

SHOOTING FOR THE BEST: STUDENT VS STAFF BASKETBALL GAME



Photo by Becca Margolin

DURING A TENSE PLAY-BY-PLAY, senior Jake Shirley and coach Jason Grider face off at the Student vs. Staff basketball game.

By **Kasey Lee** and **Kyleigh Zvara**

The students versus staff basketball game was held at lunch in the big gym, Dec. 8, with teachers and students competing, faculty members performing and hundreds of others watching with excitement.

“I’m very excited for the game,” freshman Gavin Morgan said. “It’ll be very fun and it’s a good opportunity.”

The basketball game is a yearly event creating competition between staff and their own students. The students’ team consists of seniors that aren’t on the school’s basketball team who are being coached by Morgan and Taryn Watrin. The staff team includes teachers and coaches, who are being coached by Nicolas Phenix and Laila Bowers. All four student coaches play for the school’s basketball teams and are

qualified with their experience to coach.

“I think [the students will win] because the teachers are, you know, a little beyond their years,” senior player William Mortazavi said. “They might have height on us, but I don’t think they have the stamina to keep up with us.”

Both teams had high hopes for victory, ensuring that their strengths would give them the winning edge.

“The staff team is going to win,” physical education teacher and staff player Jason Grider said. “We’re just more developed, we’re smarter players, we’re stronger and we have good leadership on the team.”

Both teams have prepared for the game by having their own practices. Grider has been working on his cardio on the new school track during his free periods and the students team has met up at the park to scrimmage and renew their skills.

“[I chose to participate because] it’s my senior year,” senior player Dylan Golestani said. “I want to make a mark in my last year and it’s supposed to be really fun. It’ll be super fun, you know, collaborating with the staff and I’m excited.”

Many students look forward to competing against their teachers, especially in their senior year. The basketball game is an opportunity for students and staff to connect with each other and promote the overall school spirit.

“[The students versus staff game] is something that I did in high school that I thought was fun,” social studies and staff player Bobby Denny said. “Now that I’m in the position to make it fun for my students, I would like to do so.”

Some staff members chose to participate in the game because of their love for the school and their enthusiasm for school spirit. To keep

the crowd alive while players get a break, a halftime show was performed by faculty who didn’t want to participate in the basketball aspect of the game.

“I really like to participate in any school spirit events,” Spanish teacher and halftime performer Alison Yedor said. “I love dancing, so putting the two together is super fun.”

The halftime show consisted of a dance performance and cheer performed by student council and other staff members to hype up the players and crowd. The school’s step team also made an appearance showing off their well practiced routine.

“I’m immersed in school spirit and school culture,” counselor and halftime performer Tara Hopkins said. “I love doing all of that and increasing positivity... throughout the school.”

As another way to show their support, the spectators

also wore school colors to the game, with white for the students’ team and blue for teachers’ team. The student versus staff basketball game was a way to bring the school’s community together, involving everyone in a fun, exciting and lively event.

“I love El Camino,” Yedor said. “I’m looking forward to having fun with other staff members and seeing the kids all have a great time at the game.”

The outcome of the game was a success, with students crowding to get a seat in the gym. In the end, the students’ team won 19-12 and the performances put on were a hit with the audience.

“I’m proud that we won,” Morgan said. “We pushed the tempo, played fast, and worked together. That’s why we won.”

SAG-AFTRA update



Photo by Michael Buckner/Variety/Getty Images

By **Victoria Matz**

After a near four month strike, the actors’ strike reached an agreement with Hollywood Studios to increase their wages as well as other benefits in 2024. The strikes began May of this year; however, the most well-known strike was early July, when the crowds combined to see both actors and

writers protesting in solidarity. Strikes were happening primarily in Downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood, targeting production companies. About 200,000 Hollywood actors and actresses were in attendance at these strikes and showed people what their true concerns and opinions were about this situation.

Production companies and beloved television shows, as well as movies, have halted filming and even casting. Upcoming movies like “Avatar 3” and “Avatar 4,” the live-action interpretation of “Moana,” as well as “Lilo & Stitch” have paused production. Shows such as “Law & Order,” “Emily in Paris” and even “Stranger Things” have stopped filming. Programs that were set to be released in 2024 are now, because of the strike, believed to be released in 2026, if all goes as planned. Actors at the picket lines are not only fighting for higher wages but also equality with their digital existence. Extras on certain shows were scanned using a complex arrangement of cameras to digitize their image. Hollywood’s proposal is to use these three-dimensional imag-

es in films, eradicating the need for performers to be in the background of them. This would destroy countless jobs, and remove most on-screen actors from work. Above the issue of artificial intelligence taking over the actor’s jobs, any performer whose likeness was used in a piece of media would not be paid. From standing at the picket lines to talking with board members, actors are relieved to be able to resume exciting projects like popular television shows and films. After meeting Nov. 8, board members negotiated on higher wages and health benefits for actors as well as background actors. An approximate 7% wage increase was said to be given to actors in 2024 and 2025 and an 11% increase for background actors. Health benefits agreed

upon included an extension for members that lost eligibility in October as well as a continuation of health insurance through the end of the year. Actors will also be receiving a new streaming participation bonus that increases the revenue actors receive for returning to shows and for episodes that are streamed by the audience. The bonus is said to be worth 100% of an actor’s residuals; however, only 75% will go to the actor’s on popular shows. The remaining 25% will go to a fund administered by employers and the union. While everything begins to resume regarding filming and production, actors continue to work hard and do all they can to produce amazing films for the public.

Panera’s charged lemonade causes devastation

By **Sydney Keane**

Panera’s charged lemonade killed young Sarah Katz Sept. 2022 due to the high caffeine contents not being listed for customers to see. Katz was a 21 year-old college student at the University of Pennsylvania, who was involved with the program Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation [CPR] and Automated External Defibrillator [AED] Training to Save Lives, as well as a student teacher at the John Marshall Pre-Law Honor

Society. Katz suffered from a heart condition called long QT syndrome type one which affects the hearts’ electrical activity through potassium ion channels. Emotional and physical stress are big contributors to the condition, and doctors recommend that people who have long QT syndrome stay away from energy drinks. The drink speeds up heart rate and can mimic physical or emotional stress in the body, proving it dangerous for people with this condition.

Panera’s charged lemonades were marked as a plant-based and clean drink that contained just as much caffeine as their dark roast coffee. The charged lemonade has an extremely high caffeine content, even more than a can of Redbull which are advised to drink in moderation due to them causing health defects. Panera advertises the amount of caffeine in their dark roast coffee while avoiding mentioning the amount for the lemonade. The drink lacks specific warnings that

would specify the amount of caffeine within the drink as well as warn people who may be affected by it. This whole situation is brought to the media’s attention again as a second person, Dennis Brown, has died from the charged lemonades this past October Panera now has two lawsuits resulting from these lemonades, but Katz’s case focuses on the inadequate labeling that led her to believe the lemonade was safe for her to drink. There is an ongoing investigation de-

veloping to determine the full impact of Panera’s actions; but, the Katz family representatives claim that Panera is reckless, fraudulent, and engaged in outrageous misconduct. Panera has since put up warning signs that display the correct amount of caffeine within the drinks, as well as warned pregnant people and those with health conditions to drink the charged lemonades in moderation.

New COVID-19 variation worries experts

By **Isabel Rose**

A recent uptake in the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases beginning in April has worried experts as a new variant, BA.2.86 pops up around the globe. The general public has stopped worrying about COVID-19, though it is still around and as of late, there have been spikes of COVID-19 cases not seen since the emergence of the original Omicron variant. Due to mutations in the

spike protein, the virus has an easier way to invade human cells. This has caused an increase of cases, but people can now receive a booster vaccine. The new vaccine, from Moderna and Pfizer, is focused upon the XBB.1.5 subvariant. The new vaccine is available to people ages five and older, even if previously unvaccinated. Even though people are protected through the vaccine, there are still new threats in the form of the ever changing virus.

One of these new variants, officially called BA.2.86, does not match well with the updated boosters. However, BA.2.86 is not very prevalent, rather the most common variants in America are closely related to the XBB.1.5 subvariant. Despite BA.2.86 not being all that common, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) labeled it as a variant under monitoring, but that only a handful of cases have been found. The CDC doubts it will be able to overtake the Omi-

cron variant. The latest variant of concern however, is the EG. 5 variant, nicknamed Eris, and it is the dominant variant in the United States, United Kingdom, and China. In the United States, it accounts for 17% of COVID-19 cases according to the CDC. Despite all these new threats, COVID-19 rates are not higher than they were in 2020 or 2021. Most people also have had COVID-19, the vaccination or both. The antibodies protect a very large amount of the popula-

tion. COVID-19 hospitalizations have risen by 60%, though they are still historically low. These rising rates coincide with the plethora of variants like previously mentioned Eris. As a whole, experts are not worried about COVID-19 because most people have already developed an underlying protection from the severe disease after three years of living side by side.

Enter a world of magic with theater’s Peter and the Starcatcher



Photo by Isabel Moncayo

By **Jenna Espinoza** and **Kasey Lee**

With lots of preparation and rehearsing since September, the school’s theater program performs Peter and the Starcatcher Dec. 7-10 and 15-16 with two casts.

“[Peter and the Starcatcher is] a special play this year that I think that a lot of people will really enjoy,” senior Cassius Franciosa said. “I’m really excited for the audience to see.”

Peter and the Starcatcher is the prequel to the iconic character Peter Pan. An orphan named Peter, played by Franciosa, meets Molly Aster played by Lindsey Cromar in the Neverland

cast and Riley Fraser in the Wasp cast. Together, they embark on a journey to protect starstuff, a celestial substance, from evil pirates, led by the fearsome Black Stache, played by Rocco Perdenza.

“Putting on the show is so much more than just acting,” senior Thora Miller said. “It’s blocking and months of rehearsing non-stop. [We spent] lots of November nights memorizing lines and finding out how to work together with everyone.”

With all their preparations, the students are ready to perform the play written by Rick Elice and based on the novel by Dave Barry and

Ridley Pearson. They’ve been rehearsing everyday after school and on the weekends for hours, and the set design class helped create the backgrounds and props for this production.

“I play Peter Pan and I think the most exciting thing about him is his boyish charm and excitement for life,” Franciosa said. “[This year’s performance] will be different than before because of the jokes.”

Many of the cast members look forward to performing because of the comedic aspects of the play. As a part of their training, they all practiced their British accents to pull off the true personality of their role.

The new Hunger Games prequel sings a song of adventure

By **Victoria Matz** and **Isabel Rose**

The highly anticipated prequel to the successful Hunger Games Franchise, “The Hunger Games: Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes,” was released Nov. 17, bringing excitement and anticipation to movie theaters.

The film, directed by Francis Lawrence, is centered around the young Coriolanus Snow and his time mentoring Lucy Gray Baird from District 12. In “The Hunger Games” universe, this dystopian world is divided into districts where they each specialize in different things. The district that Lucy Gray Baird is from specializes in coal mining and is known to be the poorest district of all 12.

The movie unfolds to reveal an enchanting plot about Snow and his journey in the Hunger Games. The purpose of the movie was to divulge the renowned President Snow’s intriguing

backstory as well as to show what led up to the original Hunger Games movies.

While many people believe that the heroine of this story, Lucy Gray Baird, is related to Katniss Everdeen, their only relationship seems to be the district they were born in. Some scenes in the movie seem to make an odd connection, linking the two characters in some way, but the movie’s setting takes place in the year 2248, while the original movie’s are set in the year 2312.

The movie was based on the book, “Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes,” written by Suzanne Collins which was released May 19, 2020. The film includes some well-known actors, including Peter Dinklage as Casca Highbottom, Tom Blyth as Corolanuis Snow and Rachel Zegler as Lucy Gray Baird.

The film has been extremely successful, achieving \$243 million worldwide after three weeks in theaters



Artwork by Isabel Rose

and has received a Rotten Tomatoes review of 64%. It did not surpass the original franchise however, which is the third-highest-grossing film series based on young-adult books.

The movie as a whole stands at about two hours and 38 minutes long, which was defended by Lawrence, who said that he didn’t want to split it up or cut out parts because that would cause the film to lose the essence

“I play the character Ted and it’s honestly just really nice to be the comedic relief in the entire show,” junior Emily Cromar said. “It’s so fun to do and I really love the role.”

After spending countless hours together rehearsing and having fun, both casts have formed strong bonds with one another, making the final performances more genuine and entertaining for audiences to watch.

“[There’s a moment where] we all have to hold in our laughter because that scene is really funny,” senior Zelda Tabanou said. “We literally start dying laughing during rehearsals.”

The two hour and 15 minute performance with two acts costs \$17 for adult general admission and \$12 for students and children. After their long hours of hard work, the play was a success with a culmination of all their preparations.

“Opening night is what I’m looking forward to the most,” theater director Heidi Hutson said. “Seeing it all come together – the costumes, lighting, set, and the energy of the audience is always magical. There’s nothing better than opening night in live theater.”

THE ROYAL COURIER FALL 2023

The Royal Courier is El Camino Real Charter High School’s student-run and student-led newspaper publication. The Royal Courier has been publishing news for the school community since 1970.

STAFF

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF
Jenna Espinoza
Sydney Keane

PAGE EDITORS
Isabel Rose (News)
Kaley Samiian (News)
Kasey Lee (Features)
Isabel Rose (Features)
Jenna Espinoza (A&E)
Kyleigh Zvara (A&E)
Sydney Keane (Opinion)
Victoria Matz (Opinion)
Kasey Lee (Sports)
Kaley Samiian (Sports)

HEAD COPY EDITORS
Victoria Matz
Kyleigh Zvara

STAFF WRITERS
Sophie Apolaya
Victoria Amar
Teagan Harkins

ARTIST
Isabel Rose

ADVISER
Amy Carter

STAFF POLICY

The Royal Courier is published by the newspaper class of El Camino Real Charter High School and is funded by the school and by advertising. All issues are free.

Our main purpose is to (1) inform the students, faculty and community of school-related news; (2) broaden the range of thinking of staff members and readers; (3) provide a forum for readers; (4) train the students in the functions of the press in a democratic society; and (5) provide entertaining features of interest to the students. All editorials without a byline reflect at least two-thirds opinion of The Royal Courier staff but are not necessarily the opinion of the administration.

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CONTACT

The Royal Courier
El Camino Real Charter High School
5440 Valley Circle Blvd.
Woodland Hills, California, 91367
phone: (818)-595-7500
fax: (818)-710-9023

Killers of the Flower Moon

By Teagan Harkins

Martin Scorsese’s new intense crime-drama film, “Killers of the Flower Moon,” released Oct. 20, sheds light on a real-life incident in 1920s Oklahoma in which a white businessman murdered members of the Osage Nation for their land and money.

The film features Leonardo DiCaprio and Lily Gladstone and speaks on the tragedy of the deaths of many Osage people. The Osage Nation is a Native American tribe that resided in Oklahoma.

In the film, white settlers invade the land of the Osage people, and while the Osage receive money in exchange for giving up their land, they are stripped of their culture and forced to conform to white society. All

three hours and 26 minutes of the movie are packed with intrigue and heartbreak at the murders of the Osage people.

“Killers of the Flower Moon” is based on the book by David Grann, which shares a similar title; “Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI.” The book was published April 18, 2017 and is a true-crime nonfiction best-seller.

The main characters are Ernest Burkhart, played by DiCaprio and Mollie Burkhart, portrayed by Gladstone. Ernest, a White settler, marries Mollie, who belongs to a rich Osage family. Ernest is persuaded by his uncle to assist in the murders of some of Mollie’s family members. His uncle, William Hale, who is played by Robert De

Niro, presents himself as a peaceful, modest man who is greatly respected among the Osage community. Yet, throughout the movie it becomes evident that he is more sinister than he appears.

Mollie suffers tremendous losses throughout the movie that leaves her with only her husband and children. Later, Mollie decides to take matters into her own hands, and travels to the White House to bring up the issue to the President. This brings the Federal Bureau of Investigation to their town, to put an official end to the violence.

Scorsese brings to light the hardships that many Native Americans dealt with at the time through an emotional and intense feature film.

A new Marvel movie blasts into theaters

By Isabel Rose and Kaley Samiian

Walt Disney Studios released “The Marvels” in United States theaters Nov. 10, as a sequel to the Marvel Cinematic Universe’s (MCU) original movie, “Captain Marvel.”

The movie revolves around the leading character, Carol Danvers, who is more famously known as Captain Marvel. She has reinstated her identity from the Kree, an alien race and sought revenge on the Supreme Intelligence. However, she faces an unstable universe and her powers get tied with two other Marvel superheroes. From there lies a world of difficulties and struggles to overcome.

The cast of “The Marvels” consisted of many familiar faces seen in the original movie, along with new members. Brie Larson, Samuel L. Jackson, and Iman Vellani returned as their characters Carol Danvers, Nick Fury, and Monica Rambeau, respectively. The new superhero, Kamala Khan, was played by Teyonah Parris.

The movie was directed by Nia DaCosta and first began filming July 2021, finishing May 2022. Being released over a year after completion, fans had high expectations from the film, however, many were disappointed.

This film has been the largest flop in MCU history and is the only MCU film to not pass the \$100 million mark domestically

so far. Bob Iger, the chief executive officer (CEO) of Disney, claims that the flop of the film was due to the lack of supervision because of the COVID-19 pandemic and because there have been too many sequels in the movie franchise.

The movie has a Rotten Tomatoes score of 58%, which is incredibly low for the MCU franchise. A multitude of fans point out the film’s lack of captivating production and an underwhelming plot. Its disorganization between the intertwined storylines of the group of superheroes leaving viewers confused and disconnected from the story. Despite these negative reviews and aspects of the movie, some viewers enjoyed the newly-released film.

Those who enjoyed the movie complimented its emotional depth and accepted the newer side of Marvel. They also enjoyed the chemistry and dynamics between the three lead superheroes and how this was a representation of feminism. These positive aspects of the movie leave many fans waiting excitedly for future MCU movies.

Marvel has announced upcoming releases in the next few years. These include “Blade” coming Sept. 6, 2024, “Deadpool 3” releasing Nov. 8, 2024 and many more, like “Fantastic Four” and “Avengers: The Kang Dynasty.” Many await these new releases and are eager to see what MCU has in store for the future.

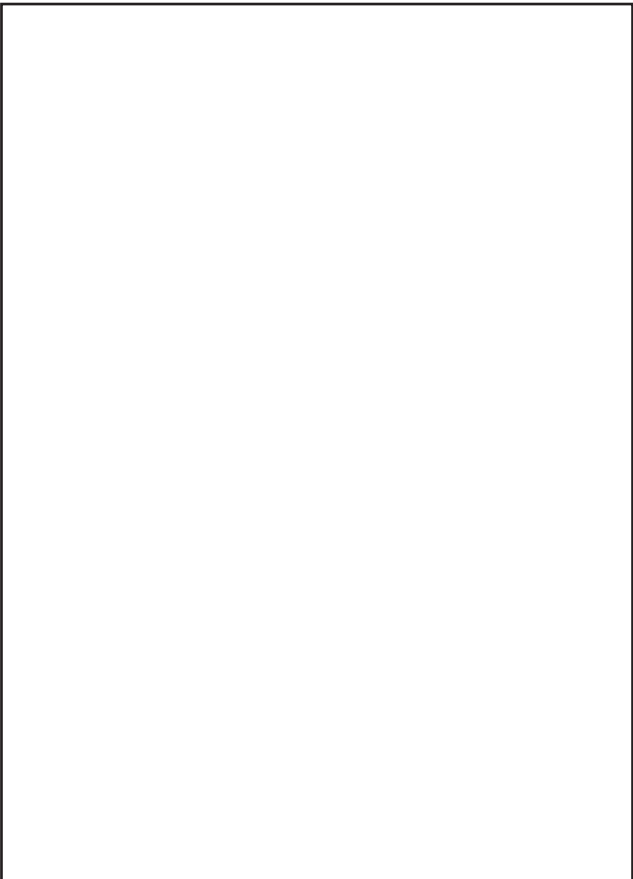
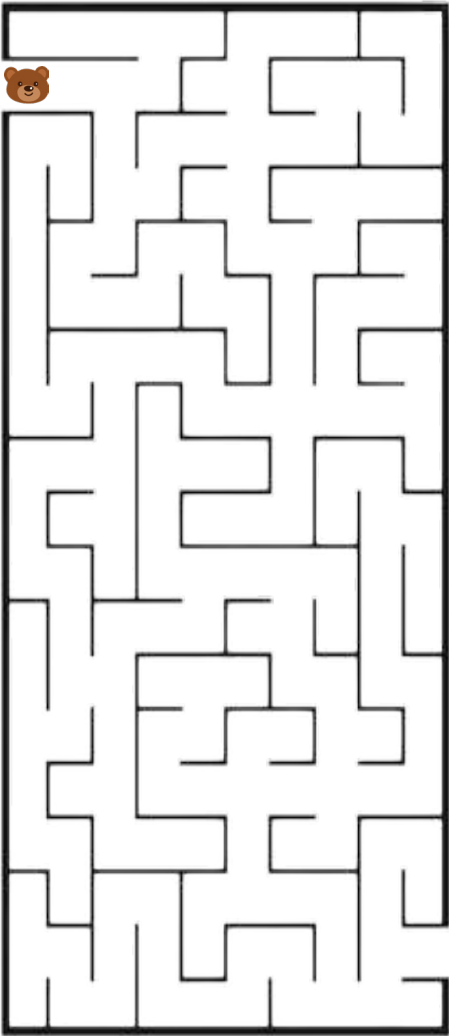
Stellar Remnants

By Noah Clifton-Goin

Wishing upon a star, I plead to the open air above me.
Nothing could be farther than the disloyal flickers of light.
A speck will turn into a streak, if I'm lucky. A quick flash of astro-lightning will skirt through the sky, a fleeting aurora borealis.
The shooting star divides the heavens into one half and the other, drawing a finish line beyond the end of the Earth.
Hoping for the dying ball of fire to grant me its three destinies, I bow for its demise.
Only famous in death, still means famous at all.
When I wish upon a star it is my last hope.
All the space between us, yet I believe that
Every sparkle,
Every glare,
Every morse code dash-and-dot is a message that I have been made to decipher.
No rhyme, no reason,
Just my fate lying in light that is glimmering in the past.

The Royal Games

Draw your own version of the school mascot!



Tag @ecr.newspaper and share your art

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The Season of Giving: Black Student Union collects donations for families in need



Illustration by Isabel Rose

By Kasey Lee and Kyleigh Zvara

Thanks to the school’s Black Student Union’s (BSU) annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, Nov. 6-16, hundreds of people in need are being fed for the holidays through donations from students to the Canoga Park Family Rescue Center.

“We chose to host it [because] it’s an annual thing [and] it’s been happening for years,” senior and BSU co-president Imani Geck said. “It’s Thanksgiving and you’ve got to give back. It’s good to help the community. A lot of people participate [for] extra credit [and] it’s good for the people in need.”

Over the past 14 years, BSU has hosted the food drive annually, only stopping for two years during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the food drive has started back up, including, last year, continuing their success in helping those in need.

“All of Miss Franklin’s floor is covered in bags [of donated foods],” Geck said. “It’s interesting, [and] definitely good. [The amount of donated food items] always builds up at the end.”

All of the food donated by

students were given to the Canoga Park Family Rescue Center, where it is then organized and distributed to families who don’t have enough food this Thanksgiving. Some of the food donations include bags of beans and rice, canned vegetables, fruits, meats and many other non-perishable items.

“A lot of adults say [that if] young people would just act right or be right, things would be better,” teacher and BSU advisor Stephanie Franklin said. “So instead of being the problem [students] chose to be the solution. Doing the food drive as part of being the solution for homelessness, [is a] solution for people in poverty [and those] who can’t eat and can’t support themselves”

Students part of BSU, including their board; Imani Geck, Omolola Bankole, Morgan Smith, Estephanie Lopez and Synaia Phillips, took action by planning the drive themselves. Planning included reaching out to the rescue center, and teachers to publicize the event. BSU members were even able to convince some of their teachers to give extra credit if their students donated to the drive.

“[The food drive] is something that allows us to give back to the community,” senior and BSU co-president Omolola Bankole said. [For our club], it also creates team building [activities] and lets us interact with the student body as a whole and gets them to give back to the community. Every year when we do it, it’s crazy to see how much people have donated and it’s really great that people are passionate to like help and give back to the community.”

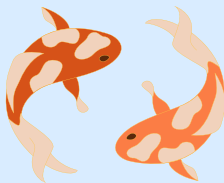
The combined efforts of BSU members, and the student body led to another bountiful food drive letting families across the city enjoy the holiday with dinner on their plates and gratitude for the students who provided it.

“[We] had people at the shelter in tears,” Franklin said. “They were so happy that so many people were so generous and that our school and students are very generous if they’re given the right direction. Knowing that bringing two cans of food can just reduce the burden these people are feeling will hopefully train us to do that.”

CLUB COLUMN

By Kasey Lee and Victoria Matz

Koi Fish Remedy - Fridays at lunch in C-125



Koi Fish Remedy works to create arts and crafts for people in hospitals, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers to bring happiness and positivity.

“I always wanted to make people smile, laugh and have fun,” junior club president Danielle Bagulbagul said. “I hope my club can bring that to those who need it. My club will help remedy [people who are in gloomy spaces] in hopes it will help them through the tough times.”

The koi fish is a symbol of strength, courage, and perseverance, something that Bagulbagul and the rest of the club would like to encourage people to have. By their hard work and creativity, they bring enjoyment to people who need it most.

Origami Club - Mondays at Lunch in C-18



Origami Club teaches students how to make origami crafts with their goal being to create a fun and calming environment.

“We decided to start our club because we wanted to give students a relaxing way to embrace arts and crafts,” sophomore club president Emma Chang said. “We wanted to create a positive environment for those around us and we also just enjoy teaching people new and possible intricate concepts.”

Origami club also provides community service hours in club meetings, for those who have busy schedules outside of school.

Recycle for Research - Tuesday at Nutrition in B-114



Recycle for Research is a club that finds ways to raise money for leukemia research through recycling drives and fundraisers.

“I have always loved [this club] and been very passionate about it,” junior club president Neveah Marsh said. “[It’s] honestly my favorite because we don’t pressure anyone to complete anything and it’s all out of pure goodness.”

The club is an easy way to contribute to such an important research topic and be able to help people while also eliminating waste on our planet.

ECR Say - Mondays at Lunch in C124



ECR Say spreads awareness about stuttering and creates a comfortable environment for people who stutter. With their support from SAY, a non-profit organization that fundraises for kids who stutter, the club teaches its members the science behind stuttering and how it can affect people’s lives.

“Stuttering is something that I have always had and used to be embarrassed about,” junior club president Kelthy Liu said. “[Other people] did not truly understand what I was going through because they don’t know what a stutter really is. I made it my all time goal to teach people about stuttering [and] to advocate for myself [and] many others who also struggle with a stutter.”

With her newly established club, Liu continues to invite all students, whether they stutter or not, to learn and have fun.

The special education program continues to support students

By Jenna Espinoza and Sydney Keane

The special education program at the school has created a helpful and welcoming environment for the students who participate in it.

“School psychologists are special education employees responsible for a variety of job duties within the school,” school psychologist Jessica Friedman said. “We work with students who are often significantly struggling cognitively, socially and academically.”

In the program, a psychologist will conduct an interview, as well as a series of tests to determine what kind of help the student needs and how the program can accommodate them. The tests look at their cognitive function, such as learning, organizing and motor skills, to create a comprehensive report on the student. They are then able to work with a behavior analyst and other teachers to find ways that will best help the student’s educational process.

“I was a behavior interventionist for six years prior to earning my first master’s degree in Clinical Psychology,” Friedman said. “When I realized I wanted to primarily work with kids, I decided to return to school and earn a second master’s degree in School Psychology.”

After students are tested, the school reports are used to create an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which indicates that a student has significant learning challenges causing them to struggle in their classes. These students are offered time with the school psychologists, both long term and/or short term, depending on what branch of the program the student is in.

“We conduct risk assessments and often support the counseling staff with intervention recommendations, attend some student success team meetings or complex initial 504 meetings,” Friedman said.

The program is aimed to help support students with educational disabilities by

offering long-term counseling support that will help assist the students’ academic success over their educational career.

“On average, most school sites have 10% of their student population in the special education program,” Friedman said. “Here [at school], I believe it is about 11%.”

The special education program is featured to help support students with educational disabilities; however, not all students who have disabilities qualify for placement in the program. Even though the program offers a variety of ways to help the students who need it, some either don’t apply for the help or just struggle to receive it.

“If you come by the office, you will likely find us working hard but also laughing and enjoying our time here,” Friedman said. “Our special education team truly cares about providing the most beneficial and appropriate support for each individual student.”

Preparing for finals: Effective studying tips

By Victoria Amar

As first semester comes to an end, finals are creeping around the corner which can present a challenging and stressful time for students. Here are some helpful studying tips to help students prepare for their exams.

Having a space that’s comfortable to work in may help students focus and optimize productivity. Some individuals concentrate better in a quiet and peaceful environment like a library, while others might prefer a place with background noise or music like a coffee shop.

Students often don’t realize how many resources are available to them, so visiting a place that offers tutoring can also improve preparations for the finals. If tutoring isn’t available, students shouldn’t be shy to ask a teacher for help. There are many people that are willing to assist students with any questions they are presented with.

Though it’s hard to stay on task when studying, doing so with a friend or a group can help. When studying with another person, students can quiz

each other on the material. Sharing notes amongst each other can also help prevent students from missing any material they may need. This can help keep students motivated and could make studying more enjoyable.

Creating a routine can be incredibly helpful in establishing good studying habits. Instead of cramming in all the studying the night before, breaking up studying sessions throughout the week enables students to avoid the stress of last-minute studying. Setting aside a little time for studying can help keep students focused and organized as well as promote studying without any excuses.

The most important thing throughout the studying journey is to remember to take breaks and to not overwork. It’s important for students to prioritize their well-being and to not let stress consume them. Implementing regular breaks can help improve focus and performance on tests. Students preparing for finals should remember that their well-being is just as important as academics.

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One routine that has helped me handle my crazy, complicated life is taking a good old walk.

Going for a walk helps with stress, anxiety, and depression. A saunter of half an hour is enough to make a big difference. Walking clears my mind and refreshes my senses. It cheers me up when I’m sad. It soothes me when I have had setbacks. When a problem stumps me, the solution often comes to me while walking.

Observing my surroundings, I notice the beauty of the world around me. It gets easier to ignore the worries in my head. They melt away as I wander. I walk away from small, temporary, unimportant thoughts and towards big, important ones. I put my phone away. Being unreachable feels good. I’m not in a rush. I listen to my body. Breathe in. Breathe out. As I let my mind wander, I sometimes ponder who might have strolled through this spot in the decades or centuries before me. I consider everyone who has lived in the houses I’m meandering past. What struggles, worries, and interests did they have? Were they similar to mine? If they dealt with them, I can handle them, too.

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The new exit system upsets early-leave students

By Sydney Keane

The new scanning exit systems at the front of the school and middle B exit are frustrating since it makes it harder for students who have a lunch pass or early dismissal to leave on time. “It takes like 10 minutes [to leave the school] sometimes,” senior Morgan Pime said. “By the time [a student] leaves and comes back there [isn’t a lot of time left].” Even though the front exit is available to students, most of them tend to use the middle B exit to leave at lunch because their cars are in the

parking lot outside. There are two lines that people can use to exit during lunch, one for students who don’t have any classes after fourth and the other for ones with lunch passes. A student can use their school issued Identification (ID) or their Royal Pass to scan out before they exit. “I thought [the old way of leaving school] was pretty efficient,” senior Claire Grasteit said. “I thought that it was easy because it was quick since you just show your ID and you’re able to leave. I didn’t really have any problems with it.” The new exit system has

caused a lot of problems for students who leave out of the middle B exit. There are only two scanners which allows for two students to leave at once, when the old system allowed for multiple security guards to check multiple student IDs at a time. This means that students are exiting at a much slower rate with the new system. This can be problematic for students who have jobs and are required to be there as soon as they get out of school. It also makes it hard for students who leave early to give other students with lunch passes a ride, since the lunch

pass line is much smaller than the early dismissal line. “I think that [changing the system] did help them become more strict [with early dismissals and lunch passes] because they’ll know if someone doesn’t have a pass,” senior Ava Punzalan-Findling said. “People were also finding fake stickers and printing out fake stickers.” There are a couple of changes that students feel could be made to the exit system that would make it easier for students while continuing to correctly manage the passes. Some suggest that both scanners can

open up for students at the middle B exit, rather than separating the lunch passes from the early dismissal students, to ensure that everyone gets out quicker. Another option would be to open up the lower B gate or even the S building gate to allow easier access for students everywhere around campus to leave, as well as avoid large crowds in the halls. “Maybe we could get stickers a little more often, instead of [getting them] by semester,” Pime said. “Maybe they could do it every five or 10-week period,” Punzalan-Findling added.

The new tardy sweeps cause uncertainty amongst students

By Victoria Matz

Since the beginning of the school year, the school administration has implemented stricter protocols, known as tardy sweeps, to help get students to class on time. “They’re not good or bad, but, they are necessary because most kids decide to skip,” freshman Isabella Letcher said. Students are rushed into classes to eliminate ditching and keep students inside the classroom, learning. Within the past months, administrators have seen a large increase in student attendance and a decrease in tardies. “I was talking to Mr. Hussey actually and he said

how we’ve had a significant amount of less tardies since the tardy sweeps [began],” sophomore Cole Morgan said. Most students understand that the administration does this to increase student attendance and for the better of their students. “You gotta be in class. And the school knows that, and they’re trying to do [just] that,” Anonymous senior said. Since the initial start of the tardy sweeps, the staff has stopped announcing the tardy sweeps on the loudspeaker, and teachers are expected to lock doors at the start of all classes. This way, students are forced to

get a tardy slip from security/staff standing at the doors to the buildings and go to class. “Everyone’s already tardy, so I just think that the [tardy sweeps] don’t do anything at all. And they just get more people angry,” Anonymous said. This argument seems to be common amongst students as it is said that the urgency and chaotic energy around tardy sweeps make students feel uneasy and anxious. In addition, there has been an increased amount of security guards around the school, which helps the school execute fewer tardies and absences. “If the [tardy sweeps]

weren’t around then no kids would go to class and then they wouldn’t get an education like they’re supposed to,” Letcher said. Another argument that is made by students is that the tardy pass system is inefficient in regard to wasted class time. Sending students to get a tardy slip for such a minimal amount of time being late is truly inefficient with increased class time being the main goal for these tardy sweeps. “I notice that even being late one minute will result in your teacher sending you all the way to get a tardy slip and then back to class,” sophomore Sage Bellisi said.

Overall, the staff is extremely impressed and delighted to see students getting to class on time. This has ensured more learning time for students and more instruction time as students are not constantly rushing into class late. While this issue may continue, students and staff generally feel optimistic about the outcomes of this new update. “[Students are] annoyed that they’re being rushed but at the end of the day, we gotta get to class on time so I think the other kids are annoyed but it’s for the best,” Morgan said.



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Los Angeles’ best: Varsity girls volleyball brings home the gold

By **Kaley Samiian** and **Kyleigh Zvara**

The school’s girls volleyball team brought home gold in the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Los Angeles division Nov. 3.

“The first couple games were nerve wracking,” senior Adriana Pakes said. “You just have to go out and give it your all. We focused on sticking to the basics and what we knew, as well as what we’ve practiced.”

The girls varsity volleyball team beat Taft Charter High School to win first place in the Los Angeles sector of the CIF playoffs, qualifying them for the state division. Their hard work and practice paid off in the end, strengthening the team.

“First of all, we focused on being safe and healthy to prepare for playoffs,” senior Audrey Choi said. “But I know practice was very competitive. We were doing a lot of competitive

drills, just to prepare for like situational events during games.”

The team practiced to hit different skills and scenarios to ensure they were prepared for competition. They also practiced plays tailored to beating the opposing teams by using the experience they gained from prior games.

“CIF runs our high school seasons based on what division we’re in and what our leagues and sections are,” Pakes said. “We play whoever’s in our league and those who qualify for playoffs with multiple divisions.”

Following their city championship, the volleyball team moved to the state competition where they continued their season. Their round one state championship against Central Valley Christian was a success, winning 3-0. Unfortunately, round two against San Diegoito Academy marked the end of their season.

“In the beginning I was a little nervous because there [were] a lot of people there,” freshman Addison Choi said. “But, then, near the middle and end of the game, I got used to it.”

The high-running emotions exuded from the court and the stands, with teammates, friends and family ready to cheer on their players to victory.

“The playoff games were really exciting to watch,” sophomore Isabella Kim said. “They were very stressful at times when we were down, but our team was able to pull through. The gym was full of loud cheers, and we were able to have posters while cheering for the team.”

The environment created by nervous players, excited fans, and supportive friends contributed to the perfect atmosphere to bring home the trophy.

“I wanted it to happen again.” Addison Choi said. “I wanted to relive it.”

Drafting, playing and winning: Students participate in fantasy basketball leagues

By **Sophie Apolaya Diaz** and **Kyleigh Zvara**

With the National Basketball Association (NBA) season starting, many fans, including students, come together to enjoy the games and place their own bets with each other through their Fantasy Basketball Leagues.

“If you like watching the NBA, [fantasy basketball] adds more excitement to it,” sophomore Aidan Sayadof said. “You want certain players to do good so your team will win.”

Students partaking in

fantasy sports leagues, like fantasy basketball, use apps through sites like ESPN and Yahoo to make their teams.

“Fantasy basketball is an app where you’re in a league with your friends and you can draft players, and those players, when they play in real life, can accumulate points for you and whichever team gets the most points wins.” Sayadof said.

Before the season starts, competitors pick a time and choose the NBA players they think will score the most points or do the best in plays like assists, rebounds, or steals. The amount of

points correspond with what their team does. For example, a three point shot from a player will win the fan three points, while a turnover results in the loss of a point.

“It’s competitive because you never know the outcome,” freshman Isaiah Johnson said. “Your star player could always turn bad even though on paper it might look good but in game it really isn’t, so it’s always iffy.”

The competition, though fierce, creates a link between the students participating. They use it as a way to connect through their

A fresh start for winter sports

By **Jenna Espinoza** and **Kaley Samiian**

With the fast-approaching winter season, a variety of sports teams, such as basketball, soccer, wrestling, and water polo, begin their 2023-2024 journey from the end of November to February.

“I enjoy doing the sport I love,” junior and varsity basketball player Tyler Tihinen said. “Playing the game that I’ve been playing since I was a little kid on a varsity high school level is just really exciting.”

Many players share a common passion for their sport which overrides the strenuous practices that come with being on the team.

“We’re [in the wrestling room] from sixth period to five o’clock, which [is sometimes] extended later,” junior varsity wrestler Paige-Marie Shambayati said. “When we practice, it’s a lot of cardio and drills. If we extend our practice times, we will go into the weight room on a daily basis.”

Despite the immense amount of time, hard-work and dedication it takes, players find joy in their sport and feel a sense of enthusiasm as they take on their in-season games.

“During games, I’m pretty focused on what I’m doing,” sophomore and junior varsity basketball player Aarna Uppal said. “I always

have fun and I enjoy the feeling of being on court so much, but it can get frustrating sometimes.”

Even after a number of hours practicing, games can be stressful on a player, however, winning a game can make up for everything and prove all of their hard work was worth it.

“Our first duel meet was against Birmingham and we beat them for the first time in eight years by 40-39, so it was electric,” senior and varsity wrestler Berkan Ranjbari Saisan said. “It was probably one of the best moments because we haven’t beaten them in all my years here at the school.”

Through the ups and downs of the season, from the mutual joy of unexpected game victories to the intense and sometimes the difficult group practices, teams have created inseparable bonds and lifetime friendships.

“My favorite part about being part of the [basketball] team is that I have a different kind of connection with some of the people in the school,” sophomore and varsity basketball player Cole Morgan said. “At the end of the day, we go to war together. We get to go to other schools to represent our school. So, I like having the responsibility of being able to represent us all.”

love of basketball.

“We use it on the side to talk about basketball and have fun.” sophomore Alexander van Gerwen said. “It’s a good way to forget about other things like school and just focus on the game.”

Winning is very important in fantasy leagues, and players often make agreements based on who wins or loses. The loser has to do something embarrassing, and the person with the most points gets a cash prize from their competitors.

“We’re all very competitive when we play, because we all want to win.” van

Gerwen said.

The special community they create over their shared appreciation for the sport allows them to cultivate new friendships and find a new outlet of entertainment.

“[The] best part about it is when you’re playing with all your friends, [and] you get the ability to have a friendly, yet competitive type of game.” Johnson said. “Since this is going to be going on until the end of March, you know you can really get to bond over time.”