



SAGE RIDGE SCHOOL

The Ridge





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Edited By:
Aryan Shukla
William Moore
Luxin Sun

A Look Back

BY: ARYAN SHUKLA

As the 2018-2019 school year comes to an end, it's a good idea to take a minute to look back at all the special moments and accomplishments from the last school year.

The year started with students returning to school and finding that a wall had been taken down to turn the conference room into another classroom, all classrooms had been renumbered, the old Spanish room had turned into a new Innovation Lab with new, powerful computers, 3D printers, and virtual reality headsets, and several new teachers had arrived. Mrs. Bubala was now the head of the Upper School, and huge changes had been made over the summer. The school year began, and students settled in.

In September, students left Reno to explore nature, bond, and learn during Outdoor Education Week. Trip locations ranged from the fourth-grade trip in Sage Ridge's own backyard at Thomas Creek to the senior trip to Oregon. With a greater sense of community and having had some extremely rare experiences, students returned five days later (along with a lot of dirt!).

In October, Sage Ridge celebrated its 20th anniversary. We had a full weekend of celebration that concluded with the Birthday Bash. The same weekend, the fall play, *Lend Me a Tenor*, opened and gave the whole Sage Ridge community a good laugh. Sage Ridge students also went to the Reno Mini Maker Faire to show off the huge strides the school had taken to give students more access to technology that would be able to advance learning and give them opportunities that had never before been possible. We also celebrated Grandparents and Grandfriends day to celebrate our entire community. After celebrating the Sage Ridge veteran community at the "Thanks and Giving" event, students left for Thanksgiving Break in November.

School resumed for a month until, in December, hardworking yet tired students were at last able to take finals and go off onto Winter Break.

And that's only one semester.

School resumed with students returning to Mini-Session classes. These non-traditional classes covered topics such as drone photography, business management and investment, debate, film history, and more. These classes gave students the opportunity to learn skills that aren't normally taught in schools, but are still useful.

In February, students across all of the Sage Ridge extracurricular activities prepared for championships and statewide competitions that would happen in March. Once March actually came around, students left for Las Vegas to compete. Students in theater competed in the state Winterfest competition and performed *Lend me a Tenor* on the Las Vegas mainstage. Debate students competed in the state tournament. Junior Classical League students from both the Upper and Middle school went to the state convention to compete in a variety of classics-themed activities against other high school students across the entire state. In April, the entire school community enjoyed the ABBA-based spring musical, *Mamma Mia!*. Upper School students began to study hard for AP Exams that would come up soon as Seniors began to complete their Senior Thesis and prepare for their finals. College acceptances rolled in for Seniors. AP Exams, Senior Internships, and more happened in May, as the year began to wind down for all students. Still, extracurriculars were continuing at full speed. The Sage Ridge swim teams and golf teams competed in state events, with great results.



And now, here we are. Finals happen very soon, and our seniors are graduating on June 8th. A lot has happened this year, with huge changes to improve the school, the 20th anniversary of the school being celebrated, and more. Now, all that's left is the Last Day of School, when students will leave, the school will make more changes over summer (maybe another wall might be taken down, who knows?), the next school year will start, and students will arrive, ready to start learning again.

Here's to decades of success, innovation, learning, and students to come.

Aryan Shukla is an eleventh-grade student at Sage Ridge School and is an editor of The Ridge.

CLASS OF 2019

BY: WILLIAM MOORE

As SRS prepares to end its 2018-2019 school year, I thought it would only be appropriate to take the time to reflect on those who will not be returning again next fall: the Class of 2019. Comprised of twenty-three students, this year's senior class may seem small to many, but it is actually one of the largest in the school's history. In addition, eight of the twenty-three, or over a third, have been here all the way since 5th grade, those who we like to call "lifers," and are proud of it. We kicked off the school year with an Outdoor -- although mostly indoor -- Education trip to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. Everyone agreed the highlight of the trip was the river-rafting they did on the second to last day of the trip, specifically the epic water fight we got into. Despite some minor injuries and freezing cold, it was a blast.

seemed to elongate with untimorous elasticity while we waited to hear back from colleges. We had many a fun time in class, between the numerous philosophy lessons in Dr. McGann's class and the bonding brought on by surviving the inexorable succession of assessments and assignments in math.

At long last, college admission decisions rolled out and we were put through yet another cycle of stress by trying to pick just one. The results, of course, were nothing less than exemplary: we had students heading off to renowned institutions across the country from Dartmouth, Amherst, Haverford, and Duke all the way to Chapman, UChicago, Cal Baptist, UC Berkeley, and so on. It only served to reinforce my opinion that my time at SRS has surrounded me with some of the best and



Then came time for Senior Sunrise, where we got to enjoy some hot chocolate and immortalize the memory of our grade by painting our names on the largest rock we could find. For the next several months, we trudged through the slodge of college applications, endured the onslaught of schoolwork, and heartily enjoyed our senior privileges, with many a memorable trip to Starbucks and Bab Cafe. Even as senioritis set in and school became more painful, the joy of spending time with classmates did not diminish. I myself, though I am sure I am not alone, hold that what makes SRS so special is its students, and that was certainly borne out this year. As we went on winter break and the application process drew to an end, time

brightest minds of our generation, those who I am sure will go on to be world leaders in the decades to come. Though it is the peculiar vice of each person to ascribe to their own a certain exceptionalism of character, having spent eight years with some of my classmates, my belief is nonetheless unshaken that they will all go on to do great things. As senior year draws ever closer to its end, I look forward to spending more time with these remarkable individuals who I have the privilege of calling my classmates; we may never see their like again.

William Moore is a twelfth-grade student at Sage Ridge School and is an editor of The Ridge.

Sage Ridge Seniors



Ryan Bell
Case Western Reserve University



Candace Cui
University of Toronto



Oliver De Jonghe
Dartmouth College



Owen Grimm
Southern Methodist University



Sadie Hart
Long Island University, Post



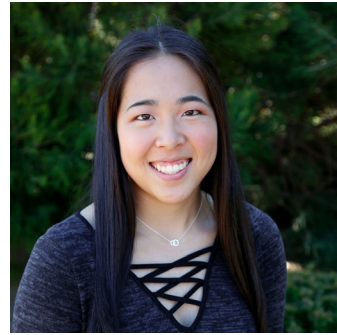
Zoa Katok
University of Chicago



William Moore
Haverford College



Jeremy Rodriguez-Canales
Northeastern University



Sophie Schler
Northern Arizona University, Honors



Bo Sun
University of California, Berkeley



Chase Warner
University of Maryland, Baltimore County



Alec Woomer
University of Nevada, Reno

2019 Graduating Class



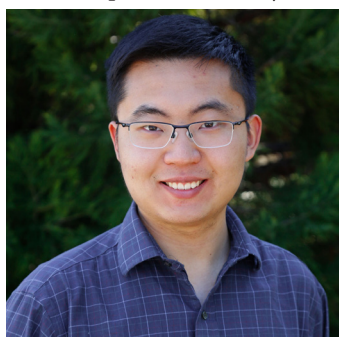
Izzy Dhindsa
Chapman University



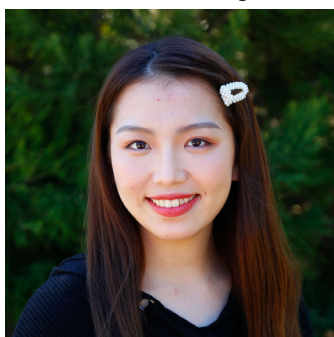
Kalama Flagg
Amherst College



Claire Grady
California Baptist University



Jeff Li
Duke University



Lena Liu
University of Toronto



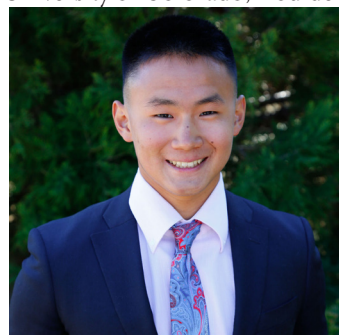
Jackson Maurer
University of Colorado, Boulder



Ali Stanko
University of Nevada, Reno



Marco Suarez
University of Nevada, Reno



Tyler Sugimoto
Gap Year



Jackey Yang
Purdue University



Zhanyu Ye
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill



INNOVATED LEARNING: TECHNOLOGY AT SRS

BY: MR. DAVID KUEHN

During the 2017-18 school year Sage Ridge School received a grant from the E. L. Wiegand Foundation. This grant provided the school with funding to allow teachers to innovate their lessons with new technology. New equipment includes a 3D printer, poster printer, virtual reality headsets, audio and video recording equipment, photography drones, and Adobe Creative Cloud licenses for each student and teacher.

Over the summer the Lab was set up in Crossbow in room 204. Teachers and students are welcome to work with the Director of Innovation to learn something new or use the equipment to enhance the educational experience at Sage Ridge School.

So far this year teachers and students have taken on some amazing projects. Mock historical podcast interviews, green screen videos of students explaining ancient ruins, virtual reality free reading projects, and 3D printed components for a recycled car project are just some of the examples of projects so far. Students in Freshman Seminar also received a two-week introduction to digital citizenship and media literacy. A drone photography mini-session was also created this year, in which students learned safe flying procedures, fundamental photography skills, and the basics

of photo and video editing software, and combine those skills to produce a video or photo project. Teachers who have braved the challenge of trying something new and taken the time to research, prepare, and evaluate the outcome should be commended. Without these amazing instructors who are willing to take a risk we would all still be using chalk, blackboards, and paper bound encyclopedias in class.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of innovation is what the future holds. There are numerous plans already in place for the second semester including: props built on the 3D printer for a puppet show, students and teachers using the lightboard to explain lessons, enhanced use of virtual reality to provide students with the



An eager group of Coding students from the Middle School prepares to launch photography drones, a part of an activity that was made possible by this year's E.L. Wiegand Foundation Innovation Grant.

opportunity to explore new environments, and our newest acquisition, the Raspberry Pis. These small devices can be used at all grade levels to teach students how hardware and software work together to accomplish amazing feats.

Education is changing, and students today have easier access

“Perhaps the most ex- citing aspect of innovation is what the future holds.”

to more information than previous generations ever dreamed possible. This shift has created a need to learn how to successfully evaluate information rather than memorizing facts. The ease of access to information as well as devices such as the Raspberry Pi has also given students the chance to experience hands-on learning with real-world applications.

As I reflect back over the last six months I am amazed with what has been accomplished. What was once the Spanish room has become a multi-purpose learning environment for students. Sage Ridge instills in students a desire to become life-long learners. That message extends to staff and faculty as well. I have had the opportunity to learn how to setup, maintain, and use a 3D printer, how to create my own 360 degree panoramic images to show on a virtual reality headset, the rules for safe drone flying and how to capture amazing video and images from 200 feet off the ground, how to setup a Raspberry Pi to turn an LED on and off, and I have only begun to scratch the surface. The community of students and faculty at Sage Ridge inspire an environment where creative thinking, experimentation, and learning from mistakes is embraced. As we move into the second semester and the years beyond I encourage everyone to come by the Lab and see the amazing things being done. Challenge yourselves to not only learn something new each day, but to take what you learned and use it to prepare for the future.

Mr. David Kuehn is the Director of Innovation at Sage Ridge School and leads the innovation initiative.

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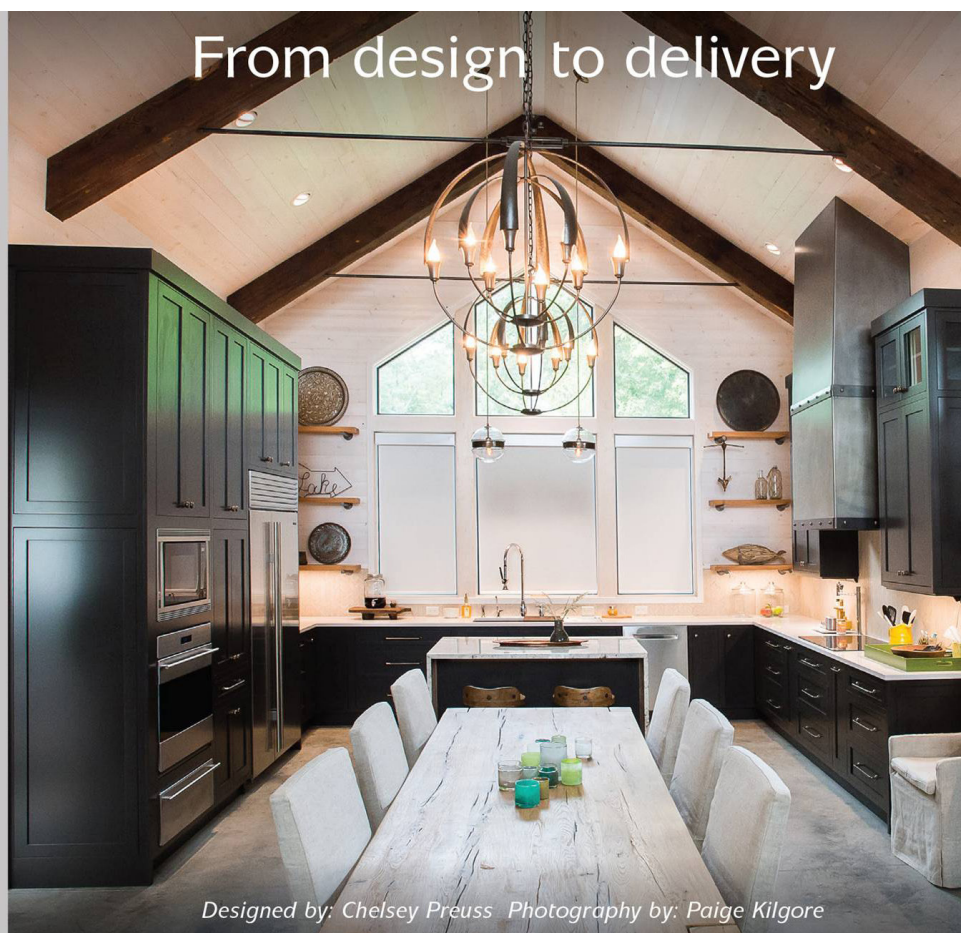
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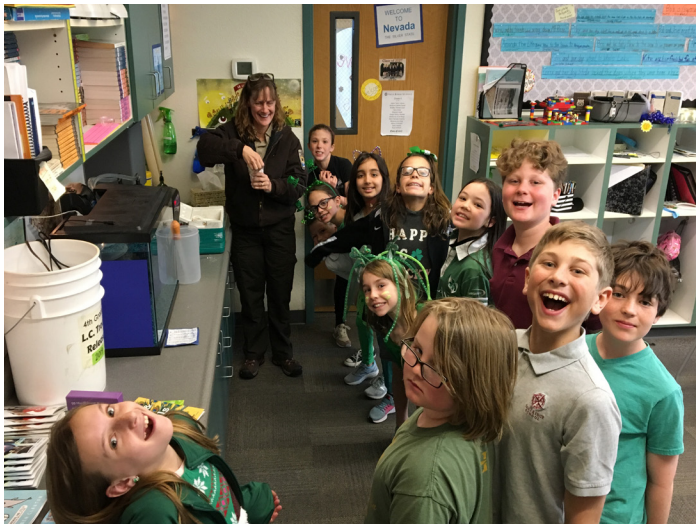
BY: LILLIAN FERRELL AND KENNEDY KURTZ

To begin, it is no surprise that Sage Ridge School is constantly involved in many projects that educate students and benefit the community through hands-on learning. It is something that we, as students, have grown to love and truly appreciate as a part of our curriculum.

On campus, we had heard about some of the recent SRS happenings that peaked our interest. One of them was a project being conducted in the fourth grade classroom involving Lahontan cutthroat trout. Upon further investigation, we decided to take a peek at what was going on first hand with an in-class interview. Needless to say, the fourth graders were hardly short of enthusiastic to speak with us on the work that they have done in the past few weeks.

They started by telling us the reason that they were doing this project. Fourth grade teacher, Myra Oksness, told us that she found interest in the project a year ago when she took her previous students on a field trip to the Lahontan National Fish Hatchery. On their exhibition, the hatchery enlightened the class on the history of the Lahontan cutthroat trout and how they provide fish for projects such as these.

Mrs. Oksness explained to us the benefits of the project in the classroom, and how it even brings the children closer together, "I love it when I see a group of kids over by the fish tank together!"



The Fourth graders learning about how to care for and raise the trouts in the classroom.

By the general enthusiasm and energy the kids had when answering questions about their project, we could tell just how excited they were, which brought a smile to our faces. The group said that they have named a few of their small fish.

Some names include "Sushi" and "Jimmy". Mrs. Oksness explained that even though the project is extremely fun for the

class, it also teaches them many lessons along the way. One very important one to mention is the idea that animals do not live forever. The class has lost a few fish along the way, which is completely normal according to the hatchery.

When asked to describe the project using only one word, the eager class came up with words such as "fun", "exciting", "mesmerizing" and "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious". As of the week of the first of May, the class collectively released the trout into a river in the Lake Tahoe area. For anyone who would like to raise trout the class recommends that you have the right equipment, put a net over their filter so they do not get stuck, check the water pH once a week, and do not overfeed them! As you can tell, the fourth grade class of 2018-2019 has had an amazing time raising these trout together!

Lily Ferrell is an 8th grader at Sage Ridge School in Reno, Nevada, and will be attending SRS for high school.

Kennedy Kurtz lives in Reno, NV and is an 8th grader at Sage Ridge School. In the fall she will be attending Damonte Ranch High School.



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WHAT IT TAKES TO PRODUCE A BROADWAY MUSICAL

BY: SARAH DEHNADI AND ANNIE RAVAZZINI

Throughout the second semester of the school year, Sage Ridge's theater program has been working hard to put together the Broadway musical *Mamma Mia!*. Only with a hard working cast and crew led by two directors, Michelle Crain and Brenda Johns, was this production made possible. The play was performed 6 times in total, which means it took a lot of effort on the actor's, director's, and crew's parts. Despite the challenges they faced, such as memorizing lines, songs, and choreography, Faith Phillips, who starred as Lisa, said "[Being in the play] was probably one of the best decisions I have ever made." The group gained connections and bonded over their love and dedication to theater. Starring in the musical was fun and rewarding despite the challenges they faced along the way.

However, it certainly isn't just the cast that had to work hard. The crew had to not only literally set the scene for the show but also control lights, perfectly time the music, fix microphones, and much more to ensure that the musical



The ensemble joins the cast of *Mamma Mia!* on stage to perform a singing-dancing routine to a live version of the popular song "Does Your Mother Know?" (originally performed by ABBA) as a part of the show.

was able to run smoothly. "To be in crew, it took a lot of patience and organization for me to do my job well so that the directors could do their job better and with ease," said stage manager Ben Browder. If something went wrong, it was the crew's duty to fix it quickly so the show can run smoothly and efficiently. But it wasn't all work. The crew got the experience of being in a show without getting all of the attention, which some people were thankful for! They also got to learn about the technology behind the scenes to make the show work. The directors were the final piece of the group that were needed to make the show possible. The directors for *Mamma Mia!* were Michelle Crain and Brenda Johns. "There was a big cast with different skill levels

in acting and singing to help. There was also not a consistent attendance, a lack of space, and no means to build a good set," said Michelle Crain about the issues that were faced. Although there were certain challenges that were difficult to conquer, Brenda Johns says that ultimately, "It was very rewarding though. Seeing the kids have an incredible show run, and what it does for them... that's why we do this." The popular show with catchy songs was just what the directors wanted and knew



Kalama Flagg and Kimora Whitacre share an emotional moment during the final scene of the show during the epilogue to the song "I Have a Dream".

that the cast would have a blast performing in it. "We also want to live in Greece!" said both directors. The directors bonded with the kids through being exhausted and delirious, cracking up on stage for no reason, and even someone farting backstage causing his friend to flee from behind the curtain, gasping for fresh air!

All in all, the show required a lot of time, money, patience, support, food, and of course a committed cast and crew to make it all possible.

Written by Sarah Dehnadi and Annie Ravazzini, seventh grade students at Sage Ridge School who live in Reno, Nevada.

EIGHTH GRADERS REFLECT ON MENTORSHIP

BY: ZOE DIXON AND MIA WOHLLETZ

Every year, the Eighth graders at Sage Ridge School go on "Buddy Trips" with First graders from Bernice Mathews Elementary School. They go to educational yet fun areas, such as the Discovery Museum, and each other's schools. Sage Ridge School started these trips to expose students to kids of all ages from around Reno. Despite living in different parts of town, the eighth graders and the first graders love to be around each other. These trips educate students on different cultures, social development, and active listening. Everyone that goes on buddy trips enjoys going for a variety of reasons.

All the buddy trips were made to be amusing yet informative. The kids all learned a lot while having fun. They all seemed to have had the times of their lives, especially at the Discovery Museum. Eighth grader Mae King said that "The events at the museum were fun and engaging for my buddy and me. She had the opportunity to learn and create in different centers and especially loved climbing the cloud tower." This shows how the kids learned and had fun throughout the time they've been with their buddies. The most loved trip was going to the Discovery Museum because the kids not only learned a lot but had the most fun playing in the water and climbing throughout the clouds.

Many of the older kids felt like they grew as caretakers. They remembered their own time as First graders, and put those thoughts into taking care and playing with their buddies. Many of the kids felt like they finally had an older sibling or at least another person who cared for them, which is invaluable to have for even the most fortunate kids. "I have also learned about First grade kids with what they like to do, watch, play," said Sophie Powers.

Not only did the younger kids feel like they had someone there for them, but so did the eighth graders.

The Eighth graders are constantly under pressure, with school, sports, homework, and other extracurricular activities. These buddy trips have always been like a breath of fresh air for Sage Ridge students. They have fun with their buddies without wor-

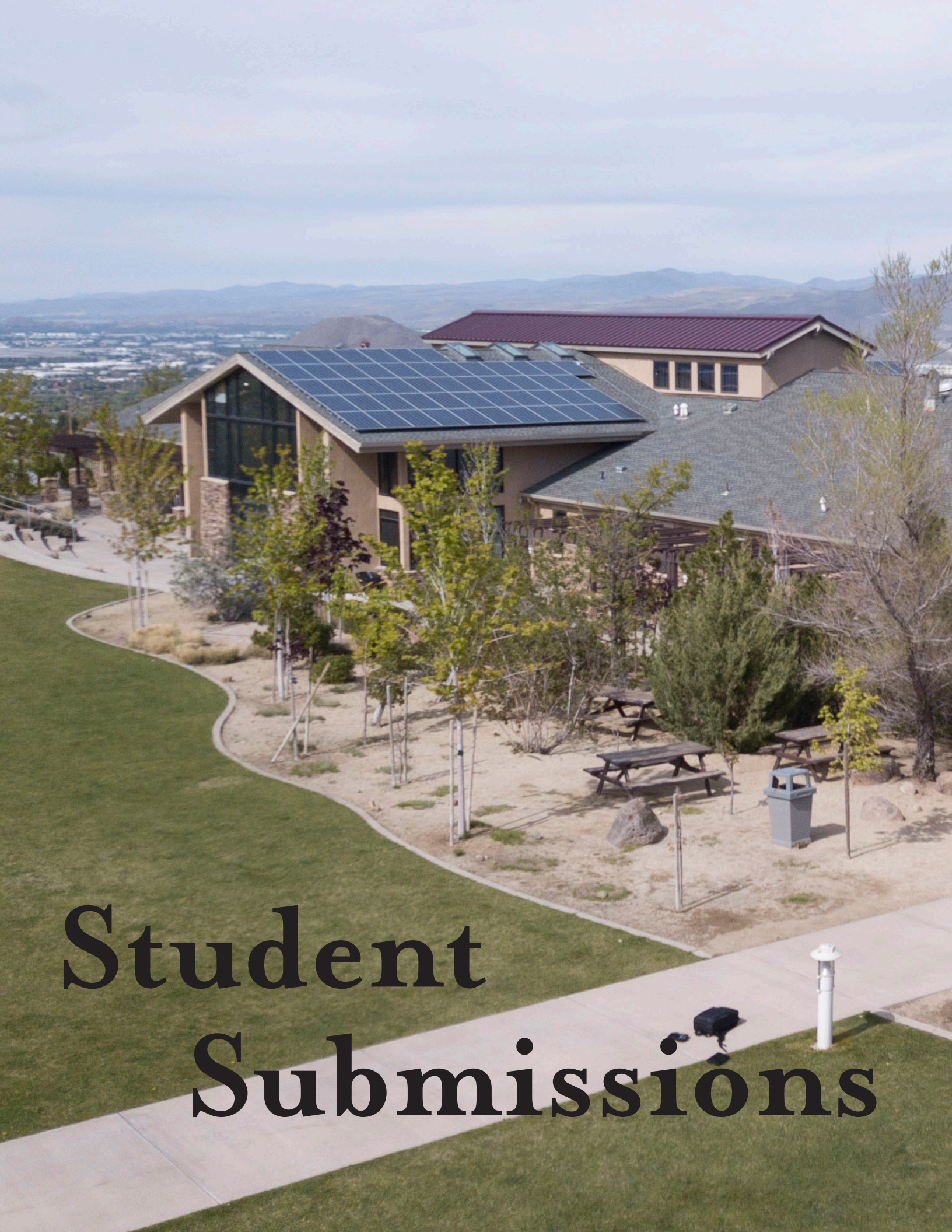
rying about the pressure of their daily lives. The trips have gotten all of the kids out of their comfort zones with talking to different ages of people and having to communicate for the activities they did. "My greatest accomplishment with my buddy was actually getting him to talk to me. He is very, very shy and he doesn't talk a lot and it's been a bit of a struggle every time we meet up. When we were at the museum he seemed to have come out of his shell and he was talking and making jokes with me and we had a lot of fun together!" said Madison Lane. Buddy trips like these help kids get out of their comfort zone and learn skills with taking care of younger kids. Katie Ravazzini said, "I have learned a lot from these trips. I have learned more about little kids and the kinds of things they like to do. I have

learned the best ways to communicate with them and the best ways to teach them new things in a fun way." The kids learned a lot of social and intellectual skills. They not only had fun but also learned a lot about socializing with people of different ages and caretaking. They bonded with their buddies and it was heartwarming to see the kids getting along so well with each other.

Zoe Dixon and Mia Wohletz are both in 7th grade at Sage Ridge School and work on Publications staff.



Eighth grade students bond with their First grade buddies as they work on a Thanksgiving themed arts-and-crafts project together



Student Submissions



WHAT IS COURAGE?:

THE FIFTH GRADE RESPONDS

"Courage is more than just being brave. It also means standing up for yourself and others, to do all you can to make something happen and much more. You can do lots of things to be courageous. Even trying a new food is courageous!

My whole family has courage. Both of my grandpas were in the Air Force. I think anyone can be courageous no matter their age. I was courageous when I went on a scary roller coaster. I didn't want to go, but I tried anyways and it was actually kind of fun.

My dad was courageous when our smoke alarm ran out of batteries. It is right above our staircase on the ceiling and my dad had to lean a ladder against the wall right above the rail. He could easily have fallen off but he didn't, which was very good.

My mom was courageous when she killed a baby rattlesnake in our backyard. It was in our tortoise's habitat so we had to get it out or else it would harm our tortoise. My mom and her friend got it out with a shovel, killed it and threw it down our hill. That was really scary because it could have bitten them.

Anyone can be courageous, no matter who you are. Just try and don't give up. You can do it!"

--Ava Wohletz

"Courage can be anything from stopping a robber to working a job twelve hours a day. I think courage can be anything that puts yourself out there. Courage is a very powerful thing. It can help us perform a song in front of millions of people or present a project to our class. Courage will help us conquer our fears and accomplish anything. A courageous person does not have to be an adult. Children can sing in front of "billions" of people, climb a very steep mountain or just simply fight through a sickness that they might have.

There is this one child, her name is Angelica Hale. She is only nine years old, but was able to sing on America's Got Talent in front of a lot of people, big lights, and judges. The judges loved her and she received the golden buzzer. I think that takes an extreme amount of courage.

I define courage as an emotion that helps us conquer

big or little fears. I see my Uncle John as a very courageous man. He has competed in many Ironman triathlons. In these triathlons you have to run a marathon, swim 2 miles and bike 40 miles. With his courage he never gave up and continued to train very hard for his competitions. And he ended up coming out on top. Clearly, courage can help you accomplish anything!"

--Jennifer Sarkissian

"I describe courage as when there is a problem, goal, or fear, and you are able to overcome it. I think an example of courage is if there is a bully and you stand up to him/her. Courage can also be if you are afraid of heights during Outdoor Ed. For example, your class is supposed to go skydiving, having courage would be to go skydiving with your class... and then who knows, maybe it would be so fun that you would not be afraid of heights anymore!

I do not think a courageous person has to be an adult. I showed courage at my first basketball game when my teammate and I overcame my fear of playing in front of strangers, and, guess what? My team actually won!

Another way that I showed courage was at my first singing recital, all the lights went off except the stage lights that were on me. There were so many eyes watching me, but I finally took a deep breath and started to sing. After I had started, the words to the song just kept coming and coming and by the end, I was so proud of myself.

Another way I would define courage is a way to meet new people and do new things. If I did not have courage, I would not get to do all the fun sports and after-school activities that I get to do.

Someone that I know that is courageous is my Uncle George. He was in Haiti during the horrific earthquake, fell off the second story balcony and was buried in rubble. He had fractured ribs and ended up with life long back problems. I think he is courageous because he dealt with everything in such a great way and has been so strong since it happened."

--Sophie Najjar

"When you have courageous instincts you are going to have a really good life, because when you do have courage you are a good person. When someone is really mean to you they most likely don't have courage. Courage is everything. In basketball, if you are nice and have respect for a referee, they will more likely to make calls in favor of you. If you don't show courage, they will most likely not call in favor of you. They will get angry and grumpy to you if you really don't show courage. If I saw a handicapped person trying to cross the street and they were having a hard time, I would go and help them get where they needed to get. If my dad and mom worked really hard at a pretty crappy job to try to help us survive and have a place to live, that would be courageous. But if they didn't work hard at school and at their job, we wouldn't be where we are now. That's courage.

I can name the people that have changed my life with courage. First, my family. My family has been so nice and helpful for me in the past with school and any other things in my life. My Mom and Dad also worked so hard to keep my family safe and healthy. When I come home I always ask my Mom and Dad how their day was and what did they during the day. But if I came home and said "hey Dad, hey Mom, hi... I'm home," that's exactly how you would come home and just have really no courage at all. You would want to come home happy and nice to your family so they don't start to get mad at you."

--Zak Stanko

"Courage can be many things. It can be someone in war, or police officers and firemen. It can also be seen in everyday ordinary people. Chasing a robber is courageous, but having the courage to sacrifice your most valuable time to work hard for your family needs, is equally courageous. An example of courage is trying diving with sharks. What if you've always wanted to try that? Well, I have something to tell you: have the courage to do it!

A courageous person doesn't always have to be an adult. Children can also be courageous. They can have the courage to stand up for themselves or at least walk up to someone new and talk to them.

To me courage is facing danger, trying something new, and also sometimes honesty. I've seen courage in many people, the courage I've seen is in my family. Fifteen years ago before I was born, my family moved to America from the Philippines. They were able to fit in. It is courageous to move to somewhere different. Courage is mostly bravery."

--Beatrice Liwanag

"I can do anything!" Courage is the persistence that you feel when people say you're incapable of something.

Courage isn't always about stopping criminals or defeating enemies. Courage is a feeling that anyone, small or big, can have. Courage doesn't have to be against enemy forces. Courage is the foundation to a strong person. But the amazing thing is that the foundation doesn't have to be made of steel. As long as people try their best to beat their goals, they are showing lots of courage. Courage is the urge to push on, achieve, and tell the world and yourself, "I **can** achieve my goals." Courage is a constant game against yourself to always be better than your last attempt. Acts of courage aren't always monumental. Courage is struggle, determination, and persistence. Courage makes you a strong person by telling you to do new things. Even if you fail, you will learn to have a different plan of attack the next time you face that situation. Your courage is you.

An example of a very courageous person in my life is my grandma. When she was younger, she escaped from a war in Vietnam. She fled to the U.S. where she made a family. If that isn't courage, I don't know what is."

--Kadin Su Maberry

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HOW TO FIX AMERICA: A SENIOR THESIS TOPIC

BY: WILLIAM MOORE

As many of you may know, Sage Ridge is one of a very few high schools that requires all of its students to complete a senior thesis. While this may sound onerous at first, the senior thesis is actually a rare opportunity for students to write about a topic that interests them. For my thesis, I chose to write about something that many people prefer not to think about -- politics. In particular, I wanted to evaluate if American democracy was in danger of failing. While I do not wish to go into all of the details here, I studied three trends that have become especially prevalent over the last half century in the US -- voter realignment, institutional paralysis, and expanding executive authority -- that present a virtually unprecedented assault on our democratic republic.

So, how to fix the system before it drives itself off of the cliff into authoritarianism. There is a good reason for this, since it is much easier to diagnose a problem than it is to find a solution. First and foremost, the most common misconception about solving our current political crisis is that it started with Donald Trump's election in 2016 and can be put to an end by voting him out of office in 2020. Indeed, former Vice President Joe Biden is running on the promise of ending this "aberrant moment" in American history. There are simply too many other factors to take into consideration to believe that simply changing the guard in the Oval Office will fix the crisis. Our current problems demand nothing less than putting an end to a signature feature of our politics that happens to be at the core of almost all of the problems we are experiencing: the two-party system. Antagonism between Democrats and Republicans has quite simply been tearing our country apart as a result of demographic changes that have made the parties more dissimilar and more likely to do whatever it takes to stay in power. So how are we to take down the two-party system? Well, first we must understand why we have a two-party system to begin with. The reason is actually surprisingly simple and also surprisingly easy to change: US electoral rules. Throughout American history, we have consistently used a system called FPTP SMD, short for "first-past-the-post single member districts;" in which we elect only one representative in each district and the person who wins only needs a plurality of votes, not a majority. The problem with this is that only two parties can have a reasonable chance of winning the single seat, and so it creates only two electorally viable parties. The Constitution gives Congress the power to determine the "manner" in which representatives are elected, and there is currently a bill in the House called the Fair Representation Act that would create MMDs -- "multi-member districts" -- where multiple seats would be available for the three to five top candidates to win. This would open up the US Congress to more political parties, which would allow for the break

up of the Democratic and Republican parties. Americans would have more choices in who they elected to better reflect their personal beliefs and always have a greater chance of having a representative who they felt truly represented their interests. Since no party could hope to have a majority in Congress, they would have to accept working with at least one other party, which would foster political norms around cooperation instead of competition, reinstate the non-partisan selection of independent arbiters like judges, and create a more active Congress to check the president. The trick, however, is getting two political parties to put an end to a system that benefits both of them in the interest of the country.

If American democracy is to recover, then it demands nothing less. That is the task, to adapt the Sibyl's advice to Aeneas, this is the labor.

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PIANO FILLS ME WITH JOY

A poem by Samuel Browder
(Fourth Grade)

Piano fills me with joy
And I search like a pirate with a treasure map.
Piano fills me with longing
And I listen to the echos
As I stand at the edge of a canyon
That falls down to a river of carols.

But mostly, piano fills me
with the urge to play more verses,
To hit and smack the keys
To fill the room with a melody.

And along with that, the longing to decipher,
To read the notes as a book
With a pencil and an inspiration.

Piano fills me with joy
And I strike like hammer seeking a nail.
Piano fills me with influence
And I climb up a mountain of notes.

And when I reach the top
I recede like a wave on the shore.
And as I slowly press the keys softer
A lullaby takes shape

SAGE RIDGE SCHOOL

