

## VALENTINE'S DAY AT EL CAMINO



Photo by Rebecca Margolin

THE STUDENT ACAPELLA CLUB SINGS TO STUDENTS WHO WERE GIFTED SINGING GRAMS.

By **Jenna Espinoza** and **Isabel Rose**

The school took part in Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, with games and grams to encompass the joyful spirit the day brings.

"I like to spend my Valentines stealing chocolates from people and just trying to make the best of the day that I can," junior Shaked Kahlani said.

Even though, for many people, Valentine's Day is a day to celebrate the love of one another, others don't find the holiday as exciting.

"I think that Valentine's day is kind of overrated to be honest," junior Nyah Marley said. "But it's nice for couples to have a day to share their love."

The school's acapella club

had singing grams that are greatly enjoyed by most, as they create a fun way to embrace the spirit of love.

"I love the idea of the [singing] gram's," Kahlani said. "It reminds me a lot of my childhood since I used to do it when I was in elementary and middle school and I just love the tradition."

The singing grams were \$5 for a song and \$7 for a requested one. Earth Angel by The Penguins, Can't Help Falling in Love by Elvis Presley, Treasure by Bruno Mars, L-O-V-E by Nat King Cole and Like I'm Going to Lose You by Meghan Trainor were the many choices that students were allowed to pick from.

"I think it's hilarious, I love seeing people get those singing grams," sophomore

Lucia Hage said.

Though students loved the singing grams, some have other ideas for what the school should do on Valentine's Day.

"People love grams and think they're super funny," senior Mischa Bolotnick said.

Although the popular day is often associated with romance, people can celebrate it with friends and family as well. The Student Council also sold Valentine's grams for people to send to those they care about, whether it be a significant other, friends or even family. Teddy bears and candy were sold for \$2 and roses on the side were 50 cents each.

"If you're lonely you can just go with your friends and have fun, celebrate

being single, and it's awesome," Hage said.

Many people alternatively decide to spend time with friends for Valentine's Day, or more commonly known as "Galentine's Day."

"I don't think Valentine's day is just for couples, you know?" science teacher and Co-department chair Rosalinda Montague said. "It's just for anybody you love, right? That could be your mom or dad, your kids, your friend, it doesn't have to be a significant other."

Regardless of how the day is spent, people can enjoy and celebrate the feeling of love and appreciation with anyone.

"Love is in the air, you know?" Hage said.

### INSIDE:

#### NEWS

Major wave of extreme storms hit the U.S.

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

#### A & E

Top 10 Fashion Trends of Early 2024

By **Sydney Keane** and **Kaley Samiian**

The History of Halftime shows

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

#### FEATURES

Advice to 9th Graders: POPS club members featured in newly published book

By **Kasey Lee** and **Victoria Matz**

#### OPINION

The revival of an iconic 2000's movie

By **Sophie Apolaya Diaz** and **Kaley Samiian**

#### SPORTS

Girls varsity soccer wins incredible game against Birmingham

By **Sydney Keane** and **Estephania Lopez**

# New year, new student body elections

By **Kasey Lee & Kyleigh Zvara**

The 2024 student body elections, which ended Dec. 7, crowned the new class presidents who are now working hard to improve school spirit and open new opportunities for the student body.

“I was really excited [when I won] because ever since I joined the student council it was my goal to become student body president,” senior and Class President Felipe Barrera said. “My goals for this year [are] to make changes to this school [and] improvements for the long run.”

Barrera is working closely with his cabinet who share the same aspirations as him. This includes Vice President Nimran Singh, Junior Class President Selma Bahy, and Sophomore Class President

Sophia Saravia. This year, there is no freshman class president in the council.

“The main thing [I want to improve] will be increasing school spirit,” Singh said. “I think after COVID-19 [spirit] went down and I knew we were a school with a lot of spirit before. I love leadership so I think [being vice president is] a great way to show my leadership, and [I love] being more involved in overseeing everything.”

One of the new board’s primary goals is to rally school spirit. They want to connect Royals and raise pride among both students and staff.

“My main goal is to promote spirit in the junior class,” junior class president Selma Bahy said. “I know that junior year specifically is difficult. [Juniors] have a lot of classes and it’s the

most important year for college. I want people to have fun outside of AP classes and all that.”

Another goal they have is getting students more involved through activities and events that they will be hosting throughout the year. Through their ways of boosting school morale, they hope the students will participate and enjoy what they have planned.

“I [want to host] more lunch events because I feel last year there was not as much spirit in our schools compared to others,” Barrera said. “I also think that we need to have more events for the classes because I feel like the freshman and sophomores don’t have as much to do spirit wise.”

The new student body is excited and ready to make sure that everyone, regard-

less of grade, gets included with the events, hopefully helping to make connections and have fun with both lower and upper classmen.

“I’m looking forward to being able to lead the sophomore class,” Saravia said. “Now I [get to run] sophomore steering. I’m excited to run that club and inform the sophomore students of events that are going to happen this year”

The class presidents are ready to advise students within the school. As a part of their new jobs, they have to communicate and build bridges between students of all grades and staff members.

“I’m excited to help new members and show them the ins and outs of the school,” Singh said. “Getting it confirmed [that I won] was very nice because I love leader-

ship and I think this a great way to show [that].”

The new student body presidents chose to run to display their leadership skills, and create a healthy environment at the school. During the election, the students voted for whom they believed would be the best candidate, or in some cases the candidate ran unopposed. Regardless, all the 2024 spring semester presidents have passion for what they do and are prepared to lead the Royals this year.

“We should all be treated equally [no] matter what grade you are in,” Barrera said. “I want to see the results [of our work]. I can say ‘I want to do this, I want to do that!’ but until the changes start happening and when I can see those changes is when I feel most accomplished.”

# Major wave of extreme storms hit the U.S.

By **Victoria Matz & Isabel Rose**

A series of tragic and powerful winter storms hit the United State (U.S.) at the start of 2024, causing yet another uncomfortably frigid season.

States on the East Coast such as New York, Florida and even Tennessee have experienced extremely below average temperatures, resulting in the concerns of citizens safety and well-being. Health hazards for citizens are stronger as the winter weather gets more dangerous for transporta-

tion and even being outside for too long. As of Jan. 22, 2024, there has been an estimated total of about 75 deaths, including 25 of which were all in Tennessee.

There has been an approximation of about 95 million people that were affected by the weather. All of which are scattered widely across the U.S., including states that may not usually get this kind of weather like California.

Additionally, temperatures in California have been seen dropping tremendously, leading to unsafe condi-

tions on the road, including icy roads and strong rain. Weather conditions fluctuate as the season continues, ranging from icy cold days to foggy, dense clouds.

Near-record snowfall hit parts of the United States, including in California, in places such as Mammoth Lakes. This included a recorded 41.5 feet of snowfall since October.

One of the possible causes of these freezing events can be traced back to weather patterns above the Arctic, specifically near Greenland. This may also be a result of a jet stream, a collection of

strong winds located in the upper atmosphere. The jet stream, which was in Canada during the month of December, moved into the U.S., causing these intense conditions to ramp up a whole other level.

Despite the occurring cold temperatures, meteorologists predict weather to drop under 20 degrees in Shreveport, Louisiana, Mississippi, Birmingham, Alabama, and Atlanta.

To protect against the dangerous winter weather, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises people who are caught

in these storms to heat their homes safely and have a backup in case of the power going out, such as blankets and sleeping bags. The CDC also recommends using battery powered flashlights for light and keeping an emergency supply of water.

While these weather conditions continue to gain strength, citizens must do their best to stay safe and healthy.

# Registering to vote and making a difference

By **Jessica Khandouzi**

The ability to vote is one of our most valuable rights as citizens in a democratic society. To use this fundamental right, we have to go through the voter registration process.

There are various ways to register to vote in California. People can register to vote from the comfort of their home by using the online voter registration portal offered by the California Secretary of State’s website. Just go to the website, complete the online application, and send it in electronically. If the old-fashioned way is preferred, there is always a paper voter registration form at the county elections office, the DMV, post offices and

public libraries, among other places. Accurately complete the form, sign it and mail it to the county elections office. Ensure that it is mailed before the deadline for voter registration. California permits conditional voter registration if unable to register by the usual deadline. During the 14 days running up to and including Election Day, stop by the county elections office or another designated place. After eligibility is confirmed, registration is available, and a provisional ballot will be tallied when the vote is placed.

Regardless of the method chosen, there are a few essential pieces of information that are typically needed for the voter registration process. First, to register to vote in

California, the person must be a resident of California, a citizen of the United States and at least eighteen years old on Election Day. Afterward, they must provide personal information such as their full name, residential address, date of birth and, if applicable, the number from their driver’s license or identification card; if not, use the last four digits of their social security number. Finally, choose the preferred political party during the registration process. Selecting a party affiliation here determines which primary elections one is eligible to vote in; if an individual would like to register as a “No Party Preference” voter, they can do so.

One of the most important

parts of being a citizen is voting. Make sure that voices are heard and that everyone’s interests are reflected in democracy by casting ballots. It’s a chance to participate in the decision-making process and discuss important matters. The people’s involvement ensures that the needs and goals of their generation are given the attention they deserve by amplifying the concerns and viewpoints of young people. They may campaign for causes like social justice, healthcare, education and climate change by supporting politicians and projects that share the same ideals. Voting at an early age helps develop the habit of being informed, involved in the issues and voting in later

elections. By actively participating, it may encourage others and make our democracy stronger.

Take advantage of the chance to participate in civic life, uphold democratic values and develop an active citizenship habit. Use as many registration options as possible, including conditional voter registration, paper forms and internet registration. Recall that everyone’s vote counts and gives the ability to truly influence the issues affecting the world. With the power of our votes, we can work together to build a better future.

## The newest must read: The Getaway List

By Jenna Espinoza and Sydney Keane

New York Times best selling author, Emma Lord, has come out with another hit novel, “The Getaway List,” Jan. 23 that will captivate readers throughout the entirety of it.

The story begins on the day of her high school graduation, when Riley Larson realizes she has no idea what she wants to do once she crosses the stage. After getting rejected from every college she applied to, Larson decides the best way to reconnect with her old self is to visit her childhood best friend against her mothers wishes.

Larson and Tom Whitz had been best friends since a

young age, where they always got into trouble when they were in each other’s presence. However, things changed when Whitz moved from their town in Virginia to New York City in ninth grade.

Once she arrives in the big city and is reunited with Whitz, they decide to complete the Getaway List, a list of adventures they’ve wanted to do since he moved away four years ago. As they complete their journey one by one with their newfound friends, Larson grows into the person she was meant to become from the beginning.

Lord writes the other characters in a way that makes the readers fall in love with them. Each of the contributing char-

acters has a trait that makes them memorable and they all bring humor and belonging to the group of 18-year-olds.

“The Getaway List” includes some of reader’s favorite tropes such as found family and coming of age. The novel gives off a warm and comforting feeling which pulls the reader in immediately. It is a perfect read for any graduating senior who is about to jump into a new experience of life and doesn’t know what the future holds.

Although this 320 page book is marketed for young adults, readers of all ages will get sucked into its sweet and deep nature. The progression of Larson’s character, as well as her connection to every-

one else, is well worth the heart-warming read.

Lord is a relatively new author as her first publication was back in 2020 with “Tweet Cute.” Since then, Lord has come out with five books as well as another book, “The Break-Up Pact,” anticipated to come out some time in 2024. Other than writing heartfelt books, Lord is a BuzzFeed market editor and dabbles in community theater. Her experience in the writing industry and musical world definitely adds to her array of phenomenal romantic comedy novels.

“The Getaway List” is a must read for all readers who enjoy a story about love, friendship, family and self-discovery.

## Top 10 fashion trends of early 2024

By Sydney Keane and Kaley Samiian

The media has always been known for its infamous trends, so take a look at the current top 10 fashion trends that everyone should know about.

Starting off at 10 is the resurgence of camo print. People have been seen wearing it as pants and sweatshirts. Many tend to wear it with white or black clothes to compliment the colors.

Number nine goes back to the girlhood’s roots, as bows have also made a popular comeback. People often use ribbon or even find some cute bows off Amazon to add to their hair. Many wear it for the overall cuteness it adds to an outfit.

Cargo pants take eighth place on this list as they have been popular for some time and continue to stay in the limelight as a go-to. People wear them in all different col-

ors and patterns, but are most commonly worn in black or beige. People love it for its simplicity and ability to build with any style.

Number seven introduces some of the current aesthetics that take different sides of social media by storm. The first being the “clean girl aesthetic” which is best known for its cute but simple style. The other, or opposite, style is the “messy girl aesthetic.” This tends to include smudge or bolder makeup and hair that is wild or fierce. Both the “clean girl aesthetic” and the “messy girl aesthetic” focus on letting the person’s inner personality shine.

Number six goes to Adidas Sambas as they’ve gained popularity as a common staple shoe. Their simple, comfortable design that can match almost any outfit has been the root of its popularity. The brand also extended their shoe to a variety of colors to expand their customers.

Following this, bodysuits and Skims tops take number five. The skin-tight clothes originated from the popular company, Skims, which is an American clothing and shapewear brand. It has gained immense popularity over the past year and other inexpensive companies have added similar tops to their inventory. These tops and bodysuits are also commonly worn with baggy pants.

In the fourth spot, Wide-leg sweats are mainly known for their comfort and style. They prevent the morning stress of picking out an outfit since they can be paired with almost any top or sweatshirt. The third spot goes to low-rise baggy jeans which have become popular as well. Jeans have been a common fashion since the 20th century, but styles have varied over the years. Presently, the reason for the baggy and low-rise trend is that it fits the generation’s desire for comfort clothing, which is deemed

to be a major characteristic of today’s style.

Number two is given to off-the-shoulder tops. There has been a revival of the clothing trend, which was popular back in the 1980s. The renewed popularity has influenced people to cut their T-shirts and crewneck hoodies to fit the trend.

Last but not least, taking the number one spot is the comfortable, yet trending Uggs. This brand of boots originally sparked public interest in the 2000s. However, the newer style varies from the previous, with the classic mini, ultra mini and tasman slippers being the most popular. Ugg has even released platform versions of their shoes, which caught the public’s interest in the past few months.

They emphasize the cute, yet comfortable mindset of the generation, which has been apparent in almost every top fashion trend of today.

## Mitski extends her North American tour

By Sylah Hill

33-year-old indie singer Mitski announced additional summer dates for the North American tour of her new studio album, “The Land is Inhospitable and So Are We.”

Mitski’s tour was initially meant to begin in late January and end April 13, but the growth of the support from her fan base resulted in the tour being prolonged.

New dates were added for late August and September for the tour, with some featuring the Icelandic jazz-pop singer Laufey. Since Mitski is well-renowned for her melancholic music, Laufey

is often regarded as the more jovial version of the indie star. A collaboration between the two famous artists has been desperately desired by fans worldwide, thus their collaboration for even a few tour dates is groundbreaking to both fanbases.

Originally, the fan presale for the tour began Oct. 4, with the tickets becoming available to the general public two days later. Aside from the most popular collaboration for Mitski’s expanded 2024 tour, she will also be seen collaborating with popular artists such as Ethel Cain, Wyatt Flores, Arlo Parks and the Japanese band Lamp, which will be making their de-

but in America.

Mitski’s astounding rise in popularity as an independent artist became evident in her now most streamed song, “My Love Mine All Mine” which reached second in the Billboard United States (U.S.) Independent Albums, Top Alternative Albums and Top Rock Albums.

Prior to the release of the album, Mitski’s most popular albums were “Be the Cowboy,” released in 2018 and “Bury Me At Makeout Creek,” released in 2014. Both albums provided the most iconic examples of her music as an artist, with songs like “Washing Machine Heart” “Nobody” and “First

Love / Late Spring” gaining traction on media platforms such as TikTok over the past few years. The awe-invoking career of the indie artist dates back to even her teenage years when she released the album “Lush,” one of the most lyrically and orchestrally powerful albums of her career during her time at the State University of New York at Purchase.

Although her fame has skyrocketed exponentially since the release of “The Land is Inhospitable and So Are We,” Mitski’s career and what she has made of it has been and will continue to be one of the most aweing pieces of art in the decade.

## THE ROYAL COURIER SPRING 2024

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-Diaz  
Sylah Hill  
Jessica Khandouzi  
Estephania Lopez  
Oliver Yuval

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.

Letters to the Editor are welcomed and must be signed; however, names will be withheld for valid reasons. All contributions are subject for restrictions of libel, defamation, slander and obscenity. The Royal Courier staff reserves the right to edit letters without changing the meaning, and also reserves the right to reject letters for reasons of limited space, untimely material, or unbalanced coverage.

The Royal Courier is a member of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, Quill and Scroll, National Scholastic Press Association, the Journalism Education Association and the Southern California Journalism Education Association.

### 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

# A rockin' night with Battle of the Bands

By Kyleigh Zvara

Shining purple lights and the sound of loud amps filled Anderson Hall Friday, Feb. 2 during the school's Battle of the Bands (BOTB).

"I was more excited for this one than I was [the last one]," junior Threshold drummer Gabriel Swintek said. "The management stepped up a lot and I know people who are running it this year. They're all nice guys and you could feel that in the quality of the production."

BOTB is an opportunity for students to showcase their music for peers and staff alike. At the end of the night the crowd gets to vote on which band they think should win. The audience

had crowned their victor, Bleech.

"I think every other band that played was fantastic," senior creator of Sundryed Julian Unholz said. "Bleech totally deserves it."

Five bands performed including Redroom, Sundryed, Bleech, Smite and Threshold. Each of the bands had their own music style, like Redroom on the more indie side and Bleech who played nu metal.

"My favorite part of the night was playing Minus Blindfold," sophomore Bleech drummer Guy Hillel said. "That song is really fun,"

Redroom opened BOTB with sophomore lead singer Olive Sanders, bassist Nicholas Raal, keyboardist So-

phie Beveridge and drummer Anthony Esparza.

"I felt really supported by the crowd," Sanders said. "I am so grateful to have shared the experience with my friends."

Each band played three or four songs during their set that were originals or covers.

"The music that's released is always something I do on my own," Unholz said. "I started [Sundryed] because I wanted an outlet that was totally me so any creative choice I made was wholly and honestly what came out."

Unholz created the band three and a half years ago in July of 2020, so far producing six original albums with the latest one, Life Insur-

ance, debuting Feb. 10.

"[I loved] how engaged the audience was," Unholz said. "It really felt like an important show."

The night's winner and third act, Bleech, had the crowd screaming and singing along. Their set hyped up the audience enough to win it all.

"I was pretty excited," Hillel said. "Plus, we got [prizes] after we won."

Smite was a newer band at BOTB. They played three songs, all metal.

"[My favorite part], it's gotta be Smite," Swintek said.

Threshold was the last band to perform. The four member band met at a local guitar shop two and a half years ago and have

been playing together since. Their musical career has even included a manager.

"We really enjoyed it and we started booking gigs," Swintek said. "We moved away from the director after that and started on our own. We still actually practice at the guitar shop every week."

BOTB was a night to remember for both the bands and the crowd. The five groups came together to perform awesome sets and connected the listeners through their music.

"I think everybody should be given the opportunity to play an instrument at least once in their life," Swintek said. "It's the most beautiful thing in the world and I think music is the best thing humans have ever created."

# The history of Halftime shows

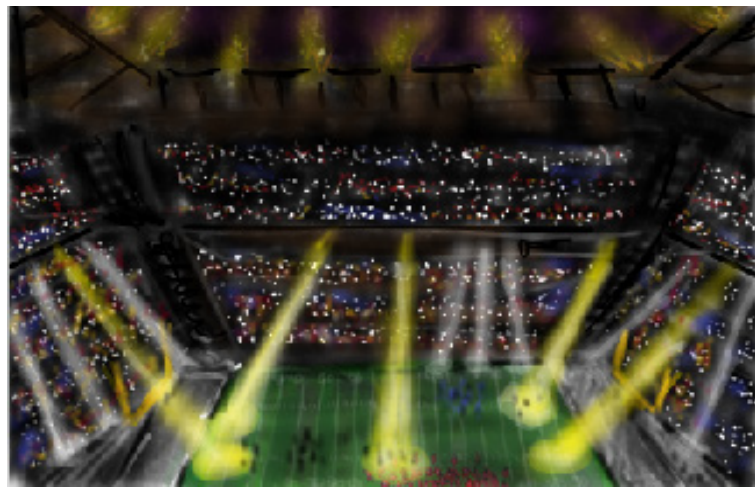


Illustration by Isabel Rose

By Victoria Matz and Isabel Rose

Ever since 1967, the Halftime show during the Superbowl has been a favorite for football fans and non-football fans alike.

The 2024 Halftime show starring Usher is set to take

place in Las Vegas, Feb. 11, at Allegiant Stadium. He is set to perform crowd favorites like, "Yeah!", "You Make Me Wanna" and "DJ Got Us Fallin' In Love."

In addition to this icon of a singer leading the Halftime show, stars like Reba McEntire, Post Malone and

Andra Day will start off the show. With McEntire performing "The Star-Spangled Banner," Malone singing, "America the Beautiful" and finally, Day performing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," fans will be left inspired and ready to watch a wonderful day of football.

As time went on, Halftime shows only got better and better, leaving fans wanting more year after year.

Popular singing sensations such as Rhianna, Snoop Dogg, Eminem, the Weeknd, Shakira, Maroon 5 and Justin Timberlake have been the center of these shows, displaying extravagant performances.

Halftime shows generally

last around 10-13 minutes long, with Justin Timberlake's 2018 performance lasting 14 minutes long. The entire Halftime break during the Superbowl is about 20-30 minutes long, taking into consideration all of the ads that are featured on the big screens at people's homes.

While the musical performances are the highlight of the day, many viewers often talk about the ads featured in the breaks. Over the years, fans have discovered the wildly high prices for a 30-second ad in the show. Many sources claim that the estimated price of the commercials this year is about 7 million dollars. However, no matter the cost, the mon-

ey and effort put into these commercials make it all seem worthwhile.

The top three most popular and most watched Halftime shows are Rhianna's (2023), which racked up 118.7 million views, Katy Perry's (2015), which totaled 118.5 million views and Lady Gaga's (2017), which had 118 million views. Coldplay, Bruno Mars and Madonna's Halftime performances also achieved incredible views from around 114 to 115 million each.

While fans and viewers wait for the big day to come, many speculations circle the internet featuring rumors of what is to come at the show and who else will be seen there.

# The Royal Games

Word search grid with letters arranged in rows and columns for a game.

### Word Bank

- Arrows
Cupid
Fun
Hearts
Love
Red
Candy
Flowers
Gifts
Kindness
Rose
Sweet
Chocolate
Friendship
Happiness
Letters
Pink
Thoughtful

Find the Valentine bear inside the pages!!



# Advice to 9th Graders: POPS club members featured in newly published book



Photo by The San Fernando Valley Sun

By **Kasey Lee and Victoria Matz**

After a year of hard work, the book *Advice to 9th Graders: Stories, Poetry, Art and Other Words of Wisdom* is being published with contributions from students from the school's Pain of the Prison System (POPS) Club, Feb. 13.

"The book is giving advice to kids coming into high school," social studies teacher and club advisor James DeLarme said. "All these kids who have experienced so many things and learned so many lessons are able to share what they have learned whether it's related to incarceration or not."

POPS Club meets in B115 on Mondays and is a safe space for, but not limited to, students with relatives that have been incarcerated to share their experiences. The club stretches across the country and has nearly 20 schools participating in four

different states, who have also added to the book.

"POPS is a club for support and community for everyone," junior club president Kimberly Romero said. "It's [gives students] creative expression so they can heal and feel supported [knowing] that they aren't alone and that other kids are going through the same things."

Working in hand with The PATHfinder Club and the other POPS Clubs, students at the school created their own media, including various poems, stories and artwork to help inspire others, specifically freshman students.

"They gave us the prompt of advice to 9th graders so I kept thinking about what that could be [or] what would I even tell my 9th grade self," senior Tamira Shany said. "[I would tell myself about the] world in general and POPS. Some of that was me thinking about

how to balance my emotional being with all my classes and being able to describe my emotions."

About seven or eight students out of the 25 members of the club submitted their media to be published in the book. One of the students, Shany, drew a symbolic representation of a brain and wrote a short piece with it to share her advice. Shany's quote is even featured on the back cover of the book. As a culmination of their hard work, the students of POPS club are going to participate in a book release party March 2 to celebrate.

"[During the party], we get to share our pieces and talk more about it because the [small description] we have going with our art work doesn't capture everything that is in each piece," junior Rachael Galper said. "I get to expand on that and why I chose my artwork for the book and for the prompt."

Galper shared a photogra-

phy piece along with a short written piece. Like Shany, she is also featured in the synopsis of the book. With the help from DeLarme and other faculty, many of these students shared their stories.

"[Creating media for the book] was a very easy process for the students," Romero said. "For me personally, DeLarme, the faculty and the people that volunteered really made it easy for us to just be able to express ourselves and capture that in a book."

The process of making media for the book included brainstorming and drafting by students, support from DeLarme and other faculty and editing from executive director of POPS club, Amy Friedman, who helped them make their pieces more powerful. School administration and students alike are ecstatic for the upcoming release of their new book, and cannot wait for it to be shared with the world.

"[The book being published is] really satisfying," DeLarme said. "This is the fifth book that El Camino kids have worked on and this one is definitely one of my favorites. I like having the idea of having advice for 9th graders. I also really like that even though kids don't have to share if they are connected with incarceration, a fair amount of kids still do."

Students that are a part of the club feel a great sense of belonging and community and that is why students who attend these meetings and participate are so grateful to have an outlet like this.

"It's really amazing to see my name in something and I think it's cool that I'm a part of the club," Shany said. "I'm gonna continue to go there and I want to be in the next book because I think it's awesome."

Kohan-Sedgh Law Firm, P.C.

## ACCIDENT LAWYER

Tel. (310) 954- 8888



**Sasan Kohan**  
Attorney at Law



**L.A. ELECTRIC SERVICE**  
FOOD MACHINERY SERVICE

Tel (818) 744-9503

laelectric@service@gmail.com



NOW FIXING EXPRESSO MACHINES

19655 Ventura Boulevard • Tarzana, CA 91365

www.laelectricservice.com

# Students help save lives: UCLA Blood Drive



Photo by Tarryn Macias

By Jenna Espinoza and Kyleigh Zvara

The school's student council (StuCo) teamed up with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) to host the annual blood drive, Jan. 22, to help the patients at Ronald Reagan UCLA medical center.

"This blood drive was a great way to get the school back together for a good cause after our three weeks off," junior Zaynah Zuhair said.

Zaynah Zuhair and sophomore Marielle Flores, the directors of community service in StuCo, had three days to organize the blood drive, including their work in publicity to reach a goal of about 150 participants.

Our determination to get [the blood drive] done and planned on such a timely basis made an impact on StuCo and everyone's leadership skills," Zaynah Zuhair said. "I think it was definitely successful."

Students who participated in the blood drive got summoned during one of their classes to donate. They arrived in Anderson Hall between the times of 8:30 and 1:30 and after they gave blood, they got snacks and some time to rest.

"I feel great, the people here are really nice," junior Zarah Zuhair said. "They give you a bunch of food if you feel like passing out and they take extra precautions to take care of you."

There are many health impacts associated with donating blood for both the donor and recipient. A healthier heart, emotional and social benefits and the opportunity to save someone's life are just a few of the benefits when donating blood.

"My future occupation is probably gonna be in health care so being able to give blood and help people with certain diseases is really beneficial," Zarah Zuhair said. "Giving blood is also really good for your body."

However, in order to give blood, students needed to meet certain requirements. Students must be 16 or older to donate blood, with all 16 year old donors getting a signed parental consent form. If they have healthy iron levels, are feeling well and have a healthy weight, they are eligible to donate blood.

"There were around 30-50 people who were not eligible to give blood," Flores said. "They all made appointments and were willing to donate but couldn't."

After the success of the UCLA blood drive, StuCo is preparing to hold another in late April of this year.

"I really did not think we could pull it off or get much blood for that matter because of how little time we had, but we both pulled it together and got so much blood to help the patients in UCLA!" Zaynah Zuhair said.

# February Program Highlight: The Flex Program

By Sydney Keane

The Flex Program gives students the opportunity to work at their own pace and catch up on credits or even graduate early.

"The main purpose [of the Flex Program is] to get students who are behind on credits on track to graduate with their graduating class," the Flex Program's Office Manager Evan Coleman said.

Students are given their course work and can complete it on their own time, whether that's at home or at school. The students receive points for each of their assignments for the class, each assignment being one to three points. Once they reach 75 points in the class they are able to receive a letter grade for the class and move onto completing another course they need credit for. This allows students to complete courses and gain credits at a much faster rate than they would taking a regular course.

"It's my job to discover how each student learns and how best to help them," art and English teacher Zabrina Zahariades said. "With this information, I can assign the appropriate work. As part of being in the Flex Program, we are flexible to meet the students' needs."

The students really enjoy being able to work at their own pace to help accommodate their rate of graduation. Many students, prior to learning about the program, see it as working slower, but it actually gives students the opportunity to work more and faster. They work as hard and as best as they can to finish their courses in a timeline that works best for them, and it normally works to their advantage as they finish the courses faster than they expected.

"This last semester I took it as an opportunity to work more," senior Nicholas Valvo said. "I just worked as hard and I could and did as much as I could [to complete my credits]."

In the past, students who were behind on credits have found out about the Flex Program through Coleman. He has then recommended the Flex Program, formally known as the Alternative Education Program.

"I love being able to work with the same student for a few years. Since I teach all eight English classes, we can focus on the skills they need to learn and build upon that," Zahariades said. "It's wonderful to see their academic progress."

# Widespread generosity sparked due to new shoe drive

By Sylah Hill

The new year invites inspirational change in the world, off campus, but also on campus with the Royal Regiment's new shoe drive lasting through Feb. 23.

"Surprisingly, [we were] getting way more shoes donated than I expected," band director Kevin Thurow said.

The shoe drive was introduced for the benefit it would have on those giving back and being selfless, especially the students. In hopes to spark incentive in

students to give back to the community, the ECR shoe drive was organized. However, the shoe drive has been both rewarding to those giving and those receiving.

"We had to find a storage area to keep all the donations," Thurow said.

A parent of a student on the color guard had offered up the idea to Thurow after having previous experience and success with organizing shoe drives. Thurow found the proposition to be a great idea, thus the creation of the drive. Thurow and those

working on the organization of the drive have worked hard for this drive to receive the attention it deserves.

"Most of the work has been with the band parents," senior Owen Mann said. "They have done a lot of great work for the band to help us, and...they brought the shoe drive to band."

Organizing the shoe drive consisted of a large amount of time being set aside for flyers and newsletters in attempts to help invite and convince people to join, and to become involved.

Even though the shoe drive required a lot of time and effort in organization, the reward didn't solely lie in the students and parents participating in donating to the drive.

"It's had a pretty big impact to help provide shoes to people who need them," Mann said.

Those participating in the shoe drive have found themselves inspired by their actions and the actions of the shoe drive coordinators to be more generous and to take advantage of what re-

sources they have available. Open for donations until Feb. 23, the shoe drive will continue to gain significant traction and nonfinancial revenue to positively affect the lives of those who could use these donations.

"Any opportunity my students can get to...help others in need, we are all for," Thurow said. "This was a way for us to get involved and we took it."

# The future of Artificial Intelligence in schools

By Kasey Lee and Victoria Matz

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) rapidly advances and grows as time goes on, students are having mixed judgments when it comes to the use and application of this technological tool.

“I think it’s bad if you are trying to get out of an essay,” freshman Emma Fishman said. “You’re just going to get caught no matter what.”

Following the growing popularity of AI applications, such as ChatGPT and others, there has been an increase in the usage of AI in school. Students have found many methods to utilize AI, whether for studying, cheating, or other ways.

“AI, in a sense, is very helpful, but it sucks because it hurts creativity,” senior Daniel Lahmanchuk said. “People often use it to search up ideas instead of coming up with them themselves.”

While some students argue that AI is harmful and negatively affects them, others believe that it creates a fresher aspect for students as it continues to grow and develop.

“Sometimes it can be cool for pictures and I just like how you can type something in and it’ll give you a response,” Fishman said.

“[AI can be good] for digital art or for inspiration.”

While keeping the consequences in mind, many students understand that these new tools are beneficial for studying and maintaining a good work ethic.

“[I only] use AI for studying,” sophomore Radin Moosavi said. “I think it can be helpful [and] help kids study, but at the same time people can also use it to cheat.”

In addition to these amazing new learning techniques, some argue that it can replace existing search engines in a newer, more advanced way.

“[AI can be] really useful,” sophomore Oshri Atia said. “Sometimes you can use it instead of Google but if you’re going to use it to cheat, you’re not really learning anything.”

As time goes on, the opportunities and uses for AI will continue to rapidly expand and even benefit administrators as well as students.

“I think [AI] will just grow to be a better tool,” Atia said. “I also feel like teachers can start using it. It just depends on how students use it.”

Students understand that in retrospect, using these applications to cheat will only cause them harm, therefore they might as well put

them to good use like studying tactics, or explanations to lessons they may not understand.

“Sometimes if I’m checking my math homework, or if I don’t know how to do a math problem, I’ll put it into an AI search engine to see how [to do it],” junior Oliver Green said. “I don’t use it for cheating obviously, but I use it to see how to do things I’m not sure how to do.”

AI can provide immediate learning assistance to students and increase how efficiently they can work. While many believe that AI can be beneficial to their education, AI can still have harmful effects for students’ learning if it’s used incorrectly.

“I think it’s going to be detrimental to society,” Green said. “I think that it makes us worse as people, [but] I do think that as a commodity, it’s helpful. It’s nice for everyday tasks, and things like that.”

As AI continues to grow, society will have to face the consequences that come with it.

“I think that with time AI will become even more powerful,” Lahmanchuk said. “More and more people will continue to use it. Ultimately it’s both good and bad.”



Photo by Comingsoon.net

## The revival of an iconic 2000’s movie

By Sophie Apolaya Diaz and Kaley Samiian

With an increasing trend of musicals arriving in theaters, the recent “Mean Girls” musical, released Jan. 12, has taken the internet by storm, with many people expressing their mixed opinions.

From the moment the musical’s adaptation was announced, fans were exhilarated and had high hopes for the renewal of the iconic movie. Public relations (P.R.) especially fueled the people’s excitement, and the logo of “Mean Girls” took over theaters across the country. However, these expectations were quickly converted to disappointment as the movie wasn’t nearly as iconic as the 2004 original. The original film was a hit when it was first released and even remained one throughout the following two decades. With the charismatic cast, iconic lines, and appealing fashion, it had solidified its place in the movie industry. With these exciting elements of the movie, fans expected the new musical to reach this level of entertainment, which wasn’t the case. The new adaptation had fallen flat in many areas.

The fashion was the first aspect of the movie that didn’t appeal to viewers. The modernized look of the characters didn’t compare

to the Year 2000 (Y2K) fashion of the original. It was more of a Generation Z (Gen Z) stereotypical style which has become overused in present-day movies. Fans expected something eccentric and non-cliche. Others also expected high-end and brand-name clothes, like Gucci and Chanel, for the “Plastics” as they were portrayed to be wealthy, popular teens. Sadly, fashion wasn’t the only part of the film that was a disappointment.

Many supporters of the original musical had been especially overjoyed to listen to fan favorites such as ‘Meet The Plastics’ on the big screen. However, this excitement was short lived, as multiple songs had been cut out, even with iconic verses being skipped or altered to save screen time. Numerous energetic instrumentals were swapped out for a more mellow approach, disappointing fans even more as the adaptation had lost all of its charm.

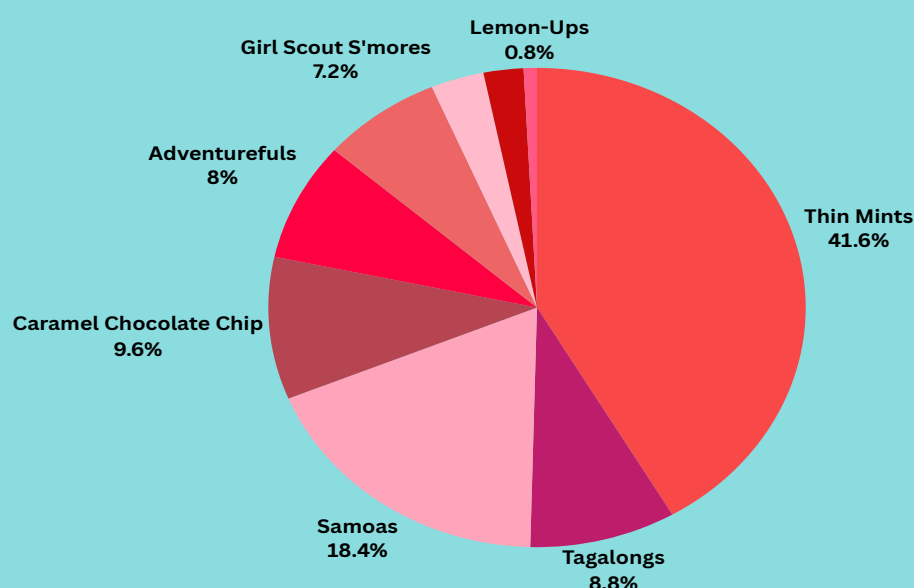
While there were many negative responses to the movie, this didn’t stop Mean Girls (2024) from gaining monetary success. With the movie reigning the box office for weeks since its opening of \$28 million, it doesn’t seem to be slowing down any time soon. This has proven that despite the hate the movie is receiving, there is still an abundance of fans the movie appeals to.

The film has gained much profit, considering it was slated to be straight-to-streaming on Paramount+, with a change of plans taking the movie to the theaters.

Though many attributes can be noted as negative about the film, there are countless arguments defending the musical movie. A positive element that a majority of viewers agree with was the incredibly accurate casting when compared to the original. Reneé Rapp and Avantika Vandanapu in particular have gotten the most praise for their acting and vocals that precisely and accurately match the original characters’ attitudes. Another worthwhile contribution was how Tina Fey, the screenwriter in the original movie who also played Ms. Norbury, had come back to contribute and reprise her role in the 2024 film as well. With the adaptation sticking to most of the original dialogue and plot points, fans of the 2004 original experienced great nostalgia and it was as if they had traveled back to the 2000s, hearing the same lines on the big screen once more.

Although Mean Girls (2024) was underwhelming overall, both theater and film fans were happy to see a blend of the two worlds, as well as a classic movie come back to life and regain the spotlight.

### Students Reveal What the Best Girl Scout Cookie is



# Girls varsity soccer team wins intense game against Birmingham



Photo by Eliza Lotterstein

By **Sydney Keane** and **Esthaphanie Lopez**

The school's girls varsity soccer team won their game two to one against Birmingham at Pierce College Jan. 24 in a suspenseful showdown.

"Before any game, I like to roll out and stretch the night before to make sure that I don't cramp up mid-game," senior Talia Saffie said. "I also make sure to listen to music on the bus ride to any game to make sure my mind's right."

During the first half of the game, the score stayed at zero to zero for what seemed like forever. There were a lot of offensive moves from both sides to try and score a point. Soon, Birmingham began to get aggressive with their opponents but were not given a penalty until later in the game. As they competitively played, senior goalie Catherine O'Riely successively blocked many goals keeping the score stagnant.

"My dad was at the sidelines [telling me that] something's got to happen and

that we have to win," senior Sharon Alcocer said. "[I knew] I had to do something to get a free kick or pass to get the assist."

The game began to pick up in the second half with senior Julia Beltran from Birmingham scoring the first goal of the game. Varsity started picking up their defense and began to keep the ball on the other side of the field as much as possible. Birmingham kept up their aggressive plays and ended up getting multiple yellow cards because of it.

The first goal from varsity started with a penalty kick from Alcocer which made it into the goal thanks to a header from Saffie.

"We needed to score. We needed to win," senior Taryn Macias said. "There was no other choice. I had to be there for the team."

Once the game was tied, both teams attempted to get that winning goal and break the one-to-one score. It wasn't until four minutes before the game was scheduled to end did Macias make the winning goal from the

15-yard line with the help of another assist from Alcocer. The stands and the team went wild once they knew that they could secure the win. The rest of the game was dedicated to protecting the goal and keeping the ball away from Birmingham.

"I'm proud of all my teammates for remaining headstrong and committed to our success despite the number of setbacks we've had," Saffie said. "I truly believe that we can go far this year as long as we all stay focused and dedicated."

## 49ers and Chiefs Superbowl showdown

By **Kaley Samiian** and **Kyleigh Zvara**  
Contribution by **Oliver Yuval**

The Kansas City Chiefs won Superbowl LVIII, beating the San Francisco 49ers [Niners] at Allegiant Stadium Feb. 11, crowning them their second consecutive victory.

The game was an exciting one overall, with the difference in scores not exceeding 10 points throughout the entire game. The Niners were up for most of the game, until the very end.

The first quarter marked a slow start for both teams as neither scored points, which ultimately showed the strong defense of both teams.

Following this, the second quarter welcomed the first points of the game. Niner's kicker Jake Moody made a huge 55-yard kick to get a field goal. The premier touchdown of the Superbowl was made by a well-known play called a flea flicker. Uncommon for a wide receiver to throw the ball, Jauan Jennings passed it to McCaffery, who made it to the endzone. With a 10-point deficit before them, Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes led the team to a successful run, making it in field goal range securing their first three points of the game with a successful kick from Harrison Butker. The teams closed the half with a low score of 10-3.

However, the game start-

ed picking up in the second half, with a shocking play starting off the third quarter. The Chiefs lost some grip, fumbling the ball, but soon got it back and ensured the Niners didn't get possession.

Later in the quarter, Kansas City's score went up to six points from a 57-yard field goal by Butker. Butker displayed his advanced skill in his position, consistently making near impossible, long-range goals.

As Butker's punt led to a fumble by the Niners. Although the football only grazed one of the Niner's legs, the recovery by the Chiefs gave them offensive possession. Starting their run close to the end zone thanks to the fumble, the

Chiefs ran in to their first touchdown of the game, also taking their first lead of 13-10 and closing off the quarter.

Emotions ran high with the beginning of the fourth quarter as the game was in anyone's hands. Within the first few minutes, the Niners came back with quarterback Brock Purdy passing it to Jennings for his second touchdown of the game, regaining their lead. However, the unexpected happened when Moody's extra point was blocked, potentially inhibiting their win in the end.

Three field goals were later made in the last few minutes of the quarter, one by the Niners and two by the Chiefs. The second of the Chiefs tied the game in the

last few seconds, leading them to overtime.

Tensions ran high going into overtime. About half way through the extra time, Moody kicked a field goal to push the Niners up three points, 22-19. The score stayed like this until the very end of the game. With six seconds left on the clock, Mahomes made a short pass to wide receiver Mecole Hardman Jr. and he ran into the endzone. The Chiefs scored a touchdown with their last moments left on the field. Kansas City officially won.

This became the Kansas City Chiefs second win in a row, and their third win in five years, securing their football legacy.