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# The ARAGON OUTLOOK

Thursday | September 19, 2024 | Volume 65, Issue 1

900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo, CA 94402

Aragon High School



## Aragon welcomes new principal

Leah Hawkins  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On July 1, Aragon welcomed a new principal, Dr. Michael Jones, as former principal Valerie Arbizu returned to Burlingame High School as Assistant Principal. Jones has worked in education for the past 30 years, across numerous states and countries, most recently as principal at Lowell High School for two years.

Jones describes his new-found place at Aragon as fate.

"We chose each other," Jones said. "Aragon is a school that is passionate about students and development, and I am passionate about the same. I also enjoy being in environments that are highly competitive."

One of the reasons Jones chose to join Aragon was an alignment of values.

"I like to develop leaders, which is why I came here," Jones said. "When I was in the interview, I understood that there would be an opportunity for me to help grow the school, build the school spirit and morale and that's my sweet spot as a leader."

The compatibility between Jones and Aragon makes sense, given the highly detailed selection process, which involved surveys of the community, outside consultants and several rounds of interviews with students, teachers, and admin.

"He's really brought with him an attitude of listening and hearing from different people," said Jayson Estassi, social science teacher, PD coordinator and member of the Academic/Instruction Committee that interviewed Jones. "[He's] really present with the rest of the administrative team in classrooms

... having more connections [with students]."

Jones hopes to obtain a well-rounded understanding of Aragon's community to form future goals.

"I'm doing a 90-day looking, listening and learning journey," Jones said. "Which is going to lead me to the strategic plan for the school the next three to five years. We have to decide together as a school community ... because it's going to take all of us to reach our goals."

Some of Jones's plans for the campus have already been implemented, such as the famous Joy Wagon – a wagon filled with candy and taken around campus on assorted Wednesdays each month.

"The Joy Wagon Wednesdays are amazing because it's a way to instantly connect with students," Jones said.

Jones has come to appreciate Aragon's unique factors.

"It's a very diverse school," Jones said. "The San Mateo Union High School District in particular is very rich in resources. The parents, school community partners, even students, are very involved in [the] decisions."

Jones will continue to be visible around campus through school and community events, his Joy Wagon Wednesdays and regular classroom visits.



Principal Jones poses with seniors.

COURTESY OF MICHAEL JONES



Aragon alumni Josh Yuan hits birdie.

CARL RECINE

## Olympian: Josh Yuan

Andrew Dong  
SPORTS EDITOR

The 2024 Paris Olympics produced a special piece of Aragon history. Aragon Class of 2021 Joshua Yuan competed in men's doubles badminton at this summer's Olympic Games, becoming the first Aragon athlete to be an Olympian.

Joshua Yuan and doubles partner Vinson Chiu, ranked world number 42, were placed in Group D. They didn't win any of their four group stage matches and didn't advance further in the tournament since all four opponents in their group were ranked top 10 in the world.

"I'm still very happy with the way we played," Yuan said. "I think we did play our best. We did give them a hard time, and we put on a show. I can't say I'm satisfied with my results obvi-

ously, but I'm satisfied with the way we played and the way we stuck with them."

In their first match against the world number 2 pair from Denmark, Yuan and Chiu lost 21-13, 21-16. However, they led in the second game by 5 points, giving their opponents a scare as the heavy underdogs.

"In the second game, we were actually leading for a majority of the match," Yuan said. "I remember this one rally where it was a very long rally, and then [the opponent] smashed it, hitting the shuttle, really hard, really fast down. Then I did a cross defense, which caught both of them off guard, and hit into an empty corner. The crowd was going wild because the USA is not very strong, and they're like 'Wow. These guys are really strong.'"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Seniors kick off final year with sunrise

Darshan Bal  
NEWS EDITOR

On Aug. 23 at 7 a.m., Senior Sunrise took place in center court. The seniors enjoyed many activities as part of the annual tradition. Spikeball and cornhole games were played on the grass and a photo booth was set up for students to take pictures. Additionally, students who attended were provided with breakfast, which consisted of bagels, donuts, hot chocolate and more. The event allows seniors to bond as they start their last year in high school.

"[Senior Sunrise] is a way to celebrate the start of the senior year," said co-chair of Senior Sunrise Ashley Stubbins. "A chance for seniors to

be with friends, to have some time outside of the classroom, to connect and just enjoy being together. There's also Senior Sunset at the end of the year, so everything comes full circle."

Many students enjoyed having the chance to interact with their classmates outside of a class setting.

"Because we have classes and classwork and projects and stuff, we don't have the time to connect with other people," said senior Yarezi Rodriguez. "These events [help] with getting to know what [people] are [up to]."

Some were surprised by the large turnout at the event.

"People [who] don't normally show up to class events ended up showing up to [Se-

nior Sunrise]," said Senior Class Council Vice President Juliette Szwarcberg. "It made me really happy that people are trying to connect with the class. It is also just a fun way for people to have a good time with their friends."

Members of the Parent Teacher Student Organization began planning Senior Sunrise over the summer, as organizers had to sort out many logistics.

"[We worked on] planning the food, purchasing decorations ... going to Starbucks and ordering coffee [and worked] with the school to make sure we had someone to set up tables for the morning," Stubbins said. "And then [we worked] a little bit with the Senior [Class] Council, because

they were in charge of activities ... They gave us some suggestions for a few food items and decorations to add, and then just kept us updated on what they were planning to do for the event."

On the morning of Senior Sunrise, PTSO members and volunteers arrived at 6:30 a.m. to set up.

"We had a ton of help, so it was actually really quick," said co-chair of Senior Sunrise Kathryn Lingenfelter. "We were pretty much ready to go by the time the seniors got there at seven."

During Senior Sunrise, students gathered around to watch a presentation by Senior Class Council, where they talked about activities being planned for seniors this year.

"We like to remind the seniors of things that are coming up to get them excited," Szwarcberg said. "We have class fundraisers, we did something with a senior [parking] spot ... [and] we're doing a class bingo. We're just trying to get people to be more connected with the school and [participate in] certain activities that people wouldn't normally do."

Senior Sunrise is the first of a series of larger events planned for seniors this year. Senior Activities Day, Senior Sunset, and Grad Night are organized by the PTSO's Senior Activities Committee and Senior Class Council, and are all set to take place in May. The Senior Class Council will also be hosting rallies and other activities to celebrate their last year.



# Breaking down the walls: bringing in the Walz

Darren Lo  
NEWS EDITOR

On July 21, President Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race and Vice President Kamala Harris took over as Democratic candidate. Less than three weeks later, Harris announced Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as her running mate. Both candidates accepted the nomination of the Democratic Party at the Democratic National Convention.

Walz first made headlines when he deemed former President Donald Trump “weird” in a viral social media clip. According to the Associated Press, this catapulted Walz into the running for vice president. Many people enjoy his casual style.

“It’s something more people in the country can relate to,” said senior Dalton Kane. “It doesn’t feel like they’re way up in D.C.. My family really likes Walz, maybe more than they like Harris. It feels like a different perspective.”

This draws a sharp contrast to language that Democrats have traditionally been using to describe Trump, calling him an “existential threat to democracy” amongst other high-level attacks. Additionally, Walz’s background as a high school teacher and football coach helps increase his relatability.

“I know that people didn’t like Hillary because she was

very elitist,” said senior Andrew Huang. “People didn’t feel like they could relate to her.”

Walz, despite hailing from a small conservative town in Nebraska, has pushed semi-progressive policies during his time in office, signing into law free meals for all schoolchildren. Harris advances these policies, proposing to cut taxes for middle class fami-

lies, vowing to strengthen Medicare and in her agenda, claims she will make “affordable health care a right, not a privilege.”

“I don’t want to say they’re super altruistic,” said senior Calvin Chao. “[But Walz] did a good amount for schools and he supports alleviating college fees [and] free [school] lunch. Even if we don’t necessarily know 100% what his intentions are as vice president, it definitely shows more about his character and what he’s willing to do.”

News outlets have criticized the Harris/Walz ticket for a lack of substance in their agenda.

“On both sides, vagueness is a problem,” said government teacher Michael Gibbons. “They’re definitely [running] on personality. It’s horrible but that’s what they’re doing. They’re not running on a coherent, articulated set of policy goals.”

This has led some to ask if this election has emphasized “vibes over value” too much, turning the race into a likeability contest.

“It’s not good, but at the end of the day, there’s not much you can do,” Kane said. “I don’t love

Donald Trump’s character, but if he wins, it’ll be with his character. Kamala has been doing

a pretty good job of preaching policy, but in [the] media, they haven’t really talked about [it].”

There is also an important distinction between character and personality.

“Personality is presenting a certain way [while] character is more about morals,” Gibbons said. “Potentially, character should tie into policy. If you are really wor-

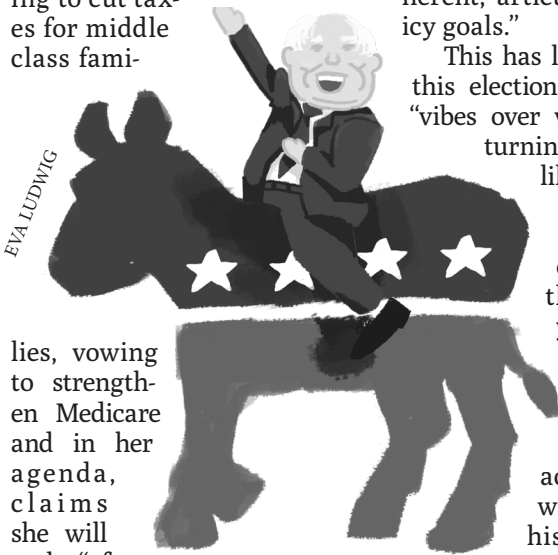
ried about people and you see people in pain and suffering because you’re empathetic, then that should result in policy choices.”

While TikTok campaigns and the increased social presence helps humanize politicians, it also can turn them from policy-based activists to influencers. Students argue that this negatively hurts the political sphere as parties rally around their supposed cult of personality, leading to polarization. In fact, a recent Forbes study shows that the United States media is

among the most polarized in the world.

“What you see during the presidential election is a personality war,” Chao said. “It’s concerning when our presidential elections become more about what’s bad about the other candidate compared to what makes the candidates good. That doesn’t inspire confidence, and it ... turns people [away] from voting.”

The candidates will be running in the 2024 presidential election taking place on Nov. 5.



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# Kamala is brat.

Angela Nguyen  
FEATURES EDITOR

Six hours after President Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race, Charli XCX, a British singer and songwriter, tweeted “Kamala IS brat” with over 54 million views. Inspired by her latest summer hit album, “Brat,” the phrase signifies a “girl who is a little messy and likes to party and maybe says some dumb things sometimes,” as described by Charli XCX on TikTok.

After Charli XCX’s endorsement of Harris’ run in the presidential race, Harris’ social media team changed @kamalahq’s banner on X to the same font and color as the cover of “Brat.” After the Sept. 10 presidential debate between Harris and Trump, Taylor Swift, a popular artist, endorsed Harris for presidency. Immediately after, Harris’ social media team tweeted a picture of Swift’s post along with the caption, “Ready for it,” in reference to Swift’s 2017 song. Harris’ social media team has embraced all memes, using pop culture and music such as the song “Femininomenon” by artist Chappell Roan to highlight Harris as a woman of color.

“[Social media] would give her a way to communicate her message in creative, short ways that are catchy and will appeal to voters,” said advanced standing world history teacher Jon Felder. “A lot of voters aren’t that interested in politics, they’re just being told that they should vote ... [and] they might not want to read long articles.”

Following that, countless memes, sound bite remixes and edited videos erupted and took over the internet. One of the most viral ones came from a speech that Harris gave in May 2023, where she quoted her mother’s saying.

“You think you just fell out of a coconut tree?” Harris said. “You exist in the context of all in which you live and what came before you.”

Since then, politicians who supported Harris have tweeted the emojis of coconut trees or called her campaign “Operation Coconut Tree.” Among them, U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii even posted a picture of him climbing a coconut tree.

“[Gen-Z] could have taken anything she said once Biden dropped out [and] they could have found any audio and made

it viral,” said senior Adrienne Nguyen. “But [the coconut tree] was a golden one.”

Harris’ speech now has over 18,000 videos that use her laughing coconut tree speech as an audio. The day that Biden dropped out of the presidential race 10,554 posts were made about Harris’ coconut tree speech.

Harris’ and Walz’s campaigns aim to target the younger generations through memes and vibes.

“18 to 25-year-olds have the worst voting record of every age group,” said history and economics teacher Kevin Nelson. “Traditionally, they don’t feel like they matter [so] they’re not engaged. Whenever a political party is able to identify what gets that group motivated and come out to vote, they’re going to go after that.”

According to CNN, more than 230,000 people signed up to vote after Biden dropped out - 81% of whom are between 18 to 34-years-old.

“I think [social media is] very influential, especially with young voters, because that’s all we’re doing,” Nguyen said. “Gen Z was feeling okay about Kamala Harris, and then she decided to make a TikTok account, and now it’s going crazy and everybody loves her.”

With the power of social media being well known and influential, especially to younger generations, it has had a history of impacting elections.

“[Social media has] been affecting elections very similarly ever since Trump started,” said senior Thomas Williams. “He sort of set in motion an era where the internet and cult of personality dictate whether you get elected or not. It’s become more of a reality TV show because of social media.”

In addition, news outlets have previously criticized Harris for having vague policies in her campaign as her strategy. Because of this, many feel that the vibes of this election have overshadowed factors such as policy.

“We are in the midst of playing to the emotions of individuals rather than the practicalities of issues [and] construction of ideas of what we believe is important to the people,” Nelson said.

While social media has proven itself to be influential in people’s perception of the election, it is only one of many factors that will impact the final results on Nov. 5.

# Ethical porn: does it exist?

Hannah Li  
FEATURES EDITOR

“Not everyone can have a monster schlong,” said senior Lucas Nguyen.

This may seem obvious, but in the world of online porn, it may not be as apparent as it seems.

For teens and preteens, the widespread accessibility of porn means that 73% of those age 17 and younger have consumed pornography, according to a 2022 study published by Common Sense Media. Among those, 15% said they were first exposed to online pornography at age 10 or younger, with the average reported age being 12.

“Being exposed to porn is just a given from being online nowadays,” said sophomore Ash Adams. “You could just look it up, and they’ll have a ‘click this box to make sure you’re 18.’ They don’t know if you’re actually 18. It’s not anything actually secure and kept away from children’s hands.”

Especially amongst impressionable teens, nonconsensual and exaggerated depictions of sex often

found in pornography can create distorted perceptions of sex, leading to harmful attitudes and behaviors in real-life interactions.

“Is it good for a young girl to hear the boys in her class talk about a porn star, or talk about explicit acts?” said senior Michela Peccolo. “When I was growing up, I feel like because a lot of people in my middle school, or at least the boys, were consuming pornography, it sexualized a lot of my peers ... It’s not a good thing for people to view others

as sexual creatures, because it creates this type of one-sided interaction, where you’re basically using that person as a sexual commodity.”

The effects of observational learning become especially concerning when taking into account the normalization of aggression and violence in porn. A study on over 4,000 videos from Pornhub and Xvideos, two major pornographic sites, found that on average 40% of scenes contained at least one act of physical aggression, including spanking, gagging, choking, and slapping. Among the targets of aggression, 97% were women.

Additionally, porn can create unrealistic body standards.

“You have people with fake genitalia, implants or surgery, and none of it’s real,” said senior Brad. “[People] look at it and feel insecure of themselves. Men can look at women and be like, ‘oh, you’re not good enough.’ Same thing with men. You get gigantic dudes who are incredibly buff with giant [penises], and suddenly, women are comparing the men they see in porn to their real-life partners, and that causes tensions in the relationship; it enforces toxic masculinity.”

The effects of the porn industry don’t stop at its consumers. Take Pamela Anderson, former Playboy model and Baywatch star. In one of the first instances of leaked celebrity sex tapes, hers was stolen and leaked onto the internet. In less than 12 months, the tape made an estimated \$77 million on legitimate

sales alone. Relatively nothing was done about it beyond a civil suit.

“We think about women who leave the pornography industry, whether that be underneath their own worker license, and they’re still haunted by it,” Peccolo said. “Big name stars like Mia Khalifa, [for example]: she’s banned in certain countries, or she’s harassed as she’s walking across the street. Even if the ethics of porn in that instance, when the content was being filmed, existed, now it’s a negative to her life.”

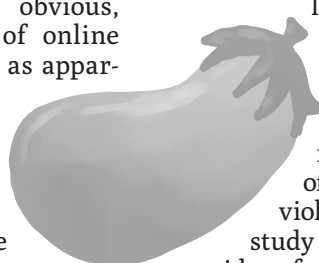
The process of making porn is also an important step to consider ethically.

“If someone has [sexual] trauma from a young age, and because of that, they ended up in the porn industry, even though it was ...

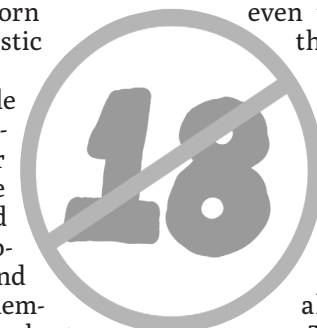
their own choice, I wouldn’t really consider that ethical,” Nguyen said. “It [serves as] an outlet for their trauma, which I wouldn’t really say is healthy ... The only way I see it ethically made is if someone has no long history of trauma, they don’t have any outstanding [monetary] needs that they’re doing it for, and they’re recording either themselves or their partner because they get true enjoyment from it.”

While ethical porn, such as fair-trade or feminist porn, does exist and aims to promote consensual, realistic, porn, it may not be the silver bullet to the porn industry.

“It’s depicting a consensual [relationship], but that’s the bare minimum,” said senior Rachel\*. “It’s not ... like we’re all going to watch this fair trade [porn] ... It’s great that it’s there, but bad that everything else is also there.”



EVA LUDWIG



# The ARAGON OUTLOOK

aragonoutlook.org

Ellen Li & Leah Hawkins  
Editor-in-Chief

Scott Silton  
Faculty Adviser

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Angela Nguyen\*  
Chloe Chen\*  
Hannah Li\*  
Meilin Rife\*

BUSINESS  
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Hannah Li\*

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\* denotes editor



# Mirror, Mirror



Copy: Alexa Sterry, Chloe Chen, Darshan Bal  
 Graphics: Alexa Sterry, Meilin Rife  
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In Ancient Greece, unibrows were considered a sign of beauty and wisdom. Women's unibrows were valued for their natural beauty, but many still used cosmetics to help their eyebrows stand out. On the extreme side, some women would glue goat hair between their brows to achieve a unibrow. Married women tended to leave their eyebrows alone, while single women would apply makeup. This trend of unibrows could also be seen in Iran's Qajar dynasty, when male and female beauty standards were similar. Women and men alike desired thick eyebrows and moustaches.



Throughout many cultures and eras, body types which we now consider "overweight" were glamorized as they represented prosperity and fertility. Separating themselves from thin, malnourished peasants, elites saw body fat as an exhibition of their bountiful wealth. During the Renaissance and Baroque eras, most portraits featured rolls, double chins and full stomachs. This ideal directed fashion trends of the time toward voluminous garments to imply an attractive, ample figure. Society's celebration of fatness died out in the 1800s when industrial expansion commodified food, excess weight traded the connotation of wealth for that of inactivity.



The beard tax was instated by Tsar Peter the Great as a part of his efforts to "Europeanize" Russia, or make it comply with Western European cultural standards. The beard tax incentivized men to shave. Before, beards were considered godly under the Russian Church, causing resistance to the tax. People who had beards but didn't carry proof of paying the tax were forcibly and publicly shaved by police. Today, this seems ludicrous, but when Russia was vying for the same power as the West, these reforms were seen as necessary. The beard tax was ineffective since few Russians were willing to shave, and Catherine the Great repealed it in 1772.



Throughout the 19th century, tuberculosis, also known as "consumption," became increasingly common, killing millions of people. Weight loss, pale skin and red cheeks were symptoms of the sickness that became associated with attractiveness. Artists and writers romanticized the disease, changing how the public perceived the otherwise devastating illness. Soon, women began to powder their faces and use chemicals to appear pale and "consumed," as well as corseting their waists to look sickly thin. As people began to understand how serious, contagious and deadly tuberculosis was, the consumed look died away.



1200 - 323 BCE

500 - 1400

1300 - 1800

1600 - 1750

1698 - 1772

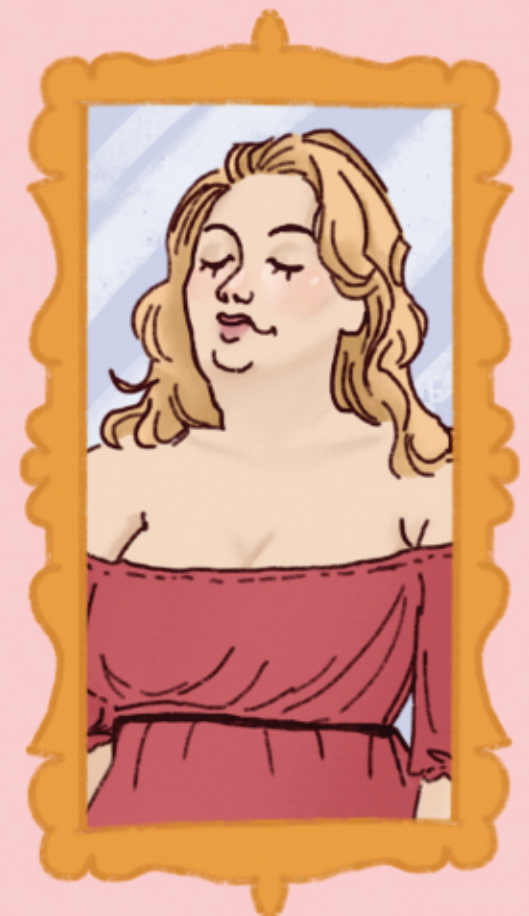
1837-1901

1882 - 1901

PRESENT



In medieval times, it was considered "wrong" for women to have body hair. With this idea emerged the fear that having too much hair would harm women's chances of marriage and fertility, leading to the trend of having high foreheads to seem like they had less hair. To achieve this look, which connoted purity and innocence, women would pluck their eyebrows and hairlines. The trend continued into the Renaissance period, with Queen Elizabeth plucking her own eyebrows to have a larger forehead. People at the time also believed this look made women look more intelligent.



Today, men in heels are considered absurd, but heels were originally created for men. Men's heels hit their stylistic stride in Baroque-era France. High heels implied a high status, following in the image of elites like King Louis XIV. At 5'4, Louis embraced the height boost just as much as the colorful, ornate aesthetics of the heel. The trend burnt out quickly, though – the French Revolution's eat-the-rich attitude made the aristocratic look deeply unpopular, which meant heels had to say au revoir! Heels have made a comeback since the 18th century for women, making them a living example of fluidity in gender roles.



During the Victorian Era, the advent of cheap manufacturing led to a variety of new, accessible clothing. Men wore coats, suits and trousers while women strove for tiny waists and large skirts. Corsets, a tight undergarment worn on the upper body, squeezed women's bodies to be desirably small. In 1857, Alexander Douglas invented the bustle, a cushion at the back of a dress that supported large skirts. However, this garment inhibited mobility; women had trouble even sitting or walking. This impracticality, along with a growing movement for female independence, ended the trend as the century came to a close.



Finally, in 2024, we see more "realistic" models and body positivity movements increase acceptance. The lack of one defined look doesn't mean freedom from pressure. Social media fractures our concept of beauty with new terms each day. "Boy vs. Girl pretty," "cantal tilt," "visual weight" – it's hard to keep up when each niche finds something different attractive. Photoshop and filters, like the infamous "bold glamour" or even the subtle Tiktok beauty filter, change the way people look completely, changing face shape, skin tone and texture, etc. While we've broadened our idea of beauty, social media hashtags constitute new insecurities.



*What do you think contributes to beauty standards in the modern day?*  
 "Famous people [can] contribute to beauty standards ... people want to be like [them], so they copy [the] way they act or their clothing."  
 Macklin Berg (10)



*Do you think you've seen societal beauty standards change?*  
 "Yes, and I think it's because of fast fashion and social media ... I think there's [been] a lot of trends ... like, a certain body. For example, Marilyn Monroe was popular [at] one time. Now it's Kim Kardashian."  
 Emily Peng (11)



*Do you think beauty standards disproportionately affect any group?*  
 "Women, teenagers ... I think the idea that women's value is in their youth and that people shouldn't age is especially harmful [and] prevalent for women as they get older."  
 Maya Patnaik (12)

You can lookmax all you want, but at the end of the day, our society's idols are ever-changing and will never consider any one body to be timeless. Indeed, almost every possible feature or insecurity of yours has probably been accepted or even idealized, so it's best not to be too focused on superficial qualities. After all, beauty is in the eye of the beholder!





## Alternative produce

Meilin Rife  
FEATURES EDITOR

Since the 1700s, the typical American meal has evolved from homegrown goods to being sourced from the colorful aisles of a chain supermarket. While this change has brought increased productivity and ease, groups of people have also looked back to buying locally.

These numerous aisles entice customers with appealing packaging, signaling products optimally engineered for human consumption. Yet it's the bare appearance of one-of-a-kind local, fresh produce that attracts some people interested in eating unprocessed foods.

"They have all kinds of vegetables that the supermarkets wouldn't have [such as] purple carrots [and] squash," said junior Kabir Sulur when talking about Crystal Springs Produce, a grocery store that sources mainly from local farms. "It forces you to eat healthier if you go to a place [selling] only vegetables and fruits."

For others, the product quality of local produce straight from farms is more reassuring than supermarket chains.

"One time from a grocery store I bought a bag of fruit and it had bugs on the inside," said junior Noah Miller. "It was the reason why we switched [to buying local]."

Freshman Sofia Cabrera eats dried apricots directly from her aunt's farm when she visits. "They're all sweet, there's no sour ones," Cabrera said. "It's hard on the outside but mushy on the inside ... It's a hundred percent better [than grocery store bought ones]."

Some grocery stores, such as Whole Foods, stock their shelves with locally owned brands, but this can come with price premiums. A study conducted in 2022 by researchers at University of California, Nutrition Policy Institute found that while conventionally grown produce in farmers markets was more expensive, organic produce was actually cheaper when buying directly from the source.

Growing food has many costs that are not immediately obvious in store. Going to buy directly from farms can honor those roots.

"[The best part of buying from local farms] is meeting the people," Miller said. "They're really nice and do a

lot of hard work. Some days I'll go help out with their work if I'm free ... [I help so] more people can buy food from them and that can help out the farm."

Jennifer Seif, an advanced standing modern world history teacher, buys a share of a Community Supported Agriculture subscription – a farm-run program that sends a box of seasonal produce weekly to families – from Fifth Crow Farm. Her interest was sparked by meeting the family running the farm ten years ago at a farmers market.

"Despite [CSAs] costing a little bit more, one of my favorite things [is that] ... every single farm worker is well cared for," Seif said. "You know those seasonal farm workers have stability and they have health care ... Knowing that my food was ethically, not only grown, but then harvested, to me, feels an investment in humanity ... All of our small actions build to big movements and change."

Community support can not only encompass large regional areas, but also small nearby ones. Project Pantry is a club that started at Borel Middle School. They take food donations from companies or local farms specializing in collecting defective produce and give it out to students. Junior Kate Sato and her friends hope to continue at Aragon this year.

"It's something that everyone should be aware of – how fortunate they are to live [in the Bay Area] and be provided [with] these foods," Sato said. "The fact that we can help people that don't have the resources we do is a good thing."

Supporting local farmers and businesses doesn't have to be an extreme shift. Junior Alex Camarena gets a small portion of his food from farmer's markets.

"I would recommend [shopping at the farmers market] to my friends because you can find new shops you didn't know about [and] try out new foods or new dishes," Camarena said. "[My favorite part] is the pop-ups and the ready-to-eat foods."

There are many ways people can try out local foods, including going to the farmers market, trading home-grown foods, or joining a produce group. Anyone can become an urban scavenger among the trove of options offered by grocery stores and farmers alike.

## Gay pop reaches new audiences

Chloe Chen  
FEATURES EDITOR

Sparks flew after Jojo Siwa, 21-year-old pop artist, stated, "I want to start a new genre ... called gay pop." While the proclamation brought new awareness to the genre, many online also pointed out that gay pop scene has already been well-established with an ancestrally rich community, which Siwa's statement disregards.

This subgenre of music started as early as the Harlem Renaissance, where many queer people gathered together to share cultural discoveries, including music. In the late 1960s to early 1970s, gay people met up at disco clubs. Early gay pop artists include Prince, Freddie Mercury, Elton John and many more who have not been represented as much in the media compared to gay pop artists today.

Gay pop has expanded the scope of traditional pop music.

"The style of pop is the same in a musical sense," said sophomore Lia Alves. "The content of it's the same, but it's really the words and the message behind it that changes. A lot of pop songs talk about love, but gay pop specifically focuses on LGBTQ+ love and relationships, rather than heterosexual relationships."

The definition of gay pop varies from person to person. Some students believe it is not limited to LGBTQ+ artists.

"Gay pop is more defined as people who like music

about inclusivity and celebration of queer identity," said senior Pippa Reading. "[It] explores themes of love and relationships and acceptance from the queer perspective."

With the rising acceptance of the queer community, gay pop has reached greater audiences.

"It's good that people [explore] their [identities] and what they want to listen to," said freshman Eshnad Perez. "[Gay

Students recognize the visibility gay pop brings to the queer community.

"Good Luck, Babe!" [by Chappell Roan] is so popular," said senior Felix Gee. "It's a song about comphet [the pressure to live by heterosexual norms], which is a lesbian experience. It's really great that songs about [this] subject matter are so popular."

Others believe it has furthered the purpose of music: to connect communities.

"It's really fun and a great way to express identities and to have content that you identify with," Alves said. "Music is always really impactful, no matter what it's about and bringing different identities into it is really powerful."

With changing attitudes towards the queer community, gay pop is enjoyed by a wide variety of audiences, not just people from the queer community.

"In the future of music, there will be a lot more 'gay pop' because it's a genre everyone enjoys," Reading said. "It feels good for the queer community to be more accepted. It's important for queer representation because a lot of times, queer is not the norm, and now it's more like 'it's okay to be gay.'"

This subgenre of music has helped the queer community gain recognition, a step towards more equality and diversity. This evolution in music has expanded the range of traditional pop, celebrating identity and spreading awareness for the queer community.



EVA LUDWIG

pop] brings more diversity into pop culture with people feeling more welcomed."

Gay pop artists have gained awareness on social media platforms and the web.

"I love Chappell Roan, and a lot of [other] people say that too," said sophomore Mavis Nguyen. "She talks really candidly about girl experiences and [she makes] really funny, silly [songs]."

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# Short N' Sweet: jarring style and clever lyrics



ISLAND RECORDS

Ellen Li  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

All eyes have been on Sabrina Carpenter, a rising pop singer and performer, as she releases hit after hit. Carpenter's latest album, "Short N' Sweet," released on Aug. 23, cements her place as a powerhouse in the music industry.

Since 2011, Carpenter has starred in various acting roles, and in 2015 released her debut album, "Eyes Wide Open" (2015), followed by the albums "Evolution" (2016), "Singular: Act I" (2018) and "Singular: Act II" (2019).

In 2020, Carpenter was involved in internet drama with fellow pop singers and former Disney stars Olivia Rodrigo and Joshua Bassett, as many speculated the blonde girl referenced in Rodrigo's hit song "driver's license" was about Carpenter. Carpenter later released the hit single "Skin" in January of 2021 as a response.

The following year, she released "Emails I Can't Send" with "Nonsense," which gained online fame because of Carpenter's customized outros of the song at each stop on her headline tour and other events, including Taylor Swift's Eras Tour.

Carpenter is known for her witty lyrics, which is definitely reflected in her new album. Expectations were high when Carpenter released her first single from the album, "Espresso," in April of this year, which quickly gained popularity for its fun and clever lyrics like "I know I Mountain Dew it for ya" and the funky, upbeat melody. The track was described as "the song of the summer" and presents a unique take on love, with Carpenter likening herself to espresso, keeping her lover up all night thinking about her. Carpenter followed it up with the chart-topping song "Please Please Please," released in June of this year, which soon became her first number one song on the Billboard Top 100. Though the song has fun verses and cute lyrics, it was not my favorite on the album as I thought the lyrics were repetitive and the song felt a bit hollow overall.

"Short N' Sweet" displays Carpenter's unique style of lyrics and flirty pop princess persona. Though the album contains some catchy hits, it also contains some misses, with the biggest problem in the album being its lack of continuity. Listening through the album is a roller coaster

of moods, switching abruptly from upbeat songs to more melancholy and angry ones. The first half of the album is exceptional, but I felt that the second half lacked substance and Carpenter's iconic charm.

The first song of the album, "Taste," displays Carpenter's sweet and breathy voice. The song is written to her ex's on-again-off-again girlfriend, explaining Carpenter's lasting impact on him de-

ally shined on this song. However, the jarring transition from "Espresso" to this song was incredibly off-putting. The song itself was nothing new and didn't stick with me.

Playful sexual innuendo permeates the album, but "Bed Chem" and "Juno" explicitly say it. "Juno" references the 2007 film of the same name about teenage pregnancy, with Carpenter declaring that she would let her partner get her pregnant. The song is not shy about its sexual messaging, as well as containing a cute melody.

Overall, the hits on this album make it one that should not be missed. Anyone who enjoys Carpenter's old songs and her newfound style of silly yet clever lyrics, will definitely enjoy this album. Overall, I give this album four out of five stars. The album contains a mix of more pop-esque songs as well as some slower songs that display Carpenter's full vocal abilities. Though some songs lacked depth and the transitions throughout the album were often jarring, the clever lyrics and unique style make up for it.

spite their short time together. I personally really enjoy this song, with its upbeat melody. The song is an instant hit. "Bed Chem" had a slightly different vibe, incorporating an '80s groove style. Though I did not initially like this song, it quickly grew on me, especially the lyrics: "Come right on me, I mean camaraderie" and "Where art thou? Why not uponeth me?"

A song I didn't like as much was "Dumb & Poetic." The song is on the slower side with heart-wrenching lyrics, and Carpenter's vocal abilities re-

## OUR OUTLOOK



# Rotten to the core: self-destructive behavior

Emma Shen  
NEWS EDITOR

From our bodies to our brains, social media has us all rotten to the core. These apps have mastered the art of exploiting young users' desires to fit in, capitalizing on the fact that many live in a bubble of self-pity — sometimes building this bubble themselves.

Society has even shifted from the term brainwashed to brain-rotted; not only are people devoid of any original thought, but they're so mentally corrupt that their mindset can only be described as such.

Brain rot refers to the toll that internet content, usually nonsensical and low-value, can take on people who are chronically online. This will often be videos that contain

extensive strings of buzz words, including "skibidi toilet" and "rizz." Sure, by itself, it's harmless enough — sometimes one just needs a mindless scroll.

"I don't take [those videos] seriously," said junior Dahlia Selig. "Some [are] kind of funny, [but] I don't go searching for them. When they come up, it's like Cocomelon, you don't have to think about it. And in that way, it can be really nice, because it's like, 'Wait, who will win, the 1 million chickens or the Mongolian army?'"

While much of the content on social media may be taken lightly, there may be a darker side to some of the trends dominating these platforms, rooted in prejudices such as fatphobia. TikTok especially has both stigmatized and nor-

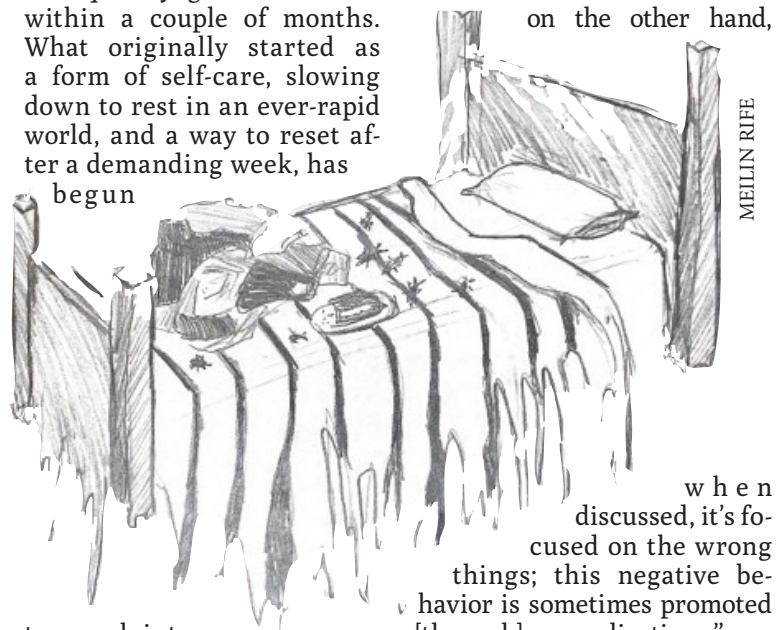
malized conversations about weight. Month after month, there are new trends about every body type under the sun, and most recently, social media has deemed it acceptable to comment on people's size — even, and sometimes especially, if inaccurate — as long as it's executed creatively.

"Skinny people calling themselves fat just makes fat people feel worse about themselves," said junior Benjamin Lee. "[When] I call myself fat, I don't really think about how it makes [others] feel [until] I look back [on] the moment. I don't think it's [about] the body weight, it's just how much I eat."

Beyond body shaming, social media has also normalized unhealthy and sometimes self-destructive behaviors.

A term known as "bed rotting" emerged in late 2023 and quickly gained traction within a couple of months. What originally started as a form of self-care, slowing down to rest in an ever-rapid world, and a way to reset after a demanding week, has begun

"I don't see much representation of [mental health online]," Benavente said. "But on the other hand,



to morph into an excuse for idleness. As a result, issues like poor time management skyrocket.

"Whenever I see reels relating to procrastination, I notice it tends to promote that," said junior Darren Benavente. "It's all these jokes about, 'oh, I procrastinate until the night [an assignment is] due,' and they say how they got it all done. But [it's] unhealthy behavior; that's not what you should be doing."

With the rise of casual body shaming and habits like bed rotting, people facing real issues are often invalidated, pushed aside by those who misuse the terms to fit in. This limits the amount of accurate content circulating the media about issues like binge eating disorder or depression.

when discussed, it's focused on the wrong things; this negative behavior is sometimes promoted [through] generalizations."

While social media may be a powerful vessel to form communities and interact with like minds online, being informed while consuming content is essential. Moreover, it's crucial to call out the usage of these negative, self-deprecating terms in order to decimate the perpetuation of stereotypes.

"I don't think I've made a conscious effort to stop [calling people fat] but maybe after this article's posted and I get a lot of hate, I will," Lee said. "Backlash makes people stop."

Challenging the cycles of self-destructive behavior promoted on social media begins with awareness and accountability — be big-minded not big-backed.



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# Fall sports previews

## Girls water polo

Phoebe Harger, sports writer

After facing pool closures last year and finishing their season with a losing record, the girls water polo team is determined to come back stronger.

The team achieved first place in the annual Battle of the Bay tournament played between local schools. Junior Charlotte Graham credits the progress to the team's new dynamic.

"Rather than having just a few star players we have a whole team of really talented girls," Graham said. "And everyone is getting an equal opportunity to shine on this team and grow as a player."



MIA THURRELL

## Football

Sora Mizutani, sports writer

On Sept. 13, Aragon football lost to Lincoln 17-35, falling to 1-2 for the season.

This year, Ashley Parham is the new head coach, after 24 years under athletic director and former head coach Steve Sell. The team used the off-season to implement new strategies.

"We have a completely new offense," said senior cornerback and receiver Markus Gosch. "Our strengths will be that teams won't know what we're gonna do this year. They're not going to know any of our plays. A lot of our plays are misleading, and ... we have counter options to those."



EHTIAN TAWN

# Josh Yuan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Yuan also participated in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and got to experience Paris and the Olympic Village. He even met his childhood idols, taking pictures and chatting with basketball superstars LeBron James, Steph Curry, and Kevin Durant on the boat at the Opening Ceremony.

Currently 21 years old, he plans to finish his studies at University of California Berkeley as an economics major and begin the qualification process for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. His goal is to win the first Olympic medal for the United States in badminton, one of just five sports that the U.S. has never medaled in.

Yuan began playing badminton when he was eight years old, growing up in Foster City before moving to Hillsborough last year.

"At a very young age, he tried all kinds of sports, like basketball, soccer, baseball, taekwondo and tennis," said Yuan's mother Janet Jin. "He was always into sports, and of course, badminton was always his main sport. Through elementary school and middle school, there weren't any badminton teams in school, so he played in his club, and then he competed all the time internationally as well as locally."

Former badminton head coach and current PE teacher Linda Brown saw Yuan's special talents up close during his time on the team.

"When he would come in and he would play opponents, there was really no one that could really touch him until he went to CCS and the competition was much higher," Brown said. "He's just an amazing badminton player. At 14, he's beating the seniors in the whole area and really with not a lot of effort."

To pursue Olympic qualification, Yuan took a gap year this past school year. The Olympic qualification schedule was very demanding, with over 25 tournaments around the world in a year and around one every other week.

"While it was fun to be going to all these different countries, meeting new people and cultures, and playing the sport that I'm so passionate about, there are also many low moments," Yuan said. "It's exhausting just being on the road and not having a place to call your home."

As a full-time student-athlete at Cal, Yuan had to sacrifice many aspects of college life.



Joshua Yuan consults partner Vinson Chiu. YOHAN NONETTE

# The new kid on the court: pickleball

Jack He  
SPORTS EDITOR

Over the past few years, parkgoers may have noticed some new additions to the tennis courts near San Mateo and Foster City – bright pink miniature nets deployed over a dozen make-shift courts, adorned with shabby duct tape for lines. The Bay Area is not the only one jumping on the pickleball trend – after all, it's been named the fastest growing sport in America by ESPN for the past four years. But why the national rage over pickleball?

For one, pickleball is very compact: paddles are small and light while nets can be rolled up and stored in a bag, and courts can be created just about anywhere with tape. This made pickleball the perfect candidate for a pandemic sport. People were stuck at home, often unable to participate in their usual sport due to facility restrictions, but had a lot of time and an open backyard.

"When COVID hit... there was a big

wave of people shifting over to pickleball," said social studies teacher and tennis player Jon Felder. "Before COVID, I almost never saw anyone play [pickleball]."

One person who rode the pickleball surge after the pandemic is Chinese teacher and pickleball enthusiast Qi Fan. What was once a casual pastime with her friends now became an irreplaceable part of her routine.

"I got started because I saw other people play, since my house is near the pickleball court," Fan said. "When I walked my dog, I saw people playing pickleball, and it seemed fun. It doesn't require a lot of sports background, a lot of training ... [the] paddle seems small and light, unlike tennis which seems intimidating."

By being so beginner-friendly, pickleball has drawn in both adults and teenagers alike.

"There's no shame if you're bad at it, because everyone's learning together," said junior Brooke Lau, who had her first encounter with pickleball last summer at a camp. "It's a back and forth thing – you may lose one game, but then you could win the other, because your skills are basically on the same level."

Pickleball's strong retention of players is an indication of the potential it has.

"I'm addicted [to pickleball]," Fan said. "I hope this is a good addiction; I still support my family and my job as my priority, but I feel [pickleballers] have a shared interest, and that we're a warm community, doing things together to make the community better. That's a lofty thing."

Pickleball's low barrier to entry, diverse age groups, and small court makes it the perfect mecca to socialize with new people, and the pickleball community prides itself as being one of the friendliest across all sports.

"The pickleball community is really welcoming," Lau said. "If you just go up and you're like, 'Hey, can I play with you guys' and you're by yourself, they'll [say], 'Oh, yeah'. The community is pretty good for making friends with new people."

The tight-knit identity of the pickleball community also has an intensely passionate fanbase.

"One time Cupertino wanted to convert one of its pickleball courts over to a paid pickleball court," Fan said. "But through collaborative effort, a lot of people showed up to City Hall on Zoom, and everyone talked about their pickleball story, how pickleball changed their lives. I think the government, the officials, were really touched. They did not expect to see so many people on Zoom. 500 people is a lot of people."

Given pickleball's meteoric rise in popularity, facilities have not been built fast enough to accommodate the influx of players.

"Since it's so trendy right now, everyone's playing," Lau said. "No matter what time you go, the courts are always going to be filled. You have to wait so long just to get in one match and then it's over. You have to wait another 20-30 minutes for your turn again."

The sport's inclusive, social, and flexible nature has captivated the hearts of many who tried it once and never dropped the paddle again.

READ MORE ON ARAGON OUTLOOK.ORG.

missing strong with victory over Los Altos High School, who seeded second in CCS last year.

Head coach Dave Owdom believes the team is full of potential with three-star recruit Ella Teng joining the singles lineup. "The boys team did win the league [last year]," Owdom said. "The girls hope to do well in PAL—we would love to win it."

## Cross country

Sora Mizutani, sports writer

This year, the Aragon cross country team has a record-high of 76 athletes. With many returning seniors, head coach Frank Hunt has clear objectives for his final season.

"My goal is to get us out of the PAL championship, into the CCS regional championship," Hunt said. "I really enjoyed my time ... It's been a pleasure to work with one of the best athletic directors in the whole district, possibly in the whole section."



EHTIAN TAWN

## Girls volleyball

Charlie Henderson, sports writer

After defending their Central Coast Section Championship with a 21-14 overall record and a 10-4 PAL finish last season, this year's girls volleyball team could "three-peat" as CCS champions.

With this goal in mind, the Dons are still focused on constantly improving as a team.

"It's going to be important for this team to understand that we're still building," said senior Cassie McMillan.

"It's not expected for us to win every game in the beginning. The goal is to figure out what the issues are and solve them as quickly as possible."

## Flag football

Charlie Henderson, sports writer

After a successful (7-3) inaugural campaign last year, Aragon's varsity flag football team hopes to build on their previous success. The Dons have hired a new head coach, Ron Douglas, a former college football player and assistant coach.

Each member of the team knows the positive impact their team has on the Aragon community.

"It's important to have flag football because it gives girls an opportunity to broaden their horizons in terms of sports," said senior Kaia Smith. "I am proud to be part of a team that is helping pave the way for high school athletics."

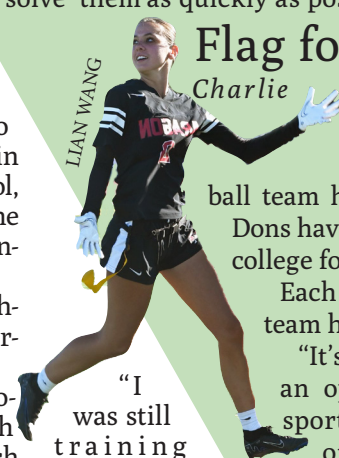
## Girls tennis

Jack He, sports editor

After barely out on last year's CCS team ships, Aragon girls tennis started a 8-2 overall record, including a 4-1 victory over Los Altos High School, who seeded second

in CCS last year. Head coach Dave Owdom believes the team is full of potential with three-star recruit Ella Teng joining the singles lineup.

"The boys team did win the league [last year]," Owdom said. "The girls hope to do well in PAL—we would love to win it."



LIAN WANG



MARTIN ZHENG



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