this team special is the coaching. The coaching kind of brings us all together, and we have really good chemistry," said varsity pitcher **Sebastian Schaffer**. Junior infielder **Josh Carlisle** pointed to the depth of the roster as another driving factor, stating, "We have a lot of guys on the bench that can come in and do their job. We have multiple players that can play each position."

The Wildcats got an early test of that depth in April, when the program traveled to Lebanon, Tennessee, to take on Friendship Christian School. Senior pitcher **Ethan Williams** delivered a dominant performance, striking out 11 batters over five innings while surrendering just one hit and no earned runs in an 11-0 shutout. Senior outfielder **Brady Simon** contributed a home run and four RBI, while junior infielder **Blake Mordaunt** reached base all three times he stepped to the plate. The trip served as an early signal of just how far this team could go.

Williams has been outstanding all season, posting a 0.53 earned run average (ERA) alongside ten victories. Simon leads the offense with a .466 batting average and five home runs, junior **Nicky Gangemi** reaches base at a .600 rate, and senior **Beau Musser** has stolen 17 bases. This dominance has only grown, as the team produced an 18-0 shutout of Los Altos High School on May 7 and a historic 24-2 victory over Homestead High School.



CELEBRATE: Musser throws a tub of water on his coaches.

On the junior varsity side, the Wildcats have been equally impressive. Sitting at 8-7 overall with a perfect 7-0 league record, sophomore JV outfielder **Hank Lee** credited the team's long-standing relationships for its cohesion. He stated, "We've all been playing together since a young age, so there's really good team camaraderie, and we all know each other really well." Sophomore teammate **Dexter Torres** highlighted a comeback victory over Homestead as the defining moment of his season. "Coming back in the last inning after being down the whole game was definitely it," he said.

With the CCS playoffs approaching, Schaffer spoke for the group in laying out what remains to be accomplished: "As a team, we hope to win the rest of our games and hopefully win CCS. As an individual, I want to be the best I can and hopefully go somewhere good for college," he said. Be sure to follow the Wildcats as they pursue a CCS title in the weeks ahead.

(Source: Maxpreps)



courtesy J. Natividad

SAY CHEESE: LG baseball smiles for the picture after a win.

Los Gatos Rowing Club prepares the team for nationals

by Julia Valencia
Opinion Editor

Now that Los Gatos Rowing Club (LGRC) has finished its official season, a small group of junior athletes is in the team's post-season training period, where they will prepare for the Youth National Championships (YNC) in Sarasota, Florida. This preparation phase is a time of intense selection, finalizing boats for the racing in June. All rowers are working to fight for a seat in the boat, knowing that even if they helped qualify the boat at the Southwest Youth Championships (SYC), there is no guarantee that they will travel with the team to the YNC.



courtesy S. Riordan

POSE: The Men's Youth 2V Eight dominate the regatta, winning first place.

At the beginning of May, all LGRC athletes drove to Folsom, California, to compete in SYC, also known as Regionals. There, more than 1,850 athletes competed on Lake Natoma, all vying for the same coveted spots that send a crew to Nationals at the start of the following month. LGRC dominated the competition at Regionals, bringing back nine regional titles and qualifying over 15 crews to send to Florida.

LGRC's men's team had one of its most impressive years in club history, earning not only six first place finishes, but for the first time in 30 years, winning the Men's Team Trophy. This award is given to the team that earns the most points throughout the weekend; it's measured by how well a boat finishes in its race. This result is especially notable given that their varsity eight was not allowed to compete in finals on Sunday, May 3, because of a boat breakage that happened in the warmup. Officials did not allow LGRC to get another boat, resulting in their not participating in the race and being awarded zero points for that event. Luckily, the LGRC's men's team quickly rebounded and went on to win many medals on Finals day, like their Junior Varsity eight, coxed by senior **Mariko Okubo** and rowed by seniors **Cameron DeGraff** and **Declan McInerney** and juniors **Luke DeGraff** and **Matthieu Boillet**, who won their race by four seconds.

LGRC's Women's team also had a very successful weekend of racing, coming away with three regional titles and medaling in eight different categories. The Women's Varsity quad with sophomore **Chloe Stopford** and senior **Jenna Yoder** won their final by nearly 18 seconds, and their Junior Varsity quad, with junior **Sophia Juarez**, also won their final, defending the club's title. The Under 16 quad with freshmen

Annette Lee and **Makayla Kelley** finished in second place after a close race with lane one, Newport Sea Base, and the Club four, coxed by **Mimi Moghaddam** and rowed by senior **Nainica Kapoor**, placed third.

As these LGRC athletes continue their training, they all have one goal in mind and are willing to do anything and everything to achieve it; they want to win the national championship. Follow their journey through LGRC's Instagram, @losgatosrowingclub!

(Sources: Regatta Central, USRowing)



courtesy A. Agarwal

CHAMPIONS: The Women's Youth Quad smile big with their first place trophies.

El Gato's Players of the Year: Ojas Shastri and Leaya Cleary

by **Tori Schubert and Siyona Singhal**

People and Humor Editors

Senior, standout athlete, and recipient of the Scholar Athlete Award **Ojas Shastri** is wrapping up his final year of high school, committing to the University of Pennsylvania. He is planning to further his athletic path as a Division 1 wrestler.

Shastri began his sports career in basketball, and when he discovered it was not his strong suit, he switched to wrestling in sixth grade. He was inspired by his older brother and wanted to build a better connection with him. Shastri finds motivation through seeing personal progress: "You can be better on one day and worse on another, but as long as you can see yourself in an upward trajectory, it's motivating." Shastri plays on a club team and the LGHS Varsity Wrestling Team. He described the team environment as "uplifting guys that each have similar goals, and mindful focus. Our coaches' belief in us that we are one of the best teams in the state of California and even in the nation is what helps us proceed and keep going."

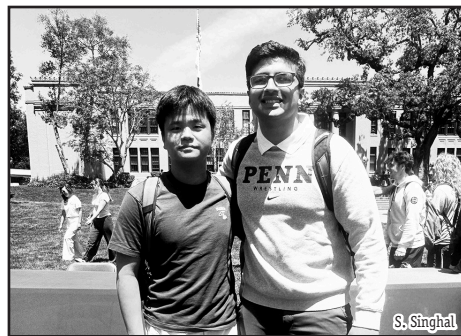
Shastri explained that wrestling is a unique sport because, paired with its physical strain, a player's mind plays an important role: "You figure out how to deal with pressure when it's you against someone else, and there's not a team you can fall back on, even though it is considered a team sport. It's your decisions, your choices, and the actions that you do before the match, during practice, all define your outcome." In terms of the pressure he faces during matches, Shastri commented that he is still working on developing effective strategies, but what works best for him is self-talk and reminding himself that a wrestling match does not define him. He also credited his coach, **Greg Varela**, for instilling the principle that effort matters more than anything else.

Beyond athletics, Shastri has taken a rigorous course load throughout high school. He described the difficulties of taking care of himself during

the season while balancing such a hectic schedule, emphasizing the necessity for time management and productivity. Shastri reflected, "Wrestling has taught me to work hard, to have grit, and not to let things slip. That keeps me on top of my workload." His drive and determination are reflected in both wrestling and academic performance, earning Shastri the Scholar Athlete award. This was announced following his success in CCS, after he placed first in his weight class.

Shastri is committed to the University of Pennsylvania, planning to pursue the Management & Technology program in Engineering and Business. Driving his decision was the opportunity to wrestle on a Division 1 team, in addition to the multitude of academic opportunities that the school offers.

Shastri's advice for rising wrestlers is to "stick with it. Wrestling doesn't require a certain height; it doesn't require you to be fast or anything like that. It just requires you to put in the work, put in the effort, and be willing to learn and be willing to go through some tough times and see the light at the end of the tunnel, and that's always the most rewarding thing." As Shastri concludes his high school career, LGHS will surely miss his presence on and off the mat.



MEMORIES: Shastri poses with senior **Cody Chen** on NCAA day.

by **Tanya Chang and Hayley Strahs**

Sports Editor and Editor-in-Chief

Just because the school year is coming to a close doesn't mean that senior **Leaya Cleary's** field hockey career has to end as well. In the fall, Cleary will continue her athletic and academic endeavors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Growing up in the Netherlands, where field hockey is exceedingly popular, Cleary has played the sport since the age of six. She recalled how



LOCK DOWN: Cleary gets ready to intercept the next pass.

she and her classmates would bike to practice after school, as field hockey was the sport that everyone played there. Even after moving to the United States, Cleary continued with her sport, holding on to the connection it gave to her childhood home. Despite experiencing "ups and downs" with field hockey over the years, Cleary said she always found herself returning to the sport because of her genuine passion. Positioned as an inner and the captain of the varsity team

in the 2025 season, Cleary has become known not only for her athletic ability but also for being well-rounded in balancing advanced coursework with demanding practices and stepping into her leadership role during intense matches.

In addition to its athletic opportunities, MIT will open countless doors for Cleary in the scientific world. Between enjoying her physics and biology classes and spending a summer interning at an oncology biomedical drug company, Cleary fell in love with the discipline. Although unsure if she wants to attend medical school or focus on the engineering side of things, Cleary is looking forward to "taking advantage of those opportunities [that MIT offers], meeting people, finding something that I like and that I enjoy and want to do for the rest of my life."

For Cleary, one of the most meaningful parts of field hockey has been the sisterhood the team has created. Over the course of four years, the teammates have become more than people she plays alongside; they have become people whom she can rely on, as she reflected, "I know I can call up any of those girls and ask for help or just hang out, even if I don't talk to them every day." She explained that her team is often referred to as a family because of everything they have experienced together, from winning the championship to celebrating their accomplishments at the many pasta feeds. Cleary added that many of them would never have known each other if it weren't for this sport, building on the significance of those relationships to her.

As she moves on to the next chapter of her life, Cleary's time on the LGHS field hockey team will continue to impact her. Cleary reminisced about "having fun these last four years with the team, and just really enjoying every moment because high school has flown by so fast." Wherever the Massachusetts wind takes her, Cleary will no doubt flourish.

Boys' volleyball sets its sights on achieving first in CCS

by **Britt Melinauskas**

National Editor

As the Los Gatos High School Boys' Volleyball season has now ended, the Wildcats successfully completed league play and postseason games. The varsity and junior varsity teams entered the second round of league play on April 24. To close out the league season, varsity and junior varsity competed against Lynbrook, Harker, Monta Vista, Homestead, and Mountain View High Schools.

For varsity, the team beat Lynbrook 3-0, lost to Harker 2-3, and won the rest of their games against Monta Vista and Mountain View: 3-2 and 3-1. Specific to the match against Homestead, the Wildcats commemorated their annual senior night, celebrating seven future graduates. Seniors **Sean Slover, Nolan Harr, Nico Bianchi, Nate Jones, Ali Akca, Logan Stanton, and Reily Nguyen** finished their league careers on a high note, beating Mountain View 3-2. Ultimately, these concluding matches secured the Boys' Varsity team for third place in the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL). Junior varsity fought hard against Lynbrook, Harker, Monta Vista, and Mountain View but lost the matches. However, they were able to secure a clean win with a score of 2-0 against Homestead High School. At the season's conclusion, the varsity team finished with a record of 19-9 with the junior varsity team close behind finishing with 7-14 record.



SPIKE: Akca attempts to tip the volleyball over the net after an unexpected block.

In the current position in league of the Los Gatos High School Boys' Varsity Team, they were able to qualify for the Open Division of the Central Coast Section (CCS) to compete for the title. Battling in the SCVAL league against powerhouses like fifth-seeded Harker and sixth-seeded Monta Vista, the Wildcats started the tournament as the eighth seed, with hopes of upsetting the competition and rising through the bracket. In addition, the other rival teams in the bracket are Archbishop Mitty, Saint Francis, Harbor, and Valley Christian High Schools.

On Tuesday, May 12, the varsity team faced off against the number one seed, Bellarmine College Preparatory School. The match concluded 1-3, ending their opportunity to move on to the championship. However, their consistent performance leading up to CCS showcased their growth, resilience, and ability to compete at a high level under pressure. As a result of their strong season and postseason showing, the team earned seeding into the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) NorCal Championships.

As the spring season wraps up, be sure to congratulate the Los Gatos High School Wildcats on an eventful and hard-fought season marked by perseverance and standout performances across the roster. From early-season matchups to high-pressure league and CCS games, the team consistently showed determination and the ability to compete at a high level.

(Source: MaxPreps)

LGHS track aims to place at CIF State Championships

by **Atharava Pandey**

Sports Editor

The Los Gatos track and field season is drawing to a close, with meets growing more intense and athletes continuing to race blazing times. The team hopes to smoothly continue its strong momentum through the end of the year.

Junior **Aydin Hussain** remains a pivotal member of the track team. As a varsity sprinter, Hussain specializes in the 100-meter, 200-meter, and 400-meter races. These events require strong mental fortitude and significant skill, as they are typically shorter events that provide less margin for error. Regarding the continually rising stakes

that come with these big meets, Hussain remarked, "We now understand that time is limited, especially towards the end of the season. We can't be as relaxed as we were in the preseason." Hussain noted that this season has definitely had its ups and downs, with key athletes suffering injuries in the early stretch. However, he pointed out that the team has started to gel: "Around a month before League, we finally started to put it together, finally hitting our times." Hussain looks forward to competing in the state championships on May 29.

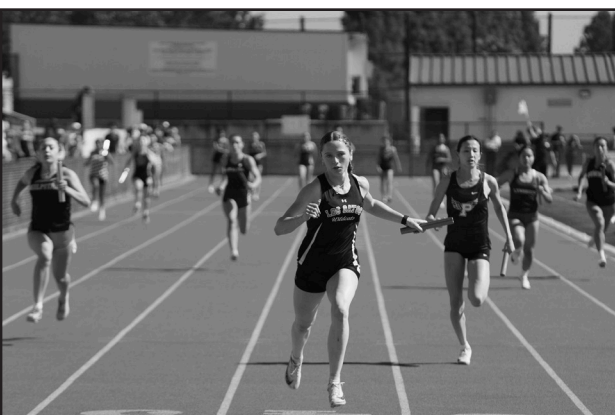
Offering his perspective on a different side of the track, sophomore **Finn Allan** specializes in longer distances, specifically the 1600-meter and the 3200-meter races. These events test the ability to deal with a unique of physical activity. Describing the cohesive chemistry of the team, Allan said, "Everybody on the team has a good relationship, and it makes the environment a lot more fun." He credited this chemistry as a major contributing factor to his improvement this season. Looking towards the end of the season, Allan mentioned he is interested in watching his friends and fellow teammates junior **Jackson Cresta**, junior **Nolan Hochleutner**, and sophomore **Ben Booyen** compete in the 4 by 800-meter relay.

At the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL) Qualifiers on May 9, the Wildcats continued to display their grit and determination. In particular, the boys' 4 by 400-meter relay team, consisting of Hussain, as well as teammates senior **Kai Jordan**, junior **Han Tang**, and senior **Hayden Benjamin**, won the race with a time of 3:21:15. On the girls' side, the 4 by 400-meter relay, consisting of senior **Bridget Moore**, junior **Elise Greenstreet**, senior **Kaylee Cross**, and junior **Madison Kohli**, won their race as well by a gap of

almost nine seconds. In the 4 by 100-meter relay, the girls continued their remarkable performance. They ran their fastest time as a team and placing second.

The Los Gatos Wildcats have worked immensely hard this season and have certainly delivered performances that reflect their dedication. Be sure to support the team as they compete at the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) State Championships at Buchanan High School on May 29.

(Source: Athletic.net)



PERSEVERE: Cross prepares to hand off the baton for the final leg of her relay.



RUN HARD: Sophomore **Kiley Horwitz** leads her heat in the 1600 meter race.

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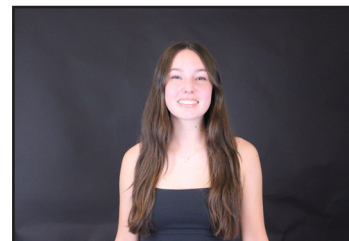
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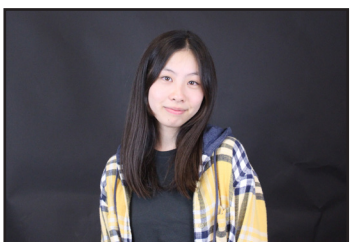
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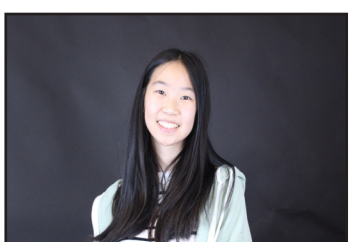
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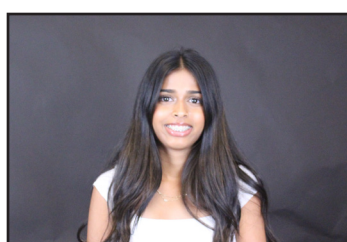
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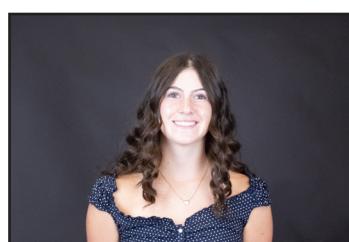
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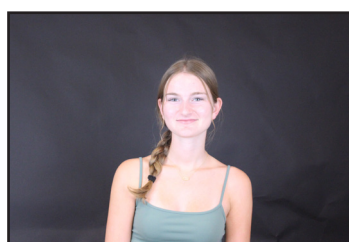
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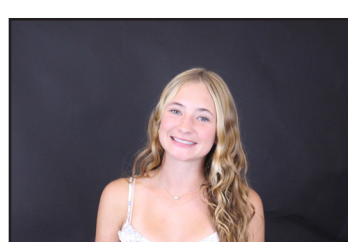
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