

900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo, CA 94402

FOOD INSECURITY

Ellie Blakely
NEWS WRITER

Due to the government shutdown this fall, the federal government reduced Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits across the country on Nov. 1. San Mateo County responded by allocating money to local nonprofits in an attempt to manage food insecurity ahead of future cuts to the program.

The government shutdown, which lasted 43 days and was the longest on record, occurred because Congress failed to pass a bill extending the government's spending by the Sept. 30 deadline. As a result, non-essential government services were temporarily stopped or reduced and federal workers either worked without pay or were temporarily suspended.

"People working for the government ... weren't getting paychecks," said Lee Miller, a political science professor at the College of San Mateo. "So if you're living paycheck to paycheck, and you miss a paycheck, you can't pay your bills."

Another major impact of the government shutdown was the delay and temporary incomplete payment of SNAP benefits in November, which left about 42 million Americans without food assistance. SNAP, known as CalFRESH in California, is a federal food aid program that provides low-income individuals with money for groceries through an Electronic Transfer Benefits card each month.

"I remember receiving [an EBT card], which was actually very helpful," said junior Vivianne Santos, whose family previously received SNAP benefits. "Just a week of groceries helps. Even [my family] can't meet the budget that we're wanting to."

The reduction of SNAP benefits left many people unable to afford groceries and escalated pressure on food banks.

"It [increased] the food demand from our existing clients," said Elida Valencia Sobalvarro, director of the YMCA Community Resource Center in South San Francisco. "[And] we saw new families we had never worked with before come to our food distributions seeking services. [Also], because of having to pay a little bit extra for food, now folks [were] short on rent."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Senate Bill 640

Diya Poojary
NEWS WRITER

On Oct. 6, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 640, granting eligible high school students direct admission into some California State Universities.

Authored by Democrat State Sen. Christopher Cabaldon, the bill is effective beginning Jan. 1, 2026. Cabaldon stated the bill would encourage and expand accessibility to higher education.

Under the bill, eligible students meeting the CSU admission standard of a 2.5 or higher GPA who have fulfilled A through G high school courses will receive admission offers from CSU campuses on behalf of the CSU Chancellor's office without a required formal application. Students can choose to decline the offer or complete enrollment steps to secure a spot.

"This bill [provides] an opportunity ... to learn about college and to know that they have a choice," said senior Heli Artola. "[For example,] there's a lot of people in my family that didn't apply to colleges because they

didn't know how to or they didn't feel like they could get in. But with this new bill, it would be eye-opening to them knowing that a college chose them."

However, some consider the possibility that relatively lowered bars for acceptance may negatively impact student performance.

"[Some] people aren't going to be motivated to work hard ... because they don't feel they need to," said junior Audrey Turner. "[People] need to have urgency to do their work, but not to the point where it's impacting their mental health. It's a fine line you have to walk."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



EVA LUDWIG



AIDAN KASTEN

BRANDON HO

San Mateo County sheriff appointed

Diya Gourineni
NEWS WRITER

On Nov. 12, Kenneth Binder was appointed as the San Mateo County Sheriff by the San Mateo Board of Supervisors. Binder's appointment came after former Sheriff Christina Corpus was removed from office by the board in October after allegations of misconduct, nepotism, corruption and retaliation. The removal of an elected sheriff by a county was a first for California.

In late October, the Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to appoint a sheriff for the remainder of Corpus' term rather than have voters decide on a candidate through a special election. Supervisors Noelia Corzo, Lisa Gauthier and Ray Mueller voted for the appointment of the sheriff, while Supervisors David Canepa and Jackie Speier voted against it.

"It is not healthy for any organization to be in crisis and instability," Corzo said. "We completed our appointment process in about two weeks, and it did not come at the cost of the community having the opportunity to provide input. We actually made sure that we allowed community members full transparency into the decision making ... [and the process was] very public. [The appointment] has allowed us to bring stability to the sheriff's office and to the community."

Julie Lind, head of the San Mateo County Central Labor Council, agrees with Corzo. The Labor Council is affiliat-

ed with the Deputy Sheriff's Association, the Organization of Sheriff Sergeants and other labor unions.

"What you have to do to run for sheriff is not the same as the tem-

to say, then they would have made it more publicized, because a lot of people aren't aware of [the appointment]," said San Mateo High School sophomore Savera Munugala. "They could have involved the people a little bit more."

dersheriff. Immediately before being appointed as San Mateo County's sheriff, he served as the Interim Chief of Police for the city of Gilroy.

Binder has emphasized neutrality and peace for the department in recent statements, hoping to increase diversity and reform the San Mateo County jails. During the past several years, the county's jails had five deaths, inmate fights, undelivered mail and broken elevators, all issues which Sheriff Binder hopes to resolve. As a former Under-sheriff of Santa Clara County, he also has experience with the Santa Clara County jails, which are larger and more complex than the San Mateo County jails.

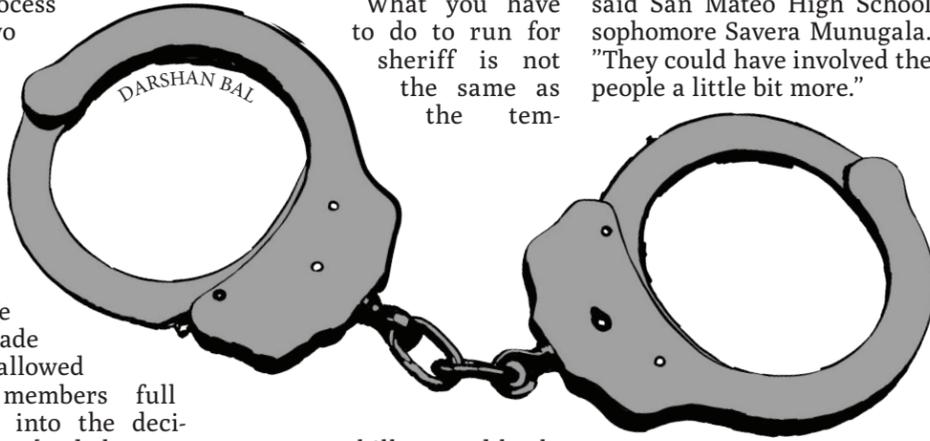
"[Sheriff Binder's] information and experience can help not just Sheriff's Office employees and correctional officers, but also the incarcerated people who are living in the jails and deserve to have dignity in that experience," Corzo said.

Some people hope to see positive changes in the Sheriff's Office as a result of Binder's appointment.

"Integrity, not being corrupt and wanting what's best for the people [is important]," Munugala said.

Lind hopes to see a turnaround from Corpus' leadership of the organization.

"A standard of communication, collaboration and respect [has] been missing from that office for so many years," Lind said. "Going into a room and wanting to listen and wanting to learn and wanting to move forward as a team is going to be [Binder's] biggest asset."



perament, skill set and background you need to have to serve as sheriff, especially now," Lind said. "The voters chose overwhelmingly to support Measure A, a mandate empowering the Board of Supervisors to remove the sheriff ... The public had given the board the authority to make that happen, and [this appointment] was a piece of making that happen."

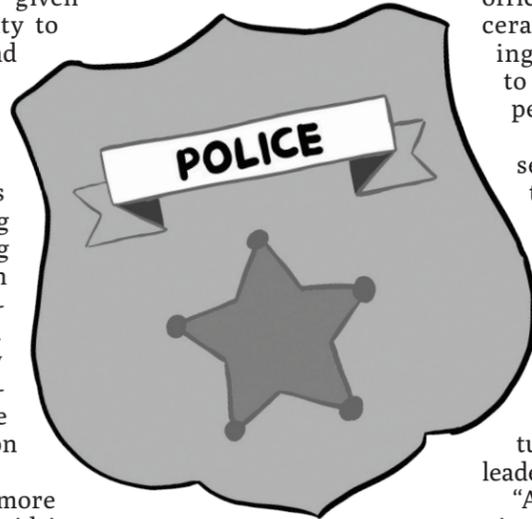
On Oct. 21, the Board of Supervisors allotted time during their regular meeting for public comment on the method of choosing the new sheriff. San Mateo County residents have differing opinions about the public's participation with the appointment.

"I like that it was more open to the public," said junior Victoria Salto Lopez. "[People] were able to give out their own opinions."

Others felt they were more neglected by the appointment process.

"If they were really listening to what the people had

Sheriff Binder has a Master of Arts in Criminal Justice from Arizona State University, a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from San Jose State University and graduated



from the FBI National Academy. He has been involved in law enforcement for 27 years, previously serving in the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office as Chief of Police of Cupertino, Saratoga and Los Altos and later serving as un-



COURTESY OF THE MERCURY NEWS

Binder at a public candidate forum on Nov. 10.

Senate Bill 640 creates opportunity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

It is important to note that the bill does not guarantee placement into students' preferred campuses, especially if their selected campus or major is oversubscribed. In such cases, placement into the universities depend on additional criteria, like higher GPA, to secure admission.

Additionally, the bill only applies to certain CSUs, such as Fresno State, California Polytechnic State University Humboldt, San Francisco State and others, which have faced severe financial problems due to budget cuts and declining enrollment in the past years. More popular CSUs, like Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and CSU Fullerton, are not subject to the bill and require the pre-existing application requirements.

Some contemplate how the bill may impact the prestige some students may regard colleges in.

"The standards, for some people, of prestige may be impacted, because people might [start] to see it as, 'oh,

now it's easier to get into, so it's less special,'" Turner said. "But overall, the people who go are going [are] the people who are interested in higher education, ... in getting a degree ... [and] in trying new things."

Another detail is that the bill only applies to Local Education Agencies, such as a public board of education; private high school students are not subject to the bill's provisions. Some, like Sophie Farid, a junior at Crystal Springs Uplands High School, consider this to be a reasonable decision because of the resources private schools have access to.

"[We] have support for everything that you could possibly think of," Farid said. "So from a standpoint of a Crystal student, it doesn't affect us very much."



Additionally, some students believe the bill is taking the wrong steps toward raising the standard of education for students across the U.S.

"[By] the time someone graduates high school, it's too late to shoehorn them into college, especially if the past ... 13 years of their educational experience has been of poor quality," said junior Remy Chow. "You have to make sure that [their] education is good from the beginning ... then everyone will be more prepared [and] more likely to go to college, and then you can increase your college enrollment without this ... method."

Many, like college advisor Mary O'Reilly, are eager to see the changes this bill will bring moving forward.

"I'm excited ... to see how it rolls out," O'Reilly said. "Maybe the first year there

might be some learning curves that the state and different schools have to work through. But it's going to open more doors for students [in general]."

Results from this Bill are expected after the first season of fall 2027 applicants.

Colleges with Direct-Admit Opportunity:

- CSU Bakersfield
- CSU Channel Islands
- Chico State
- CSU Dominguez Hills
- Cal State East Bay
- Fresno State
- Cal Poly Humboldt
- Cal State LA
- Cal State Monterey Bay
- CSU Northridge
- Sacramento State
- Cal State San Bernardino
- San Francisco State
- Cal State San Marcos
- Sonoma State
- Stanislaus State

SNAP down

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In response to the broad impact of SNAP benefit reductions, San Mateo County distributed an additional \$900,000 to its Core Service Agencies, nonprofits that provide food, shelter and housing assistance to people in need. When California resumed funding of CalFresh on Nov. 7, the county was also preparing to provide CalFresh recipients with funding in the form of checks, along with other plans, according to Claire Cunningham, Director of the San Mateo County Human Services Agency. Those plans have since been halted.

"It was a good move on the county's part to [give] what they could to those food banks so they're at least a little bit closer to meeting [the demand of] those in need," Santos said.

States also responded to the pause in benefits. 25 states sued the Trump administration over its decision to halt SNAP benefits, and a federal judge ruled the administration had to pay the benefits in full.

However, days later, the Supreme Court issued an emergency ruling that allowed the Trump administration to temporarily continue its restriction of SNAP benefits.

"That was really a terrible situation," Cunningham said. "And [it was] right before Thanksgiving. You almost can't make up a more cruel impact to people who are already struggling a lot with their day-to-day existence."

Following weeks of uncertainty for those reliant on SNAP, the benefits were restored across the country after the shutdown ended on Nov. 12. In addition, Congress passed a bill that ensured SNAP funding until September 2026.

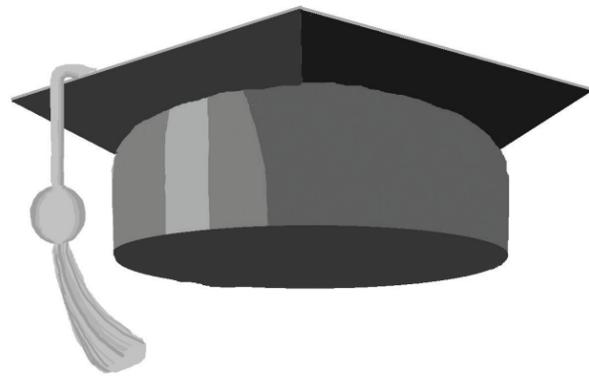
However, many people are projected to lose access to benefits as a result of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed in July. The bill will restrict eligibility for SNAP benefits, taking millions of Americans out of the program. Many are unhappy with these cuts, which they say withhold support for people who are already struggling.

"If you build a country on liberty and equality, then you have to [uplift] people who are less fortunate," said junior Kira Partridge. "Cutting [SNAP benefits] ... and [not raising people] up to the standard [of] living, that's going against what America stood for."

According to the county, nearly 35,000 San Mateo County residents rely on SNAP benefits. Officials say these cuts to SNAP will harm residents and cause more reliance on food banks and other community services.

"These ... tremendous policy shifts are going to have a dramatic impact on thousands of San Mateo County residents," Cunningham said. "We're going to have a lot more people who rely on other sources of support because the governmental safety net is not nearly as robust as it used to be ... That means our communities really need to come together, and neighbors need to help other neighbors out."

As people reliant on SNAP benefits recover from the government shutdown, they face more uncertainty. SNAP changes caused by the OBBB Act will leave millions without food aid, putting strain on struggling families as well as the local agencies that serve them.



HAVE THOUGHTS YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH THE OUTLOOK? SUBMIT HERE!



Silver Sword reworks

This editorial represents the opinions of 14 out of 14 Outlook editors.

Silver Sword first found its roots in honoring Aragon students for their involvement and dedication to the community. To recognize participation in activities that otherwise would not result in a grade or credits, Silver Sword opened the doors to another form of schoolwide honor. That being said, as Aragon continues to undergo changes throughout the years, so too should Silver Sword.

The roles listed need updates. Certain roles, such as the "Senior Citizen Outreach Club", do not exist anymore. Simultaneously, other categorizations lack specificity; the robotics title "team manager" gives no clue as to whether it refers to the team's director, one of its six subteam captains or any of the subteams' other leadership positions.

While it most certainly is a hefty task to run the Silver Sword role list by every featured club, revising the list yearly to delete discarded roles and introduce some specificity is entirely possible and would help to streamline the process of point addition. Clubs can provide the information necessary to create these specified roles in their annual application forms.

Furthermore, students often find it challenging to access how many points they have earned. In the past, students were instructed to email the Silver Sword coordinator, with mixed results. This is not the fault of the coordinator, however, as the current system is inefficient. Instead of having to input each student's points by hand, Silver Sword points could be maintained entirely in a digital format that is easily accessible to both administrators and students, allowing students to review how many points they've accumulated at any time. There are a number of means to digitize signatures as well, from websites to email confirmation, meaning that verification from advisors is still factored into the process.

Of the 500 points required for the Silver Sword Award, only 200 can be obtained from activities outside of school and community service. This cap sends the wrong message. Instead of encouraging students to pursue service wherever they can in order to make the biggest impact, it discourag-

es them from continuing meaningful work beyond campus.

As opposed to clubs with tryouts or applications, community service opportunities tend to accept all students; yet the 200-point ceiling undermines this accessibility. As such, the Outlook agrees with the plan already being proposed by staff members to create a separate award for community service. Both Aragon involvement and outside community involvement can receive an award without deviating from the spirit of Silver Sword.

Even in school-affiliated organizations, there still exists unaddressed disparities in point rewards. At minimum, a club member may only need to dedicate 30 minutes of lunch time a week for a semester in order to obtain 15 points — but can one truly say clubs like Marine Biology or DECA, which commit to after-hours meetings and events, only receive the same amount of points?

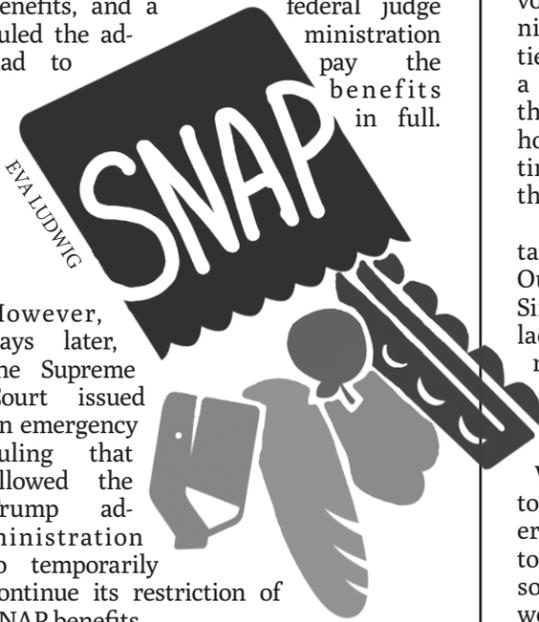
"There's also differentiation between people who just attend [DECA] meetings and people who are actually attending [DECA] competitions," said sophomore and DECA secretary Sonia Timothy Chin Hao. "If you're attending those competitions, there's also a lot of

behind-the-scenes preparation and extra practice ... [and] you're also taking time out of your day to actually attend these competitions. ... It'd be great to have an extra category for members who are attending competitions [so] that they gain more points than the regular club member."

As has already been suggested by staff, and implemented by other schools in our district, a tiered system focusing on distinction between club involvement should be used to better curate point values. Tier 1 clubs

that involve meetings outside of school hours, funding or participation in competitions earn more points. Tier 2 clubs — which focus primarily on lunchtime meetings — still call for commemoration, though the points awarded are slightly lower.

The Outlook believes these revisions will make Silver Sword more efficient and fair while still remaining true to its original goals, and that, as Silver Sword is redefined, the concerns of participants should be taken into account.



aragonoutlook.org

Scott Silton
Faculty Adviser

Meilin Rife & Emma Shen
Editors-in-Chief

FEATURES

- Gemma Albertson*
- Kyra Hsieh*
- Zack Li*
- Angela Nguyen*
- Rebecca Chen
- Ethan Fei
- Roy Kong
- Oliver Levitt
- Seona Srivastava
- Anushka Punjabi
- Addie Rose
- Madeleine Sah
- Ashley Tsui
- Cayleigh Wilson
- Nathaniel Wilson

NEWS

- Darshan Bal*
- Helen McCloskey*
- Yang Yang*
- Ellie Blakely
- Siddharth Gopinath
- Diya Gourineni
- Naomi Kotani
- Ryan Li
- Jannah Nassef
- Diya Poojary
- Renee Ren
- Seanan Young

SPORTS

- Claire Dong*
- Claire Qi*
- Alex Choy
- Max Feng
- Sabina Gulati
- Erena Irokawa
- Ethan Kim
- Olivia Mukherjee
- Adya Tewari
- Luke Trimble

GRAPHICS

- Eva Ludwig*
- Matilda Bacani
- Vanessa Chan
- Lillian Huang
- Eden Kwan
- Mi Nguyen
- Winona Reif
- Dahlia Sehligh
- Audrey Wang

PHOTO

- Madeline Allen*
- Colin Fournier
- Brandon Ho
- Aidan Kasten
- Haley Lau
- Jayson Liu
- Darra McLintock
- Cameron Trio
- Ian Wang
- Jackie Wong

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Madeline Allen*
- Eva Ludwig*
- Angela Nguyen*

BUSINESS

- Zack Li*
- Angela Nguyen*

EDITORIAL

- Gemma Albertson*

CENTERSPREAD

- Allinah Zhan*

TECHNOLOGY

- Allinah Zhan*

Volume 66, Issue 4
December 11, 2025

900 Alameda de las Pulgas,
San Mateo, CA 94402

* denotes editors

Footloose the musical: no cold feet in the theater

Siddharth Gopinath
NEWS WRITER

From Nov. 20-23, Aragon put on its annual musical, "Footloose." The play follows Ren McCormack, a boy from Chicago and an avid dancer who moves to the small town of Bomont after his father abandons his family. In Bomont, dancing is banned, and Ren at first feels isolated from the residents due to the rule and the conservative ways of the town. But McCormack campaigns to overturn the rule, facing a hostile minister and a town unwilling to change the rule. In the process, he makes friends and falls in love with Ariel Moore, the minister's daughter, learns what happened to make others believe in these laws and comes to terms with his father's abandonment of him.

"Footloose' is upbeat," said Aragon Drama Director Shane Smuin. "Some musicals are very deep and sad, and 'Footloose' has [its] serious moments, but it's overall very fun."

The rehearsal process for Aragon's musical each year starts at the beginning of the school year.

"The first four or five weeks is just [dancing] and singing," Smuin said. "October is when I

come in and start putting all of the pieces together: the vocals, the dance and the blocking and the set pieces."

The task for the performers has many components, one such being learning choreography.

"Personally, I have a hard time danc-

people since they're behind stage," said freshman and lightboard operator Sebastian Battles. "But they're still doing all the work behind the

scenes. Stage crew is moving all of the props and sets around. Booth people are the light board, the spotlights, the sounds ... making sure all of the audio and the visuals work."

Many people's view of the show was positive.

"Footloose' is a great choice for a musical, because it's about dancing," said freshman Sophia Barizon. "The choreography and musical numbers seemed great."

Freshman Nicholas Jones had a favorable view of the show.

"The singing and dancing was

really good," Jones said. "The actors were creative [and] I really liked the story. I liked how it incorporated dancing into a nice message."

The show drew large crowds. "We saw the most audience Friday," Petty said. "The seats were pretty much sold out completely."

Despite being set in the 1980s, the musical explores themes of children versus parents, country versus urban areas, old versus new and religion versus youth, but it also shows that these divisions aren't as distinct as people may think.

"The theme of fitting in a new place still applies to any time," Jones said.

Similarly, Smuin believes "Footloose" continues to be pertinent.

"[The musical] is still relevant today," Smuin said. "It gives people a chance to come into the theater and hopefully go back out into the real world with a more compassionate heart."

Drama's next performance will be the Young Playwrights Project on Jan. 31.



ing because choreography is just hard to remember," said Gianni Petty, a freshman who played Garvin. "Singing is easier for me."

The technical crew takes set pieces on and offstage and manages the sound and light.

"[Tech] crew definitely has a lot less visibility to



Oliver Levitt as Ren McCormack announces his move to Bomont.

allcove San Mateo

youth wellness center



find your moment.

find your space.

find your center.



scan to learn more!

allcove San Mateo

2600 S El Camino Real
Suite 300

San Mateo, CA 94403

(650) 226 -7030



GEN Z UPRISINGS GO GLOBAL

Naomi Kotani
NEWS WRITER

Gen Z usually sets trends online, but this time they're taking to the streets.

Since last year, a wave of youth-led protests has swept across dozens of countries around the world in response to a range of issues relating to perceived government inadequacies. Most of the protests follow a similar pattern: they were sparked by specific government actions or neglect that, and when combined with long-held political frustration, pushed young people to mobilize to demand change.

In June 2024, Bangladesh's Supreme Court ruled the 2018 ending of the country's affirmative action government job quota unconstitutional. This decision, in addition to widespread discontentment with the lack of transparent elections that allowed for one party to maintain power for over a decade, gave rise to student protests. This opposition was met with physical pushback from government supporters. The military was then stationed and given a shoot-on-sight order, leading to over 1,400 deaths, a UN report said. The prime minister resigned and fled, and has since been charged with crimes against humanity and sentenced to death.

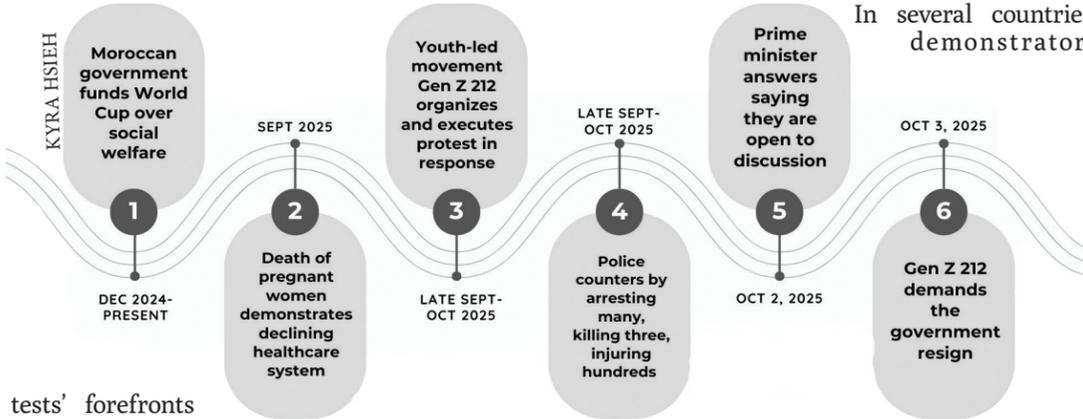
This September, the Nepalese government banned a number of social media and messaging platforms. Coupled with what many viewed as corrupt and elite politicians, this prompted young people to organize peaceful protests. Despite the ban, communication was largely through social media due to the use of virtual private networks. Once protests started, the ban was lifted. But the demonstrations had spiraled out of control, becoming violent in the presence of police, resulting in numerous deaths and government buildings being broken into and set on fire. Following this, the military was deployed and the prime minister resigned. An interim prime minister was elected through a Discord server with over 100,000 members.

The same month, Morocco also saw youth-driven protests. The movement, named "GenZ 212" after Morocco's dialing code, is calling for improvements in welfare services, which organizers said the government had neglected in favor of preparation for the 2030 World Cup, though the government denied this. The protests were also triggered in part by several women dying after having C-sections due to the failing healthcare system.

These are just a few of the countries where uprisings have occurred recently. And while these movements, organized independently of each other, were triggered by different problems in different places, the one thing they had in common was that those at the pro-

tests' forefronts all belonged to the same young generation. This raises the question of why Gen Z seems to be the one leading the efforts, as opposed to older generations.

Moroccan youth protest timeline



tests' forefronts all belonged to the same young generation.

This raises the question of why Gen Z seems to be the one leading the efforts, as opposed to older generations.

"In a lot of countries, it's every man for themselves," said Ren Fitzgerald, local youth organizer and political strategist. "You have this idea of, once you've made it, you don't need to worry about anyone else. It's not about, 'if we work together, we'll all succeed.' It's about you and what you can do for yourself. Unfortunately, with the really

freshman Nishka Hari. "With the Vietnam War protests, [young people] were getting drafted in a war they didn't believe in — their opinions were not being heard. Now, in Nepal [and] Bangladesh, they're speaking out because they feel like the government isn't listening. Even though it's a different issue, [the younger generations] take charge to protect their future."

But Fitzgerald said there is something that sets Gen Z apart

to an international movement," Fitzgerald said. "I've been able to cheer on comrades in other parts of the world that I never would have known were having protests right now, because of social media."

On top of social media, the young protestors have used cultural symbols to bring unity to their movements. In several countries, demonstrators

"People are really afraid right now," Fitzgerald said. "The Trump administration has targeted students who protested in support of Palestine on their campuses. They've detained our classmates [and] threatened to deport them. There's a lot of people who are afraid because of high political violence, mass censorship [and] immigration rights ... We don't feel safe speaking up in the same ways that we did."

Hari is among those with hesitations about engaging in activism.

"I disagree with a lot of things that the [Trump administration] is doing, so I want to start getting involved in protests, but I don't want to get in trouble," Hari said. "With our Constitution, that's probably not gonna happen, [but the Trump administration] can bend the rules, and I don't want to be a victim of that."

But censorship isn't the only obstacle preventing youth in the U.S. from taking more drastic action.

"There's this huge division between Republicans and Democrats," said sophomore Nora Junttila. "In other countries, the youth can combine together, because they're all fighting against one big power. But with [the U.S.], it's two sides fighting against each other, instead of combining like [in] Nepal and fighting against [government leaders]."

More generally, many considered protesting a necessary step towards reform. Fitzgerald brought up other ways of pushing for change, like through policy work. Still, for many who have little sway in policies and elections, demonstrating seemed the most feasible option to advocate for change they wanted to see.

"We're observing a slow reduction of freedoms and that enrages you because you don't want to be not free," Junttila said. "With protesting, it's a way for people to gain recognition when they don't have it yet, if they're not being listened to. It's a way to demand change and have an impact."

While policy, in addition to protest, must be addressed in order to make a lasting difference, these global uprisings signify a far-reaching desire for governmental revisions.

"Change doesn't happen in a single protest," Fitzgerald said. "It doesn't happen overnight. But oftentimes we do need these mass movements, these opportunities to come together as one. It's a catalyst."

waved a pirate flag from the manga and anime "One Piece." Symbols like this one highlight the international solidarity amongst these youth despite their individual movements targeting separate issues.

Even though the U.S. has experienced major change this year under the Trump administration that some thought resembled the events that



difficult economic standpoint of the working class, once you are at a more stable place, as you age, you're not necessarily inclined to think about other people as much."

Several noted that Gen Z appears to be following a common

from older generations — having grown up alongside social media and being able to use that familiarity with the digital world to mobilize.

"We've dominated this online forum that has connected us, not just to our neighbors, but

provoked these international protests, the response from American youth has not been as overt or extreme as in other countries. Many attributed this apparent silence to recent reprimands by the U.S. government for speaking out.

Online this month

FEATURES

Wicked for Good: but was it for great?

Curtains closing: Broadway shows are dying!

"Performative" nonprofits prove to be impactful

News

Community and literacy in action: a plan for multilingual learners

SPORTS

College requirement for athletes: a rule for a reason or an obsolete barrier?

Boys basketball vs. alumni: 11/26

check it out at <https://aragonoutlook.org>

Project 2025 Analysis

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY'S PLAN FOR AMERICA

Cayleigh Wilson and Ryan Li
FEATURES AND NEWS WRITERS

Ask ten people what Project 2025 is, and get ten different answers. Just as most Americans skip the terms and conditions on their phones, many haven't read the 900-page plan that could reshape the federal government, which raises the question: what exactly is Project 2025?

KNOWLEDGE

"It's a project for political reform that leans towards the right," said sophomore Robert Mo. "I haven't heard about specific policies, but I know some people are very against it."

Like Mo, many people are only familiar with the basics of Project 2025, and are still unclear of the ramifications of this sweeping conservative policy plan. Nevertheless, many are aware that it is highly controversial.

Some have been following the proposal more closely.

"I started hearing about it as it came about in 2024, during the [presidential] campaign," said Jon Felder, U.S. Government and Modern World History teacher. "There were a lot of people out there saying, 'if Trump wins the election, we're going to see more of this in 2025.' It was created by the Heritage Foundation when President Biden was still president, with the hopes of a conservative [president] getting elected [next]."

EDUCATION

Project 2025 lays out an ambitious plan that would restructure how the federal government is run, affecting nearly every department. One of its most dramatic proposals is to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education, shifting responsibility for public education and funding for low-income school districts to state and local governments. Although unequal access to education is already a problem, critics warn this could further widen the gap, leaving students' experiences even more dependent on their district.

Moreover, the plan aims to eliminate federal funding for Title I, which provides funding for schools to close opportunity gaps between low and high-income students. If enacted, consequences would include a worsening teacher shortage. According to the Center of American Progress, a progressive policy think tank, 6% of teaching positions in California would be lost.

"Low-income schools usually [have] kids that need education," said sophomore Donya Paz. "[In] a lot of low-income schools, [students aren't] going to be able to go to other places to get an education. This is all they have. If you take away funding for that you're setting kids up for failure. [For] people who need it, this is their chance to provide a life for themselves, their parents and their futures.

Taking away funding for this is hurting not only them, their families, their community, but also ... everyone."

Project 2025 also plans to eliminate the Head Start program, which supports low-income families and children through early learning and development services. According to the National Education Association (NEA), Head Start was able to serve nearly 720,000 children in 2024. If the Head Start program were to be eliminated, 800,000 tod-

money for things that would help people, instead of just giving them more money even though they already have it."

Based on the Constitution's separation of powers, Congress has specifically outlawed the concept of impoundment, which means presidents cannot refuse to spend money that Congress has directed them to through an enacted law. The Trump administration and Project 2025 are challenging this principle. Their actions towards freezing Title I prompts the question, to what extent are Project 2025 and Trump going to in order to

blocked by a federal judge due to the order failing to define what a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program is, as well as being an overstep of the government's power.

On a similar note, the project also proposes to amend Title IX to define sex as "biological sex recognized at birth," instead of gender identity. The project plans to reverse revisions to Title IX under former President Joe Biden, which added the prohibition of discrimination based on

immigration, including \$30 billion towards Immigration and Customs Enforcement and \$45 billion towards construction of immigration detention centers. Trump has issued an executive order commanding the government to detain and prosecute undocumented immigrants.

"[ICE] isn't a great [method] of deportation," Rhodes said. "Because people are being stripped of basic rights to court and hearing, and what I've seen from the detention centers is that people aren't being treated right. The families of those who are deported aren't getting any information from where the people [who] have been deported are being taken ... I cannot believe that our government and the president [are] allowing this to happen. It's very inhumane and disgusting how they are treating these people."

SOCIAL MEDIA

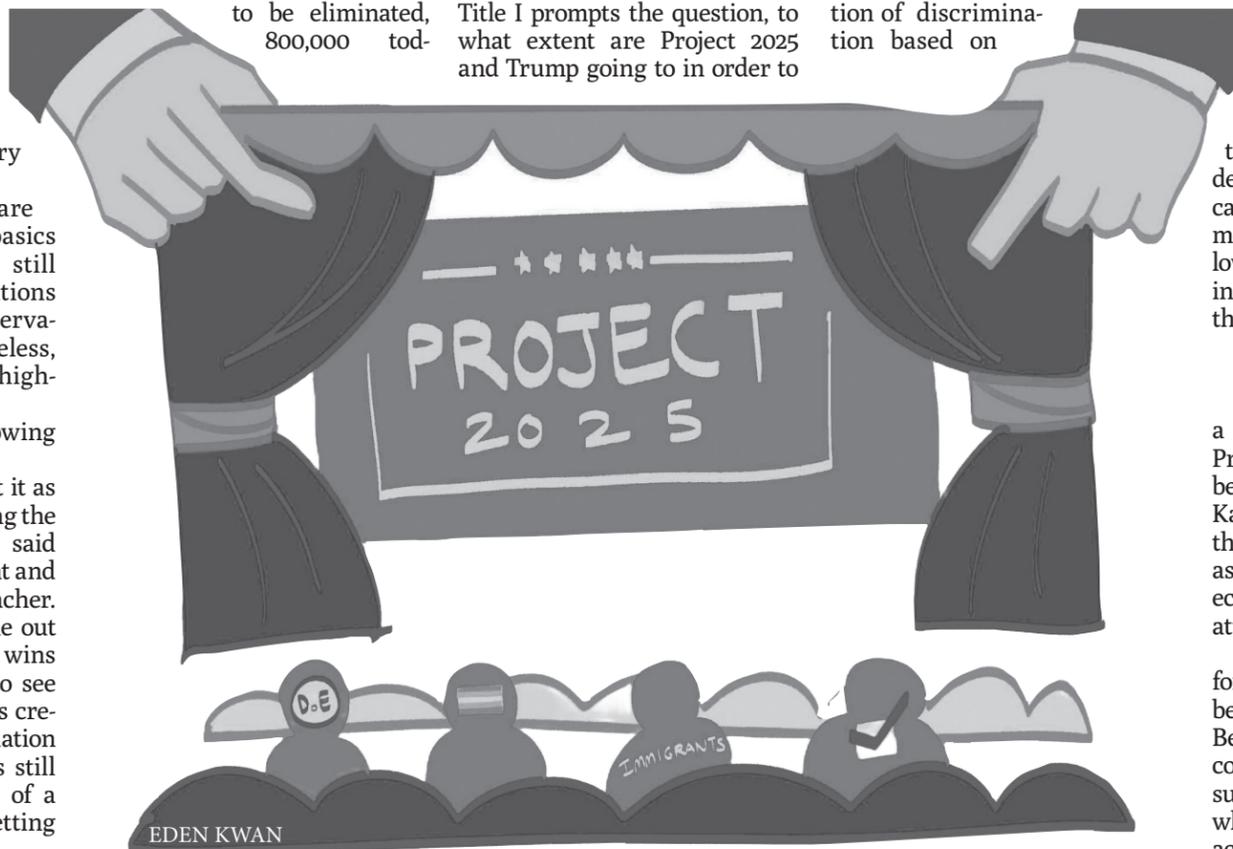
Social media has become a center for discussion about Project 2025. After a debate between former Vice President Kamala Harris and Trump, a thread on X, formerly known as Twitter, breaking down Project 2025's key points drew the attention of 20 million people.

Apart from being a center for discussion, social media has become an information source. Because the plan is long and complicated, people rely on summaries from influencers, whether those summaries are accurate or not. Content creators from both the left and right post their interpretations of the plan, allowing them to shape the overall narrative. However, influencers transform tedious and complicated concepts into quick and engaging media, which draw more Americans into conversations about government. People who would usually shy away from politics can now pick up information by scrolling through their social media feeds.

Though many of Project 2025's proposals have yet to be implemented, some students fear that the project will hurt the country if it were fully enacted.

"The people that need help the most are the people that Project 2025 would hurt, and it just makes the rich people richer and the poor people poorer," Paz said. "It's just going to hurt the country, because it's going to make people feel more excluded ... It's not really progressing America."

With Project 2025 being implemented, there are major implications across countless fields. These policies have the power to reshape the nation.



dlers and infants would lose educational services.

The project seeks to increase education choice through "micro education savings accounts," praising Arizona's Education Savings Account program as an example of states increasing

Removing impoundment: Congress is now unable to ensure the president spends money as it has legally directed for the money to be spent

school choice, suggesting Project 2025 to use Arizona's program as a model.

The program provides \$7,000 of taxpayer money per child for expenses, such as private school tuition. However, according to the NEA, the ESA program lacked accountability in private schools' finances and operations and predominantly served wealthier, private school families. Only 5% of ESA recipients in Arizona came from ZIP codes with a median income under \$49,000, highlighting its lack of impact on lower-income students who need funds the most.

"The funding should not be going towards rich kids' education," Paz said. "[Money] going towards tuition for people that can afford the tuition is contradicting what the money is for. You should use the money for

obtain power, and how will the states bear the impact?

So far, Trump has signed an executive order to issue guidance to states on using federal funds to increase students' ability to decide the schools that they would like to attend.

Project 2025 also has major implications for higher education payment. It proposes the removal of Biden's income-based student loan repayment. The NEA reports this will lead to 43 million Americans paying up more per month on student loan debt. The project also called for the elimination of the Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students loan program, which has been partially achieved. The Grad PLUS program, which provided student loans to graduate students, maintains current borrowers but stops from accepting any new borrowers under Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

RACE & GENDER

Project 2025 impacts not only the funding for education but also the curriculum taught. It calls for the removal of critical race theory and "gender ideology" from public school curricula, comparing transgender content to "pornography." Trump signed an executive order in January to cut federal funding to schools which teach what he claimed to be "indoctrination" like "gender ideology." However, this executive order was

sexuality and gender identity to the law.

"Getting rid of protections ... [for] LGBTQ youth is very harmful," said sophomore Julian Rhodes. "Discrimination has led to [higher] suicide rates of [LGBTQ] kids ... As an LGBTQ youth, I'm lucky to be in a community where I'm not afraid to go to school and face discrimination. But I know, for other kids who don't have the same safe community as me, getting rid of laws that protect against discrimination toward them can affect them a lot. [It] is very unhealthy for people to face discrimination."

IMMIGRATION

Beyond education, Project 2025 additionally plans to crack down on immigration, expanding the government's ability to detain migrants, narrowing the number of ways people can legally immigrate and streamlining the process of deportations by requiring fewer hearings and protections, opening the door to more mistaken deportations and overall discrimination.

As of now, the OBBB Act allocated \$170 billion towards immigration, including \$30 billion towards Immigration and Customs Enforcement and \$45 billion towards construction of immigration detention

Immigration:
- Stop birthright citizenship and right to asylum in the U.S.
- Make deportation raids targeted at immigrants
- Make it possible for Immigration and Customs Enforcement divide families

Dehumanizing language: the controllable monster

Seona Srivastava
FEATURES WRITER

**Names have been changed to protect source privacy.*

On a crowded school bus last spring, senior Lawrence* felt a car swerve dangerously close. In that moment of shock, a racial slur escaped his lips — not directed at anyone, just an exclamation absorbed from years of environmental exposure.

“Just how people pick up on accents depending on the environment, the same can happen even with whole words,” Lawrence said. “That exposure, even subconsciously, got to me.”

This incident captures a troubling reality at Aragon: dehumanizing language has become so normalized that students internalize it without conscious intent. However, students are not inventing this language. They have downloaded it from institutional sources that have spent decades, sometimes centuries, refining the art of dehumanization.

Many turn on the news to hear government officials use the word “alien” to describe human beings. The term is clinical, legal, institutional and profoundly dehumanizing. It strips away individuality, family connections, dreams and fears, reducing complex human stories to a category of otherness. This is how dehumanizing language has always worked. It operates by stripping individuals of their inherent worth and complex inner lives, weakening the moral constraints against mistreating them.

Historical patterns demonstrate that dehumanizing language can serve as infrastructure for systemic violence.

The Holocaust was preceded by years of propaganda depicting Jews as vermin. Rwandan genocide was enabled by radio broadcasts calling Tutsis “cockroaches.” American slavery required an elaborate ideological apparatus portraying black people as subhuman.

Though the slurs in school hallways aren’t equivalent to genocide, they draw from the same psychological well. They’re also being fed by active pipelines that connect institutional hate speech directly to teenage social dynamics.

“The main way alpha bro culture thrives under Andrew Tate and similar influencers is it plays on the insecurities of young men,” Lawrence* said. “It grows anger in them and sells this idea of being an alpha bro. They say ‘Be aggressive. Go make money. Be angry at all these other groups.’ [When you’re taught] to put others down, that easily segues into hate speech.”

When political rhetoric describes immigrants as “invasions,” when memes reduce entire groups to caricatures, when algorithms reward transgressive content, teenagers are absorbing the same dehumanizing patterns that have enabled systemic violence throughout history. Adolescence amplifies these dynamics. Teenagers are actively constructing their identity, making the “us/them” boundaries that enable dehumanization particularly salient. Social hierarchies create strong incentives to elevate one’s own group by denigrating others.

“At first, it’s a feeling of shock,” said senior Kabir Sulur. “You’re like, ‘I didn’t know they would muster up the confidence to say this stuff.’ But then, as they keep saying it, you even become desensitized to it.”

The danger of normalized dehumanization is that what should provoke moral outrage becomes background noise.

“[I] don’t want the people [I’m] closest [to] to be saying insensitive things and neglecting the value or the meaning of words,” Sulur said.

Understanding how dehumanizing language spreads requires examining not just who says it, but also who stays silent. Many students feel they should intervene but feel socially paralyzed.

“You have this sense of helplessness,” Lawrence said. “Especially in a tense social situation, you want to say something but you [convince] yourself into thinking it’s not too severe. ‘This is nothing. This is common.’ You want to do something, but it could potentially have more negative outcomes for you than general positive good, which is pretty selfish but that’s how people weigh their options.”

This calculation is precisely how systemic dehumanization maintains itself. The silence becomes complicity, and complicity becomes normalization. Each incident that passes without challenge sends a message that such language is acceptable, lowering the threshold for the next offense. The administrative response directly correlates with this principle.

“The staff felt more empowered [addressing hate speech] as we talked about strategies for dealing with it,” said Andrew Hartig. “It’s deeply uncomfortable to have to confront somebody about something they’ve said. The default in many institutions and cultures is to ignore.”

Students who use dehumanizing language often operate with limited awareness of the harm they’re causing. Many express genuine remorse when confronted.

“The second [the slur] left my mouth, I knew,” said sophomore Tyce*. “I watched his face change. My other

friends kept laughing, but in that moment I knew I lost one of my best friends. I tried to apologize later but he just said ‘I thought you were different.’ That sentence plays in my head every day.”

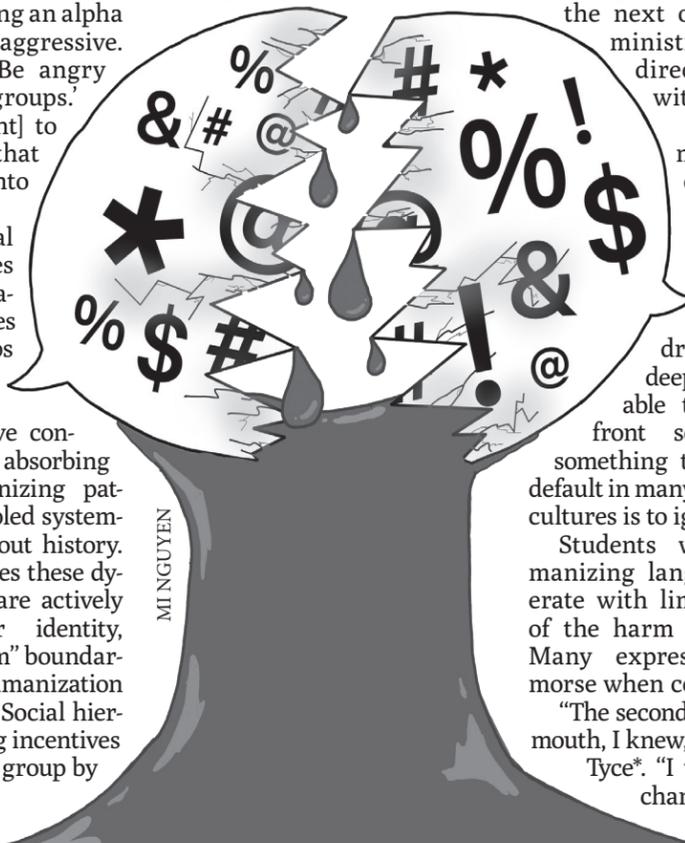
When dehumanizing language incidents are reported, the school’s response depends on severity, disciplinary history and whether the speech created substantial disruption.

“There’s a different level of severity between someone putting graffiti of a swastika on a wall and two friends who may be of a particular group using a slur that’s been appropriated by that group,” Hartig said. “Both require education and remediation, but consequences look very different.”

The Student Equity Council’s campus-wide campaign represented a turning point.

“I’m really proud of our Student Equity Council for bringing this issue forward,” Hartig said. “As a result of that work, our director of student services was able to add dehumanizing language as a category to our discipline platform. Since the campaign, there’s greater awareness and sensitivity. It doesn’t mean dehumanizing language has disappeared, but the fact that we’re having less reported is a positive trend.”

The path forward requires creating a culture where students feel empowered to break the silence, where bystanders can intervene without social martyrdom, where victims can report without fear of retaliation and where those who’ve caused harm can find pathways to genuine accountability and change.



Opinion: Sudanese suffering is an unnoticed atrocity

Jannah Nassef
NEWS WRITER

13 million displaced, over 150,000 murdered and counting: this is the reality in Sudan. The Sudanese genocide is disgracefully unspoken about. Media worldwide has failed to cover the suffering of Sudanese people.

On Oct. 31, 2025, Yale’s Humanitarian Research Lab posted satellite images of Sudan after Rapid Support Forces’ capture of Al-Fasher’s city, which featured blood stains and tents filled with dead bodies that was seen from space. These startling images caught media attention by storm, but it should not take hundreds of thousands to be murdered for us to pay attention.

Put simply, Sudan’s political climate has been curated over decades of unrest; its origins started with colonial rule under Britain and Egypt. Egypt’s liberation from Britain led Sudanese activists to fight for an independent country, which was gained on Jan. 1, 1956, with about 100 murdered. In a 1998 coup, Omar Al-Bashir, a member of the Egyptian military, and the Sudanese Armed Forces, seized power and led the second civil war, which

oversaw the creation of South Sudan and the Darfur genocide in 2003. The Darfur genocide included the burning of thousands of villages by the Janjaweed, murder of 200,000 people, displacement of 2.5 million and mass rape.

General Burhan and General Dagalo created a coup against Al-Bashir, and were once close allies. Power struggles caused them to split, leading Burhan to reform the Janjaweed into the RSF in 2013.

The RSF and SAF are constantly battling; the SAF lost credibility for being considered a part of Bashir’s leadership and the RSF used this to their advantage, stating they intend to hand military power to civilian politicians. Videos of civilians being forced to bury themselves alive, thousands of women raped, civilians being run over by vehicles and women being hung from trees have gone viral.

Fighting for control of Sudan caused mass-murder, a rape epidemic and destruction. The RSF has been accused of genocide by many, including Sudanese doctors. 730,000 children are expected to suffer acute malnutrition from man-made famine. The ZamZam refugee

camp has been barred from accessing aid.

Refugee camps have been terrorized, humanitarian aid workers and journalists have been killed and sex trafficking and rape amongst women and children as young as the age of one have skyrocketed.

As someone who grew up in a majority Arab school, I learned much more about Palestinian suffering, compared to other oppressed groups, including Sudan. While learning about Pales-

anger; they are unequal in the eyes of the public. However, a person’s skin tone or ethnic background does not determine whether they deserve empathy, for our blood is the same color.

“[Focusing on your own country] would make sense if [the U.S. wasn’t] so politically involved in [things like] Ukraine or Palestine ... but we are, so we should care about Sudan too,” said senior Shaurya Tiwary. “[Some] of the African countries are war torn [with] ethnic violence everywhere because of European involvement.”

Media gives coverage to issues once they reach unparalleled levels of heartbreak. For example, media coverage of Palestine rose due to the increase in genocidal war crimes committed by Israel against Palestinians.

“People care a lot about Palestine, — which [is] nothing against Palestine,” said sophomore Zoe Farrigan. “Save Palestine, of course, but if we’re going to focus on one issue, we need to focus on issues similar to it. Palestine isn’t the only genocide going on in the world; [there’s] Sudan [as well].”

I emphasize that I’m not better than anyone. I remain ignorant on the majority of Sudan’s

political state, which is incredibly shameful, but you don’t need to be a scholar or professor in political science to take action and help. Hearing about oppression, and saying “I am not educated on that issue,” is unacceptable. Work to educate yourself, even if it means reading one article.

This article isn’t written out of arrogance, or to guilt-trip people; it’s hard to learn about genocides and oppression, but we’re privileged enough to be able to scroll away from news articles and videos about Sudan. Videos of traumatized women, starved children and abused men show up on our feed; the normalization of African suffering desensitizes us to such images while others are living through that reality.

“[It’s not publicized] because it’s an African country,” said Sudanese student Mariam Al-Sherif. “People just assume [African countries will suffer]; [for example,] stereotypes like, ‘there’s no water in Africa’ ... [or general] struggle is [seen as] normal in African countries, but it’s not normal when it happens in Europe.”

While we scroll on social media, on the other side of our screens, a child loses his mother, a father loses his family and a young girl loses her autonomy.



PERSONALITY TESTS

Copy: Allinah Zhan, Helen McCloskey, Eva Ludwig, Yang Yang
Graphics: Allinah Zhan

Social categorization is an excellent tool for people to predict attitudes and beliefs of others. For that reason, personality tests like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are convenient ways to label traits. Websites like 16Personalities.com offer tests and detailed reports that some may find surprisingly accurate.

"They say ENFPs are the most introverted of the extroverts," said junior Anjali Kalyanakrishnan. "I feel like that a lot. I can't spend too much time with other people, but I need social interaction too ... Personality quizzes give you a lot of introspection. 'What actually is this question? What do I actually think of that?'"

The MBTI test can help with recognizing personal advantages and flaws, helping people gain additional insight on what improvements they can make.

"I use personality tests as a way to get to know myself better and also see how I progress as a person throughout the years," said freshman Cora Johnson. "I [am] an ENTP, which [has] a lot of [traits] like [being] very strong-minded. [My personality type is] definitely a reminder to mellow a little bit and let other people share their ideas, instead of just arguing for my opinions."

Some students have used the test to discover new traits of their friends.

"I had all of my friends take the [MBTI] test, and that's when I realized how accurate it was," said senior Ethan Guo. "Their personality types

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a self-report assessment

based on Carl Jung's theory of cognitive function, testing four categories: extraversion/introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Feeling/Thinking and Perceiving/Judging. Each combination presents a different personality type for a total of 16 different types, which are grouped into analysts, explorers, diplomats and sentinels.

- **Analyst** (ENTP, ENTJ, INTP, INTJ): Rational, logical, curious
- **Explorer** (ESTP, ESFP, ISTP, ISFP): Spontaneous, carefree, observant
- **Diplomat** (ENFP, INFP, ENFJ, INFJ): Empathetic, generous, compassionate
- **Sentinel** (ESTJ, ESFJ, ISTJ, ISFJ): Practical, self-motivated

explain so much about them, like certain traits or habits that I noticed they had before. It allows me to make a lot of other conjectures about them that are accurate 90% of the time."

Personality tests have sparked criticism over the years. Some claim distinctions between types are trivial or overly flattering. Others say some people become fixated on their results. As revealed by Tyler Shapland's 2023 dissertation "Misinformation Alters Personality Assessment Scores," prior test results have some amount of effect on future tests when false feedback is more positive than negative.

"A lot of people can take [their results] the wrong way ... [and] try to put people in a box," said sophomore Gabriella Pate. "You'll [think], 'You're an introvert. You must be only like this.' [Or,] 'You're an extrovert. You must like these things and do these things.' It makes you question, 'Am I really [this personality type], if I'm doing this stuff?'"

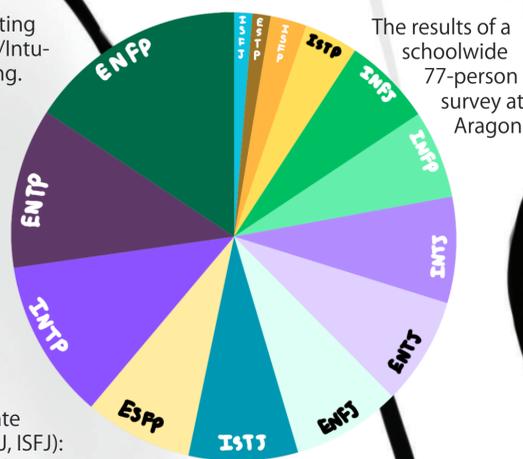
There are some key issues with the design of personality tests. Typically, creators write questions about select traits with answer options on a scale of one to five, from "completely disagree" to "completely agree." The underlying algorithm then adds and standardizes the points using statistical methods.

"Take one element of them, like openness to new experiences," said Advanced Placement Psychology teacher Giancarlo Corti. "[A quiz] might ask, 'When you go on vacation, do you like going to places that are totally new and different, or do you like going to the same place over and over again?' What if I like both of them? What the test will say is, 'Oh, you don't have a strong preference.' How is that a personality trait then?"

Personality tests claim to reveal essential, in-born traits, but personality is too complex to capture in a few measures. Environmental factors, cultural context and lived experience shape how people respond to questions just as much as biological predisposition.

"My results are only a fraction of who I am," said junior Francez Santos. "I find it funny how they quantify our personality with percentages. 'You're 64% extroverted and 36% introverted.'"

... How can you use math to determine what kind of person someone is?"



Therefore, while personality tests can offer insight or a sense of belonging, they ultimately may only provide a simple snapshot rather than a fixed identity.

Additionally, the tests are not scientifically proven. For example, although MBTI is based on the ideas of psychologist Carl Jung, there is no evidence to back up the 16 personalities the test promotes. Another pseudoscientific test is the Big Five personality quiz, considered to be the most accurate by psychologists. When Scientific American had 559 people take both a Big Five and MBTI test, they found the Big Five test to be only 25% accurate, while the MBTI test was 16% accurate.

Personality tests are often used in workplaces as icebreakers or to predict employee compatibility, though their effectiveness is debated.

"It can be a good surface level way of understanding someone," Santos said. "You can use it as a way to introduce yourself and understand people and socialize, but I don't think it should be a way to make friends with someone based on if you're compatible or not."

At Aragon, students take at least three personality tests, on Naviance and California Colleges, both of which are related to career planning.

Although there is no survey to determine how students have been affected by the tests, counselor Josephine Ho has seen some instances of the career tests inspiring students.

"I had a former senior who was at a loss [with] whether or not they wanted to go to a four-year college or not, and they had no idea what they wanted to do," Ho said. "All they knew [was] they really liked to walk their dog and skateboard ... They did [a career] test during his senior year and one of the options for him [was] to be a park ranger. That piqued his interest, [as] he never thought of being a park ranger as being a career."

However, there are examples that demonstrate the opposite.

"Career doesn't depend on your personality; it depends on what you actually want," Kalyanakrishnan said. "[I got] farmer [last year, which is inaccurate, though] you get independence, which ENFPs enjoy, from running my own farm."

The Jungian Archetypes test,

similar to character archetypes like the hero, mentor and villain taught in English classes, takes into account human behaviors and characteristics. Based on universal thought patterns, the user is sorted into one of nine archetypes; examples include the Jester, Lover and Orphan. Underlying these archetypes are the four cardinal orientations — ego, order, social, freedom — which respectively represent the desire to accomplish goals, to maintain structure in society, to make genuine connections with others and to break free from limitations.

The Big Five model illustrates human personality based on five components: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

- **Openness** corresponds to one's ability and willingness to explore new possibilities.
- **Conscientiousness** describes a person's level of self-discipline and organization.
- **Extraversion** is the standard "introversion versus extraversion" test.
- **Agreeableness** is the ability to empathize and compromise with others.
- **Neuroticism** is a person's likelihood for dramatics and mood swings.

Buzzfeed is a website with various user-created quizzes that match characters or items to a user's personality using pop culture references. Some examples include "Find Your Disney Husband," "What is Your Mental Age?" and "Which Wicked Witch are You?" Many of these tests have very little scientific backing and are thus used recreationally.

Just like the Sorting Hat from Harry Potter, there are

various websites that sort people into one of four Houses at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry: Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw or Slytherin.

- **Gryffindor**: Daring, determined, upstanding, rebellious, impulsive, class clown
- **Slytherin**: Ambitious, shrewd, deliberate, sardonic, image-conscious, prideful, closed off
- **Ravenclaw**: Wise, witty, adaptable, eccentric, inventive & innovative, analytical, overachieving, carefree, individualist
- **Hufflepuff**: trustworthy, clever, humble, principled, hard-working, loyal

The Enneagram personality

test categorizes people into one of the following dominant personalities: reformer, helper, achiever, individualist, investigator, loyalist, enthusiast, challenger and peacemaker. The results reflect the user's lifelong fundamental motivations, encompassing the totality of one's genetics and childhood that affect their development involving personality and habits.

Enneagram wings represent the interconnectedness of the different personalities, allowing for a more holistic view of one's personality. Wings can be determined by the personality directly on the left and right sides of the most dominant personality.



AUDREY WANG

Fra-“eternity”

Addie Rose
FEATURES WRITER

Ask most high schoolers what they think about sororities and fraternities, and the responses are fairly similar each time: “It’s all partying,” “The hazing scares me,” “They don’t do any work.” Despite having such negative stereotypes, Greek life remains popular, usually having multiple chapters on college campuses.

Although stereotypes often characterize sororities and fraternities as shallow or academically disengaged, the experiences and perceptions of past or present Aragon members reveal a different reality: one in which Greek life offers great community bonding and leadership opportunities, while still including the issues of hazing or exclusivity.

“Our [sorority] house had one of the highest GPAs,” said English teacher Victoria Daniel. “It looked like being surrounded by a bunch of really smart, interesting women, where we would gather for dinner, study together, live together and [go] through life together.”

Greek life for women almost always comes with assumptions of being unintelligent and wanting to party instead of taking classes seriously.

“When the [honors thesis class] group found out that we were in a sorority ... the shift in their behavior was palpable,” Daniel said. “They started to look down on us as intellectually inferior.”

Sororities are organizations for female college students to take on sisterhood, academic achievement and community service. They also prioritize philanthropy to serve the community. Each sorority chooses one main cause and does numerous activities for them, including fundraisers and volunteer work.

“Something special about Tri Delta [a’s philanthropy] is that at St. Jude’s Hospital ... there is something called Tri Delta place,” said Aragon alumna Eliana Rose. “We donated a lot of our fundraising [as a national chapter], ... [making] the biggest single donation Shane Street has ever received.”

Even with the great aspects of sororities, there exists less glamorous sides. Sororities often pride themselves in being very inclusive and welcoming, and they can be, but they have been exclusive and discriminatory. This can create an aristocratic environment and start to become extremely cliquy. But with these negative stereotypes, they have impacts on students’ choices to join sororities in college.

“The stereotypes have influenced my choice by steering [me] away from it,” said senior Sienna Shehadeh. “I wouldn’t want to jeopardize my future if something went wrong in that

sorority, so I wouldn’t want a bad title [in] the future if I’m applying for a job.”

Frats are a whole different topic, where members can gain social connections, leadership skills, or personal development. They can create life long friendships from a sense of “brotherhood” and make a large university seem smaller and more genuine.

“One stereotype of a frat is that they party a lot,” said history teacher and former frat member Will Colglazier. “And that one’s quite true. But where that misses the mark is [dismissing] the times when you’re just walking to class with a frat brother, or you’re relaxing after class.”

Frats host many events, including formals or parties, that help provide extensive social outlets and memorable experiences. And while rushing, the process of being recruited into the sorority, you are given the task to help host parties and such, which gives great leadership opportunities that can be very useful later on.

However, the initiation rituals, or pledging, can be very dangerous and demeaning when it comes to frats. The hazing can include forced binge drinking, sleep deprivation and sometimes verbal abuse. This environment can take a serious toll on someone’s health, with potential for alcohol poisoning and addiction. The commitment to rushing for a frat is also majorly time consuming, and the hazing is on 24/7. The day after day unpleasant tasks and pranks can be very degrading and tiring to handle.

“At my school, another fraternity was kicked off the campus because of serious hazing they did to one of their potential members,” said Aragon alumnus Tom Rose. “They got the guy really drunk, and he was walking around campus when security found him.”

With these negative reputations, there are many efforts to “break the stigma” of these stereotypes that have risen. This phrase refers to efforts done by fraternities and sororities to combat the negativity surrounding them and promote important causes, most notably mental health awareness. For example the National Alliance on Mental Illness is partnering with sorority Sigma Gamma to help promote resources for an individual or a community’s health.

As high schoolers transition into college, Greek life may come up as one’s first sign of welcome at an unfamiliar place. Despite negative stereotypes, the experience of being a part of a sorority or frat can leave core memories and shape one’s college experience through forming friendships that will last a lifetime.

Ur-bandoned exploration

Roy Kong
FEATURES WRITER

While the thought of exploring abandoned places might bring fear to many people, to many, it brings a rush of adrenaline that quenches their thirst for adventure.

Urban exploration, also known as urbex, has recently exploded in popularity among teens and young adults due to influence from online content creators like @decayingmidwest and @UrbexAshton on social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. There are even websites and apps that provide locations across the world to urbex as well as track and document one’s adventure.

Urbex explorers come across various forgotten and destroyed structures, with popular choices of abandoned tunnels and old factories. But the variety of these places — from the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in Ukraine to the Six Flags in New Orleans — often evoke interest because of the history of these places. They allow the explorer to have a snapshot of the past by observing the surroundings.

“I specifically like going to old military bases [and] bunkers,” said urban explorer Sophia Edmonds. “The history of it is really interesting to me ... I’ve [also] gone two or three times to ... an abandoned Exploratorium ... where they have those giant telescopes, and the only way

with vandalism charges if they are arrested.

“I’m also completely fascinated with graffiti artists who will continually violate [trespassing signs] and go into space and create something new,” said urban explorer Gwenth Tripp. “There’s this building [in] downtown Los Angeles [that] ran out of money while they were building it. So artists got in and just started tagging every floor ... You can see the development of the artwork over the course of the building ... I know it’s a tricky space to navigate because [of] property rights, and I respect that.”

However, since most of the places have been abandoned for so long, such as the popular Abandoned Grain Silos in

San Francisco, which have been abandoned since 1977 because of an explosion, there are many safety concerns. According to the Natural Hazards Center, abandoned places increase risk of health problems because they can harbor mosquito-borne illnesses. And in many other cases, abandoned hospitals and factories may have poisonous leftover chemicals. But the structures of

San Francisco, which have been abandoned since 1977 because of an explosion, there are many safety concerns. According to the Natural Hazards Center, abandoned places increase risk of health problems because they can harbor mosquito-borne illnesses. And in many other cases, abandoned hospitals and factories may have poisonous leftover chemicals. But the structures of

100% sure what’s gonna happen, especially if you’re somewhere old where the floor [or the roof] might cave in or something just might break or fall while you’re there, it’s important to have people with you who can help you if something goes wrong,” Edmonds said.

But, to many explorers, they find the thrill in exploring because of the unknown aspects. Especially in abandoned places, there can be many elements of surprise — whether it is finding remnants of the past that tracks the history of the place, or meeting another group of fellow explorers.

“My first studio space was in an old noodle factory in West Oakland,” Tripp said. “It was abandoned ... I remember there was someone who was unhoused at the time in the neighborhood, who said to me, ‘This company’s going [out of] business, and they’re getting rid of all their supplies’ ... I remember going through [those] with him ... I still have things that I got from that time, including coffee stir sticks.”

Moreover, the adrenaline rush is also caused by the unknown factor of whether or not there will be security at the place. Since many of the places explored are old, they often have trespassing signs set up by the owner to warn those who are in the area.

“Before I hit adulthood, I definitely did not care about [trespassing] as much as I do now,” Edmonds said. “But there are some, serious legal things that can happen if you get caught in a spot like that ... [If] I knew the area well, I’d feel more comfortable trespassing, but most spots I don’t actually go into.”

With legal complications, such as charges of trespassing and vandalism, there are



to get into the building is through the telescope’s hole at the top.”

Moreover, urbex is an excellent way to find the beauty of art through graffiti on the walls of the abandoned buildings. With an ample amount of visitors from around the world, many often leave their own mark through tagging or graffiti. These graffiti serve as a way to build on the history of the building. But this also means that those who made the graffiti could face complications

these places are the main concern, as they are easily collapsible unexpectedly.

“When I was exploring [an] abandoned house, the floor collapsed, not under me, but in front of me,” said freshman and urban explorer Vlad Model. “I was pretty scared.”

Because of incidents like Model’s or even worse ones, which could lead to major injuries or death, many explorers feel safer to go with a group of people.

“When you’re in an environment where you’re not

cases where explorers had to escape from security guards to avoid consequences such as jail time.

Overall, urbex still stands as a controversial topic as it allows the explorer to get a look into history of places, but also could lead to legal complications such as vandalism and trespassing. Regardless, urbex continues itself through society as the rapidly-trending activity seen on the internet that promises unpredictability and excitement.

The Neighborhood's not “((((ultraSOUND))))”-ing new album

Nathaniel Wilson
FEATURES WRITER

The band behind “Sweater Weather” is back, but with an album made of singles. Have they lost their punch?

The Neighbourhood took an extended hiatus in 2021 due to personal challenges and addiction struggles. Despite that, they announced their return in August. “((((ultraSOUND))))”, released on Nov. 14, was set to determine if this band can keep up with the high expectations of fans and critics.

The songs “OMG,” “Lovebomb” and “Private” were released in advance as promotional singles. They’re exciting, with excellent production that gives them an ethereal quality. Each song transitions smoothly and explores a lovestruck infatuation with their lyrics, which are delivered in an almost-deadpan, smooth tone. Their dark tone and captivating production make them enjoyable on a late night-drive. These songs set the stage for the album as they are stylistically consistent with The Neighbourhood’s hits and appeal to their core fanbase.

The album starts with clear messages and progression: the narrator is infatuated with a girl in “Hula

Girl” and is struggling with reciprocation. These first few songs switch between slow and fast paces, as evident by the drums, and some have an underwater-like sound quality, immersing the listener into the struggle intended by songs like “Hula Girl,” “Lovebomb” and “Lil Ol Me.” They have a nice production quality and unique sounds. “OMG,” is a quick turnaround from “Hula Girl,” a mood swing that fits with the raw, emotional, heartbroken, erratic nature of the album. And then comes “Private,” which is the easiest to listen to because its lyrics are simple and minimal — a large portion is dedicated to a sort of hum.

Towards the second half of the album, the songs continue to be playable as singles, but the production and sounds do not change too much and the lyrics begin to lose meaning. Any feeling of progression made — from infatuation to losing contact to struggling

with heartbreak — in the first half of the album is lost.

“The first half was good, but the second half was way too repetitive,” said junior Tanish Kandalu. “I didn’t feel like it was going anywhere.”



COURTESY OF WARNER RECORDS

This is clear as soon as you reach “Zombie,” which seemingly dives right back into infatuation and heartbreak with similar slow vocals and an underwater feeling. “Mama Drama” is, again, enjoyable by itself, but it becomes boring, as it feels like a step back and does not bring new excite-

ment through its production or sound quality, lacking divergence from “Zombie.” Maybe this is the point, but “Crushed” is lyrically nonsensical. These songs feel like eating the 10th marshmallow in a row; it was good at first but now I’m sick of it.

The exception here is “Mute,” which is faster paced, with certain parts sung instead of the normal deadpan delivery. It offers relief, and, although it’s not the best song, it makes an effort to be different.

“Mute” surprised me because ... it finally broke the underwater sound of the rest [of the album],” Kandalu said.

The album ends with “Stupid Boy,” which starts off slow — almost torturous since you know the album is finally almost over. “Stupid Boy” does get better, actually ending the album on a — relatively — high note. I won’t praise the lyrics, though, because the chorus “Joke’s on you, stupid boy / I won’t let

you kill my joy”, isn’t very nuanced, sharp or meaningful. The rest of the lyrics aren’t much better.

The songs mostly have a similar quality, and, although it is a style the band is known for, it gets repetitive and does not feel like a coherent progression. Granted I think this is the point because there is no progress in an unhealthy relationship. Besides what seems to be a few fringe fans appreciating the album on Reddit, it hasn’t gained much traction, with only one song, “Private,” in the Neighbourhood’s top 10 on Spotify.

The album is disappointing. The band did not really deliver anything interesting with it, besides “OMG,” “Lovebomb” and “Private,” which are the best songs on the album. Although I would rate it two out of five stars, I will add one caveat: if you were already a fan of Sweater Weather you will probably enjoy it. Although I am not sure anyone outside the existing fanbase needs to listen — it already reached the audience it was meant for.

OUR OUTLOOK



Disney’s “Zootopia 2” Hopps into a zoo-ming sequel

Madeleine Sah
FEATURES WRITER

After nine years without a sequel, “Zootopia 2” finally returns audiences to the bustling metropolis where predators and prey live side by side. The 2016 original became one of Disney’s most praised animated films, celebrated for its humor, worldbuilding and thoughtful message on prejudice. With nearly a decade of expectations behind it, the question hovered over theaters everywhere: could a sequel live up to a film that had already become a modern animated classic? Surprisingly, “Zootopia 2” not only meets those expectations but surpasses the original in humor, emotional depth and clarity of message.

The film picks up with Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde fully settled into their roles as police partners, continuing the dynamic that made the first movie so memorable. Rather than rehash the plot of the original, the sequel expands the world with entirely new districts, species and conflicts. This time, the central storyline follows a high-stakes case tied to territorial

tensions with the Lynxleys, a villainous lynx family, pushing Judy and Nick into unfamiliar terrain physically and morally. While “Zootopia 1” explored prejudice and systemic bias, the sequel shifts toward themes of loyalty and betrayal, and what it means to stay true to one’s values

lit streets feels richer and more refined than the first film. The expanded cityscape is one of the movie’s biggest strengths, introducing new settings ranging from scorching desert highways to a coastal reptile district filled with clever environmental humor.

“The animation seemed better than Zootopia [1],” said Hillsdale freshman Mina Averyaskin. “It was very colorful [and] more vibrant ... [The] scene where Judy Hopps goes with the Lynx guy and the snake, and then Nick stays back was ... very well animated.”

The voice acting is equally impressive. Ginnifer Goodwin and Jason Bateman return as Judy and Nick with the same chemistry that won over audiences in 2016. New cast additions, including Fortune Feimster and Ke Huy Quan bring fresh energy and warmth to the story. Their characters help ground the film’s emotional turns, which come more frequently than in the first movie.

Though the sequel is unquestionably funny, with rapid-fire jokes that had the entire theater laughing, it also dives deeper into emotional conflict. Themes of

trust and the fear of losing someone take center stage, giving the film a more mature tone without



losing its family appeal. The emotional stakes feel more defined than those in the first movie, especially during the tense Lynxlands pursuit sequence.

“I cracked up a lot in the theater,” said freshman Julian Sah. “I was one of the loudest [people there].”

“Zootopia 2” aims not to repeat the first film, but to build on its world in a new direction. Some moments in the sequel were slightly predictable in their storytelling. Certain story beats could have pushed creativity further, particularly during major reveals. The movie occasionally falls into familiar patterns, especially

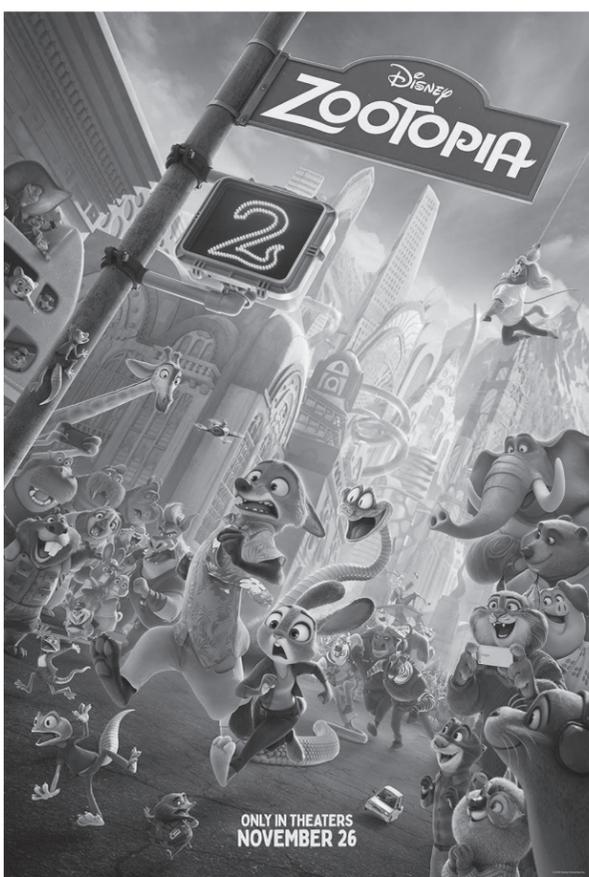
in scenes that echo other animated films, which makes some story turns feel less surprising than they should.

“[The creators] need to come up with something a little bit more creative,” Averyaskin said. “It was similar to a different movie called ‘Bad Guys.’”

The film balances emotional depth with moments that lean on more familiar patterns. While the sequel delivers strong animation, worldbuilding, humor and character development, there are sections where the story could have benefited from

a bigger, bolder twist to elevate the narrative further. Even so, “Zootopia 2” remains a compelling return to a world with plenty of space for future stories. Overall, “Zootopia 2” rises to the challenge of its nine-year wait, delivering some of Disney Animation’s strongest visuals and a story that feels emotionally sharper than the original, making “Zootopia 2” deserving of a four and a half out of five stars.

OUR OUTLOOK



COURTESY OF WALT DISNEY STUDIOS MOTION PICTURES

when pressure threatens to pull characters apart.

Visually, “Zootopia 2” is one of Disney Animation’s strongest recent projects. The attention to detail, from shifting fur textures to reflections in neon-

Opinion: there's no profit in nonprofits

Ashley Tsui
FEATURES WRITER

A student's college application represents more than a few essays; it's four years of hard work and stress to be sent off and judged by admissions officers. Every essay, every extracurricular activity, grade and test score is about to determine the fate of one's future with a single click to submit.

These students put in hours of effort to stand out in their college applications through their academics, athletics and especially, extracurriculars. Driven by ambition and the desire to be accepted to a top university, some students take the initiative to create nonprofit organizations.

The legitimacy and dedication of these operations are debated due to the shallow motivation and lack of genuine enthusiasm behind their decisions.

"You shouldn't start something just for college applications because if you don't have a lot of passion, it leads to not actually putting a lot of work in, because you're not motivated to do it, especially with nonprofits," said junior Kara Hwang. "[Also], a lot of people apply for grants [for their projects]. [Performative nonprofits] take away grant money from more deserving, more passionate people."

When people don't make the efforts to actually work towards the goals of their organizations, it becomes redundant and self-defeating.

"If you want to start a nonprofit, it should be because you're interested in helping people, rather than getting into a college with it," said sophomore Ryan Newman. "If you spend time and do the work to create a nonprofit, obviously it'll look good on a resume, but it just defeats the purpose."

This has created a culture in which students are rewarded for "leadership roles," i.e. founding an organization, even



VANESSA CHAN

when they haven't put any substantial effort into it. This also puts pressure on students who don't have their own passion projects, perpetuating a state of inferiority and unwanted stress.

"It's very easy to compare yourself with other people," said sophomore Reika Lam. "If you see your peers or people your own age, doing the same

[activities] as you but to a [more extreme] scale, it's easy to think [less] of yourself and put more pressure on yourself."

Moreover, the long term effects and obligations of leading an organization are often ignored after beginning college, making it pointless, as most organizations are meant to last for decades.

"The problem is that a lot of people don't continue [their organization] throughout college," said sophomore Kana Ueno. "They all usually stop doing it when they get into college ... if you're gonna commit to it throughout your lifetime, if you're passionate [about] it, then [you] should do it."

Furthermore, forming an organization for a shallow reason and without actual passion affects one's overall fulfillment and satisfaction.

"If you do something that ... you're not going to want to do, it'll make your high school life less fun," Hwang said. "It'll make you miserable, work[ing] at things you're not happy about ... If you're just doing things to write it down, actually [working on your nonprofit] won't be enjoyable for you. So there's no point in doing it if it's ... only for college."

However, if students put genuine effort into their organization and try to make it flourish, they will be more likely to see positive results.

"If a person truly cares about the goals of [their organization], it'll be shown in the [impact] of the nonprofit," Newman said. "Having [an organization] that works [can be] huge for college and for being proud of yourself and those are really important things for people [to feel]."

The line between performative and passionate nonprofits lies in the dedication and commitment a person has for their organization: if one is willing to follow through with the decision to start a nonprofit, then equal benefits can be reaped. But little enthusiasm leads to less reward.

Extracurriculars are meant to show universities the applicant's genuine self and passions. Starting a nonprofit for no reason does nothing to further this goal. Performative organizations hinder a person's ability to showcase their true personality and are only really necessary when they're motivated by real enthusiasm.



DAHLIA SELIG

Blurred lines: YA vs. NA

Rebecca Chen
FEATURES WRITER

Strolling down the aisles of Barnes and Noble, it is the eye-catching art or familiar author names that draw readers in. Rarely, however, do readers find themselves equally interested in content warnings or reader age recommendations. The combination of a reader's unawareness about differences in genre labeling and a lack of novel genre transparency has led to the lines between young adult and new adult books blurring.

Traditionally, young adult books have been identified as fiction written primarily for and about teenagers, typically aged 12 to 18, focusing on themes like high school life, first love and identity discovery. New adult novels, on the other hand, target readers between 18 and 25, bridging the gap between young adult and adult fiction. Many NA novels explore more mature experiences, such as college life, early careers and complex relationships. They often tackle heavier themes and sometimes include more explicit content.

Both genres share coming-of-age themes. But differences in content, author intention and reader perception make categorizing them difficult.

"They can be similar because you can say that they're similar in age group," said sophomore Hayley Chong. "Most topics can interchange with one another, like young adults and new adults dip into some of the deeper topics without going in depth about them."

That being said, some differences do separate the two genres. The boundary between YA and NA isn't just defined by the age of

the protagonist or reader. Instead, it is shaped by themes, maturity of content and how readers engage with the work.

"Adult genres can contain more adult language, and they can be a little bit more in depth compared to [young adult genres]," said sophomore Sofia Cabrera.

For example, "They Both Die at the End" is labeled as YA and centers on coming-of-age and identity discovery. Yet many readers feel it leans more NA because of its heavy themes of death and existential dread. In contrast, "A Court of Thorns and Roses" by Sarah J. Maas, an NA novel, addresses trauma and political manipulation, but later installments prioritize romance, which tends to lean more YA. Themes and depth can blur genre lines.

An author's intention also plays a role in shaping a book's audience. Writers like Bridget Collins, who write for both young and new adult audiences, focus on making their stories compelling rather than fitting a specific age category. This approach can result in YA authors producing books that feel more mature than the intended audience.

"[Mislabeling book genres] is bad because it's not [in] your age range," said sophomore Emily Tawn. "It all depends on the person. Some people might be more mature, so they like that stuff, but other people might not, which is why content warnings are important so you know what you're getting yourself into."

Because of these variations, some authors choose to categorize by content and theme instead of by age

alone. Readers mature at different rates, and some books include darker themes even with young protagonists.

Meanwhile, authors like Hannah Grace, known for novels popularized online such as "Wildfire" and "Icebreaker," are careful not to expose unprepared teens to explicit content. On her website, she notes, "My work is only suitable for adults. All my books include on-page sex, as well as other mature themes that are not suitable for a younger audience. Please be aware that buying my work in a bookstore isn't the only way your teen could access it."

However, how many people actually check an author's website before picking up an interesting book? Most readers don't pay close attention to genre distinctions. Even when content warnings exist, they are rarely highlighted in advertisements and can easily be skipped, often appearing as a simple list of words on a page. Grace's novels also often feature cartoony covers, therefore leading readers to believe the books are on the tamer side without doing a deep dive into the actual book.

"I read a few [books] that have content warnings," Chong said "I honestly tend not to really look at them too much. I already had a preview of what I'm getting into."

Readers and authors alike are responsible for content. While readers can simply put down a book if they find the content is offensive or isn't what they expected, authors should feel the need to more clearly articulate recommended age ranges and content warnings to prospective audiences of their novels.

A look at Aragon's physical education curriculum

Ethan Kim
SPORTS WRITER

The physical education curriculum at Aragon includes a wide range of activities that many students say shape their experience while being in PE. Units like tumbling, badminton, swimming, pickleball and frisbee help students develop greater proficiency in some of the most common sports, not just train for competitive sports. While most students know the activities they rotate through each semester, fewer understand how teachers choose the units that become part of the program.

The program has changed over time, and teachers say every unit is chosen on purpose to help students stay active and involved. Many students also notice that high school PE is very different from middle school, where classes usually focus more on running, conditioning and basic team sports.

"Our goal is to give every student the chance to find something active they actu-

ally enjoy and might continue after high school," said physical education teacher Linda Brown. "We know not everyone loves competitive running or team sports, so we include activities that let students try different ways to move, be active and work together."

While the state requires certain parts to be in PE, like fitness testing and basic skill development, Aragon teachers have flexibility when deciding which extra units to offer at Aragon.

"We pay attention to what students enjoy, what equipment we have and what skills can realistically be taught in a six-week unit,"

Brown said. "We want students to feel confident trying something new."

Some units, like the swimming and fitness units, have been part of the program for years, while others change based on interest and staffing. Recently,

the badminton and pickleball units have become very popular, especially among students who don't play sports competitively outside of school.

overwhelming, and it gets really competitive in a good way," said sophomore Jaiden Ou. "It's something I didn't expect to like until I tried it."

However, some students feel there should be more choices, especially activities on personal fitness and strength training.

"PE should offer more variety in individual fitness or weightlifting," said sophomore Edward Wen. "A lot of students want to learn skills they can use outside of school or after graduation."

Students rotate through several units each semester and are graded on participation, effort and improvement, not just skill or performance. The program focuses on personal growth rather than being the best.

Along with daily activities, students must take part in fitness testing and meet California's physical standards. Even though the testing can be stressful, teach-

ers remind students that improvement matters more than being perfect.

"We're not asking students to be professional athletes," Brown said. "We just want them to find something active that feels meaningful and enjoyable."

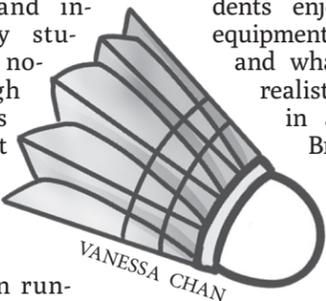
As student interests change, the PE curriculum may continue to grow and offer more choices. Some students have suggested adding units like yoga, rock climbing or dance to support both physical activity and mental health.

Many students say they appreciate how hard PE teachers work to create a program that supports all kinds of students.

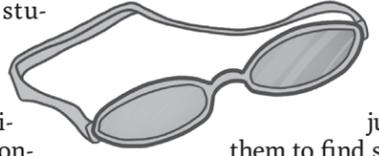
"PE is one of those classes where everyone can do well, even if you're not great at sports," said sophomore Mohan Sulur. "It's about effort and trying new things."

Even though students don't always think about how the curriculum is built, the choices behind it make a big difference in the school community. As Aragon continues to adjust and improve its program, the goal stays the same: helping students build healthy habits that last long after high school.

According to Society of Health and Physical Educators America, **nine out of 10** high school students find that PE helps them develop skills outside of physical skills, and **more than half** of the students enjoy the class.



VANESSA CHAN



Grappling with wrestling misconceptions

Luke Trimble
SPORTS WRITER

According to the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, wrestling is estimated to be 15,000–20,000 years old, making it one of the oldest sports in the history of the world. Today, wrestling is the sixth most popular boys sport by participation, and nearly the tenth most popular girls sport, according to USA Wrestling. But despite its popularity, wrestling is often subjected to stereotypes and misconceptions.

"When most people think of wrestling, they think of [World Wrestling Entertainment] and stuff like that," said sophomore and wrestler Mark Rumberg. "Like jumping on people in a ring or throwing chairs. But it's a lot different for high school and college wrestling. WWE is more of a fake story ... It's scripted."

Perhaps the most common misconception surrounding wrestling is that it is too violent or dangerous due to the sport's physical nature.

"We don't really want people who are trying to be violent and hurt people on the team," Rumberg said. "You want to be

able to overpower the other person, but you're not trying to hurt them."

Wrestling rules and regulations are also made with player safety in mind. Certain unsafe maneuvers such as choking an opponent or twisting their limbs are considered illegal.

"There's constant rule changes in high school wrestling, with the main goal [being] to keep the sport safe," said athletic director



Steve Sell. "I do 100% disagree with any idea that the sport is unnecessarily dangerous."

A study by the National Library of Medicine found that for every 1,000 participants in wrestling aged 12-17 years old, only 29.57, or around 2.9%, suffered significant injuries.

"You probably won't get hurt [wrestling]," Rumberg said. "Sometimes I've gotten small [injuries] that hurt for a bit, maybe for a day, but you won't get any major injuries [wrestling]."

Other people are confused by the high amounts of physical contact involved in the sport.

"People say that it's very touchy, [and] that people who like to do wrestling [are] very weird," said senior and wrestler Lucas Torres. "I feel like that's how other people think about it, while as a wrestler, you don't really think about it."

Another common misconception among students is that wrestling is a sport played only by men, as they make up the majority of high school wrestlers. In the 2025-26 season, 300,214 boys will participate in boys high school wrestling while girls wrestling will have approximately 74,000 participants, with girls making up around 19%

of all wrestlers according to USA Wrestling. While these



MATILDA BACANI

numbers may seem comparatively small, girls wrestling is on the rise, with 2025 marking a 15% increase in participation, according to USA Wrestling.

"Girls wrestling has finally become a more popular sport," said sophomore and wrestler Halona Nacua. "Last year, we only had a team of four girls but this year, we're having 10 to 12 girls join the team from what I've heard."

The National Collegiate Athletic Association has recognized women's wrestling as its 91st championship sport for the 2025-2026 season with the inaugural championship being held from March 6-7, 2026.

"It is fantastic, a long time coming," Sell said. "These women ... deserve a platform to compete and to represent themselves and their universities."

Something else many do not understand about wrestling is how difficult the sport truly is.

"We used to have a poster up in the locker room that said, once you've wrestled, everything else in life is easy," Sell said. "That was from Dan Gable, who's one of the more famous wrestlers in [U.S.] history."

Wrestlers agree that their sport is challenging.

"It's a very ... fast-paced sport. It really pushes you past your limits," Torres said. "So if ... you want to find out how far your limits can go, this is the sport for it."

Wrestling strives to defeat these misconceptions, as the sport becomes safer and more inclusive.

WINTER SPORTS RECAPS:

<p>12/5 VARSITY BOYS SOCCER VS LOS ALTOS 0 - 5 LOSS</p>	<p>12/6 VARSITY GIRLS SOCCER VS SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL 0 - 2 LOSS</p>	<p>12/6 JV GIRLS SOCCER VS SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL 0 - 4 LOSS</p>	<p>12/5 JV BOYS SOCCER VS LOS ALTOS 0 - 6 LOSS</p>	<p>12/6 VARSITY BOYS BASKETBALL VS PIEDMONT 56 - 34 WIN</p>	<p>11/24 VARSITY GIRLS BASKETBALL VS OCEANA 74 - 5 WIN</p>	<p>12/6 JV BOYS BAS- KETBALL VS PIEDMONT 48 - 38 WIN</p>	<p>12/5 JV GIRLS BAS- KETBALL VS EL CAMINO 31 - 25 WIN</p>
---	---	--	--	---	--	--	--

Girls soccer wins 5-1

Sabina Gulati
SPORTS WRITER

On Dec. 1, the Aragon girls soccer team inaugurated their season with an away game against Mills that ended in a decisive 5-1 victory. Since Mills is in a lower division, Aragon players had an optimistic outlook heading into the match.

"I feel good about the game coming up," said senior Phoebe Harger. "In the past, [Mills] hasn't been super challenging, [so] we're just ready to see how we play together as a team."

Since the match occurred in preseason, the team came onto the field without a record for this season while Mills had just two games under their belt. Furthermore, both a new roster and new staffing made the match slightly uncertain for the Dons.

"I expected us to do pretty well," said senior and co-captain Lorelei Rustay. "But given our new coach and just the new team, I wasn't really sure how [the game] would go. But I'm really happy with the way things turned out."

Aragon also plans to develop their game as they learn how to work together within this year's team.

"[The goal is] to feel out how we are as a team and really figure out what we need to be working on to succeed in the season coming up," said senior Abigail Dunwoody.

Aragon started out the match strong, with the team's defense managing to keep the ball out of their half of the field for the most part.

"Defensively, I think we're really strong," Rustay said. "We didn't let too many players behind us a lot, which was really good."

Fifteen minutes into the game, junior and right-wing Amelia Ortiz crossed the ball to junior and forward Evelina Karsh, who pounced at the opportunity to put Aragon on the board with a smooth ground shot to the goal's corner.

When Mills managed to get their team forward and crossed the ball to a prime scoring spot in Aragon's penalty box, Rustay, who was in goal at the time, quickly rushed up and claimed the ball as her own. With this action, Mills' first and last chance of the first half ended.

"The strength of our team, playing wise, [is] our defense ... [since] we also have really talented goalies," Harger said.

Barely five minutes before halftime, a handball in the 18-yard box, committed by a Mills player, resulted in a penalty called against them. Senior and co-captain Madison Ketcham stepped up to take it and directed the ball into the

net. When halftime was called soon after, the score was 2-0, Aragon in the lead.

"The biggest thing to realize is the talent is there, we just have to learn how to work together ... and become one," said head coach Kaylyn Toyama.

Aragon's team was able to start even stronger after halftime, jogging onto the field focused and freshly energized.

"In the second half, we were able to get into the flow of things and finally connect passes and work really well together," Ketcham said. "We were able to get a lot more energy just because we got used to playing together."

Ketcham, who usually plays defense, started the half up top as a forward. This turned out to be a wise alteration, as she almost immediately scored off of

a counterattack play to pull even further ahead of Mills.

"We knew we needed to score some more goals ... [and] we were able to load up the middle and the sides more as well as the top, which helped us score," Rustay said.

Within the next ten minutes, Ketcham seized another opportunity to strike the ball, which soared above the head of the Mills keeper and landed into the net. Not long after, she

followed up her hat-trick with yet another goal to solidify Aragon's lead, 5-0.

Despite the score, the Mills players refused to give up and rallied to find the back of Aragon's net five minutes before the whistle blew to signal the end of the match.

While the team was able to see how they played together, moving forward there's still more that they are working to set in place.

"[Going forwards, we'll be] solidifying a lineup and formations that we feel comfortable in, because we have been trying out different formations," Toyama said.

Next, the team hopes to extend their victory streak as they head into the rest of the preseason matches.

"We have a pretty difficult preseason with SHC and Monte Vista coming up," Rustay said. "I think [the goal is] just keeping our composure and getting through those games with hopefully a win."

The team now looks ahead to Dec. 11 for their next match, a home game against Woodside at 4:30 pm.



IAN WANG

Girls basketball beats Oceana 74-5

Alex Choy
SPORTS WRITER

On Nov. 24, the Aragon girls varsity basketball team (1-0 overall) defeated the Oceana Sharks (0-3 overall) in a huge blowout win with a score of 74-5.

This match-up has been played in the previous two years as a training game to help each team assess their abilities before the season starts. Aragon won both by notable margins, 72-30 and 81-32. Last season, Aragon had a record of 8-16 overall and 3-9 in PAL, compared to Oceana, who went 2-19 overall and 1-10 in PAL.

"The head coach at Oceana, Laura Zasly, is one of my former Aragon teammates, so we always get to schedule this game every year," said head coach Kristie Hala'ufia. "I look forward to seeing her and seeing where we're at, what we need to work on and what we're good at."

Last year was Hala'ufia's first season in charge, so the team had a period of adjustment from longtime coach Sam Manu, who coached from 2016-2024.

"Our focus this year is defense and rebounding, and so playing against Oceana for our first game would be good," Hala'ufia said. "We want to just focus on ... being able to contain our player ... and play physical. It's always been our style to be physical and each year we try to build on top of it."

Another focus for the team was to keep a consistent level of play, especially against smaller teams like Oceana, who can always pose a threat.

"Oceana is a smaller school, but it's always good to have competition early in the season," said junior and shooting guard Jaclyn Ruttenberg. "When we play teams that are smaller or less skilled, we need to stay sharp, remain unfazed ... [and] have consistency."

The Dons started off with a bang, scoring multiple quick-fire points off sloppy turnovers, gaining a 14-0 lead before an Oceana timeout.

As the first quarter progressed, the Dons continued to completely dominate their

opposition, winning every rebound and playing tight defense, forcing the Sharks to muster up just a single point in the entirety of the first quarter, which ended with a score of 27-1 to Aragon.

"We've definitely been working well as a team, moving our offense [and] pushing the ball," said senior and shooting guard Ellie McGinty. "That's the main [offensive strategy] ... to [run] a fast offense, a fast pace."

Much of the second quarter played out in a similar manner. Aragon remained dominant, with senior and forward Daisy Pantoja Beltran as well as junior and forward Saanvi Chawla leading the attack and persistently forcing

The game pace and scoring rate clearly slowed down as Oceana kept more ball possession, but the Dons were still unopposed as they didn't concede a single point in a 14-0 quarter, setting the score at 64-3.

The fourth quarter saw Oceana keep the ball for longer periods, getting a few close shots against Aragon's compact defense. The interval was relatively uneventful, with the Dons grabbing a few more points, securing a massive 74-5 win.

The players expressed their satisfaction about the team's performance, especially regarding the intensity, as well as the impressive scoreline.

"I thought ... [it] was really special was [that] every individual got a chance to contribute and put points on the board," McGinty said.

Another crucial point was the team's mindset when facing a lower-level team like Oceana.

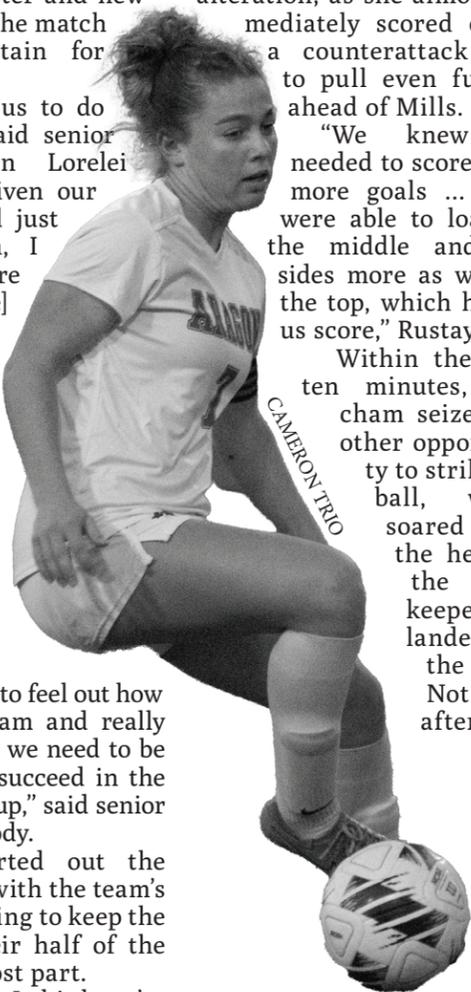
"We were playing a lower division [team] but ... we didn't lower our skill level to match [theirs]," said senior and center Sienna Shehadeh. "We still played with unity and kept [pushing] hard on defense."

When questioned on areas to improve on, some emphasized the need to improve team communication, especially on defense, which had a few frantic moments towards the end of the third quarter.

"One thing we can focus more on training is just being loud on defense," Shehadeh said. "Being loud as a team ... really impacts how we play during practice and how we translate that onto the court."

Following this romp, the Dons aim for a strong run in CCS this season. They were eliminated last season in the second round of Division II playoffs after defeating Monta Vista High School 64-50.

The girls basketball team's next game will be on Dec. 11, a home tournament game against Gunn High School at 7:30 pm.



CAMERON TRIO



EIGHT DAYS OF WINTER SPORTS

Reporting by Erena Iwokawa and Adya Tewari. Photos by Colin Fournier, Cameron Trio, Haley Lau and Madeline Allen

1 BOYS BASKETBALL

As the boys basketball season approaches, players are focusing on building team chemistry and improving both individually and as a team. Returning players are also excited to build off last season's success while incorporating new additions to the team.

"Last year was super fun and super successful, so I wanted to keep working at it and get better, while also playing with my friends," said sophomore and JV point guard Jaiden Ou.

Looking ahead, the players have high expectations.

"My goal for the season is to become a better leader and communicator with my teammates," Ou said.

With a focus on team bonding and a new mindset, the basketball team is set to play their next game against Galileo High School on Dec. 11 at home.



2 GIRLS SOCCER

With a large group of freshmen along the many returning members, the girls soccer team is entering this season expanded, and with motivation to do stronger.

"I'm really excited to get to know more of the girls, and just seeing how soccer will be for me in the future," said freshman and striker Ahlina Tanielu.

This year, the team faces challenges in adjusting and competing for playing time, but players say staying positive and communicating on the field is key.

"What makes a good team is communication, having a bond with each other and being positive," said sophomore and defensive midfielder Justine Corti. "It can be just as much a mental game as a physical game."

The team's next game will be on Dec. 11 against Woodside at home.



3 GIRLS BASKETBALL

With a dominant preseason game on Nov. 24 (see page 15), girls basketball is gearing up for another competitive stretch.

"Our team chemistry is what makes us a strong team," said Saanvi Chawla junior and guard and forward. "I'm excited to see how far we can go this season."

Senior and forward Lauren Pong also highlighted areas of improvement for this year.

"Missing out on CCS last year was tough, but it's only made us hungrier and more determined," Pong said. "This year, we are dedicated to remaining focused and refining our game to prove ourselves."

They will have an away game on Dec. 11 against Gunn High School.



4 COMPETITIVE CHEER

Competitive cheer is preparing for another season filled with long practices and high energy performances. With returning members and new faces, the team has new expectations and determination.

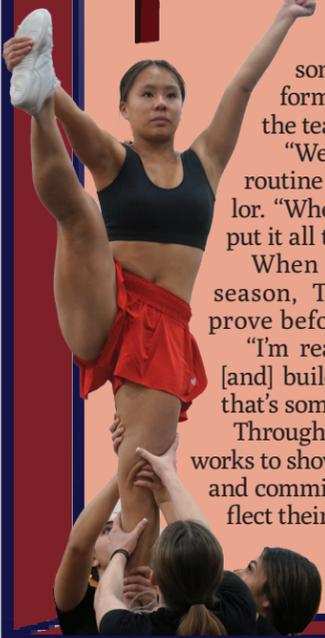
"We do about an hour of stunting and running our routine all the way through," said sophomore Nina Taylor. "When we're stunting, we work piece by piece, then put it all together."

When asked about expectations and goals for this season, Taylor expressed her determination to improve before competitions.

"I'm really hoping that we can win our competitions [and] build stamina and strength," Taylor said. "Because that's something I ... struggle with."

Through a combination of cheers and stunting, the team works to showcase their talents on the mat. Their team energy and commitment promise performances and results that reflect their hard work.

The team's first competition will be on Dec. 13 at James Logan High School.



5 WRESTLING

Wrestling season is just around the corner, and the team is putting in the challenging preseason work the sport demands. Practices focus on technique, conditioning, and staying mentally sharp, since every match comes down to individual effort on the mat.

"Everyone on the team is really dedicated," said junior Daria Barreto. "It feels great to be part of such a supportive and fun team."

With the same goals in mind of making CCS, wrestlers are determined to get there this year.

"As long as everyone stays focused, I think we can dominate," Barreto said.

The wrestling team is set to compete an away game against Burlingame High School on Dec. 13.



6 DANCE TEAM

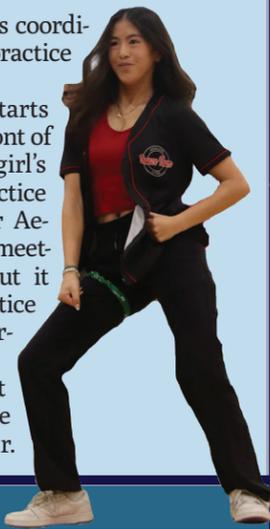
With winter sports games starting, dance team is also preparing for more halftime performances, while continuing to focus on team chemistry and personal growth.

"I want to establish a team bond especially with this new team," said junior and captain Megan Hugo. "I can feel that it's going to be a fun season even if we have a short amount of time together."

Many team members coordinate times outside of practice to continue to improve.

"Before practice starts we usually gather in front of the mirror next to the girl's locker room and practice the dance," said junior Aerial Crisostomo. "This meeting isn't mandatory but it has become a pre-practice ritual I always look forward to."

Dance team's first performance is set to be on Jan. 16 of the new year.



7 BOYS SOCCER

Boys soccer is finished strong last season (6-4 overall), and now, players look forward to the opportunity to continue that this season as well.

"We did really well last season, I feel," said junior Brainer Bocaj. "As a team, we will only continue to get stronger this year and hopefully win more games."

Despite having some returning players, a lot of seniors graduated last year.

"We lost a lot of players, so adapting to that will definitely be tough," said sophomore Dylan Sanchez. "We have a lot of talent on the team, and this gives players a chance to gain experience."

The soccer team is set to play South San Francisco in an away game on Dec. 12.



8 SIDELINE CHEER

Aragon's sideline cheer is preparing for another season of cheering and halftime performances at basketball games.

For many members of the team, this season marks their first as a cheerleader. Sophomore Alexis Vivas, new to cheer this year, shared her hopes for the upcoming season.

"My expectations going into winter cheer [include] socializing more, making new friends, trying different dance moves and overall just cheering on the basketball team," Vivas said.

With returning members supporting new members and new members eager to learn, the Aragon cheer team heads into the winter season with determination and optimism. Their first game will be against Capuchino High School on Jan. 7 at home.

