



Roaring twenties at Fox Theater



Students dance at Winter Formal.

MARTIN ZHENG

Naomi Kotani
NEWS WRITER

On Feb. 10, Aragon held its annual Winter Formal dance at the Redwood City Fox Theater from 7-10 p.m.

The theme was “Flashback to the Roaring ‘20s”, which was chosen to align with the features of the venue.

“The Fox Theater already has a red staircase and we just picked the color for the lights that we want,” said junior and Dance Commission member Juliette Szwarcberg. “There are vendors that sell props you can rent, so we try to get decorations that fit [the theme].”

In choosing decorations, Dance Commission drew inspiration from past events and social media platforms like Pinterest

In addition, Dance Commission tried to build on students’ opinions on previous dances. Based on feedback, they made changes to styles of the theme and DJs as needed.

The Fox Theater has been the location of Winter Formal for the past several years.

“It’s a really nice venue for the price,” Szwarcberg said. “The amount of money we get from tickets is a big factor in what venue we use.”

The Dance Commission students who planned the dance also set up the decorations. The railings were decorated with blue, black, white and gold balloons and streamers. At the snack bar, there was a selection of chips and Antoine’s cookies available, as well as cups of water.

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Remembering college adviser Laurie Tezak

Aakanksha Sinha
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Aragon community experienced a tragic loss on Jan. 23 when College and Career Adviser Laurie Tezak passed away due to complications from a serious illness. An Aragon alumna herself, Tezak worked at Aragon for 32 years, starting in 1992 as an Instructional Aide before being promoted to her most recent position in 2006.

“Not many people graduate from high school and then come back to have a full career at the school they attended,” said academic counselor Lea Sanguinetti. “Ms. Tezak always had an answer or a story for how something came about on this campus.”

Tezak coordinated Advanced Placement tests, college and military visits and worked especially closely with seniors to help them navigate the college application process.

“She always made sure that all students were served,” said financial aid and scholarships adviser Caroline Moala. “She always made sure she went back to the special-ed and AVID classes ... and always made herself available to all students.”

Math teacher Adam Jacobs is an Aragon alumni, and knew Tezak as a counselor during his time as a student.

“I just remember she was always very caring and kind,” Jacobs said. “[Looking] back, I always felt really cared [for].”

To senior Zion Oliveros, who often interacted with Tezak, visiting her was part of a daily routine. They remember Tezak’s cheery and welcoming nature.

“I received my senior photo proofs, and I was showing them to everyone in the counseling office,” Oliveros said. “And Ms. Tezak liked this specific photo that [was] in black and white. She said ‘I love how vintage it looks, it looks like a glamour shot.’ And I was like, ‘I’ll save that one specially for you.’ But she was already in the hospital when I received my actual senior photo prints ... It was hard, and I was worried about her. But I was able to give her the photo through someone else. I’m just hoping that she was able to see it.”

Tezak is remembered as an advocate. She also served as the union representative for Aragon’s classified staff for about 15 years.

“When she wanted her voice to be heard, she could do it in such a way that everyone would want to listen,” said former Aragon academic counselor Trisha Liskay and a close friend of Tezak’s. “And she did it in the most graceful and elegant way. She wasn’t a wallflower. She stood her ground.”

Tezak deeply valued the Aragon community, and



Tezak at her desk

ANGELA CASTILLO

helped implement many new resources for students, including Naviance. She also played a key role in the successful launch of Aragon’s biennial Career Day.

“Career Day became more and more successful because Ms. Tezak worked quietly under the radar without letting you know how much [effort] she put into it,” said staff secretary Dounia Kardosh. “And at the end, you would see a perfect production and she would quietly just go on with her next task ... She didn’t want the recognition, she just wanted to her job and do it her standards — and her standards were second to none”

Even during times of personal distress, Tezak is remembered for her persistence.

“Her strength to deal with loss, to help her family, to be able to come back to work [after losing her husband] and carry on was absolutely unbelievable,” Liskay said. “Laurie and I used to do some small group college presentations together, and I remember she would sit there with her sunglasses on. She wanted to be there for the students, but she also wanted to keep herself composed.”

Tezak connected with people on campus, and preserved those relationships off campus, as well. Having known each other for nearly 22 years, Tezak and Kardosh often traveled together with their families.

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Liskay and Tezak at Dana Point, California

TRISHA LISKAY

Winter formal at Fox Theater

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On the second floor, students could take pictures at the photo booths with themed backgrounds and a variety of props. The auditorium, which served as the dance floor, was lit up by multiple colorful lights. The 2013 version of "The Great Gatsby" was playing behind the DJ on the stage.

For music, the Dance Commission aimed to include a wide range of songs.

"We try to get the most popular songs from the past," Szwarcberg said. "We also do the form [asking for] music that the students like and we try to incorporate that into the playlist so we can get a bit of everything."

However, some students attending the dance felt that this was not the case.

"I feel like they should have used more of the song suggestions," said freshman Jackie Wong. "None of the songs that me and my friends suggested got played. The songs were very 2014."

Sophomore Tory Maciel expressed a similar opinion.

"They should play more of the student recommenda-

tions," said Maciel. "I think they should have a big playlist of the recommendations of the students instead of having a DJ."

Additionally, the volume of the music was a concern for some.

"It was a lot louder than I thought it'd be," Wong said. "My ears kinda ring now."

Maciel concurred. "I couldn't even hear myself half the time," Maciel said.

On the other hand, some had a different view on the songs.

"The music seemed to be getting people excited," said freshman Vikram Patnaik. "I liked the music. I probably didn't know half of it, but it was still pretty nice and high energy."

Commenting on the food, one attendee compared it to the food of this year's previous dance.

"The food was definitely a downgrade," said senior Zion Oliveros. "I was expecting something closer to what they had at homecoming. Obviously, they couldn't do the same level because homecoming was literally at a restaurant. But I expected

something [on a] similar level, so I was a little disappointed."

Students offered their opinions on the theme of the roaring '20s.

"[The theme was] a great choice," Oliveros said. "Even if other people didn't dress up, I loved dressing up. [The theme was] definitely super fun for me."

Attendees shared feedback on the activities at the dance.

"I really liked the photo booth," Wong said. "I thought that the backdrops were really cool and I love the little printouts that you got. I wish there were more activities to do besides just dancing and taking pictures, [which] were really fun, but at least at Homecoming we had bowling too."

Despite these issues, many students still had positive comments.

"The dance was really cool, fun and interesting," said freshman MJ Ke. "It engaged the students a lot because of the loud music and the dancing."

The next dance is Prom, only for upperclassman, which is set to take place on April 19.

Remembering Tezak

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"I love to cook and she knew that," Kardosh said. "We were up in Portland once ... [and] when we got to the downtown area, she was like, 'I know the perfect place for you.' She took me into this shop with spices and teas, and it [was like] I was in Wonderland ... She came back [after an hour] and I was still shopping, and she was like 'I knew it.' She knew exactly what people liked and what their passion was."

Tezak loved life. She rooted for the San Francisco 49ers, made floral arrangements, sewed clothes, biked to school and loved '60s rock-and-roll.

"She was proud to be a hippie," said academic counselor Josephine Ho.

Even with her demanding position at Aragon, Tezak never stopped learning.

"The reason she had so much knowledge is because she was always so willing to learn," Ho said. "Just like students here who take dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment classes, Ms. Tezak was a currently enrolled stu-

dent at the [College of San Mateo] too. She walked what she talked ... and that's what made her so special."

According to staff members, Tezak was considering retiring at the end of this year.

"The idea of retiring was flowing through her mind [for] years but every year we'd say 'no you can't leave,'" Kardosh said. "We used to beg her [to] reconsider, and she did. She did because she enjoyed the students, and she enjoyed Aragon. She knew she had so much to give."

Tezak left a significant impact on people's lives.

"She was my best friend," Liskay said. "My life will never be the same without her ... But I feel so much gratitude that I was able to have her in my life. She was just such a gift to me, my family, her family and to all the students."

Administration is currently working on finding an appropriate way to honor Tezak's impact on the Aragon community and her enduring legacy.

READ THE EXTENDED OBITUARY AT ARAGONOUTLOOK.ORG.

2024 brings new CTE course

Oscar Nicolson
NEWS WRITER

In the fall of 2024, Aragon will be introducing Interior Design as a new Career & Technical Education class.

Interior Design will cover a variety of different topics.

"We are starting with an introduction to what is design doing, talking about space planning and furniture design, color theory, application lighting, design materials, finishes and textiles, fabrics, sustainable design and green practices," said future Interior Design teacher Melissa Perino.

The Interior Design course will explore many different approaches and techniques involving design which can also be applied to students exploring other forms of design, as well as makeup or fashion. Students will work with a wide range of mediums, ranging from Legos to Play-Doh, as well as apply their skills to various real-life experiences, such as creating architectural mood boards, designing lighting fixtures for rides at Disneyland, creating mood boards, understanding colors and the psychology behind design. This class will prepare students who want to pursue a career in graphic design.

"It's going to be really hands-on," Perino said. "The reason why Interior Design is so fascinating is because it's right at the crossroads of where space and dimension and measurement and problem solving meets creativity and thinking outside of the box. So it's artistry meets math."

For Perino, her long time passions and work experience prompted her to pitch an interior design course.

"I have my own interior design company," Perino

said. "And I do that as a side work because I love teaching [but] I don't want to give that up."

Many students are excited about the prospect of a new Interior Design course, and are looking into taking it next year.

"[I am interested in] interior design," said sophomore Isaac Flores. "[It may] open more opportunities [for] students like myself] by giving more of an in-depth look at different job opportunities."

Starting new classes is not an easy process: the school board must approve a course of study and proposal from the teacher who wishes to implement the class into the curriculum.

The approval process has many layers.

"[The] first step is for the teachers to give it the 'okay,'" said Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction Julia Kempkey. "And then it will go to our principals and eventually to the school board."

Teachers put in a lot of work in order to get courses approved.

"I drafted a course proposal that outlined what the units of study would be," Perino said. "There were 12 different governing entities that had to say yes [before] moving forward."

Interior Design will be one of Aragon's CTE courses, which are a graduation requirement and allow students insight into various career options.

"When a student has access [to a] high interest course, it makes their day better in general," Kempkey said. "It's really beneficial [to have these new courses] for students because a lot of high school students feel like they have some ideas [about] what they want to do, so it's

really nice to be able to start checking out [careers] in high school."

Classes also require student support," Kempkey said. "We look into creating new classes if there are students that are coming forward saying like, 'Hey, I'd really like to learn more about Photoshop, or 3D advanced art.'"

These classes help provide students with a view into new areas.

"A lot of the CTE pathways are creative classes, [like] art classes," Kempkey said. "And then they're just [exposed] to the workforce as well. So a lot of the CTE classes will have field trips or experiences on how the course content and skills that students have applies to future jobs."

Students want this trend of new classes to continue, especially classes that prepare them for the future and life outside of Aragon.

"We should have a class for you [to] learn about life, [like] taxes [and] being an adult," Flores said.

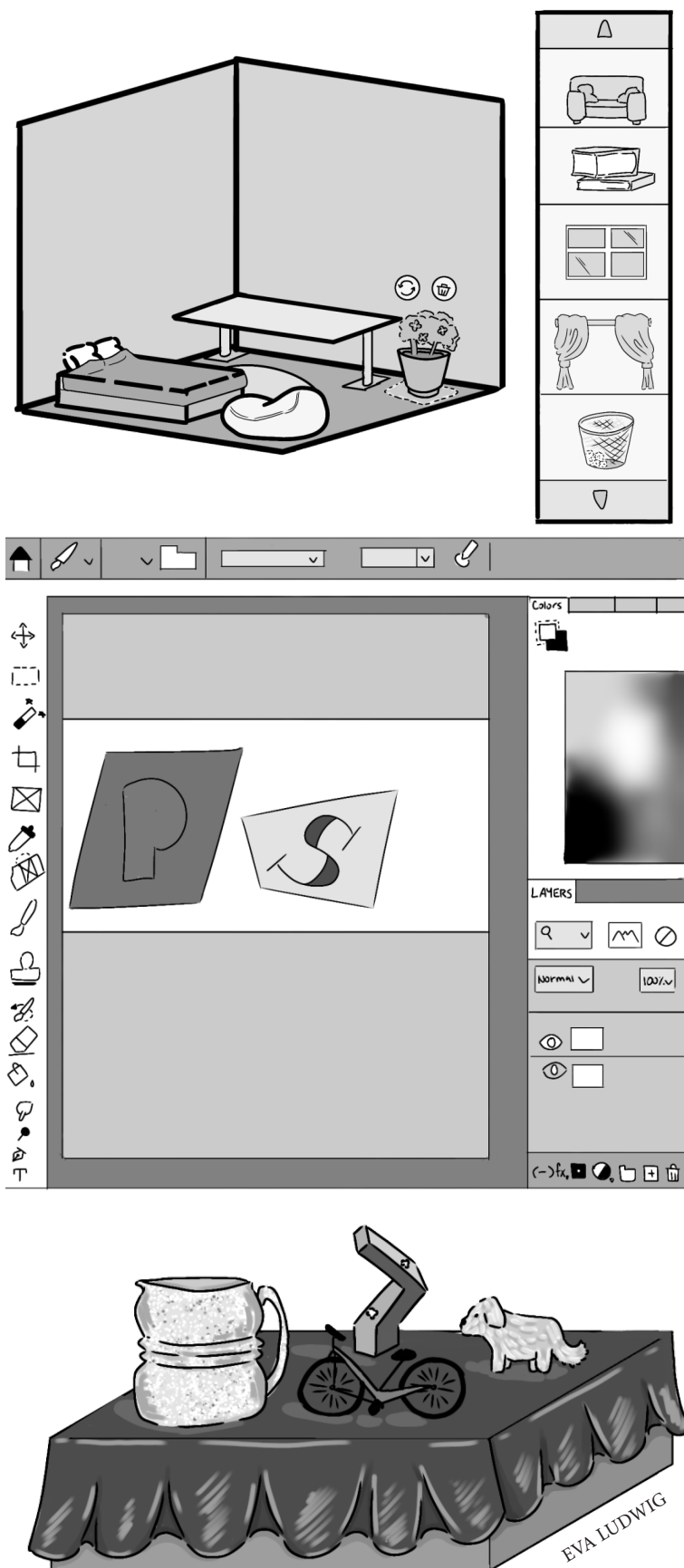
Perino focused on making this aspect a priority for interior design.

"What I'm going to be doing is taking real life examples from my industry experience and presenting those to the students," Perino said. "I think that anything that relates to the real world is going to be appealing to students because we're always looking forward to what to do after high school."

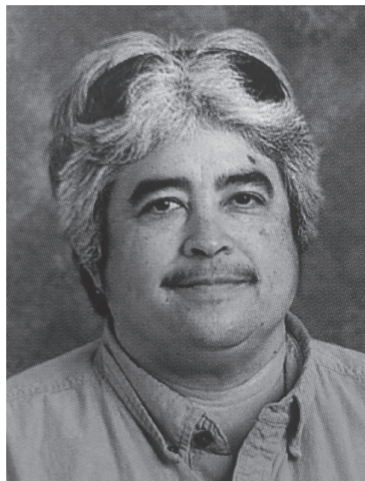
Students express their sentiments toward the prospect of new courses.

"I think that the greatest thing Aragon is doing right now is listening to the students and giving them more opportunities," Flores said.

Students can sign up for Interior Design on their course selection forms to take the class in the fall of 2024.



Admin should instate beautification detention



Gaby Gonzalez
Facilities Manager

“The world isn’t going to come to an end because people can’t pick up their garbage, but it creates a whole host of other issues, including attracting rodents onto campus, and that does create bigger problems. I don’t know [if] the students realize that when you have parents or outside people who are visiting the campus and they see all of the garbage, [that’s] the message [we] send to people. How we present ourselves is reflected in that. And I don’t know if that’s how anybody really wants to be seen.”

This editorial represents the opinion of 14 out of 15 Outlook editors.

In a poll on the Aragon Outlook Instagram, 87% of respondents said they considered trash a problem at Aragon. Litter is more than an aesthetic issue. The mess students make create a heavier burden for facilities staff. The editors of the Aragon Outlook believe that Aragon should implement a “beautification”-style detention for littering, meaning tasking students with picking up trash as a disciplinary measure.

Aragon detention is currently designed to be restorative instead of punitive. Attendees spend an hour after school completing a reflection sheet, writing about how their actions impact others, their academic success and their futures. Staff members, like assistant principals David Moore and Andrew Hartig, often follow up with students about their answers in one-on-one meetings.

“The deeper level is teaching all of us to be responsible and accountable,” Moore said. “That’s a lifelong skill.”

Aragon focuses on retributivism, that punishment should fit the crime. Each

type of infraction has a different reflection sheet, from behavioral issues to tardies. Beautification follows this framework as picking up trash correlates to littering.

The Outlook advocates for splitting detention time between picking up trash and reflection. Students often finish the reflection sheet early, meaning they would have time to pick up trash without having to stay longer after school, and additional supervision wouldn’t be required.

Because so many administrators walk around campus during brunch and lunch, when students are most likely to litter, there is already the supervision necessary to catch people littering.

Currently, there is no direct punishment for littering. So far, Aragon administration and leadership has focused on prevention and education, like through CARES presentations.

“When we did the presentations last year, it helped in the beginning [and] we saw a significant difference,” said Leadership student Brooke Barson. “Then [this year], it reset. We were back to normal.”

Local middle schools have successfully assigned lunch-

time trash pickup to students for tardies, distractions and a variety of other infractions. Establishing an explicit consequence can disincentive people from littering.

“The trash attracts the seagulls [and] rats, so for health reasons, we want to make sure that we’re taking care of the planet properly,” said Assistant Principal Andrew Hartig.

Barson expands on what she thinks caused the widespread trash problem.

“Students [have to] recognize that the staff is human and that they’re picking up our mess,” Barson said. “The greatest challenge is having the message resonate with the students, that this is like a problem now and that we need to fix it now.”

Needless trash also impacts the facilities staff.

“We spend a lot of time picking up garbage that we could spend on improving the campus [instead],” said facilities manager Gaby Gonzalez. “We have to dedicate our time to picking up garbage in the swimming pool because kids will throw things down [there].”

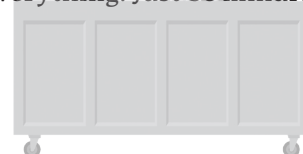
Moreover, litter damages people’s perceptions of Aragon.

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Michael Louie
School Plan Operations

“We have six stations of garbage cans, recycle bins and also the green bins. And we still find trash, on the floors and by the doorways. It’s a pretty big problem. Lunchtime is probably the most that we collect. [I want students] to pick up after [themselves] as best [they] can. If you spill something, that’s fine, we’ll get to it. we try to maintain as best we can and the school and sometimes we can’t get to everything. Just be mindful.”





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Psychedelics: the highs and lows of hallucinogens

Hannah Li and Emma Shen
FEATURES AND NEWS WRITERS

**This article contains sensitive content, including self-harm. Names have been changed to protect source privacy.*

“The first time I tried mushrooms, it was very much a raw kind of feeling,” said senior *Samuel. “I felt very in touch with my surroundings; everything felt very elevated.”

Samuel first started using psychedelics a few months ago, and enjoys them in moderation. Most commonly known through forms such as psilocybin “magic” mushrooms, MDMA and LSD, psychedelics are a subclass of hallucinogenic drugs that can alter a person’s sense of reality, affecting their emotions, cognitive processes and sense of time.

“It was very relaxing and I felt a lot less agitated,” Samuel said. “I noticed things that normally would get on my nerves were easier for me to let go, so I could be more at peace and in the moment with myself.”

With emerging research on psychedelic therapy, particularly as a treatment for mental illnesses like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and alcoholism, psychedelic usage has grown increasingly popular, prompting the decriminalization of psychedelics in California cities including Oakland, San Francisco and Santa Cruz.

Nathanael Carroll Horton, director of services at the Psychedelic Club of San Mateo and 2004 Aragon graduate, is one such advocate of the regulated legalization of psychedelics and psychedelic therapy, having begun using them to deal with his depression at the time.

“Senior year of high school, I wasn’t connecting with people [and] I was very isolated,” Horton said. “I avoided others because people are dangerous — they could turn on me, they could hit me, they could yell at me, which happened at home. I developed mental trauma, and that shapes your psychology for life, [along with] your immune system, your susceptibility to stress, depression, anxiety and chronic pain. Things perked up when I went to Brown [University], but then tanked [even though] I went through all the traditional methods of treating depression.”

USAGE

Similar to Samuel, Horton had an overwhelmingly positive experience with psychedelics, although his first trip was an accident.

“[I was] on this medication called effexor, [that] can have

MDMA-like effects, [and] it induced a mystical episode,” Horton said. “I thought I was Jesus Christ — very confusing since I was an atheist. I stopped the medication, but then I was depressed again. My twenties were a bit of a mess [and by] the end, I started developing chronic pain [and] fibromyalgia. At that point, it was disabling and I was desperate; I turned to psychedelics. The first thing that got rid of all my pain, for a whole evening, was MDMA. It gave me the will to live again and [made me think], why aren’t my doctors giving me this? This is healing.”

Psychedelic microdosing, the practice of consuming very low

vinorum, which is in the mint family [and has hallucinogenic effects]. It was so powerful that I passed out.”

Horton describes his experience as otherworldly.

“The whole world was ripped away [and] I was spiraling into darkness,” Horton said. “I saw my mother [and] my brother, who I’m closest to in my family, wave goodbye to me. There was this idea presented to me that was like, ‘you want to be on a real psychedelic trip, you want to see what re-ality actually

trips as the exemption, not the rule — making them more interested than intimidated.

“[Psychedelics are] looked at in a more positive way than negative,” said senior *Kit. “None of my friends have had bad trips; they’ve all had really good experiences. Some said it feels like a better high [than weed] and they can see and feel colors. As I’ve heard [these] stories, I get more comfortable with it and closer to wanting to experience it for myself. Weed is my go to, but I’ve been getting bored of it, [so] I want to do

and can’t even live without psychedelics at times.”

Rebecca has seen the detrimental effects firsthand, having a cousin who was a psychedelic user.

“My cousin took psychedelics when she was a teenager and it ended up in her breaking ties with our family,” Rebecca said. “She’s in and out of rehab constantly and no matter what she always turns to it. She’s constantly lying to her family, just to buy more and more psychedelics, and it ruined [their] relationship and trust.”

EFFECTS

Adolescents using psychedelics take particularly high risks, as developing brains are susceptible to forming neural pathways for drug usage that follow into adulthood. Once established, they may lead to lifelong addiction and consequences such as memory loss and declining cognitive abilities.

“If [your brain] thinks something’s important to you, it’s going to create a fast, strong pathway [for it] in [the] adult brain,” said Dr. Jessamy Cadigan, a wellness counselor and Substance Use Prevention facilitator. “So if a young person is putting a lot of drugs in their brain at this time, it’s easier to addict because of the developmental stage, and it’s harder to unaddict. 90% of all people who go to treatment for drug and alcohol problems started using when they were teens; it’s a timing issue.”

Horton echoes this.

“Unless you have a real clinical concern, like depression, and it’s a greater risk for you to be unhealthy and unable to move forward in your life as a young adult, I don’t see any reason to rush into a psychedelic journey,” Horton said. “I would start with education [so you have] enough background to know some of the basics. Otherwise, it’s worth waiting until you’re older. It can be a really beautiful experience but you’ve got to know what you’re doing.”

It’s important to remember that psychedelics are classified as Schedule I drugs, with a high potential for abuse, and are not approved for medical purposes.

“Don’t give drugs to other people,” Horton said. “Even if you think you’re going to help them, you don’t know their circumstances, their mental health history, their trauma, their personality type, [or if] they’re neurotic. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. You could give some drug to somebody because you think you’re helping with their depression, but without any preparation [or] screening during the experience and integration, it could go sideways.”

doses of psychedelics, has gained popularity, particularly within the Bay Area. Studies show that it can be used to improve mental health, focus and creativity, among other things, but more research must be conducted.

“People will put shrooms in a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, for example,” said junior *Julian. “You put enough to hit you, but not too much to the point where you could possibly [overdose].”

DANGERS

Yet, psychedelic use can be risky. Taking a large or strong batch of psychedelics can result in “bad trips,” disturbing hallucinations that may cause excessive fear, agitation or mood swings.

“[When] I was in my mid twenties, I was reckless and desperate to treat my depression [since] no medications were helping me,” Horton said. “I used a concentrated form of salvia di-

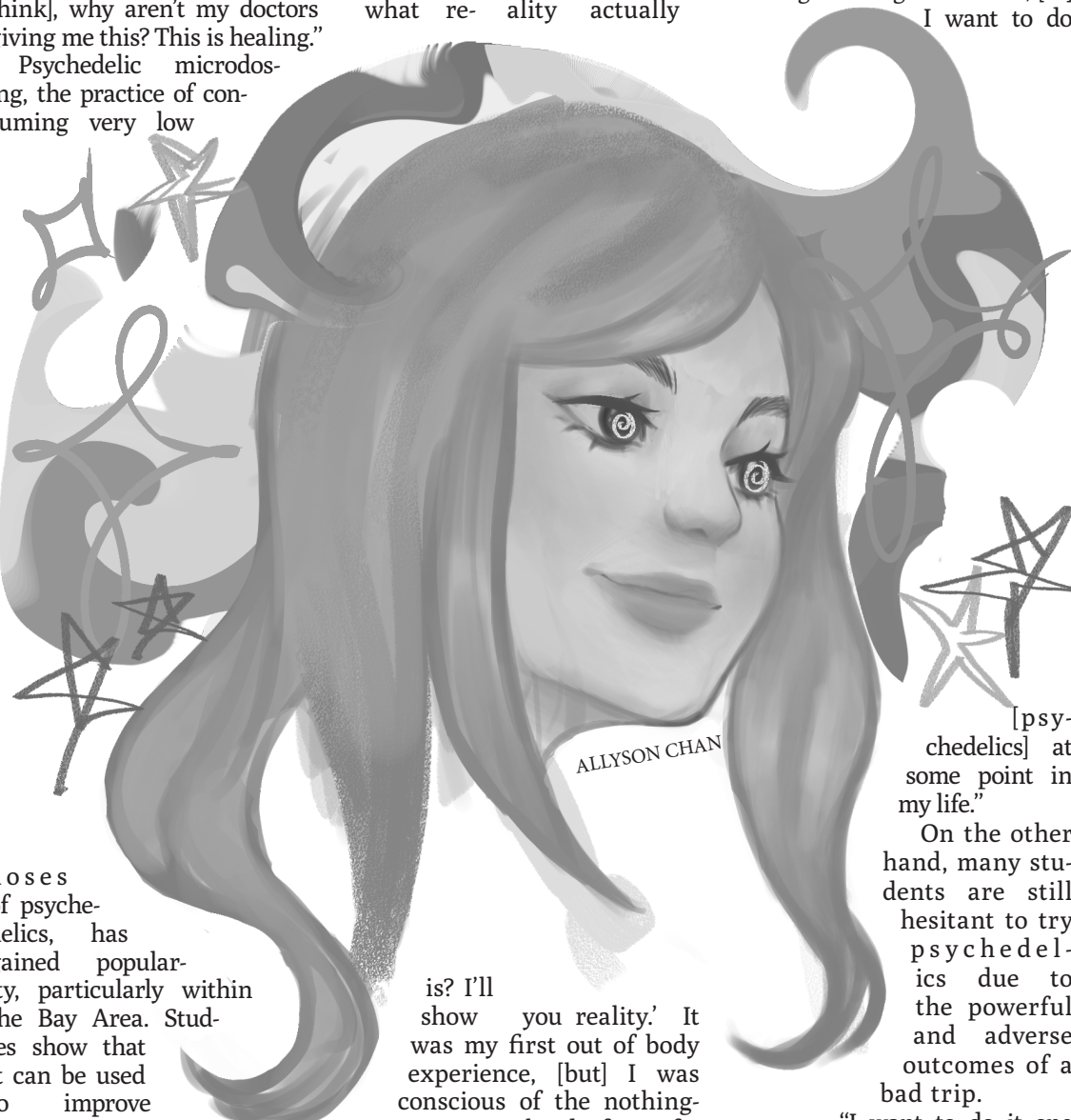
is? I’ll show you reality.’ It was my first out of body experience, [but] I was conscious of the nothingness. It was kind of terrifying, kind of boring, [and] it was kind of a relief because I felt like it was very honest.”

Horton reflects that despite the negative effects, the trip was effective in treating his depression.

“One benefit that came out of it, besides the wonder and the terrible awe-inspiring part of it, [was that] after seeing all this emptiness, I didn’t really want to kill myself anymore,” Horton said. “Because if I killed myself, it would just be nothing. And nothing’s really boring, so if [my life] really is an illusion, it’s [still] a nicer story. So I might as well do my best, live the life I got and keep trying to heal.”

CULTURE

While Horton’s experience led to intense derealization, some Aragon students see bad



[psychedelics] at some point in my life.”

On the other hand, many students are still hesitant to try psychedelics due to the powerful and adverse outcomes of a bad trip.

“I want to do it one time just to experience it, but it’s scary because it’s way stronger than anything you would be able to get over the counter,” Julian said. “It’s kind of a gray area, it’s like, ‘what it’s gonna do to me?’ Not many people know about it; it’s not as popular as weed or drinking.”

Some are concerned due to the inherently negative connotations of psychedelics, being a drug.

“Unless for medical purposes, I think all drugs are bad,” said sophomore *Rebecca. “[Drugs] hinder your brain and our ability to think and comprehend things is what makes us human. It depends on the context that you’re using psychedelics in, but I’ve known of using medical psychedelics and that backfiring on people, because [they] become addicted

LSD usage in young adults doubled between 2018 and 2021

In 2022, 11.3% of people aged 12+ in the US reported having ever used shrooms

States that have decriminalized psychedelics or are in the process of passing similar legislation

25% of high school seniors in 2022

felt it was “easy or fairly easy” to obtain LSD

Multilingual Learners Program violates standards

Claire Dong
NEWS WRITER

In the beginning of 2024, the Multilingual Learner Program updated its protocol to align with state and federal regulations.

The ML program helps immigrant students improve their English proficiency and prepare for post-secondary options. However, the program has recently come under scrutiny.

“Our district was visited by the federal government in October,” said manager of ML Programs Joana Feit. “They found that we were doing a few things that we needed to change with our multilingual learners.”

There are two main categories that the students are placed into: the newcomer program (for students that arrived in the United States within the last three years who particularly struggled with English) and the standard program. The U.S. Department of Education found that the program was not in compliance with regulations regarding the length of time students could be enrolled in newcomer classes.

“We were keeping students in the newcomer program for the entire time they were in high school,” Feit said. “The federal law is that a newcomer student can only be in ML-only sheltered classes for up to three years.”

The district had been keeping students in the newcomer program for all four years of their high school years, which prevented them from interacting with other native English speakers. Now to comply with this law, the district has now moved all misplaced students into the standard program.

In the past few years, there was a lack of support across the district. The newcomer program was limited to three campuses: San Mateo, Hillsdale and Capuchino High School, so students zoned for Aragon had to travel farther to another campus.

Not only did the limited number of campuses affect enroll-

ment rates, but the lack of staff also impacted the ML program. Because there was only one teacher at the ML program at Aragon, the district has decided to start hiring more teachers to fill in the empty positions, opening up an ML Independent Study Teacher position.

Even within these classes, students lack adequate support.

“Not every single multilingual learner is in a designated English Language Development class, with only students that are multilingual learners,” Feit said. “For example, the Community and Literacy in Action class has some multilingual learners, but it also has some students who are not multilingual learners, and the same with the English support classes.”

To eliminate these types of problems, the district has started offering classes only for ML students and will be implementing them in all schools, hoping that awareness for the program will also grow.

Among Aragon’s student body, there are very few students who are even aware that the Multilingual Program exists. Freshman Liana Jennings says there isn’t enough communication about the program to Aragon’s student body.

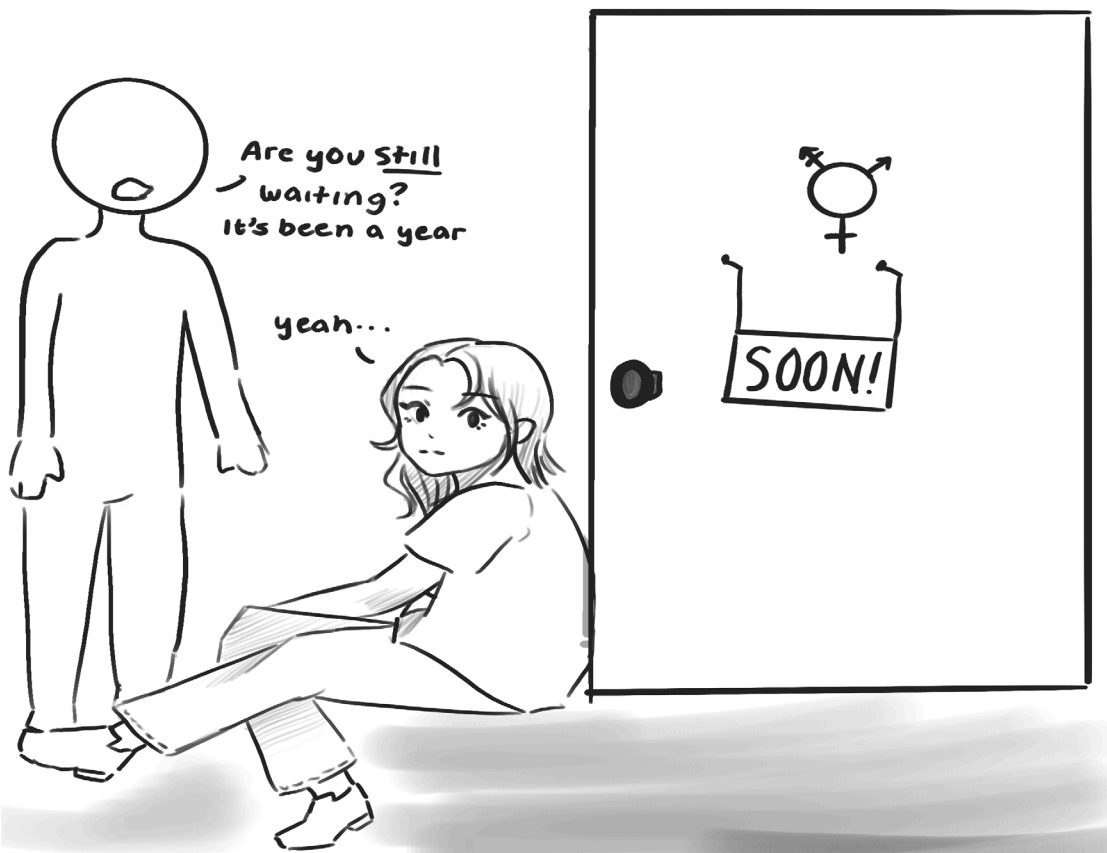
“[If] I was trying to help a friend who didn’t know English and just moved here to get accustomed to Aragon,” Jennings said. “If [nobody] knows about the program, then how’s it going to help people?”

Feit elaborated on her own experience in the program.

“I was a multilingual learner myself. I moved from Brazil to the United States in the middle of my ninth-grade year,” Feit said. “That’s why I have so much passion for this work, because I was that person too.”

The overall goal of the program is to increase the graduation rate of multilingual learners. At Aragon, the graduation rate of ML students has already increased by 6.4% in 2023, but still remains at 68.5%, compared to the district graduation rate of 92%.

“If nobody knows about [it], how will it help people?”



ALLYSON CHAN

Still waiting: construction delays for Aragon’s all-gender changing space

Darshan Bal
NEWS WRITER

In May of 2023, The Outlook reported on the administration’s plan to create an all-gender locker or changing room by the end of the calendar year. The school has initiated multiple construction projects since then, including adding shade structures next to the tennis courts, updating pool lighting and completely redoing the baseball field. But, construction on this all-gender space hasn’t yet started, leaving some students in a difficult situation.

“Locker rooms have the [reputation] of being toxically masculine,” said sophomore and Gay Straight Awareness club treasurer Brody Friedeberg. “Oftentimes, with the specific type of conversations taking place, it’s a really uncomfortable place to be, and I’d imagine for somebody who doesn’t identify with their [assigned] gender, it’s even worse.”

An all-gender locker room would allow students to get a space that’s meant for changing, rather than having to change in bathrooms.

“Students who don’t identify as male or female have to use a bathroom, and then they’re able to put their backpack somewhere else, like an office,” Friedeberg said. “I also know people who are non-binary and have to put their backpacks behind vending machines or hide them.”

The administration plans for the space to be between the boys locker room and music hall, as to be accessible for students before Physical Education and sports. The space will be in one of the team rooms that’s currently attached to the boys locker room. The intention was to keep it near the all-gender bathroom and to P.E. teachers, so the room can be easily supervised.

“It’s a really good space because it’s a locker room and a

very equal experience to the cisgender P.E. students,” said athletic director Steve Sell.

However, getting access will require students to gain permission from administration.

“If [students] are interested in using the all-gender restroom, they would need to check in with their counselor,” said Principal Valerie Arbizu. “And then, one of our assistant principals who oversees that will give them a code so they can have access to it.”

Students will also have to communicate with their P.E. teachers about using an alternate space, and some believe this process will be difficult.

“I can imagine it’s even more difficult for a trans kid who doesn’t want to use the locker rooms [to communicate with their P.E. teacher,” Friedeberg.

The school has made progress since last May.

“Locker rooms [can be] toxically masculine

“We have worked with an architect to draw up the plans,” Arbizu said. “The district has gotten the items priced out, found a location and identified everything that needs to get done.”

The area already has lockers and will mainly utilize changing stalls with benches and hooks to hang clothes, in an effort to maintain privacy for students. However, the locker room won’t include the showers that are used in the gendered locker rooms during swim units.

“There is not a shower space, and part of that is because if students wanted to use it as a changing area to begin with, they’re looking for a bit more privacy,” Arbizu said. “And we wouldn’t be able to completely

maintain that level of privacy with showers in the space that we have.”

The bathroom already has the plumbing necessary to add a shower, so one may be alternatively added.

Planning to use pre-existing lockers and not building new showers allowed for contractors to estimate lower costs and a two-week construction timeline.

But despite all this planning, the project has come to a halt.

“They were thinking about enclosing these changing [stalls] all the way to the ceiling, but that was creating an airflow [issue] and fire life safety triggers,” said district Capital Facilities Fiscal Manager Jose Quintana. “The [Division of the State Architect] would say, ‘we need these supplies tied into your EMS system or your fire life safety or your fire panel.’”

These fixes would cost over \$250,000, a cost the Re-development Agency Fund may not be able to support.

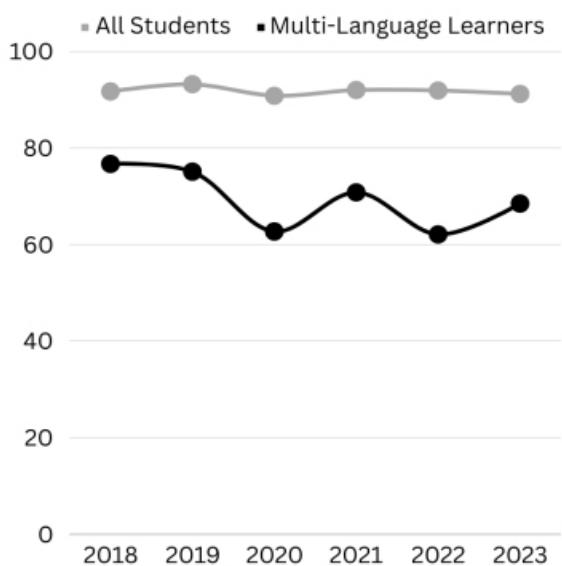
“[The funding] would probably have come through the RAF, [meaning] it’s not something that is in a bond measure,” Quintana said.

The district considered using bond Measure L, which has funded much of the summer construction throughout the district, but decided to move in a different direction. Because of the high repair costs, they had to stop moving forward with construction.

“It was communicated with [Aragon administration] that we would look at alternate direction and design and that’s something we’re currently working on,” Quintana said.

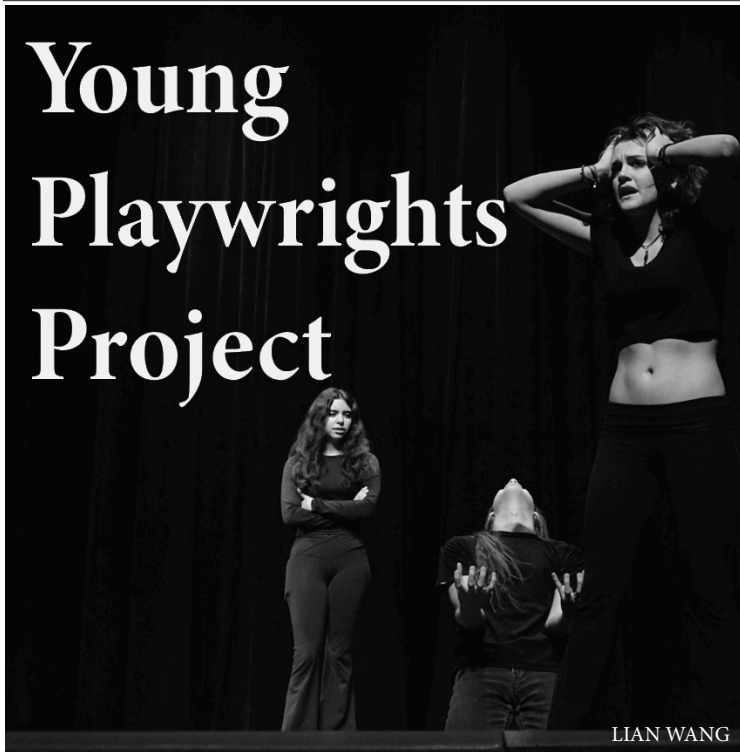
Still, following in the footsteps of the pride staircase, creating equitable, welcoming spaces is a priority for the district and Aragon administration. But, as of now, gender non-conforming students will have to continue changing in the bathroom until a separate all-gender space can be created.

Graduation Rates



DARREN LO

Young Playwrights Project



LIAN WANG

Anushka Punjabi
NEWS WRITER

On Feb 2, the spotlight fell on the Young Playwrights Project, a showcase hosted by Aragon's Advanced Drama class in the Aragon Theater from 7-9 pm. The performance showcased eight student-penned plays, selected through a class vote, and involved students in various production roles as actors or directors.

The plays examined themes from romance and comedy to loss and helplessness.

Sophomore Samantha Green's "16 Minutes of Fame" touched on the intersection between celebrity culture and everyday life. The narrative unfolds in a coffee shop,

where a barista, unaware of the celebrity status of a customer, becomes entangled in fan club recruitment.

"[It analyzed] the power we give to celebrities like Taylor Swift and explored [a] hypothetical 'evil Taylor Swift,'" Green said.

Drama Director Shane Smuin managed the production of the plays, from the first draft to the final product. Employing a minimalistic approach, he kept the production design intentionally simple.

"Everybody is in a very basic costume, the props are very simple, and any furniture pieces that we use [are] painted black," Smuin said. "So really [it has] a very simplistic look. It becomes mostly about the actors."

Senior McKenna Gustavson played the lead role in senior Maya Efron's "Mr. Bobby Shapepants," a SpongeBob SquarePants production. Poking fun at the various methods actors use to fake cry, Gustavson played an auditionee who mentally composed a speedy tragedy that ended with the death of an innocent dog. She remained unable to cry. The idiosyncratic nature of the play was particularly impactful to Gustavson.

"[It's] important for people to be able to express themselves through playwriting... [and] we have the ability to write our own plays [through this project]," Gustavson said.

Gustavson shared reflections on the rehearsal and collaboration process.

"It's not an easy class ... [but] everyone... brings such good energy," Gustavson said. "Don't be afraid to experiment."

Sophomore Maria Gevorgyan, an actor in sophomore Oliver Levitt's "Big Mamma Mee-Maw," agreed.

"I'm really passionate [about] drama," Gevorgyan said. "I [finally] feel like I can put that into something."

"Big Mamma Mee-Maw" embarks on a journey with sus-

cions and connections. Jessy can't help but feel a sense of "sussiness" when her boyfriend Himothy meets her granny. However, the granny perceives Himothy in a different light, seeing him grappling with a fear of rejection. Filled with teenage slang and occasional profanity, the play garnered laughs from the audience.

But Gevorgyan, who plays Granny, commented on how performing can be stressful.

"I've had stage fright since I was a kid," Gevorgyan said. "People say you should cover [nerves] with a smile, but I can't smile all the time. If you're stressed, it means you care."

After the comedies in the night's

program, junior Quincy Romero's "Lost and Found" was a sharp change in tone. It followed a father's journey from losing his wife, Fraya, to the uncharted territories of single parenthood. The play takes a timeline format, exploring his daughter Shai's life from her adolescence to adulthood, when she brings over a boyfriend. Viewers were moved to tears as they witnessed the journey of love, loss and rediscovery unfold.

"I'm usually known for doing ... lighthearted and comedic plays, but I wanted to ... [write] something emotional," Romero said.

Sophomore Lissette Aleta's "Through the Flowers" unfolds as two high school sweethearts reunite after thirteen years apart. Symbolically, the presence of pink roses in the narrative serves as a representation of first love and adoration. These pink roses subtly thread through the narrative, acting as a visual metaphor for the enduring nature of the relationships.

Concluding this year's Young Playwrights Project, Aragon Drama prepares for the upcoming performances of "The Murder On the Orient Express," which are scheduled for March 21-24.

LIAN WANG

Harvard Model Congress annual conference

Angela Nguyen
NEWS WRITER

From Jan. 12-14, Aragon's Harvard Model Congress club attended its annual conference in San Francisco.

HMC is a non-profit organization run by undergraduate students at Harvard University. It holds conferences around the world to create simulations of the United States government, allowing students to role-play and debate through the process of passing bills. Started in 2001, HMC hosts one of its conferences in San Francisco.

Delegates spend the weekend in the Senate, House of Representatives, or special committees. In the Senate and House committees, delegates are assigned a specific senator or representative, while delegates in special committees role-play as a real

person, country, power branch or influential corporation in a non-congressional format.

Delegates prepare for the conference during Aragon's HMC club meetings, practicing parliamentary procedure and debating in mock committee sessions. They also research their roles and read background guides prepared by the chairs of their committees.

"I was Congressman Jacob Turner," said sophomore Sevara Saidov. "[To prepare], we had committee briefings about the topics. I studied those and made notes about my representative's mindset. Because he's a very far right Republican, I took his ideals and put those towards the topics."

However, despite the extensive preparation process, some conference participants found the experience challenging at first.

"I felt unprepared because the Media Committee was recently brought back [and] because there wasn't much I could really prepare for," said sophomore and HMC member Kate Sato. "But the Harvard students in my group did just such a good job of explaining the procedure: how to write and how to find a lead, that after a few times, we tried it out [and] it became second nature."

To a lot of the HMC delegates, the Harvard students made the experience exciting.

"The college students devote their time organizing [and] leading," said English teacher and club adviser Victoria Daniel. "They inspire a lot of the high school students in their intelligence, dedication and support, and they're always trying to think of new ways to make [the conference] fun and engaging."

One special tradition of the conference is the midnight crisis, a surprise committee session from 10pm until midnight. Chairs physically pound on delegates' doors and herd them back to committee rooms in their pajamas to resolve fictional emergent scenarios. Delegates are given crises to respond to with no preparation, ranging from the World Bank's Panda Express corruption scandal to Supreme Court assassinations. To surprise the Aragon delegates, Daniel brainstormed with other advisors for a plan.

"[The students] were expecting it from last year, so I played

dumb," Daniel said. "I [told them], 'we're in a new hotel [and] this hotel doesn't let us do it because [the students] had made too much noise the night before so the hotel had a curfew'. And I think they believed it."

As it was her first time attending San Francisco HMC, Sato didn't know about the midnight crisis and was surprised.

"The moment [my chairs] came to our door, I was in the shower," Sato said. "I stepped out of the shower with dripping wet hair and changed into my PJs as fast as I could. I heard some noise [and] followed it from the staircase [and got to] my committee as soon as possible. I was in charge of covering the Senate Judiciary, where they had a case with the whistleblower and a murder, with one of my partners."

Spending two days in San Francisco fostered friendships among delegates.

"I strengthened my relationships with the people in the club," Sato said. "I got a chance to get to know the people I [usually] wouldn't talk to. We played late night card games and had a lot of fun. I was able to relax and enjoy my time while still gaining valuable life lessons."

Beyond being a bonding experience, the conference was also educational.

"Last year, before I went to the conference, I didn't know anything about the government," said sophomore Chloe Yi. "[Now] I've learned so much about how

bills, conferences [and] the government works."

Daniel emphasized how HMC's immersive learning experience enhanced students' understanding of the U.S. government.

"Because it's our government, it's what affects our daily life," Daniel said. "[The students] have come to understand that it's actually a much more complicated, and muddy system. It's important to be an informed citizen."

Senior and HMC secretary Luke Phillips reflected on his last conference.

"It's bittersweet, but it was a lot of fun," Phillips said. "Meeting people from different places [like] Puerto Rico and Afghanistan drew me into the diversity of views around the world. It's [also] a benefit for students in the [current] polarized version of America. Students who had conservative or liberal views [played politicians] that they didn't really agree with. It opened their eyes to understand different views."

At the end of the conference, multiple Aragon students received awards. Senior Eesha Gupta received Best Delegate in the Work Bank, senior Leo Levitt received Best Midnight Crisis Delegate in the Presidential Cabinet, senior Luke Phillips received Honorable Mention in the Presidential Cabinet and senior Marlee Cherkas received Honorable Mention in the House Oversight and Government Reform.



COURTESY OF MARLEE CHERKAS

The evolution of school dances

Matthew Grabow
FEATURES WRITER

At one point, high school dances used to be all the rage, whether it was Homecoming, Winter Formal or Prom, nothing could match the mystic feeling students would get once they stepped into their school gym that had been transformed from a stinky, sweaty athlete center, into a magical dance floor for students feet to glide across.

Yet the high school dances known and loved today contrast heavily with the dances of the past. While the spirit of high school dances has stayed true throughout the years, some aspects have seen changes throughout the years.

Today, many focus on the experience and joy that comes with attending a dance in high school dance.

"They're a relief for kids [after] coming out of school for the week, and they have something to look forward to," said Dean of Students Donna Krause. "It can be exciting and fun – you're with all your friends and it gives you a chance to relate in a different way to kids and even relate in a different way to the teachers or staff that are also at the dance."

In accordance with the changing purpose of holding school dances, activities at high school dances have also evolved.

"For me, [high school] dances were all about the [dancing]," said student activities director and leadership teacher Heather Stretch. "There were slow dances and people [would] couple up ... that just doesn't exist anymore."

As old eras fade, new trends, activities and dancing styles arose along with the new generation. Yet as the new generations have grown into high school dances, newer

social pressures about having dates have risen.

"For [Winter] Formal, some people think you need a date to go, and [that's] obviously not true," said sophomore and Dance commission member Lia Araneta. "Some people don't want to go to [winter] formal because they don't have a date."

Along with dates, social pressures exist around spending money on the dance.

"I get the impression people feel they have to get all dressed up, and they have to do

and spend all kinds of money," said

AP chemistry and physics teacher Kevin Doyle. "If

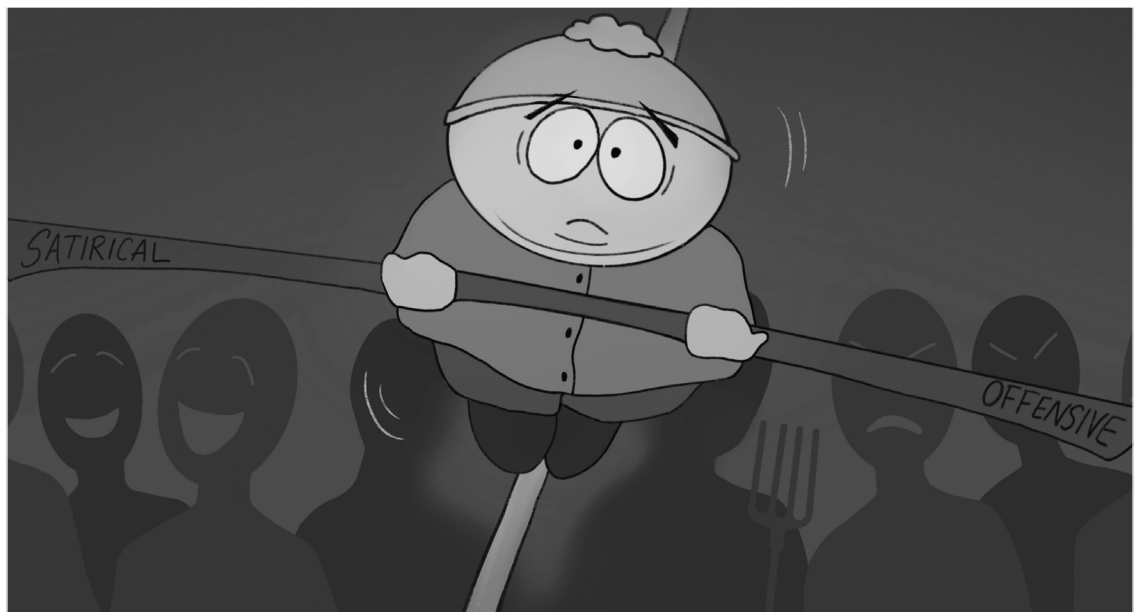
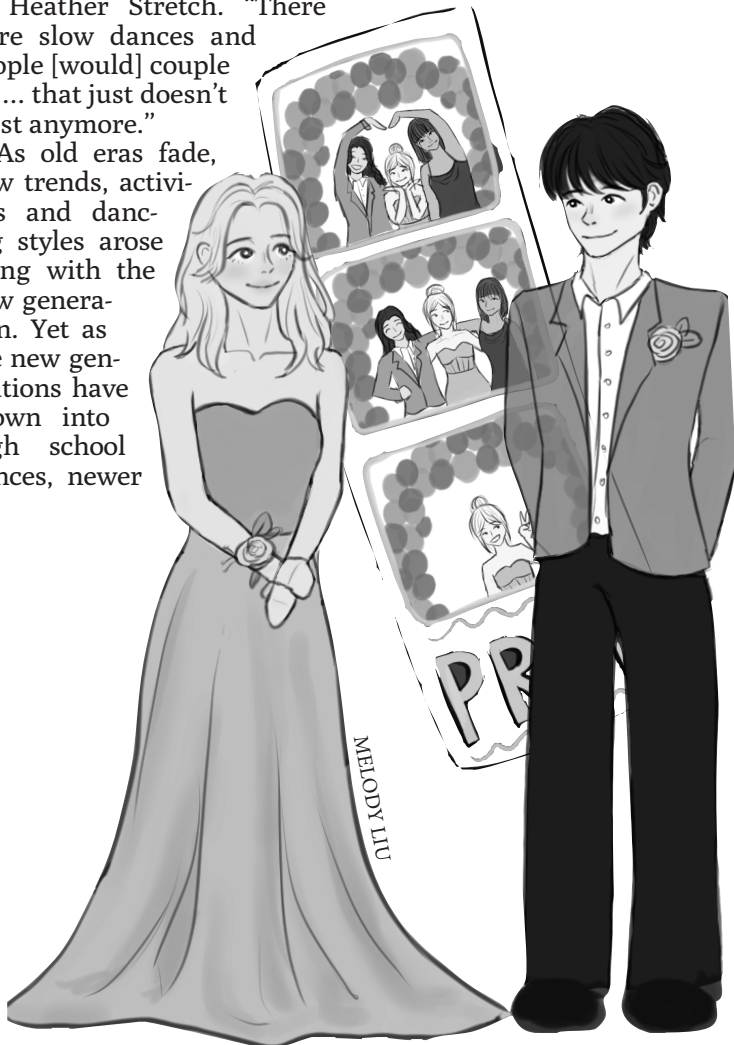
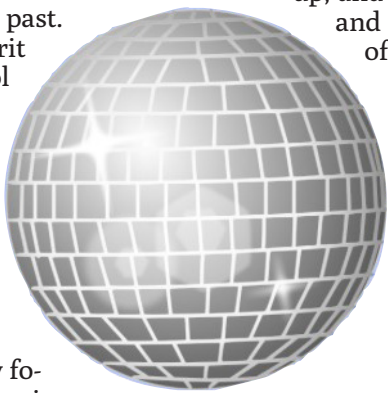
it's something you want to do, great, but I don't think it needs to be that and it

just puts pressure on people to find money and do things that's not necessarily them."

Yet despite the social pressures of having a date, the student body ironically perceives high school dances as a social gathering rather than romantic.

"Even though people ask other people out, they honestly talk to their friends more than the people they asked out," said senior Keven Barajas.

High school dances have evolved immensely since their establishment in the early 30s and are ingrained in the high school experience. While each will be a unique experience, they are a shared place where students can come together and forget academics to let loose, dance and hang out with friends.



ALEXA STERRY

Adult cartoons today: controversial yet captivating

Jonathan Wong
FEATURES WRITER

It's late at night, and the television is turned on to FOX Network. The news anchors say their final goodnights and fade out with a shot of the night sky. A different form of news appears: a cartoon. Adult cartoons such as "Family Guy," "South Park" and "The Simpsons" employ a form of humor known as satire, meant to highlight certain aspects of society through humor. The presence of satire poses the questions: are these jokes more funny than offensive? Does satire help with pointing out societal issues, or does it do more harm than good?

"A lot of the jokes [in cartoons] are race-related," said sophomore Darren Benavente. "I might not relate to those but I can understand it well. For example, the Asian stereotype that [Asians they're] all really smart, I can definitely understand it well enough, and I find that funny."

Due to the longevity of some of these cartoons, these jokes are also well-versed in society, being used more as a force of good.

"[With] a lot of jokes that [adult cartoons] make, you can tell that they're joking," said junior Phoebe Taylor. "But sometimes it really makes you think about why this is a bad thing. It makes a lot of people dig deeper into social issues and research more."

These jokes can help criticize sensitive aspects of society, drawing attention to these issues while also bringing a memorable laugh.

"Very difficult topics are easiest left unspoken about, but humor or comedy can get us to think and talk about them when we normally wouldn't," said Advanced Placement United States History teacher Will Colglazier. "I think there's real value in holding a mirror up to ourselves, getting the conversation started. You would think [comedy and serious topics] don't go hand in hand but it's a great way to break the ice."

Colglazier believes satirical cartoons can be a tool to teach his teenage son about the evolving world.

"There are some episodes in 'The Simpsons' where they were essentially making fun of [Waylon Smithers] for being gay," Colglazier said. "I paused and I talked to my son about how it's accepted and encouraged for people to be public about their sexual orientation, and it's a learning opportunity. It's a great way to slip in some wisdom."

Some believe offensive humor, when executed correctly, can be valuable.

"Offensive comedy can be made in a very tasteful way that can be appealing to others," said junior Genine Parico. "Usually when people make jokes, there is supposed to be a punchline. You can't just say something racist and think everyone's gonna laugh at it."

When cartoons cross the line, they can offend or disrespect people.

"There's a saying that it works when you're punching up, it doesn't work when you're punching down," said senior Eric Gonzalez-Jimenez. "When it punches up [at the system], that's what actually works since the whole point [of satire] is making fun of the power structures in our world. But when it's punching down [at marginalized groups], it's not funny, but it's just about ridiculing things."

Colglazier believes that being aware of these issues are important.

"You have to be cognizant and talk to people who are at the receiving end of some of those lines or attempted jokes," Colglazier said. "Is it [a joke] that I shouldn't be laughing at or listening to even if I don't know if it's offensive to the other person? If I can assume that it is [offensive], I need to proactively turn it off."

Junior Andy Le believes that the stereotypical accents used by certain characters can be offensive.

"The way cartoons depict [foreign accents exaggerates]

the way they speak English, and can be [perceived] like they're disrespecting foreigners just because they weren't born here," Le said.

There have been some cartoons that have made efforts to adapt to the changing world by dialing back or preventing the spread of certain jokes. Once in 2010, Family Guy banned an episode titled "Partial Terms of Endearment," which made insensitive jokes pertaining to abortions. Seen as too controversial by Americans, it was never given clearance to air on TV.

With cartoons and satire, there are arguments for whether it is offensive or comedic. Given the popularity of such forms of television, it is likely satire will continue to be a prevalent medium in the future.

TOP 5 ADULT CARTOONS

THE SIMPSONS' (1989 -)



'SOUTH PARK' (1997 -)



'BOJACK HORSEMAN' (2014 - 2020)



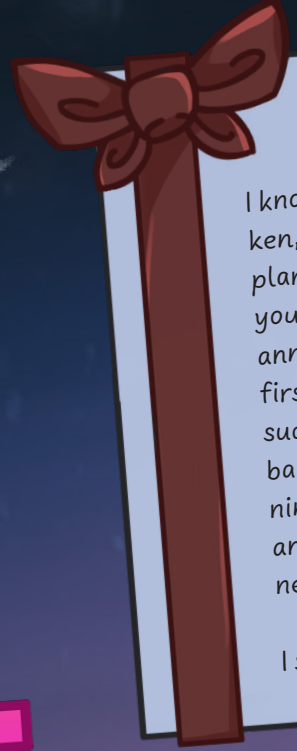
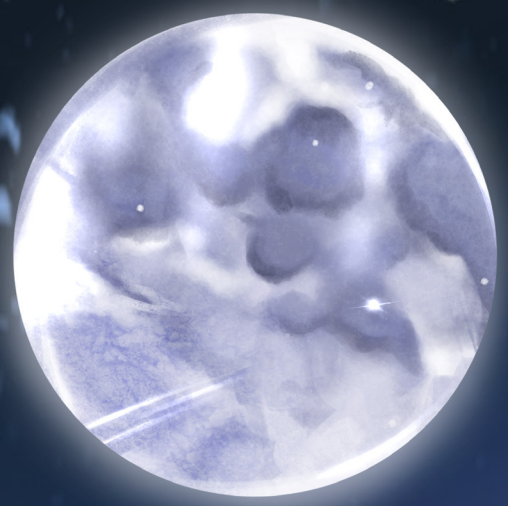
'FAMILY GUY' (1999 -)



FUTURAMA (1999 -)



ANNA HE



Michael Exner

I know water balloons are pollutants. When broken, they lay plastic down in the earth like seeds, planting toxins instead of life. But when I was younger, water balloons were just a way for me to annoy my relatives, tossing them while they unpacked on the first day of my camping trip. I caused mischief like that until suddenly, I was dripping wet. Someone else had thrown a water balloon at me. I turned around and saw her. Maybe my age, grinning at me. That was all that mattered. She was camping too, and leaving tomorrow. We threw plastic at each other all day. I never learned her name.

I still love water balloons.



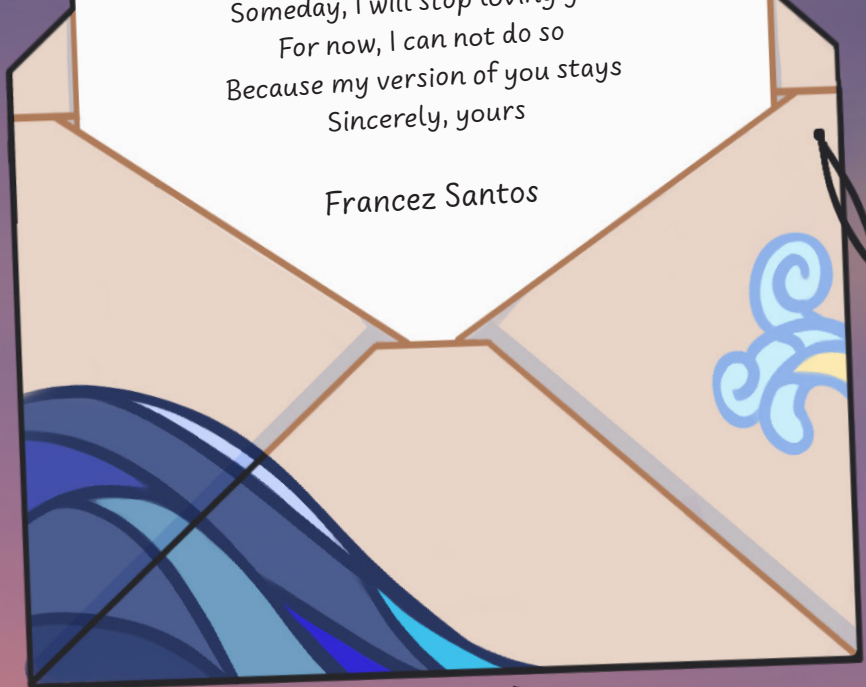
Forgive me again for watching you from afar
I think that your smile must bond me like strings
The way you don't care what anyone else says
The way you aglow with such a passion
Wherever you may be,
I am astray for your affectionate love

Love is like a thousand words in letters
And these words are for you
To love you upon the last drop of ink is my desire

My valentine, my universe
Your hugs are subtle music and wishes combined
Your eyes leave a gateway to the heavens

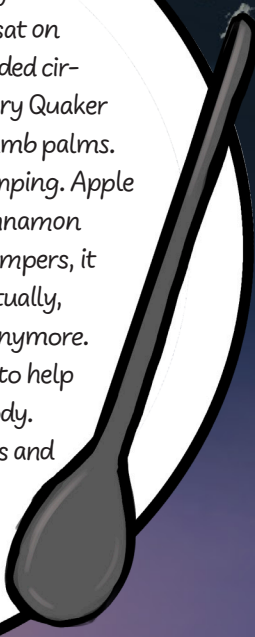
Someday, I will stop loving you
For now, I can not do so
Because my version of you stays
Sincerely, yours

Francez Santos



The crisp morning air bit
our noses, cheeks, and fingers pink. My
mom, dad, sister, grandma, grandpa and I sat on
a menagerie of camp chairs arranged in a lopsided cir-
cle. We clutched styrofoam cups of that watery Quaker
Instant Oatmeal, warming our nearly numb palms.
We only ever ate it when we were camping. Apple
cinnamon, maple brown sugar, cinnamon
spice; to us freezing, starving campers, it
was as good as ambrosia. Eventually,
my grandma couldn't camp anymore.
I baked her oatmeal muffins to help
"bulk" her chemo-thinned body.
We savored the buttery cakes and
remembered.

Adele Ryono



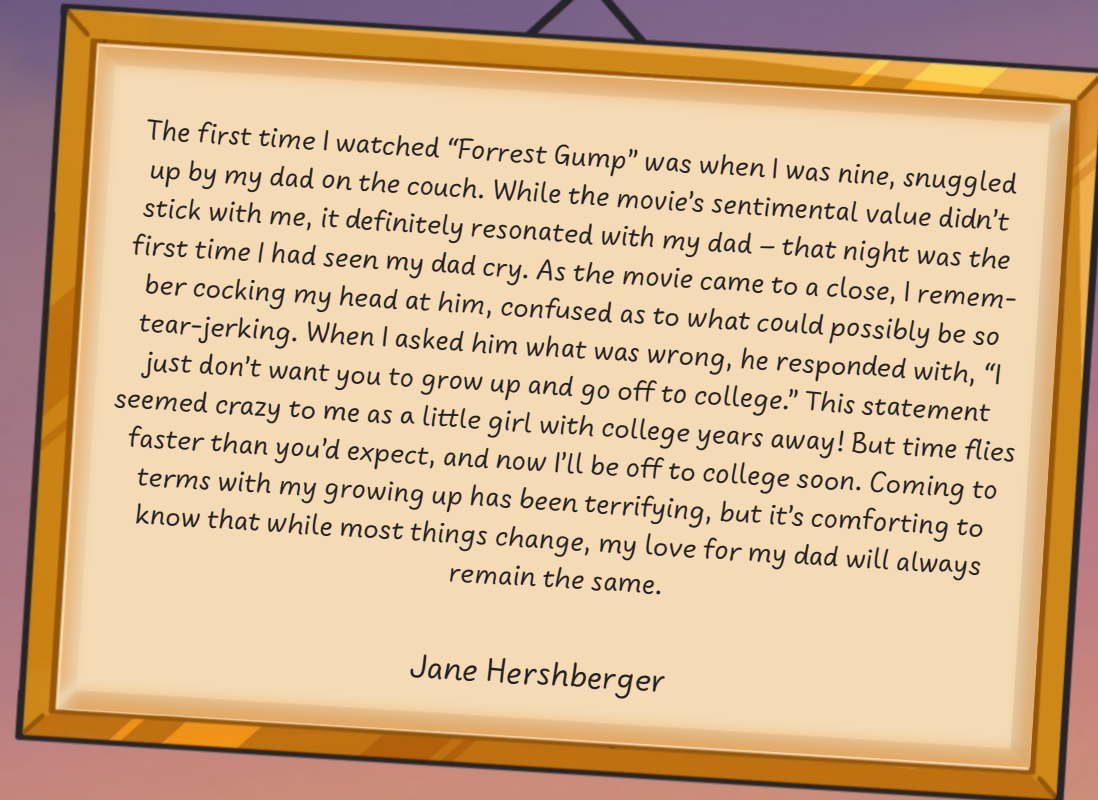
Though strangers in Spanish class, we knew
more than enough about each other. I thought
it was weird to watch Mukbang videos and
sleep to the sound of people munching, but for
her, it was better than listening to the teacher.
We sat far away from each other and never
said a word to one another. I thought she was
the prettiest, from the first day she entered
the classroom. But I wasn't the only one, so it
was over—I tried to move on, but a surprising
text the following year got me thinking again.
"You're the guy who listened to Lamp in Span-
ish class?" It turned out to be true, everything
fell into place, and we both knew, just how
long we'd been waiting for that moment, a
simple interaction.

Jose Callejas



The first time I watched "Forrest Gump" was when I was nine, snuggled
up by my dad on the couch. While the movie's sentimental value didn't
stick with me, it definitely resonated with my dad — that night was the
first time I had seen my dad cry. As the movie came to a close, I remem-
ber cocking my head at him, confused as to what could possibly be so
tear-jerking. When I asked him what was wrong, he responded with, "I
just don't want you to grow up and go off to college." This statement
seemed crazy to me as a little girl with college years away! But time flies
faster than you'd expect, and now I'll be off to college soon. Coming to
terms with my growing up has been terrifying, but it's comforting to
know that while most things change, my love for my dad will always
remain the same.

Jane Hershberger



Sammi Hollandsworth
Emma Jensen

I used Minecraft to confess to my
crush. It was very cute and really
cheesy. I planned out the entire thing,
a candle path leading to a picnic on
a beach and a signed Minecraft book
containing my confession. I wasn't
sure if they'd like it, I was afraid of
being too cheesy or too romantic.
The plan was to give them the book
in Minecraft, but they had the wrong
version. So instead, I had them read
it off of my computer while I played
with their dog. I think it worked. I
got myself a boyfriend.



More stories online!

It was my first sleepover with my best friend.
My rock, my reason, my chaos. It'd been the
best thing ever, we stayed up till five in the
morning cackling, drunk on sugar. People
don't usually clean each other's rooms when
they come over but it was something we did
together and we bonded, we were closer than
before and she made me feel real. She is the
life of my party, when she shows up, the only
rule is to be chaos. We spent the extreme ear-
ly hours talking about our futures. I looked
at her, at her smile, at her loving arms, and I
knew I wanted her to be part of it.

Mya Nguyen



The Fair
Rosalind Lumos

I remember that day
The crisp, cool weather
The excitement we felt
Finally seeing each other
After so long apart

The county fair
A celebration of fun
The crisp summer breeze
The way you touched my heart

We walked around for awhile
Hopping on every ride we could find
Not playing any games
Cause we didn't want to be fined

Eventually, it was finally time
To get off the rides
And eat together on the grass
The wet, cool, grass.
There were no tables left
But who cares about that?

We talked about whatever
Life, gossip, interests
Your new name and face
The other ways we've changed

I talked about my family
How they think I'm so pretty
And asked you, my friend
"Am I really?"

"I think you're pretty"
You told me...
With no hesitation
It wasn't hard to believe you.
There was no lie in your words.

You were genuine and true.
I could tell that you were.
And now whenever I feel
Down about myself
I think of your words.

I realized, then
I am absolutely gorgeous
All because of you,
My beloved friend.

Tiny Love Stories



Spilling the beans on school lunch

Garret Chiu
FEATURES WRITER

Monday through Friday, almost instantly after the bell rings, I see students barrel their way past others to get to the front of the lunch line. The sole reason for this is to grab the most popular items because they run out quickly. It so happens that the first item that always runs out first is usually the same.

"The most popular [item] is probably the pizza," said sophomore Brooke Lau, who works in the cafeteria. "Everyone loves pizza. [We] get it from an actual pizza store, so it's pretty good."

For me, pizza is a good item because it is always warm and pretty filling. However, since pizza is the most popular item, it usually runs out very quickly. Many students leave class early or run to the lunch line just to get pizza, which makes it challenging to get. The pizza itself is a good size and the cheese is melty, but I wish there was a little more tomato sauce to add some flavor.

Another popular item I enjoy is the nachos. Although I think it has a good balance of ingredients, the chips on the inside tend to be either soggy or stale. If you are at the front of the lunch line and get them quickly, they are better—warm and still a little crunchy.

"[I like] nachos because there's a lot of cheese on it," said sophomore Giovanni Rodriguez-Mi-

randa, another cafeteria worker. "That drowns out all the bad flavor from all the other ingredients."

Another staple item that many students eat is the chicken sandwich and tenders. I personally find the chicken sandwiches to be a bit dry, but many students enjoy their taste.

"You can't go wrong with a chicken sandwich," said junior Adam Pauling.

"Anything with chicken in it is the best. When [I am] waiting in a line, two out of three people will get a chicken sandwich." The burgers and sandwiches are common items and are on the menu every day. Aragon orders them for the students along with many of the other meats.

"They come in these bulk packages, and they're frozen because they expire pretty quickly," Lau said. "The cheeseburgers, chicken

tenders, chicken sandwiches, a lot of the meats and the rib sandwiches [mainly come frozen]." One of the most-enjoyable yet rarely-served items in the lunch lineup is the chicken wrap.

"[The chicken wrap is] scrumptious," Pauling said. "It is good. It's the best thing that is never there. You can pretty consistently get yourself a rib sandwich

but the chicken wrap, if you get one, is the best."

Supposedly, the previous chicken wrap had avocados and more dressing, but the most recent ones that were out did not have either. The wrap is pretty dry on its own, so the addition of these two ingredients would definitely make the item shine more.

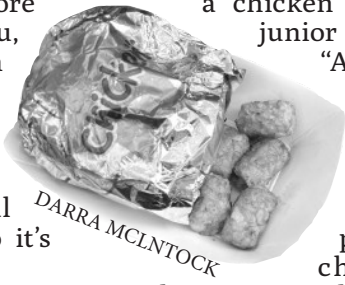
While the options at Aragon are very good compared to other schools, there are still a few things that can be improved on. The first aspect is the range of food for vegetarians.

"I wish they had one more item that was more [filling] of a lunch," said junior Marco Strassia, who is vegetarian. "[The] only thing normally is pizza. They could add a salad without meat or a vegetarian sandwich."

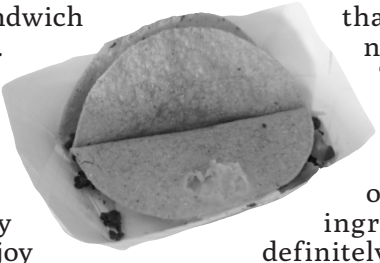
Additionally, there could be an addition of new food items that students could try and enjoy.

"More foods from different cultures [would be a good addition]," Rodriguez-Miranda said. "It would make it more diverse."

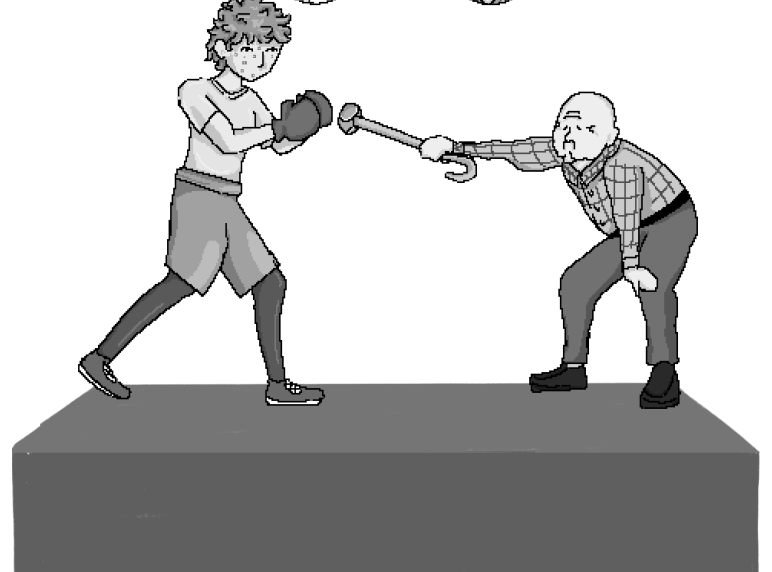
Many students now rely on Aragon for lunch and brunch, so the items on the menu do matter to students. Most students are satisfied with the options, although not without reservations. Although the kitchen staff serves Aragon students well, new items and more variety will be hopefully added for all students to enjoy.



DARRA MCINTOCK



TEENAGER VS BOOMER



EVA LUDWIG

Understanding the generational divide

Seona Srivastava
FEATURES WRITER

With the rise of Generation Alpha and new technology, generational divides have become increasingly prevalent and influence intergenerational interactions.

Already, Generation Alpha, categorized to include people born after 2010, has established its presence in pop culture with the intriguing phenomenon of 10-year-olds frequenting beauty and skincare retail stores like Sephora, provoking worries about the rapid maturation of the youngest generation.

"[They] seem to be really eager to grow up," said freshman Adya Tewari. "Kids who are so young are using skincare that isn't meant for them, like Drunk Elephant. They have phones and access to social media at such a young age. It's going to negatively affect them in the long run."

The stereotypes facing Gen Alpha contribute to a widening gap between generations.

"There's an increasing gap between generations," Tewari said. "Even though Gen Z is stereotyped to be addicted to technology and antisocial ... and shares a lot of similarities with Gen Alpha, I don't associate myself with them. They're a lot more extreme than us."

Each generation feels like they are perceived negatively by others.

"Our generation isn't perceived in a positive light," said sophomore Shreya Gupta. "We have so much privilege: it's looked down upon. People from older generations don't believe we work as hard as they did."

This disparity is rooted in the many distinct advantages and challenges faced by different generations.

"[Gen Z] has been brought up in a time where there is abundance," said dance teacher Marisa Castillo. "[They] have everything at [their] fingertips. [Their] music, photos, information—it's all a click away. [They] all are much more informed and [know about] diverse subjects early on ... But the

older generation ... endured a lot of injustice and a lot of discrimination. They persevered through the belief of hard work and pulling-yourself-up-through-your-bootstrap mentality."

Another significant contributor to the generational divide is the proliferation of technology.

"There's a big gap between generations ... [and] the main reason isn't even tradition or values," Gupta said. "It's the implementation of artificial intelligence and technology. [The older generation] has a different way of life: how jobs have become, our way of living, how we learn."

Another criticism Gen Z faces is their lack of focus, which heavily impacts classroom dynamics.

"[When] I was teaching, somebody was playing [The New York Times'] Connections [game]," said English teacher Dena Johnson. "Someone else was texting. Several people had one earbud in, so they're half-tuning me in, half-tuning me out. None of that ... would even [be] possible when I was [in] high school."

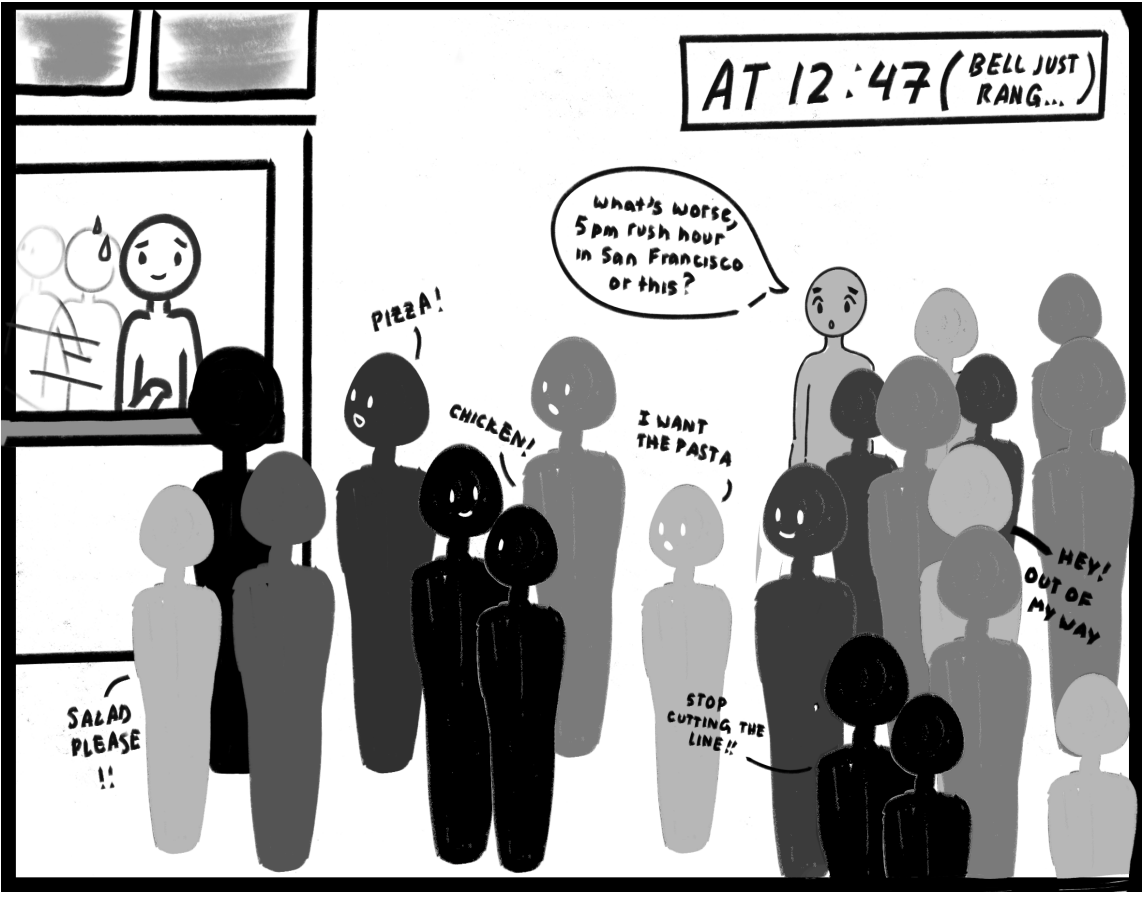
A disparity in media tastes further adds to this disconnect.

"I can't always relate to everything that students are interested in," Johnson said. "I'm not on any social media. I don't listen to the same music. I don't watch the same TV shows."

Yet some offer a different perspective, noting the ever-changing nature of society and a shared humanity across generations that transcends any gap.

"There was a bigger gap between ... me and my parents [than] between my children and me [now] just because of how much society has changed," said English teacher James Daniel. "I don't see enormous differences between the younger generation compared to when I was in high school ... People are people."

Ultimately, all generations have their differences and this contributes to a divide amongst them. It significantly shapes the way individuals perceive and interact with one another.



ALLYSON CHAN

Inside Takashi Murakami's "Unfamiliar People"

Meilin Rife
FEATURES WRITER

Guided along a trail of flowers, visitors to the Asian Art Museum might believe they're seeing romantic rose petals. However, these are the cheery rainbow creations of Japanese artist Takashi Murakami. An artist who began as an anime fan in 1980s Japan and now has a Ph.D. in Nihonga, a Japanese style of painting, Murakami has made a name for himself in the art world by combining high and low art, cute and ugly, and old and new in his Superflat art movement, a postmodern art movement. Even if you haven't heard of the artist, you may have seen his flowers, now an iconic symbol of his brand after his collaboration with fashion company Louis Vuitton in 2003.

"Takashi Murakami: Unfamiliar People—Swelling of Monsterized Human Ego" begins with a nod to Murakami's lauded portfolio, including "727" or "Tan Tan Bo Black Hole," but it is mainly a reflection of the artist's attitudes toward the current world, explored retrospectively in "Beyond the 727" and progressively in his collection of NFT pieces.

"727" is composed of three panels, coming together to form a picture of Takashi's original character Mr. DOB floating on a cloud, his crazy smile revealing a set of sharp teeth. The piece

depicts Takashi's cynicism towards Western influence, the appearance of Mr. DOB reminding viewers of the Disney symbol Mickey Mouse and the title "727" referencing a Japanese cosmetics brand that he believed copied the name from American Boeing-727 airplanes.

The deceptively innocent but cruel mascot, Mr. DOB, thus represents Japanese pop culture's drastic shift into infanthility after WW2, which Murakami believed to be brought on by US influence.

However, his reflection on the piece 20 years later reveals a more optimistic perspective. "Beyond the 727" reinvents the meaning of the number. Murakami wonders in a letter written on the canvas that perhaps because 727 coincidentally happens to be a rare prime number, his painting unknowingly marked his unique and magical artistic career.

Visitor Calvin Hong notes the significant use of color in the piece.

"This exhibition is so profound with [his] use of color, imagery, and his whole persona," Hong said. "[Murakami has] insight from when he was a child, in the days of when growing up was dark ... This is an expression of him coming out of that darkness [with] the use of color [and] imagery."

The biggest painting in the entire exhibition is "Judgement

Day." This 82-foot-long painting takes inspiration from Ukiyo-e, a Japanese art movement from the Edo Period. Ukiyo-e prints focused on courtesans, kabuki actors and landscapes, and were designed to be mass-produced, similar to how Murakami makes his artwork accessible to a wide audience.

In the center of "Judgement Day" sits an old emperor almost as tall as the canvas on a red throne, while men wearing mawashi, sumo wrestling belts, grapple at each other, forming an entangled knot around the huge figure. Rushing waves of rainbow erupt on both sides, carrying ships and yōkai, supernatural entities in Japanese folklore. On one side of the painting is a group of courtesans entertaining a man made of melded human bodies. On the other are two men with swords, one with a tattooed back, suggesting his rebellious nature as tattoos were commonly associated with criminals in the time period. Every person in the painting wears a delirious expression, with psychedelic rainbow eyes lolling in different directions.

"I created [this painting] by mixing the monstrosity of human beings I felt through the [COVID-19] pandemic with the strange imageries of Ukiyoe," Murakami said on his Instagram.

In his painting, traditional Japanese subjects are depicted

at their worst, with lustful patrons, feral warriors and monstrous seas representing the disorder in the world after the pandemic. The king calmly sits in the center of this chaos, looking toward and seemingly judging the viewer.

Visitors linger at this wall, trying to understand, but mostly admiring the masterful use of color and storytelling.

"[Murakami] is breaking down the barriers between so-called high art and low art," said visitor and cartoonist DW. "My mom might look at something I did and say 'I'm worried that I don't get it.' I'll say, 'Did you think it was a pretty picture? Then you got it ...' Even something that has depth and power and layers of meaning to it should [allow] any person who has never seen that kind of thing before ... to find something useful in it."

In the center of the exhibition, visitors can walk into a room covered in Murakami's flowers. One wall is covered with icons of charismatic pixelated rainbow flowers—from an orange and red flower blowing bubble gum to a pink-petaled flower showing off golden grills.

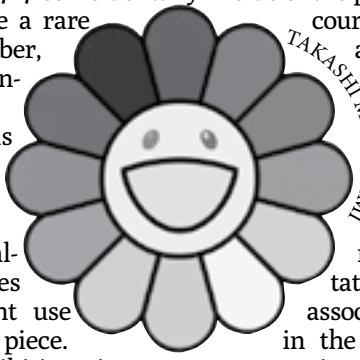
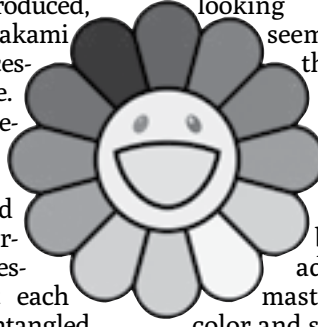
"The little kids love these flowers," said the museum's security guard Alexis Guillen. "They'll point to their favorite ones and say 'Mom, I want this one ...' They'll even draw [them with] their little notepads."

This area encourages visitors to take photos immersed in its rainbow fantasy. On the other side of the wall is written: "WEIRDLY LOVABLE, LOVABLY WEIRD" in glowing neon red letters. This phrase can be applied to Murakami's entire portfolio, but by posing under it, visitors are playfully integrated into the exhibition as they apply that phrase to themselves.

In the final corridor sits the titular painting "Unfamiliar People." These pieces focus on the effect of technology on younger generations, especially after the pandemic. In "Unfamiliar People," four large figures stand at the forefront. They wear melting clothes and monstrously morphed expressions, with rainbow teeth and eyes for nostrils. In this painting, Murakami hoped to express how the isolation during COVID-19 brought out the most polarized and shocking sides of human nature, "monsterizing" everyday people.

Throughout all of "Unfamiliar People," in Murakami's exhibit at the Asian Art Museum, the artist is infatuated with how our culture influences our humanity. His Asian Art Museum exhibit begins with his present in "727," then the past in "Judgement Day," ending it with a look to the future with "Unfamiliar People." One thing is for certain, his cynicism wrapped up in a bow of naivete is hard to look away from.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM



OUR OUTLOOK



"Percy Jackson and the Olympians" season one makes a mediocre splash

Charlotte Gregory
FEATURES WRITER

Fans of American author Rick Riordan's beloved book series "Percy Jackson and the Olympians" have been eagerly awaiting its Disney+ television adaptation since the show was announced in 2020. The book series was made into a movie series in 2010, but was scrapped after the second installment due to poor ratings. Since then, the PJO fan base has been hoping for a do-over that does its source material justice.

The show follows young demigod Percy Jackson as he learns of his godly parentage and embarks on an epic quest to retrieve the King of the Gods Zeus's stolen lightning bolt. Time is of the essence, and

with mythological monsters constantly on his track, Percy must race to return Zeus's bolt and prevent a war between the gods.

One of the show's greatest strengths is its casting and acting. Walker Scobell shines as the show's titular character, bringing to life the witty, sassy, lovable Percy Jackson fans know and adore from the book series. Other key characters are Annabeth Chase (Leah Jeffries), daughter of Athena and Grover (Aryan Simhadri), Percy's satyr sidekick. Scobell, Jeffries and Simhadri superbly portray the slow development of the trio's bond throughout the season and the heroes go from being strangers, to reluctant allies, to best friends.

The show also brilliantly introduces the exciting, dangerous world of Greek mythology and the complex portrayal of Greek gods and monsters. The Greek myths are full of countless gods, monsters, legends and prophecies that could easily overwhelm new fans, but the show delivers information

in manageable doses, allowing viewers to learn about this new world alongside Percy. Also, the show offers a very multi-dimensional view of the mythological creatures rather than writing them off as purely good or evil. One example is Medusa, a gorgon cursed by Athena to turn anyone she looks at into stone. As Medusa tells her story, viewers are compelled to feel sympathy for her and question what really makes someone a monster.

Another one of the show's greatest strengths is how visually stunning it is. From the bleak, gray deserts of the Underworld to the gleaming ancient Greek architecture of Mount Olympus, each set is a thrill to behold. Similarly, Percy's spectacular aquatic powers are exciting to watch, especially in the series finale, when his powers finally reach their peak in the form of an epic, colossal tsunami.

However, the rushed pacing and lack of suspense take away from the viewing experience. The main advantage of adapt-

ing each novel into a TV show season with multiple episodes rather than individual movies is having more time to flesh out the plot. Despite that, the show glosses over each plot point extremely quickly. There isn't enough build-up and intensity for the story's critical moments, causing some scenes to feel slightly lackluster. As exciting as it is to see these moments brought to life onscreen, many have unrealized potential to be much more action-packed and suspenseful.

Furthermore, the heroes figure things out unrealistically quickly, cutting off what could've been nail-biting action scenes. With every monster they encounter, they already anticipate what their enemy plans to do and quickly take them down. The problems with this pattern are clear: it eliminates all tension in scenes that could have served as opportunities to show the protagonists' resourcefulness and problem-solving skills. Viewers never have any genuine fear for the characters' lives since they get out of dangerous situations so easily.

Another big letdown was the show's choppy, sterile dialogue. For a series that is adored for witty narration and humor, the

PJO show is surprisingly lacking. One of the biggest reasons why the book series is so entertaining is because of its constant use of humor, even—no—especially in dire situations. After all, the main characters are kids—of course they're going to have immature and goofy moments. The show has had some witty moments, but the tone is largely serious. It would benefit greatly from more witty jokes, especially from Percy, who in the books couldn't go a single page without a witty remark.

Although there is plenty of room for improvement, the first season of the PJO television series is still an enjoyable, nostalgic adventure, earning a solid three out of five stars. Its stellar cast brings Riordan's characters to life beautifully, and the development of the show's setting, characters and relationships lays a solid foundation for more adventures to come.

Fans can look forward to reuniting with Percy and his friends in the upcoming second season.

OUR OUTLOOK

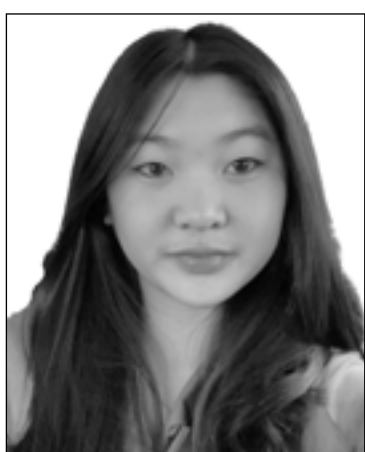
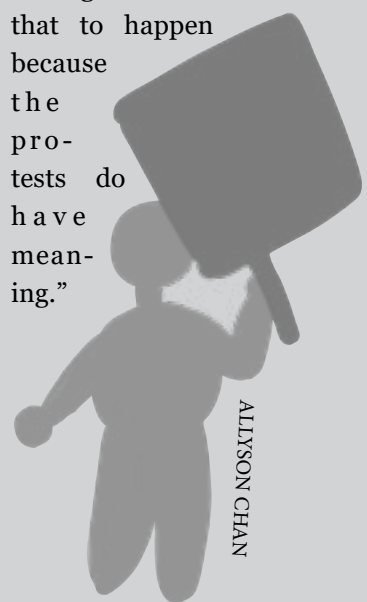


Performative activism through social media



OLIVIA KING (11)

"I recently saw a video [of] people in a protest in [San Francisco]. There was someone interviewing them about the [Israel-Palestine conflict]. They would be asked specific questions, and they wouldn't know the answer to them. A lot of performative activists jump on the bandwagon of something. They don't learn the actual information behind it. This really easily spreads misinformation. People who saw those interviews might think, 'Oh, this topic isn't as serious because these people don't even know what they're talking about.' You don't want that to happen because the protests do have meaning."



Kyra Hsieh
FEATURES WRITER

I've never posted about any type of human rights issue on social media. Although I have my opinions on some of these issues, I don't think I truly know enough about these subjects to take a stance on them. That's where so many people go wrong: not having enough knowledge, but sharing anyway.

Be it posting about a political rally, or big brands creating rainbow collections during Pride month, performative activism can fall on a wide spectrum. Many who engage in performative activism have surface-level motives for supposedly promoting societal issues.

Although posting about an issue can be important to spread awareness, overall it is not very useful. It is superficial to say one thing, or seemingly promote the "right" side of the cause without truly understanding the weight of the situation. Sometimes, people's actions contradict what they are apparently supporting.

In fact, many celebrities have been "canceled" for putting up an act to tell others they are rooting for a good cause, but there is an incredible amount of hypocrisy in many of their statements. One of the best examples are "nepotism babies"—people who grew up in the upper class with wealth and connec-

tions — who use that advantage to build their own successful careers. These are people who especially don't understand or refuse to understand the deeper reason for making activist statements, hiding behind their privilege and money. They wear metaphorical horse blinders, oblivious to the amount of damage they could be causing through their actions.

While some celebrities simply click and post about current social justice issues, others do actively donate to charities and foundations supporting the cause or participate in boycotts and rallies. Award-winning American actress Jane Fonda is a great example who supports many movements by speaking at assemblies and attending events. She makes an active effort, stepping out of the comfort of her home and truly engaging.

However, one type of performative activism I think always deserves criticism is when brands and companies supposedly support a cause for show. There are so many companies that create collections or lines for specific causes; the most common example being a Pride collection. They promote lines that incorporate rainbows for the LGBTQ+ community and yet don't actively donate to a foundation or truly help the cause. Many even support bills that actually contradict what they say they're advocating for.

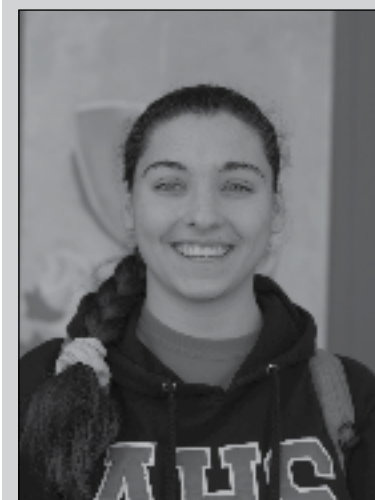
For instance, even though some companies like Amazon, Home Depot and AT&T have a law banning discrimination against LGBTQ+ employees in the workplace and have high scores on the Human Right

Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, many of them have reportedly donated money to lawmakers who supported anti-LGBTQ+ bills.

In a mix of individual and corporate performative activism, media personality Kim Kardashian promoted her brand SKIMS's new nipple bra via Instagram Reels, joking about global warming and climate change. The caption states that SKIMS will donate 10% of sales to environmental organizations, but according to the website Good on You's sustainability rating, SKIMS ranks the worst at "avoid." The company and Kardashian make extremely vague statements about their ethical practices, hinting at how little the company cares for sustainability, despite donating a percentage of profits to "support people and the planet." Kardashian seems to not care for the planet's actual well-being, and why would she, when she and so many other nepotism babies aren't affected because they have enough money and privileges to fall back on.

Unlike this SKIMS's marketing technique, it is often difficult to distinguish companies creating collections to increase visibility and awareness for an issue from brands whose only interest is financial gain, funding lawmakers and bills that restrict and push back on these issues. It is absolutely unfair when this happens.

There are many large corporations and oblivious individuals who say they support an important global issue, but act the opposite. Yet, sometimes it is extremely hard to differentiate between those who truly believe the causes they promote and those who don't. Still, many of them profit or gain popularity from their supposed promotions, even when it often has damaging effects.



ANNA GEVORGYAN (10)

"[Companies] know that in this generation, lots of people are supportive [of the LGBTQ+ community], so if they see something that has an LGBTQ+ logo on it, they [might] buy it to spread awareness. But this company is just getting money out of it, ... they don't actually do

any-thing with that money to raise awareness."

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MELODY LIU

The February crossword

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ACROSS

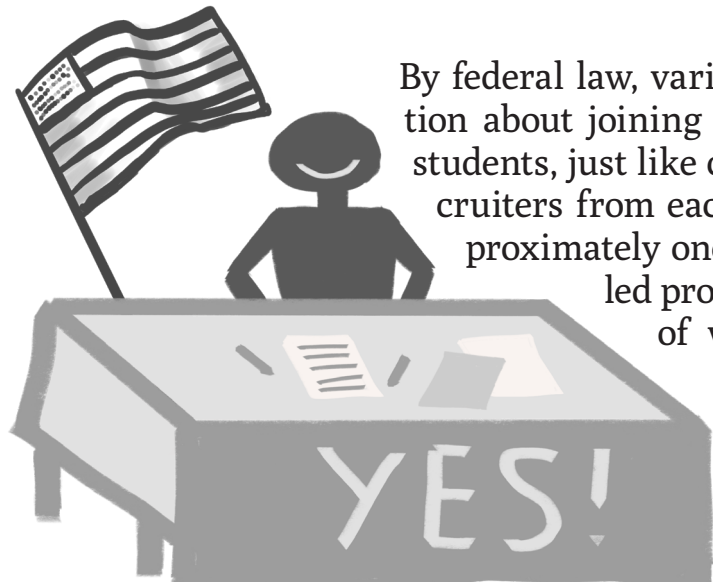
- DON RIVALS
- POWDERY INGREDIENT IN BREAD, PASTA AND CAKE
- "THE STUDY OF" SUFFIX
- UPCOMING MOVIE STARRING ZENDAYA AND TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET
- ANIMAL & HOMOPHONE FOR A TERM OF ENDEARMENT
- ANIMATED SERIES WHERE KENNY OFTEN MEETS AN UNFORTUNATE FATE
- "BARBIE" ACTRESS
- ANIMALS OFTEN FOUND IN ARAGON CEILINGS
- DISNEY + SHOW BASED ON RICK RIORDAN NOVELS (ABRV.)
- JUNIOR BOOK TAKING PLACE IN THE ROARING 20S
- MUSICIAN BEHIND "ORQUÍDEAS"

DOWN

- DESIGN (NEW CTE)
- "EL ____" (YEARBOOK)
- VIRGO/LIBRA MONTH
- PHINEAS AND ____
- ARAGON SENIORS TEND TO SUFFER FROM THIS
- NEWSPAPER IN SPANISH
- NOT GOOD, NOT BAD
- FLAG WITH STARS AND STRIPES

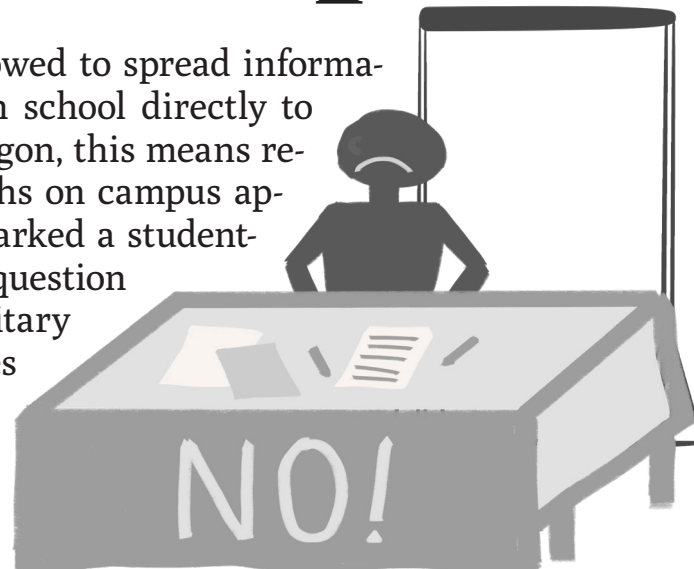
LIZA MCGILPIN

Should military recruiters be on campus?



By federal law, various military branches are allowed to spread information about joining the armed services after high school directly to students, just like colleges and employers. At Aragon, this means recruiters from each of the branches set up booths on campus approximately once a month. Their presence sparked a student-led protest two years ago, raising the question

of whether we should have military booths on campus. Features writers Oliver Levitt and Chloe Chen explore the potential merits and drawbacks of setting up military booths.



ALLYSON CHAN



Oliver Levitt
FEATURES WRITER

Military recruitment booths are meant to encourage students to join the military through posters, interest forms, officer endorsements and financial advantages. One of the main benefits students can gain is a military-funded college education for veterans, provided by the GI Bill. Even though there are many risks and dangers of being in the military, I believe incentives like paying for educational expenses are fair and valuable.

Though many argue that these target low-income families, the opportunity for incentives helps keep our country's military strong. I don't believe that we should strip away the rewards from those who give so much to our country, simply because some believe that the reward is aimed toward people that are in financial need. Removing advertisements for these benefits harms those in need more than it helps them, as it takes away important knowledge about another pathway to college. If students or their families realize the military may be a way to continue education after high school, why should the school prevent them from learning about it? If there is a possible option for post-high school success, I believe the school has a responsibility to offer information about that option.

For college or career paths, the school supplies students with information for maximum post-high school success. There is a whole team of advisers for college and career counseling, and the option of the military should be included in that section. The military is also a valid post-high school pathway, so it should be the school's responsibility to provide information about it to students.

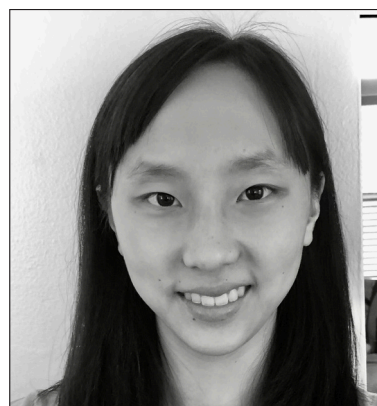
Some would argue that the booths can cause students to make uninformed or unsafe decisions, but it is very unlikely for a student to enlist in the military without proper consideration. The process is thorough, including physical and placement exams, a counselor discussion, an oath of enlistment and a rigorous training program, forcing students to consider what they are signing up for throughout this process.

Also, according to a study from the Midwest Disability Association, only as few as 10% actually end up in actual combat. According to the Defense Casualty Analysis System, of the almost 1.3 million active members, there were only 844 deaths, and of these, only 31 were by homicide (most of the others being accidents, illness, still pending or self-inflicted). Though the threat of war always looms, the job has recently been less dangerous than students may realize, making it a low-risk and even rewarding path for some. This is the kind of information and rationale that should be given to students through booths or other presentations.

If students have the opportunity to learn about riskier jobs like being on the police force or firefighting during Career Day, why shouldn't the military be able to teach students about their career pathway as well? The mortality rate for the military is actually lower, with 1.3 deaths in action per 100 thousand soldiers in 2022 compared to 13 police deaths per 100 thousand in 2020.

Besides safety or financial targeting, high school military recruitment is often criticized as a political issue in which the school should not be picking a side. However, not only is it the school's responsibility to teach, inform and prepare students for their future, whatever that may entail, but schools are federally required to allow recruiters on campus. If anything, it would be politically motivated by the school to withhold such information.

For the reasons stated, I believe that there are valid and necessary reasons to continue providing students with information about the military through booths or other presentations. Setting up students for their future is a key part of high school, so I believe it is the school's responsibility to keep allowing the military to give information to students.



Chloe Chen
FEATURES WRITER

Every so often, when I walk into Center Court during lunch, I'll see military recruitment booths set up. Although I glance at the tables, I never take the time to stop and read the pamphlets provided. More than just wanting to go eat my lunch, I don't stop because I associate the military with the controversial headlines about dangerous wars and invasions.

Many associate the military with its sensitive history, especially when innocent citizens have been harmed. According to TheIntercept, in the War on Terror, the United States conducted more than 91 thousand airstrikes across conflict zones, killing up to 48 thousand civilians.

Is this considered a patriotic act? Is this considered moral? Students should know what career they are heading into before making decisions about their future.

Military recruiters play an important role in providing information about the military for those who are interested, however, it's wrong for recruiters to lean towards persuading students rather than providing information. Two years ago, students protested against the recruitment booths, believing that the military didn't belong at school. To some, simply providing brochures and pamphlets is a form of propaganda—over-accentuating the benefits without being transparent about the difficulties of the job.

I agree with the intent to spread information about multiple pathways for students to consider post-high school, but booths aren't the best option for informing students. Usually, booths in Center Court hold activities carried out by



ALLYSON CHAN

leadership, like the Cares Cassita or Candy Grams, which are lighthearted and fun. It would be dangerous for students to associate the military with fun and games rather than having an accurate perception of what joining the military may entail. Having formal presentations, similar to that of a college visit, rather than booths would allow students to retain information in a more serious manner.

Additionally, some may join the military for the benefits rather than truly having an interest in the career. Under the GI Bill, enlisting provides educational benefits that help pay for college tuition and other educational expenses. For healthcare, joining the army grants comprehensive family coverage and access to Tricare medical services and facilities.

Low-income people may be more drawn to joining the military, hence the phrase "It's a rich man's war and a poor man's fight." According to a study by the U.S. Naval Academy, those who served in the military in 1979 were from lower-than-average socioeconomic backgrounds. The idea of having benefits is important, as veterans deserve considerable rewards for protecting their country. However, perhaps other pathways providing similar benefits would give students the choice to pursue their true interests rather than monetary needs. If students want to pursue post-secondary education, they should also learn about companies that have plans that support continued learning for employees.

While military recruiters help students learn more to make educated decisions, it is important to provide a comprehensive view by presenting in a more professional setting.

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Put me in coach: athletes welcome new coaches

Reporting by Jack He

Ashley Parham

Less than a month after former head football coach Steve Sell announced his retirement, Aragon's defensive coordinator for the last decade, Ash Parham, was hired to be the new football head coach. However, Parham is no stranger to the world of football coaching.

"I started coaching after graduate school ... at the College of San Mateo," Parham said. "I coached up there for four years and then took a short hiatus."

Parham was also an Aragon alumni, so when JV football coach Steve Henderson invited Parham to help out at Aragon, he gladly accepted.

As the Dons' defense coordinator for the last ten years, Parham has done a lot of work on-field by coming up with the game plans for the defense. However, Parham feels that as the new head coach, he will be leaving the on-field work to his assistant coaches while he focuses on general supervision.

"Coach Sell has been in for a long time," Parham said. "His predecessor, who was my head



LIAN WANG

coach, was there for a long time as well. I want to carry on that legacy and tradition ... [and] I want to be here for a long time."



ANNA HE

Nick Carrara

Replacing former coach Joe Rousseau, Nick Carrara is the new varsity boys soccer coach this season. A Serra High School alumni, Carrara was a talented midfielder who was named Athlete of the Week by the San Mateo Daily Journal in 2009. From there, Carrara played college soccer at San Jose State University, where he then transitioned into a semi-professional career, playing for the Burlingame Dragons, the Kitsap Pumas and the U23 team for the San Jose Earthquakes. Carrara first turned to coaching 14 years ago.

"When I first started, it was pretty tough," Carrara said. "I was coaching younger kids. [It was] tough dealing with the younger kids and being new to something ... I've been playing

soccer my whole life so I adapted quickly. As [I] got older and coached more, [I] became more comfortable coaching, and I can relate to the players better."

After his stint coaching elementary schoolers, Carrara returned to his alma mater as the Serra Padres' assistant coach, where he remained for the last 10 years before joining Aragon.

"I've been coaching high school for a while, and I took a break for a couple of years," Carrara said. "My friend was the coach before Joe Rousseau. When he stopped coaching, he told me that it was a great spot and if I want to do it, he would put my name in to be a coach. I applied and I was really excited to be part of the program."

Carrara is focusing more on improving the existing team framework rather than implementing new changes.

"My philosophy is if it's not broke, don't fix it," Carrara said. "I'm still going to try to add my experience and my personality to the team, my playing style, which the kids are adapting to nicely. But there was already a good program that I came into, so it's just about the boys understanding what I'm asking for in games and practices and the level of competition that I expect day in and day out."

Though there weren't major changes to the Dons' soccer program, varsity center attacking midfielder Sam Pirzadeh did notice a difference between Carrara's and Rousseau's coaching styles.

"We used to have more physical drills, or more fitness definitely, but now it's a little bit more tactical," Pirzadeh said. "So an example of the drills you did was instead of just outright running from field to field, we're playing scrimmages with short-term strategies."

One reason behind the change in drills stems from Carrara's personal coaching philosophy and how he prioritizes what's needed to win.

"My philosophy is these kids don't necessarily need to be in the best shape, because if you're good with the ball then you're a good soccer player," Carrara said. "We win games by being good soccer players and playing good soccer."

In addition to good tactics and smart soccer, Carrara also emphasizes the importance of a good work ethic.

"I expect accountability from the kids," Carrara said. "If they are not giving their best effort and best attitude, then I demand it from them."

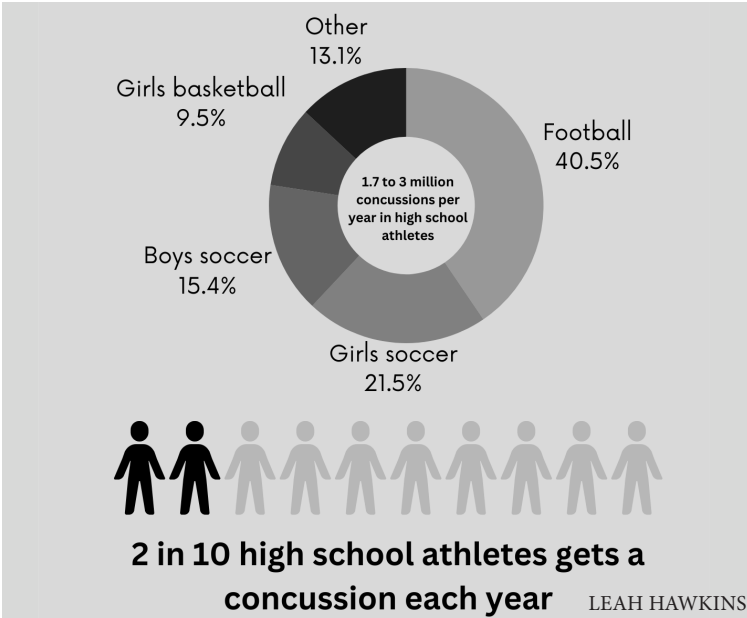


LIAN WANG

playing a team sport where you have to communicate."

Chan reflects that his passion for teaching had only grown over the years.

"I've been doing email marketing for most of my adult life. And then And then recently, since I started coaching, I've been coaching more and more," Chan said. "The benefit of coaching is that I get to work with the kids. I get to exercise. I don't have to go to some gym, or do weight lifting and run on the treadmill. I could actually play a sport that I enjoy ... It's pretty cool and rewarding, and it makes me happy to do it."



LEAH HAWKINS

Revisiting the concussion crisis

Phoebe Harger
SPORTS WRITER

According to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, between 1.7 million and three million sports-related concussions occur each year, with the majority coming from soccer and football. The same source states that two in ten high school athletes get concussions each year.

The Centers for Disease Control defines a concussion as a mild type of traumatic brain injury, caused by a hit to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly back and forth. Concussions can vary in severity and present different symptoms, such as headaches, nausea, dizziness, sensitivity to light or noise or blurry vision.

Sophomore soccer player Reina Younes, sustained a concussion a year ago during a soccer game.

"I got fouled and hit heads ready hard with another player," Younes said. "I felt really dizzy and couldn't hear anything for 20 seconds."

Feeling better the following morning, Younes decided to go back to the field, but regretted it shortly after.

"Right after the game I started to get a really bad headache which lasted three weeks," Younes said. "I still went to school but I couldn't play soccer or do [physical education] for a while."

Luckily, Younes has been able to return to soccer, where she now captains Aragon's JV girls soccer team.

However, in some cases, a concussion can be so severe that the athlete may not be able to return to their sport.

Senior Taylor Martin, who played soccer for the majority of her life, suffered her first concussion in the seventh grade while playing soccer.

"Somebody drilled the ball into the back of my head and then I passed out for a second," Martin said. "I couldn't see for 15 seconds, and then I had really bad headaches and dizziness."

Following her initial injury, Martin sustained three more concussions playing soccer, her most recent and serious one taking place the summer before her junior year of high school.

Due to the severity of her last concussion, Martin has been forced to retire from playing soccer, along with all contact sports.

"Thankfully, I have completely recovered," Martin said. "I don't have daily headaches anymore, and I don't have memory loss or anything like that. The biggest way it's affected me is just being unable to participate in stuff that I used to be able to do and having to be a bit more conscious about getting injured in certain situations."

Despite advanced medical technology, little is still known about the long-lasting effects of concussions. Some medical professionals claim that concussions can be linked to later-in-life problems. From vision loss and depression, to neurodegenerative diseases, the severity of the long-term effects are still being researched.

Although there is still much to be studied about traumatic brain injuries, a great deal of progress has been made in head safety since the early twenty first century, when the "concussion crisis" became a prominent health issue in the world of youth sports, specifically football.

"The way we teach tackling, the way we teach blocking, all of that has dramatically reduced concussions in high school football," said head football coach Ashley Parham.

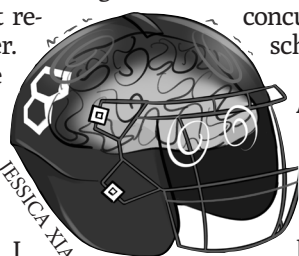
Rules against targeting, spear tackling and illegal helmet contact have also contributed to making high school football safer for teenage athletes.

"There is no foolproof way to ever completely eliminate concussions from any contact sport," Parham said. "But a lot of good progress has been made in high school athletics, especially in football."

While head safety in youth sports continues to improve, it is still extremely important to take all head injuries seriously, as well as be aware of the symptoms of a concussion.

"Because you can't always avoid getting hurt during contact sports, it's most important to not play through head injuries, even if it's small," Martin said. "Concussions should always be taken seriously and recovery should never be rushed."

While still an issue, the harmful effects of concussions can be reduced through awareness and self-care. Aragon's athletic department continues to review practice and game protocols in order to ensure a safe and healthy future for their athletes.



JESSICA XIA

Boys soccer battles Half Moon Bay, ties 0-0 amidst rain

Antonio Mangano
SPORTS WRITER

On Jan. 31, Aragon's boys varsity soccer team (9-2-5 overall, 4-1-3 Peninsula Athletic League) played a tough game against Half Moon Bay (8-5-5 overall, 1-3-4 PAL) where the final score came out to be 0-0.

Both teams played great offensive and defensive games while combating the heavy rains which eventually caused a couple of injuries and mistakes out on the field.

"We were by far the better team," said head coach Nick Carrara. "It was maybe the rain and the weather that affected [our inability to score a goal]."

Aragon started the game off strong after they won the kick-off and headed toward the goal. After a throw-in, senior Marcelo Cruz, made a couple of

strong attempts to score a goal, however his strong offense wasn't able to top Half Moon Bay's aggressive defense.

"Half Moon Bay play [was] pretty solid," Cruz said. "They were aggressive [and] they were winning some battles out there."

With 30 minutes on the clock in the first half, the Dons were able to pass the ball down to their goal where Cruz was once again very close to scoring. However, due to an off-sides call, Aragon had to give up possession to Half Moon Bay who received a free kick in return.

These contested calls began to show a pattern in this game as Aragon's offense was repeatedly called for running offsides when the team felt as if they weren't offsides.

"I would say we were a bit unlucky," Carrara said. "If the other team gets a little bit of luck on

some saves, we should've [gotten] a penalty [shot], [the] ref called that it wasn't in the box when it was five yards in the box."

Aragon worried about receiving too many calls against their team because the team was nearing disqualification in the league due to too many red cards. If the players got too many yellow cards, they could receive a red card which would be the end of Aragon's championship campaign.

"We had a few red cards already this season [because of] lack of judgment [and] players making mistakes in the heat of the moment," Carrara said. "Sometimes games get like that but it's unacceptable."

As rain picked up, so did the competitiveness of Half Moon Bay. The Cougars were able to get the ball on their scoring side of the field a couple of times. However, the skill of Aragon's goalkeepers grew evident after a couple of impressive saves.

The remainder of the first half was mainly played in the midfield after the two teams seemed to be a close match up in the rainy conditions on Aragon's home turf. Aragon was surprised with the way the game was playing out because Half Moon Bay was known to be a relatively easy win for the Dons.

"We normally win [against Half Moon Bay]," Cruz said. "We expected ... an easy game, but Half Moon Bay was a surprise to us ... They came out strong."



Senior Brian Cervantes runs down the field

ANNA HE

At the start of the second half, Half Moon Bay brought the ball to their side of the field. After moving the ball around the field in search of a place to attempt a shot on the goal, the Dons were able to get the ball back in their possession. However, the referees once again called an offside on the Dons and Half Moon Bay received another free kick. They were unable to turn it into a goal.

With only 19 minutes to go in the game, senior Ian Stretch was caught in a slide-tackle and one of the referees called a foul on the Cougars, resulting in a free kick for Aragon. This free kick was Aragon's closest shot to getting a point on the board after the ball just barely missed and hit the crossbar of the goal.

"Our weakness was the quality of our second half," Cruz said.

"We couldn't get the ball in the net. We had to be a little more clinical."

As the game came to a close, Aragon saw the ball on their side of the field for most of the remaining time. After a couple of close attempts to a goal, the referees blew the whistle for a final time, ending the closely matched game with both teams unable to score a goal.

After a small bump in the road, Carrara and his team look forward to bringing the championship home for Aragon.

"Each game is [important] because it's pretty tight right now," Carrara said. "We may be in second place after this but if we win out the rest of our games, we are champions. The tie didn't kill us."

The team will continue to the CCS playoffs on Feb. 17.



Senior Ian Stretch running

ANNA HE

Girls basketball falls 38-48 to the Hillsdale Knights

Charlie Henderson
SPORTS WRITER

The varsity girls basketball team (11-12 overall, 3-5 Peninsula Athletic League) came up short against the Hillsdale Knights (11-11 overall, 2-5 PAL) on Tuesday, Feb. 6 with a final score of 48-38 in a tight game. The double-digit final point differential is not indicative of the competitiveness of the contest.

The Dons started off slow, with careless passes leading to turnovers and easy offense for the Knights, which dug the Dons into a hole.

This deficit was hard to cut into early on, but some interior offensive production from senior forward Maya Pappas helped the Dons remain in striking distance. Along with Pappas, sophomore guard Lauren Pong also helped the Dons muster some offense in the first half through her perimeter shooting.

Led by the scoring of senior guard Maya Yoo, the Dons further cut into the lead in the third quarter, bringing it down to a two-point deficit. From there the game remained extremely close, but a couple of lucky bounces for the Knights gave them two crucial three-point shots including one in the waning seconds of the third quarter.

The third quarter shot gave the Knights a jolt of energy and they rolled into the fourth quarter with momentum. From there, a few costly turn-

overs led to some easy transition points for the Knights.

Even in the face of the expanding deficit the Dons continued to battle. Unfortunately, the transition points for the Knights started to add up in the fourth. Those easy points,

"It's just like the [Golden State] Warriors, they're amazing," Manu said. "But when they start having turnovers they really slow down. We were just passing the ball to them and giving away quality possessions to turnovers and bad passes."

(14-9 overall). These wins provided a strong sense of hope for the Dons, as they proved that this team has the capacity to shake some things up in the playoffs.

"Beating the two top teams in our league shows how

the Dons were slumping hard. With five straight league losses, the team seemed to lack an offensive identity and struggled to pull out close games. Even in the face of these struggles, Manu continued to preach a positive mindset geared around problem solving. He instilled a belief in his team that the problems they faced were put in front of them for a reason, that reasoning being that they have the tools and ability to solve these problems. Overall, this leads the team to believe that the struggles are tests that they allow them to walk out better on the other side.

The Dons' commitment to defense and maximum effort in everything they do carried them through the slump, and helped them find an identity through their struggles.

"Our team has this competitive nature and just like this kind of hustle culture," Pong said. "Every time we play defense, we just know we gotta get it."

As the Dons enter the Central Coast Section playoffs they look to bounce back from their loss against Hillsdale and play to the strengths that helped them take down Mills and Menlo Atherton. The Dons have displayed an immense amount of grit and determination through their perseverance this season, and they enter the playoffs with their eyes set on another successful run.

The team will play their first CCS game on Feb. 16.



Senior Maya Pappas goes for a layup

VICTORIA SANTANA

combined with a few late-game free throws, caused the deficit to expand to the differential that the scoreboard read at the final buzzer.

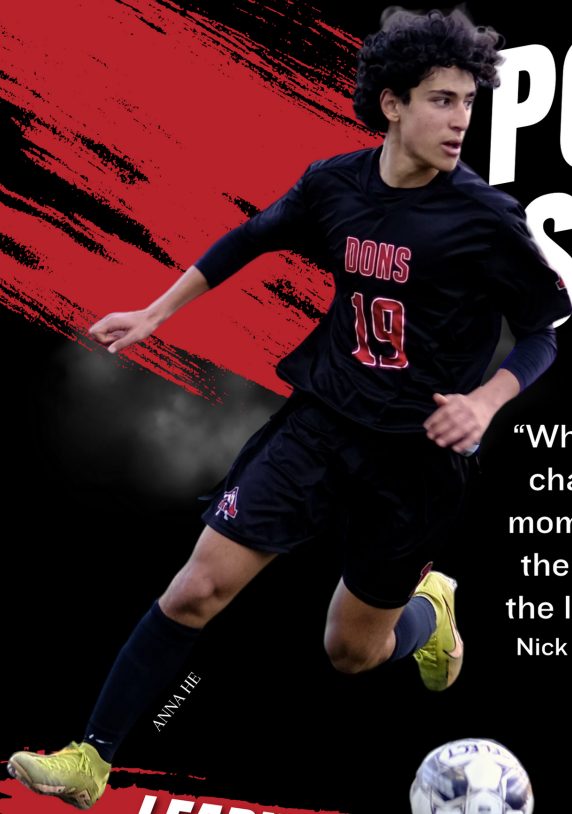
Coach Sam Manu acknowledged the Dons' passing as their main pitfall throughout the game.

Even after this loss the Dons still have much to keep their head up about. In the week preceding the contest with Hillsdale the Dons pulled out two hard fought wins over the top two teams in their league at Mills (16-6 overall) and Menlo-Atherton

much we have developed as a team," Yoo said. "It shows that even though we have struggled at times this season we keep persevering and continue to grow with each other as a team."

Leading up to the wins over Mills and Menlo Atherton,

Athletes of the Month



POUYAN SHEIKH

JUNIOR FORWARD

“Whenever we need a big change in a game, a big moment, Pouyan’s usually the one to create it. He’s the leader on the offense.”
Nick Carrara, varsity boys soccer head coach

LEADING PLAYMAKER

SIERRA TROY

JUNIOR STRIKER



“She is a very dynamic player who consistently outworks her opponents ... Her work ethic is outstanding and you can tell she genuinely loves to play the game.”
Michael Flynn, varsity girls soccer head coach

1-2 GOALS PER GAME

JACOB RUTTENBERG

SENIOR GUARD



“Jacob is our leader from top to bottom, from showing up early to staying late, the game is natural to him.”
Hosea Patton, varsity basketball head coach

14 POINTS IN FEB. 2 WIN

MAYA PAPPAS

SENIOR FORWARD



“She is one of our captains and the heart and soul of our team.”
Sam Manu, varsity girls basketball head coach

10 PPG, 10.5 RPG