

# amrutha dorai

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*JOURNALISM PORTFOLIO*

# writing

## THE BURDEN OF BULLYING

**“**It wasn’t a joke when my ‘best friends’ told me I was antisocial and awkward.”

“It wasn’t a joke when my high-pitched voice was imitated because it sounds ‘funny.’”

“It wasn’t a joke when you told me I wasn’t really that smart.”

You might think bullying doesn’t happen on campus. And you wouldn’t be alone in that assumption, either — 31 percent of students surveyed stated that they’ve never witnessed bullying at MVHS. The submissions to our “It wasn’t a joke” Tumblr challenge, however, proved otherwise.

Fifteen percent of our 349 survey respondents stated that they had indeed been bullied at one point or another, in one way or another. Statistically, that may not seem like a lot. But that’s at least 52 people moving through the halls of your high school carrying pain and alienation on their shoulders.

It can be hard to share that kind of story. So, in honor of National Bullying Prevention Month, we decided to try a low-risk approach: We gave students an opportunity to submit an anonymous message to [elestoque.tumblr.com](http://elestoque.tumblr.com) describing an incident in which they were bullied. The submissions — which were touching and sometimes jarring — proved that social media can be used for advocacy.

Yet social media can also be used to cyber-

bully. It happened to 15-year-old Saratoga High School student Audrie Pott, who took her own life last September. And it happened to junior Mane Mikayelyan, who describes how she was cyberbullied through social networking sites in “Lighten up, it was just a joke,” starting on page 25.

It doesn’t end with cyberbullying, though. Senior Zac Burke, also featured in our Special Report, endured physical bullying to the point of experiencing nausea and anxiety. And 36 percent of survey respondents have either witnessed, experienced or carried out verbal bullying.

We hope that reading about the experiences of your classmates and friends will help shed a light on a topic that, too often, is oversimplified. We hope also that you take a moment to reflect on your own experiences, whether you have been bullied, witnessed bullying or been a bully.

Awareness is key in the path to prevention: Recognize that, yes, bullying does happen at MVHS, even if you don’t see it. And be aware of the effect that your words and actions can have on those who surround you. As student advocate Richard Prinz explains, the definition of bullying is any activity that makes someone feel victimized. Even if you think it’s a joke, the victim might not.

Bullying happens at MVHS. If we all do our part, though, it doesn’t have to.

*Published October 2013 in El Estoque*

*A Tumblr submission challenge, when we first thought of it, seemed like a great idea to engage our student body. I wasn’t sure, though, how many people would actually feel comfortable opening up to us. The many submissions we received made the issue so much more real to me; I wanted to bring that effect to our audience through this letter from the editor.*

# TO PROTECT & TO SERVE

Leaving behind a troubled childhood, junior Zac Burke moves toward his dream of becoming a police officer

At 6:45 p.m. on New Year's Eve, junior Zac Burke ducked into a police car. But not the back: Burke rode shotgun.

Many of his friends were celebrating at a party on Prospect Road, a little way down from the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, but Burke had different plans. He spent the final day of 2012 chasing down potential stolen vehicles, helping administer Breathalyzer tests and busting wild parties — including the one on Prospect.

The deputy who Burke accompanied had been called in due to reports of fighting. When the two and other officers arrived, the officers asked Burke to stand back. But that didn't stop Burke's friends from giving him an interrogation of their own.

"A bunch of people come to me and are like, 'Oh, Zac, are you a police?' And I said, 'No, dude, I'm just with them,'" Burke said, animated. "'Are you a police?' 'No, dude, I just told you I'm just with them!' 'Oh, I know, but are you a police?' 'No, dude, go home — but don't drive.'"

Burke is not a policeman — at least, not yet. But he has dreamed of working in law enforcement since childhood, and, through the Sheriff's Office Teen Community Police Academy, he has come one step closer to upholding the peace.

## THE ACADEMY

The Police Academy runs two 10-week sessions a year. Burke participated in the fall of 2012, attending classes every Wednesday night from the beginning of October until his graduation in December.

After filling out an application and being selected, Burke joined around 20 other high

school students in attending lectures taught by four officers. Students learned to conduct traffic stops and operate handcuffs; witnessed a bomb squad demonstration; and spent one Saturday morning firing officers' duty weapons at the gun range. They also participated in ride-alongs with officers, like the one Burke completed on New Year's Eve.

Field trips included outings to the coroner's office and the Santa Clara County Jail. Burke recalls walking down the hallway of the jail with criminals shouting profanities at him and his classmates. There was one inmate who stood out to Burke: while his cellmates were up at the bars, he remained calmly at the back of the cell.

"I looked at him in the eye as we were walking, and he told me simply to stay in school," Burke said.

"Not all people in there are bad. Actually, most of the people in there aren't bad. They've just made bad choices."

## BROKEN WINDOWS, BROKEN FAMILY

Burke's earliest encounters with policemen were anything but positive. His parents divorced when he was eight, and it was a difficult transition for him to make; despite being on medication for depression and anxiety, he sought an

alternate method to express his emotions.

His parents argued often, but Burke didn't have that luxury. So he broke the windows of his Sunnyvale home instead.

"The cops often had to come over to set me straight. And instead of being understanding, they were just kind of there yelling at me," Burke said. "And part of me said ... maybe if I become a cop, I'd be more understanding of this, and I could help people more than intimidate them."

When he reached middle school, Burke's family decided his behavior needed a change.

"It was hard to see him struggling, not really

**His end goal is to become a police officer somewhere in this area, where he has lived for the majority of his life — where he has grown from being an eight-year-old with a temper into a young adult with dreams of serving the law.**

being able to handle life in a way that was constructive," said Kim Rappaport Burke, Burke's mother. "Raising him was not easy, but he turned his life around."

For sixth and seventh grade, he relocated to Forest Heights Lodge, a treatment center in Colorado. The therapeutic environment, according to Burke, played a key role in helping him turn his life around.

After a few more school changes, Burke

arrived at MVHS for his freshman year. As an underclassman, he faced bullying so severe that the perpetrator was expelled.

"Freshman year, I was kind of annoying. I was a little kid thinking I was a big kid. But I think I've changed that. I think I've matured very nicely," Burke said. "And I still have issues with people who don't agree with what I stand for ... but I just ignore them."

As for the windows?

"I still struggle with some problems, but I talk about them now, I don't act them out — we still have windows in this house," Burke said. "I haven't done anything since I was nine or 10, but it seems sometimes like yesterday, and when I look back on it, I think, 'Wow, that was me.'"

One of Burke's mentors, Deputy Sheriff Jennifer Toomey, feels that the challenges Burke has had to face will, in the long run, serve as an asset.

"Kids like Zac, or kids like some other people that I know who are deputies now, that have speckled pasts — they've dabbled into a little bit of trouble here and there — they make really good cops generally," Toomey said, "because when they become a cop and talk to other kids who are in a similar type of trouble, they understand where they're coming from."

In her years of involvement with the Teen Academy, Toomey has encountered only three students who were serious about a future career in law enforcement. Burke is one of them.

## BEYOND THE BADGE

On a recent Thursday evening, Burke and his mother attended a showing of "Heroes Behind the Badge," a documentary that details the sacrifices made by policemen.

"It was incredibly powerful hearing that a police officer in this country dies every 54 hours. That, to me, hit home when I thought about him being put in that danger every day," Rappaport Burke said. "I did ask him if there was anything else I could talk him into doing, but he's got his mind set on it, and there's nothing I'm going to do to change it."

Currently, Burke is applying to the County Sheriff's Office Youth Cadet program. If he is selected, he will receive a uniform as well as the opportunity to participate in alcohol and tobacco sting operations and law enforcement at county fairgrounds. For his 18th birthday, he hopes to complete a ride-along in Oakland.

His end goal is to become a police officer somewhere in this area, where he has lived for the majority of his life — where he has grown from being an eight-year-old with a temper into a young adult with dreams of serving the law.

Burke recalls an encounter with a police officer from his younger, more rash days that left a strong impression. He was one of the few officers who, like Burke one day hopes to, approached him with understanding rather than intimidation.

"I remember one time a cop kind of got down on his knee and just patted me on the back and asked me in a soft tone, 'What's going on? Why are you acting like this?'" Burke said. "He actually seemed to care, which was a big thing." More recently, Burke saw the same officer at the Sheriff's Office. He couldn't remember the officer's name, so he didn't say hello.

"But I'll see him again," Burke said. "And I'll thank him."

*Published March 2013 in El Estoque*

*My main interview with Zac for this story is the longest I've ever done. Three hours at his kitchen table, looking through photo albums and hanging out with his dogs. I had never spoken to him before; upon leaving, I felt I had an intimate understanding of his life. Powerful stuff.*

## SOURCE OF THREATS COULD FACE FINES, PRISON TIME IF CAUGHT

**El Estoque breaks down the consequences for vandalism, bomb threats and death threats**

If the perpetrator of the Dec. 13 threats is identified, he or she will face up to three charges under California state law: vandalism, criminal threats and falsely reporting the presence of a bomb. The penalty for these crimes differs depending on their severity, and is determined by three separate sections of the California Penal Code.

The penalty for vandalism is addressed by Section 594. Depending on the cost required to fix the damage, as well as the criminal's past offenses, he or she could face anywhere between \$1,000 and \$50,000 in fines and/or up to a year in prison. However, if the perpetrator is a minor and his or her parents can provide reasonable cause, this fee may be waived.

Section 422 deals with criminal threats, defined as statements with intention to "commit a crime which will result in death or great bodily injury to another person ... even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out." The threats against a staff member would be considered criminal threats, for which the maximum penalty is one year in a county or state prison.

The California Penal Code provides guidelines on how criminals are to be charged. If the person behind the spray-painted threats that caused classes to be cancelled Dec. 13 is identified, he or she could be sentenced to prison time or fines. Screenshot from [leginfo.ca.gov](http://leginfo.ca.gov).

The California Penal Code provides guidelines on how criminals are to be charged. If the person behind the spray-painted threats that caused classes to be cancelled Dec. 13 is identified, he or she could be sentenced to prison time or fines. Screenshot from [leginfo.ca.gov](http://leginfo.ca.gov).

However, because the perpetrator also vio-

lated Section 148.1 — which sets the punishment for stating with ill intention "that a bomb or other explosive has been or will be placed or secreted in any public or private place, knowing that the information is false" at a maximum of one year of imprisonment — the penalty would be increased.

When these two sections are violated in joint, as in this scenario, the criminal must also pay "full restitution" for the money spent fixing damage to personnel, equipment, property, as well as emergency response by medical and government services. In this case, that would likely constitute payment to the bomb squad and the three schools that will need to remove the threatening graffiti.

According to Section 954, these three crimes could be consolidated or tried separately depending on the opinion of the court.

These penalties would only apply assuming the criminal is convicted in an adult court; however, according to the California Legislative Analyst's Office, anyone over the age of 14 can be tried as an adult for serious crimes.

There has been no shortage of high school bomb threats in recent times; similar incidents occurred at San Benito High School in Hollister, Calif. on Dec. 4 as well as at Annandale High School in Annandale, Virginia on March 30.

While the perpetrator in the SBHS incident was not identified, the former AHS student responsible for the Virginia threats was, according to the Washington Post, charged with felony threats and criminal trespass.

*Following a bomb threat at our school, Facebook statuses regarding the consequences for the perpetrator rampant. I researched and threw together this piece as a follow up to our breaking news story to rectify some common misconceptions.*

*Published December 2012 on [elestoque.org](http://elestoque.org)*

## SUMMER NEVER ENDS DANCE, HELD AUG. 30, AIMED TO FOSTER WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

**Welcome Back dance introduced theme, movie and change in location**

*The week before the dance, we published an editorial on our website arguing that the previously held Freshman-LINK dance would become irrelevant once the Welcome Back dance, commonly referred to as "freshman rape," rolled around. Admin asked that we take the editorial down because it undermined their efforts to clear up the Welcome Back dance's image. We couldn't do that, but we could cover the event fairly. They didn't like it.*

Traditionally, the Welcome Back dance is the only dance held in the rally court, while other dances are held in the gym. This year, however, that was not an option; with cafeteria construction blocking off a majority of the rally court, an alternate venue had to be determined.

The dance, held Aug. 30 from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m., was moved to the gym. The shift in location was only one of many changes to the dance. Due to the efforts of Leadership — in particular the Bull Spirit and Student Life commissions, according to Leadership advisor and Assistant Principal Mike White — the Welcome Back dance featured a theme and a movie for the first time ever.

The theme, "Summer Never Ends," was apparent: Beach balls flew through the crowd, paper-crafted Hawaiian flowers decorated the bleachers, colorful leis were distributed in the gym lobby and a video of surfers was projected onto the inside gym wall. Alternative activities for those who preferred not to dance or wanted a break included a screening of "Lilo & Stitch" outside of the gym as well as games such as air hockey and arcade-style basketball.

According to Link Leader junior Kirtana Sripathi, the purpose of the theme, movie and games was to foster a welcoming atmosphere for all students.

"That way, [the dance wouldn't] just be for the people who want to freak, it would be some-

thing that would be fun for everybody," Sripathi said, adding that the Link team has been planning the Welcome Back dance since the Aug. 13 Link dance, which she said was aimed at teaching freshmen proper dance etiquette.

Senior Samuel Yen felt that the dance did in fact have a better environment than in years past.

"The previous times I came here, there was that funky kind of dancing, and I haven't seen that since I came in," Yen said as he watched "Lilo & Stitch." "That type of dancing was making me uncomfortable ... I feel like now, people are able to do diverse stuff."

Although a policy designed to combat inappropriate dancing has existed for several years now, according to White, this was the first dance where Leadership and Link Crew were specifically charged with maintaining that policy. White said that the key to curbing freaking lies in students' tendency emulate the behavior of campus leaders; in other words, if Leadership and Link Leaders model proper etiquette, the rest of the school will follow.

While this new approach did not eliminate freaking altogether, White acknowledged that it's a process.

"It's a long history that we're trying to change," White said. "I don't think [we'll] have to work as hard next year."

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*This obituary was a collective effort by me and two other writers; most of my work is concentrated in the first half. I'd never written a story in which I could not speak to the central source before. We talked to as many of his family and friends as we could to paint an accurate picture. I can only hope we've done him justice.*

**THIRD PLACE  
FEATURE WRITING**

2013 JEANC competition

# REMEMBERING RUBEN

Spanish teacher Maria Autran will never forget the afternoon almost a decade ago when she injured her lower back. She couldn't move, couldn't walk; she needed to make it down to her car but didn't know how. A fellow teacher went down to the office for assistance, and Campus Supervisor Ruben Delgado returned shortly thereafter with a wheelchair in tow.

All Autran wanted was to be taken to her car, but Delgado disagreed: she needed an ambulance and a trip to the hospital. Well, Autran said, nobody could pick her up — her sister was working.

It has been a decade, but Autran still remembers what he said then.

"You go to the hospital, because I think it is the best for you. If you cannot get ahold of your family, call me, and I will go the hospital and pick you up and take you to your home or your mother's home, wherever you want me to take you," Autran remembers Delgado saying, writing his phone number down on a piece of paper. "But I think you need to go to the hospital. Don't worry about anything else."

For Autran and so many others at this school, Delgado was an unsung hero. On the evening of March 23, he died of a heart attack. He has left behind eight kids, 13 grandchildren, 2,419 students and an empty spot between the cafeteria and rally court where he once kept his vigil over the school. To most, he was a familiar if imposing figure. To those who knew him, he was much more: a coach, a caretaker and, most importantly, a friend. To all, his absence is tangible.

According to Principal April Scott, Delgado's job was to ensure MVHS was a safe place. As a former police officer, Delgado used his knowledge of the penal code and easy rapport with students to handle discipline issues with grace. He worked here since 1997, and was

planning to announce his retirement March 27, according to Delgado's friend, MVHS maintenance worker Chi Ma.

Delgado wore many hats over his 60 years — he would have turned 61 on March 25. But who he was to the different people in his life — and there were so many different people — never really changed. His son, Gabriel, spoke on the point at his memorial service. It was held the morning of April 1 at St. Victor's Church in San Jose, and from the back rows of the church, the mix of people in attendance was remarkable. A few teenagers shuffled in late with mops of green and pink hair. Murmuring elderly women in cardigans. A little girl in a pink frock with a pacifier, who squirmed out of her mother's arms and brought smiles alongside the welling tears as she tottered down the aisle. At some point, Delgado had been there for all of them.

"He never changed for anybody," Gabriel said at the podium of the church.

In recent years, Delgado spent much time taking care of his wife, who has been battling bone cancer for almost a decade.

"Never once did you hear a word of 'Why me?'" Scott said. "It was, 'She is who I am, and I would do anything for her.'"

One of Delgado's daughters, Andrea, is a paraeducator at Fremont High School. In 1998, at eight years old, she visited MVHS for the first time. "My dad brought me as a part of Bring Your Child to Work Day," she said via email. "We started off at McDonald's, a rare treat because he hated that place."

At the school, Delgado took her around to the weight room and the cafeteria. "He let me run around in the quad and showed me the old film room, but the thing I remember most was that he held my hand everywhere and said, 'These are all good kids, but I never want to lose you, anywhere.'"

**He was our Campus Supervisor for over 15 years, but his title does not begin to capture the impact he had on the school community**

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In addition to being the campus supervisor, Delgado was the defensive line coach for the junior varsity football team from 2010 to 2012. Sophomore Amol Pande, a freshman when he was on the team, remembers him as "hilarious."

"He managed to make everything about practice fun," Pande said.

He remembers the day Delgado moved him to the defensive line when the team was short on linemen.

"Mr. Delgado was like, 'You're a fatty! You can do it!'" he laughed. "And then I got down and he was like, 'Oh, you're actually decent at this!'" Pande said. "There was a lot of joking.

**To most, he was a familiar if imposing figure. To those who knew him, he was much more: a coach, a caretaker and, most importantly, a friend. To all, his absence is tangible.**

We'd be running, and as we ran by he'd go, 'You know what? I'm feeling a little tired.'"

To Attendance Secretary Calvin Wong, Delgado was much the same way. One of his favorite memories of him was after a farewell dance. The two of them went to Jack in the Box like "a couple of high schoolers," Wong recalls. They later returned to MVHS to do overnight security and make sure no seniors were on campus planning pranks. At 2:30 in the morning, Delgado played a prank of his own: he snuck up on Wong in a truck and honked his horn. Wong was frightened then but cherishes the moment now.

Even the night before he died, Delgado was

still as humorous as ever. Ma, who had dinner with Delgado the evening of March 22, said that his last memory of his friend will be of them eating and laughing together.

"He never turns down food," Ma said. "Every time we were there eating he'd be like, 'You gonna finish that?'"

For Ma, who has been friends with Delgado outside of work for over 16 years, Delgado was not merely a friend but a mentor. Delgado's passion for his work as the president of the Chapter 237 California State Employees Association encouraged Ma to speak up about his beliefs.

"He always told me, never be ... never be afraid to be right," Ma said, in tears. "He's been a great inspiration for me to join the union and

speaking up on behalf of all the classified workers here — secretaries, custodians, maintenance people, printshop people, just a huge inspiration to fight for what's right."

As much as he was an inspiration, Delgado was also a listener, particularly to

Andrea, who says her father always took care of her, always listened to every "story, rant, or dream" she had.

The rest of that 1998 day when Delgado brought her to work was full of fun and people, but her father remains the focus of her memory.

"The one thing I remember the most is the feeling of my dad's hand the entire day," she said. "And even though I'm sure I slowed him down, he never let go."

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Delgado was simply a presence at the school.

He worked here for over 15 years, and the picture of him, a big, gruff looking guy watching over the rally court from his place in front of the cafeteria, is impressed in the school's memory just as much as his deep voice. "How you doin'?" he would say to nearly every student that walked past, with a big smile and a nod.

"He was that familiar face," Scott said. "It doesn't feel the same because I always see Ruben standing there or directing traffic. It's a loss when you don't see someone you expect to see every day."

Administration has plans to unveil a garden in Delgado's memory; as of right now, the custodial staff has planted purple flowers and posted photographs of Delgado off the side of the gym near the tennis courts. Also in the works are a brick dedicated in his name and a service to be held on campus after Spring Break.

At the conclusion of his memorial service, Delgado's large family filed out of the church, followed by the rows of people in the pews. There were soft smiles and nods of greeting. Outside, a friend of his for decades announced a nearby reception for all those in attendance before being corrected by a member of the family: it was a party, not a reception, because as several loved ones remembered during the service, Delgado would have wanted them to "cry a little, and then party hard."

Much of the crowd continued to linger in the small foyer before leaving, reading the posters students signed and taking in a photo collage that runs through Delgado's life, from a black and white picture of a boy no older than six to a beautiful photograph from only a few years ago, where the big man we all knew smiles at the camera, walking his radiant daughter down the aisle. The photos are sweet, heartwarming — epitome of Delgado's presence at this school. In so many of them, he is wearing Matador gear.

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# DRAMA: MURDER MYSTERY ABSORBS AND DELIGHTS WITH INTERACTIVE SETUP

## 'Curse of the Cobra's Kiss' a priceless artifact

helped solve a murder.

Well, no, not really. It wasn't a real murder — just the mysterious deaths of three characters in Advanced Drama's "The Curse of the Cobra's Kiss," performed twice Dec. 14. I didn't actually help identify the killer, either — my guess, written on a ballot provided by cast members, was pretty far off.

The crime committed in "Cobra's Kiss," written by Craig Sodaro and directed by Kim Saunders, isn't a real murder — but the show's cast and crew create an experience so absorbing it may as well be. The play is performed in a highly interactive format. Audience members are seated at a number of circular tables in the Black Box Theater, remade to look like a snazzy 1920s cafe, and cast members act in every direction, even conversing with audience members during the intermission. Be warned, though — this setup may result in some bodily harm (I was at one point whacked in the side by a mummy).

The plot is simple and exactly what you'd expect from a murder mystery. A cat is murdered, a professor is murdered, his wife is murdered and the apparently reanimated corpse of a pharaoh pops in every once in awhile. The cast is populated with the usual suspects — the jealous secretary, the inheritance-coveting nephew and the doomsaying soothsayer among others.

They're all perfect. Every actor seems to use a different accent, and each one seems to have it down to a tee. Sophomore Akshay Savale transforms into an Italian in his portrayal of Chef Boyardee. Seniors Sarah Baxter and Kazmiera Tarshis perfectly imitate Southern belles in their performances as Rose and Violet La Tou. And junior Alexander Pieb, playing the bumbling detective Hercules Porkchop, channels an almost manic energy as he provides a hilarious French accent that he insists is in fact Belgian.

Already brilliant on their own, these actors elevate the show to a new level through their chemistry as a cast. Dialogue is whip-fast and

witty, and the interactions between characters are genuine. Moreover, every character, regardless of whether they're off to the very edge of the room or on center stage, is constantly involved and reacting to the ongoings. I felt like my eyes were going to pop out from trying to keep track of every possible suspect.

During the intermission, characters drift through the audience — who are provided with delicious snacks, drinks and paper on which to take notes — offering to be interrogated. It's impressive how these actors manage to stay in character even when responding to unscripted questions.

When asked if he had a role in the demise of Moo Moo the cat, Savale, acting as Chef Boyardee, assured me that he and the deceased feline had no bad blood between them and were in fact "like brothers." Senior Dhruva Seelin, who plays Texan filmmaker Max Deblohardt with admirable swagger, offered me a role in his next motion picture.

After this walkaround, audience members have the opportunity to write down their guesses for the culprit in each of the three murders, with the most accurate, most inaccurate and most creative responses each winning a miniature chocolate sarcophagus.

Despite competition from the excellent cast, it's the lights — designed and run by junior Rafael Ruiz — that steal the show. There is lightning, fading to black and general craziness that engulfs the entire theater. The audience is not just watching the show, but immersed in it.

Though the cast and the lights maintain their quality in the second half of the program, the script begins to devalue in terms of believability. They were secretly married all along? And she was having an affair with him? And she's his illegitimate child? Come on, there's no way I could have seen that coming!

Although it's possible I'm just bitter that I didn't win a chocolate sarcophagus.

*There are so many drama productions that I would have skipped out on if not for journalism. Every single one of them has been thrilling; it stuns me every time that there is so much talent walking through our hallways. I love all stories, but especially the ones about excellent people.*

Published December 2012 in *El Estoque*



*We knew that our cover would be a chalkboard, but we didn't know until the weekend before production what the chalkboard would read. Brainstorms led nowhere until we came up with the idea of a fill-in-the-blank. Filling in the blanks — that's what I wanted to drive home with this letter from the editor.*

## CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Search "Cupertino" in Google Images. Do it right now.

Seven of the first 10 results are pictures of Apple's "spaceship campus," which doesn't even exist yet. One is a picture of Apple's old, non-spaceship campus. Switch back to the "Web" tab, and Google helpfully suggests: "See results about: Apple."

Is there really nothing in this town except for one tech company? A significant portion of our student body seems to think so: Over a third of 265 surveyed students rated Cupertino a four or a five on a scale where one means not at all boring and five means extremely boring. And seven students in the same survey chose "boring" as the word that best describes this town.

(It tied with "competitive" and was second only to "Asian.")

We ourselves were guilty of complaining that there's nothing to do around here. But maybe that was just because we hadn't looked.

So we did look, and the things that we found surprised us and delighted us and changed our perception of our hometown. Reporter sophomore Kristin Chang met a vendor of mystical stones at the De Anza College flea market. Senior Yuna Lee discovered a free archery range on the western border of Cupertino. Junior Ashmita Chakraborty and senior Ruba Shaik explored students' backyards, where they found flying chickens and vibrant murals. Read all of those stories and more in our Special Report, "Nothing happens here," which starts on page 25.

Flea market vendor Judy Garcia, featured

in Chang's story "Everything happens here" on page 32, puts it best: "Kids think Cupertino is boring? Well, of course they do. You know, they just need to get out of the house...and meet us!"

Let's face it: Cupertino will never be a bustling metropolitan center. But this town doesn't have to be boring unless we make it boring. Get out there; go someplace other than Target or the library. Try out that restaurant that only has five reviews on Yelp — if you need some pointers, we have a list of Cupertino's hidden

**This isn't San Francisco, this isn't New York; there's no Golden Gate Bridge or Statue of Liberty. Welcome to the suburbs. Here, you choose your own adventure.**

jewels on [elstoque.org](http://elstoque.org). Grab a friend, get in the car and drive until you hit something interesting. There's excitement out there, but it's not going to come to you. You're going to have to look for it.

We Google Image searched "Cupertino" because we were uncertain as to what to put on the cover of this issue, and thought the Internet might remind us of any iconic locations that we had forgotten. It turns out that Cupertino doesn't really have any iconic locations — just a 98-acre flying saucer that is expected to land in 2016.

So we decided to go with an interactive cover instead. This isn't San Francisco, this isn't New York; there's no Golden Gate Bridge or Statue of Liberty. Welcome to the suburbs. Here, you choose your own adventure.

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# WRESTLING REVOLUTION

Changes in wrestling team spur it onward to success

The match was almost over by the time junior Matt Merkhofer was up. He was the last wrestler left waiting in the wings, and it was late in the meet. The audience was restless, fidgety.

He shook hands with his opponent, and, at the referee's whistle, launched into his offense. Merkhofer jabbed, fell, stood, fell, and, this time, stayed down. It looked like a loss for sure. But then — in a flash, almost as though it did not happen at all — Merkhofer pulled one final trick out of his hat. With the help of some fancy footwork and a burst of strength, Merkhofer flipped his opponent a full 360 degrees, leaving the adversary flat on the ground.

A full 360 degrees. A full circle.

A full revolution.

Merkhofer's performance at the Jan. 19 league match against Lynbrook High School mirrors the team's performance this season. MVHS wrestling has, in a sense, undergone a revolution from last year to this one, purging the old in favor of the new: new coaches, new leagues, and, most of all, newfound success.

This season, wrestling has experienced indisputable success, winning every dual meet and ending with a perfect 6-0 record. Not just winning, but dominating, with each of these matches being won by a margin of at least 20 points — often much more. Last year's season record, by contrast, was an even 3-3. In addition, eleven wrestlers qualified for CCS, a massive jump in comparison with the three who did so last year. Even with the change of leagues, that is still impressive.

"I remember the first day after I talked to the team and their parents, I told them 'expect to win,' but I didn't really expect to win as often and by as large a margin as we have," head coach Kevin Klemm said. "[It's] been a pleas-

ant surprise how many guys have won, and how deep our team is."

These statistics make sense when you see the team in action.

There was the Merkhofer incident, of course. During a similar episode, freshman varsity member Max McCann displayed the same brand of grit during the Dec. 10 Webber Lawson Memorial Tournament, where he placed third in his weight class by using his solid understanding of basic techniques to his advantage, prompting impressed cheers from his teammates. And during MVHS' senior night match against Homestead, senior Michael Whittaker pinned his opponent in a mere 32 seconds.

Although not all matches have always been this spectacular, the wrestlers' overall progress is evident. Some attribute this change to the new coaches, Klemm and assistant coach Ian Bork, who between the two of them have about thirty years of coaching experience. Their philosophy focuses on the players, aiming to strengthen them as better athletes.

"Our new coaches are a lot more positive, a lot more informative, a lot more understanding, a lot more patient, a lot more experienced," Whittaker said.

Last season's head coach, Nolan Verga, moved to coach at Los Gatos High School ear-

lier this year. According to some veteran players, the difference is due not only to Klemm and Bork's coaching style, but also due to Verga's harsher training philosophy.

"Verga was more negative. Like, he enforced punishments," senior Philip Tsai said. "Klemm and Bork inspire you more and make you believe, not control you through fear."

After Verga left, there was, according to sophomore wrestler Ashwin Madavan's father, Nateri Madavan, an interim period where it appeared as though the team would not be able to find a new coach and MVHS would not be able to participate in the wrestling season. But then, just as everything seemed to be going wrong,

**But then — in a flash, almost as though it did not happen at all — Merkhofer pulled one final trick out of his hat. With the help of some fancy footwork and a burst of strength, Merkhofer flipped his opponent a full 360 degrees, leaving the adversary flat on the ground.**

Klemm and Bork appeared.

The new coaches have implemented an intense training strategy that involves weight lifting, running, drills and "conditioning in a can" quarter mile sprints that send the entire body into shock. The team usually runs these laps, which are designed to build endurance, on Tuesday mornings, after which they have an eight-day period to recover.

"When we approached them with things to change, they not only embraced them, they integrated them into their style immediately from day one," Klemm said. "And we've been able to throw new technique at them as the season's gone on .... These guys keep adding to their arsenal."

This approach appears to be working, given the positive results.

"We just want to get better every single day," Bork said. "And I feel like we did get better every single day."

But the level of success the team has had indicates more at work here than just better coaching. Part of this is due to this season, MVHS is competing in a lower league than they did last year. In the past, the wrestling team had been part of the De Anza league; however, this year, they moved down to the El Camino league. League changes are based on the previous season's performance, with the results of only non-senior players are taken into consideration. The loss of key class of 2011 wrestlers such as Andrew Pappas and Adrian Garcia detracted from MVHS' total points, causing the shift to the El Camino league this year. This move resulted in the huge margins — 60-9 against Lynbrook, 63-6 against Santa Clara — of victory.

Given wrestling's extremely solid performance this season, Klemm is expecting that the team will move back on up to the De Anza League — changing the status quo yet again.

"We [will] lose three good seniors [this year], so it's gonna hurt us a little bit," Klemm said, "[but] our dual meet performance and [the SCVAL finals results] should solidify us moving up."

Just another revolution just waiting to happen.

*I followed the wrestling team for their entire season, attending every home game and some away ones as well. Throughout the season, I collected a series of adrenaline-rush-inducing anecdotes. Writing this story was easy, because I already had the groundwork.*

# HIGH SCHOOL HACKS CHANGES MALE-CENTRIC HACKATHON CULTURE

**Balanced gender ratio at student-organized event will encourage female participation in coding**

**M**VHS students don't need help coding. I mean, come on — three out of the 19 AP Computer Science exam perfect scorers are students here. We have students who waltz into hackathons to compete against professionals and win thousands of dollars in the process. Computer science isn't a problem area for us.

Oh, wait a second. They're all guys: Sophomores Ajay Jain and Jimmy Liu, seniors Douglas Chen, Ashutosh Jindal, Michael Mattheakis, Zuhayeer Musa and Prajit Ramachandran. Girls are underrepresented inside the classroom as well: Last year, only one fifth of AP Computer Science students were female.

This skewed gender ratio is what makes High School Hacks, the for-the-students-by-the-students hackathon founded by senior Shrav Mehta and co-organized by senior Hana Hyder and other local high schoolers, especially exciting. Over half of the student advocates are female, a far cry from the 15-to-one ratio found at some hackathons. Even though High School Hacks is focused on helping all high school students gain experience and connections, it will be especially beneficial for female coders, who are often discouraged by the male-centric culture of traditional hackathons.

"For women interested in tech, every time they look around the room, it's always mostly men," said Kara Silverman, one of the organizers of the 2012 Hack'n Jill hackathon that allowed only 50 men and 50 women to participate, in an interview with Next Web. "Intentionally or not, this sends a certain message that has

a negative impact on women entering or staying in the field."

It's no doubt intimidating for high school boys to attend professional hackathons and face off against grown men. High school girls, however, face not only a divide in age and experience but also a divide in gender.

In a post on Femgineer, a website focused on helping women in tech progress their careers, engineer and website founder Poornima Vijayashanker points out the benefits of hosting hackathons solely for women. When women attend typical hackathons, they often "feel like they're again in middle school, and the leaders of the teams have already picked their favorite players, leaving those still standing to question their self-worth or why they bothered to even show up."

Some girls may be brave enough to take that risk, but I know that I'm not.

High School Hacks provides a low-risk environment for girls to get their feet wet. If I decide I want to attend, I don't have to worry about being the only woman there; I don't have to worry about being excluded or ignored. I don't even have to worry about my lack of experience — the hackathon organizers will provide workshops by industry professionals. For 24 hours on the March 8, we can pretend that the technology industry is gender balanced. Events such as this one, however, move us a little closer to the day when we can stop pretending.

*Published January 2014 on [elestoque.org](http://elestoque.org)*

*It's easy to slip into a pattern of writing negative editorial after negative editorial. When I heard of this student-organized hackathon, though, my immediate reaction was: "That's really cool!" That's the sentiment I tried to convey in the article. A little positivity never hurt anyone.*

*This was a tough story to write, because so much of it is based on concepts that are difficult to prove, such as the comparative difficulty of different schools. My co-writers and myself tried our hardest to view the story through an academic, analytical perspective. I think we succeeded.*

**L**ast summer, when current Lynbrook High School freshman Tanvi Bhatnagar's registered in a lottery to attend LHS instead of MVHS, she thought little of it. She had heard her older sister MVHS junior Nikita Bhatnagar's stories of pressure and competition, but it did not weigh on her mind.

It was only when she heard the news that her name was among the 33 of 196 applicants districtwide that had been drawn in the lottery, and that she had the option of attending LHS, that she really started considering the choice before her.

"I kind of knew how [MVHS] is — the mentality of the children, and ... the pressure of grades and academics. It is very vigorous in that way," Nikita Bhatnagar said. "My input was that it's not a bad thing to try to see other

options, other schools as well."

Tanvi Bhatnagar made her choice. Now, she is a freshman at LHS.

In 2005, The Wall Street Journal set off a wave of controversy with its article "The New White Flight," which chronicled the departure of white students from Cupertino schools, specifically MVHS, because of the overt academic competition. Now, seven years later, students — white or otherwise — transferring away from MVHS remains a path that some students consider. However, this emigration has manifested itself in a new form: a generational gap of sorts, in which older siblings attend MVHS and proceed to push their younger siblings away with stories of its "pressure cooker environment."

## SIBLING FLIGHT

Students such as Tanvi Bhatnagar were able to apply to attend LHS despite not living within its designated area due to last year's Open Enrollment policy. Open Enrollment allows students to enroll in a lottery to attend a school other than their home school, and was originally created because of vacancies at other FUHSD schools. According to FUHSD Manager of Enrollment and Residency Julie Darwish, ten of the 196 applicants for last year's Open Enrollment lived within the MVHS area. However, Open Enrollment will not be offered this year due to all schools in the district being over capacity.

Tanvi Bhatnagar's ultimate decision to attend LHS was due to several factors, including academic pressure. She also took into consideration class size (MVHS' enrollment for the 2011-2012 school year was 2519, compared with LHS's 1771) and its potential impact on individual attention, as well as difficulty in making the LHS volleyball team, which she thought would be easier to make than MVHS' due to its rank in a lower league.

Then, there was the matter of academic competition.

"I haven't heard from my friends [that attend LHS] that [LHS] is like a pressure cooker

... I came to MVHS and I realized that maybe I could have done a lot better if I could have gone to another school where it wasn't as hard and things weren't as competitive to the max," Nikita Bhatnagar said. "And I think that's how my parents looked at it in sending my sister to [LHS]."

## SISTERS, SISTERS

Academic competition also played a role for Homestead High School junior Victoria Rod. Her older sister, Deborah Rod, transferred out of MVHS after an academically and socially stressful freshman year in 2008. To Victoria Rod, who was attending Kennedy Middle School at the time, her sister's experience seemed like a preview of what her own experience would be like. She decided to follow her older sister's footsteps away from MVHS.

"I'm close with my sister [and] seeing her struggle showed me what I could go through," Victoria Rod said. "[HHS is] a perfect fit for me academically and socially."

MVHS has a reputation amongst students as being one of the more academically strenuous schools in the FUHSD. The curriculums of some classes at MVHS are more challenging than their equivalents at other high schools in the district; Lynbrook's Pre-Calculus Honors classes, as Nikita Bhatnagar brings up as an example, use the same textbook that the MVHS Math Analysis class uses ("Advanced Mathematics: Precalculus with Discrete Mathematics and Data Analysis").

Both Victoria Rod and Tanvi Bhatnagar chose not to attend MVHS because, among other reasons, they felt the change would better serve their personal academic needs. Despite similarities between LHS and MVHS, Tanvi Bhatnagar says her ultimate decision to attend LHS is because LHS is a better fit.

"There's stress at Lynbrook too," she said. "There's stress at whichever school you go to, it just kind of depends on the environment and how you handle it."

*Published May 2012 in [El Estoque](http://ElEstoque)*

# RUNNING FROM THE BULLS

**After witnessing older siblings' past experience, some younger siblings rethink enrollment at MVHS**



*I was having what you might call my mid-high-school crisis when I was assigned this story. The college-focused rat race at my school had jaded me. Allyson and Ann were a breath of fresh air — two people who genuinely loved what they were doing, with no regard for resume-building. Storytelling, I think, is a therapeutic process both for the audience and the writers.*

Sophomore Ann Fu mastered the art of reading in the shower when she was in the third grade. The book was “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,” and the methodology was simple: Place the book in a Ziploc bag. Step into the shower. Need to turn a page? Step out of the shower. Dry hands. Take the book out of the bag, turn the page, put the book back in the bag. Step back into the shower. Rinse and repeat.

Fu was a creative reader before she was a creative writer. Both sides, however, were helpful when she decided to enter the annual California Association of Teachers of English writing contest last November.

The prompt was to either reflect upon or continue the story of a favorite piece of literature. It was the perfect task for both Fu and fellow MVHS participant junior Allyson Gottlieb. Final results for the Central Section — an area which, according to the girls’ English teacher Matt Brashears, spans from Fresno to Monterey to the Silicon Valley — were announced at a luncheon on April 28. Fu won first amongst all freshman and sophomores; Gottlieb, amongst juniors and seniors.

#### THE CREATIVE PROCESS

When Brashears introduced the contest to his World Studies and Mythology and Folklore classes last fall, Fu and Gottlieb knew not only that they would participate, but also which aspect of the prompt they would address.

“I was like, bingo!” Gottlieb said. “Wait a second, that prompt is basically saying, ‘Write fan fiction.’”

For Gottlieb, there was no question as to which story she would be continuing. Her submission was a prologue of sorts to her favorite young adult novel series, “The Mortal Instruments.” Cassandra Clare, the series’ author, actually started off writing fan fiction herself.

Fu, however, struggled with the decision. While she knew she would be continuing a novel, there were simply too many options. Eventually, she chose to write a continuation of Jodi Picoult’s 2003 novel “My Sister’s Keeper.” Fu and her friends had found Picoult’s ending unsatisfying. Now, she had the opportunity to fix it.

Once they had written five pages of fiction apiece, Fu, Gottlieb and other participants submitted their stories to Brashears; students could only take part in the competition if their piece was entered by an English teacher. Although each teacher can send up to three submissions, Brashears chose to submit only the strongest from each of the two subjects he teaches — Fu’s from his World Studies class and Gottlieb’s from his Mythology and Folklore classes.

“Above all, I looked for things that I would like to read, things that were enjoyable to read,” Brashears said. “In that respect, these two pieces really just rose to the top because they were like published pieces of fiction. It was the kind of thing you might have pulled off of a book-

shelf or found in an anthology of short stories.”

#### A TRUE PASSION

The CATE contest marks neither the beginning nor the end of the girls’ ventures into creative writing. For them, writing is more than a skill necessary for literature class: it’s a true passion.

Gottlieb writes fan fiction — she won’t say what for because it’s apparently too embarrassing — and she has also been in the process of writing a novel for the last two years. It’s 67,000

**The story is complex, nonlinear. It involves lost love, escaped prisoners and possible world domination. When asked how it ends, Gottlieb laughs, puts her hands on her hips and says, “I can’t tell you that.”**

words long, which is just about 20,000 more than “The Great Gatsby.” She has also written a 14,000 word novella called “Darkest Legacy” that she plans to self-publish.

“When I was writing my novella, I was carrying around a little journal,” Gottlieb said. “I was writing every single second I got.”

The story is complex, nonlinear. It involves lost love, escaped prisoners and possible world domination. When asked how it ends, Gottlieb

laughs, puts her hands on her hips and says, “I can’t tell you that.”

Fu writes often as well, setting aside two-to-three-hour blocks a few times a week to craft stories which she later posts on YouTube. According to Fu, it’s a common practice in the community of aspiring writers to publish their work in the description boxes of videos that are often just five-second stills. Fu declined to provide the name of her YouTube channel; she prefers to keep it private.

As a prize for winning the CATE contest — which, according to Brashears, operates at the regional level only — each of the girls received a certificate, a journal, a book and a \$20 Barnes and Noble gift card. Neither of them has decided what they will spend the gift card on. The problem isn’t that they have a shortage of books to read.

“I read when I get out of the shower, I read when I’m eating, if I’m not eating with anybody else,” Gottlieb said. “I read when I’m drying my hair.”

It’s just that they’re selective in their purchases. When they want to read a book without necessarily buying it, they know where to go.

“My dad says that I’m probably one of the last few people who still uses the library,” Gottlieb said.

“I love the library!” Fu said. She started to recite a quote engraved by the door of the Cupertino Library: “I’ve always imagined that a library...” She paused, lost.

“...paradise would be a kind of library,” Gottlieb finished.

# STUDENTS WIN FIRST PLACE AT CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH WRITING CONTEST

Sophomore Ann Fu and junior Allyson Gottlieb write fiction to express their love of literature

*This was an opening page on a package about the college application process viewed through unique lenses. We repeated the motif of yellow folders – which house Secondary School Reports and overflow our office every November – throughout the package, and as the focal point on the otherwise muted cover.*

*Published October 2012 in El Estoque*



design

NEWS |

## TO PROTECT & TO SERVE

Leaving behind a troubled childhood, junior Zac Burke moves toward his dream of becoming a police officer

by Annelisa Doral and Sheyi Gi

At 6:45 p.m. on New Year's Eve, junior Zac Burke ducked into a police car. But not the back seat. Burke rode shotgun.

Many of his friends were celebrating at a party on Prospect Road, a little way down from the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, but Burke had different plans. He spent the final day of 2012 chasing down potential stolen vehicles, helping administer breathalyzer tests and having wild parties — including the one on Prospect.

The deputy who Burke accompanied had been called in due to reports of fighting. When the two and other officers arrived, the officers asked Burke to stand back. But that didn't stop Burke's friends from giving him an interrogation of their own.

"A bunch of people come to me and are like, 'Oh, Zac, are you a police?' And I said, 'No, dude, I'm just with them,'" Burke said, animated. "Are you a police?" "No, dude, I just told you I'm just with them." "Oh, I know, but are you a police?" "No, dude, go home — but don't drive."

Burke is not a policeman — at least, not yet. But he has dreamed of working in law enforcement since childhood, and, through the Sheriff's Office Teen Community Police Academy, he has come one step closer to upholding the peace.

The Police Academy runs two 10-week sessions a year. Burke participated in the fall of 2012, attending classes every Wednesday night from the beginning of October until his graduation in December.

After filling out an application and being selected, Burke joined around 20 other high school students in attending lectures taught by four officers. Students learned to

conduct traffic stops and operate handcuffs; witness a bomb squad demonstration; and spent one Saturday morning firing officers' duty weapons at the gun range. They also participated in ride-alongs with officers, like the one Burke completed on New Year's Eve.

Field trips included outings to the coroner's office and the Santa Clara County jail. Burke recalls walking down the hallway at him and his classmates. There was one inmate who stood out to Burke: while his cellmates were up at the bars, he remained calmly at the back of the cell.

"I looked at him in the eye as we were walking, and he told me simply to stay in school," Burke said. "Not all people in there are bad. Actually, most of the people in there aren't bad. They've just made bad choices."

Burke's earliest encounters with policemen were anything but positive. His parents divorced when he was eight, and it was a difficult transition for him to make; despite being on medication for depression and anxiety, he sought an alternate method to express his emotions.

His parents argued often, but Burke didn't have that luxury. So he broke the windows of his Sunnyvale home instead.

"The cops often had to come over to set me straight. And instead of being understanding, they were just kind of there yelling at me," Burke said. "And part of me said — maybe if I become a cop, I'd be

more understanding of this, and I could help people more than intimidate them."

When he reached middle school, Burke's family decided his behavior needed a change. "It was hard to see him struggling, not really being able to handle life in a way that was constructive," said Kim Rappaport Burke, Burke's mother. "Raising him was not easy, but he turned his life around."

For sixth and seventh grade, he relocated to Forest Heights Lodge, a treatment center in Colorado. The therapeutic environment, according to Burke, played a key role in helping him turn his life around.

After a few more school changes, Burke arrived at MVHS for his freshman year.



As an underclassman, he faced bullying so severe that the perpetrator was expelled.

"Freshman year, I was kind of annoying. I was a little kid thinking I was a big kid. But I think I've changed that. I think I've matured very nicely," Burke said. "And I still have issues with people who don't agree with what I stand for... But I just ignore them."

As for the windows?

"I still struggle with some problems, but I talk about them now. I don't act them out — we still have windows in this house," Burke said. "I haven't done anything since I was nine or 10, but it seems sometimes like yesterday, and when I look back on it, I think, 'Wow, that was me.'"

One of Burke's mentors, Deputy Sheriff Jennifer Toomey, feels that the challenges Burke has had to face will, in the long run, serve as an asset.

"Kids like Zac, or kids like some other people that I know who are deputies now, that have speckled guts — they've dabbled into a little bit of trouble here and there — they make really good cops generally," Toomey said, "because when they become a cop and talk to other kids who are in a similar type of trouble, they understand where they're coming from."

In her years of involvement with the Teen Academy, Toomey has encountered only three students who were serious about a future career in law enforcement. Burke is one of them.

Beyond the badge

On a recent Thursday evening, Burke and his mother attended a showing of "Honor Behind the Badge," a documentary that details the sacrifices made by policemen.

"It was incredibly powerful hearing that a police officer in this country dies every 54 hours. That, to me, hit home when I thought about him being put in that danger every

day," Rappaport Burke said. "I did ask him if there was anything else I could talk him into doing, but he's got his mind set on it, and there's nothing I'm going to do to change it."

Currently, Burke is applying to the County Sheriff's Office Youth Cadet program. If he is selected, he will receive a uniform as well as the opportunity to participate in alcohol and tobacco sting operations and law enforcement at county fairsgrounds. For his 18th birthday, he hopes to complete a ride-along in Oakland.

His end goal is to become a police officer somewhere in this area, where he has lived for the majority of his life — where he has grown from being an eight-year-old with a temper into a young adult with dreams of serving the law.

Burke recalls an encounter with a police officer from his younger, more rash days that left a strong impression. He was one of the few officers who, like Burke one day hopes to, approached him with understanding rather than intimidation.

"I remember one time a cop kind of got down on his knee and just patted me on the back and asked me in a soft tone, 'What's going on? Why are you acting like this?'" Burke said. "He actually seemed to care, which was a big thing."

More recently, Burke saw the same officer at the Sheriff's Office. He couldn't remember the officer's name, so he didn't say hello.

But he'll see him again, Burke said. "And I'll thank him."

CONTACT THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE COMMUNITY POLICE ACADEMY, CUPERTINO SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER AT (408) 868-6624.

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MARCH 13, 2013

*This design for this spread was inspired (as is apparent) by the minimalistic style employed by magazines like TIME and The Atlantic. The story itself is quite heavy; a muted color scheme and clean layout allows it to speak for itself.*

*Published March 2013 in El Estoque*

*The design concept for our Special Report this issue was puzzles – how the senior class of 2013 was composed of many fragmented groups that ultimately came together. After countless drafts, we settled on the simplest one. One that communicated the concept with elegance.*

*Published May 2013 in El Estoque*

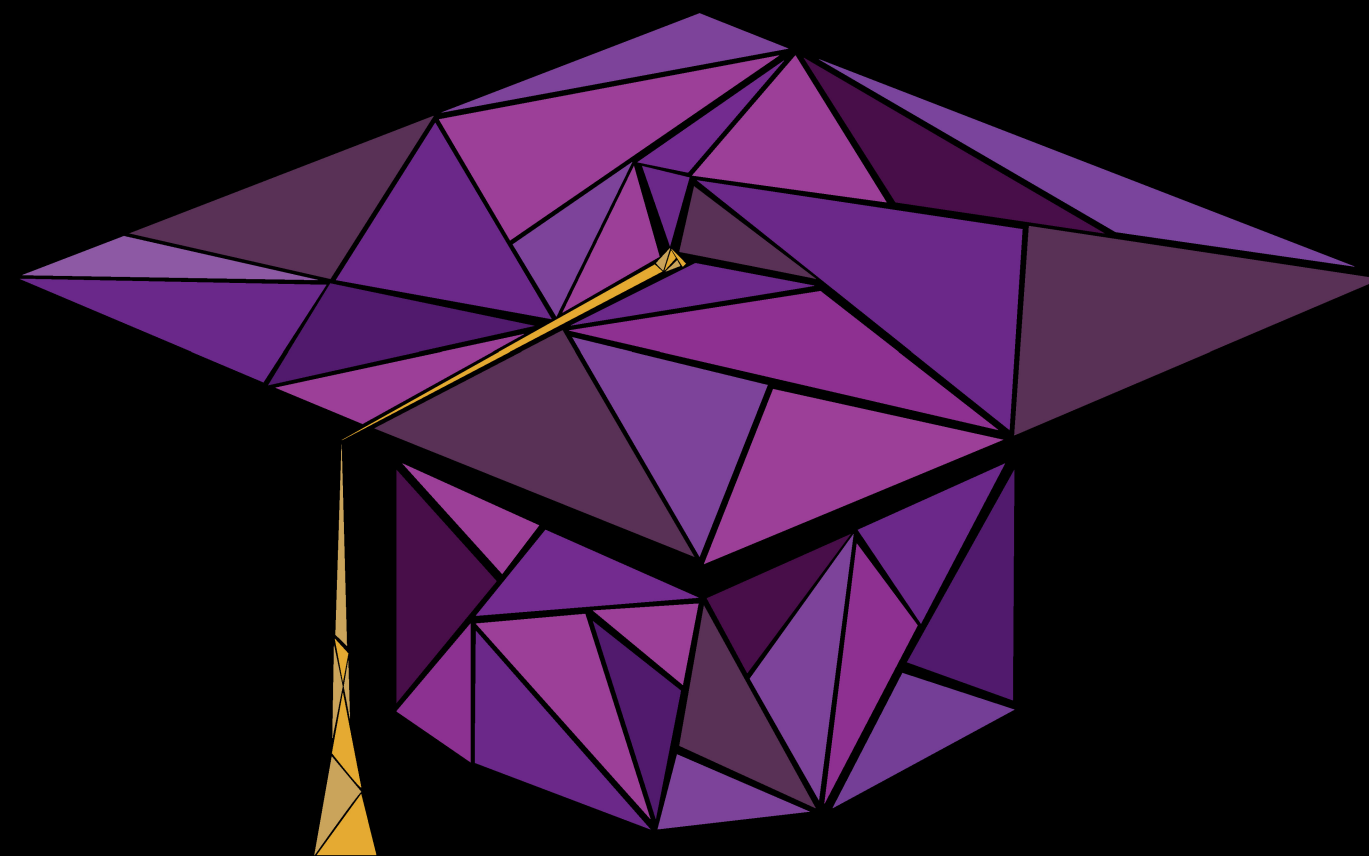
page 7  
French teacher Lise  
Gabet retires

page 15  
Audrey to  
Africa

page 39  
A tutorial on  
hanging ten

Monta Vista High School  
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PIECES OF A WHOLE

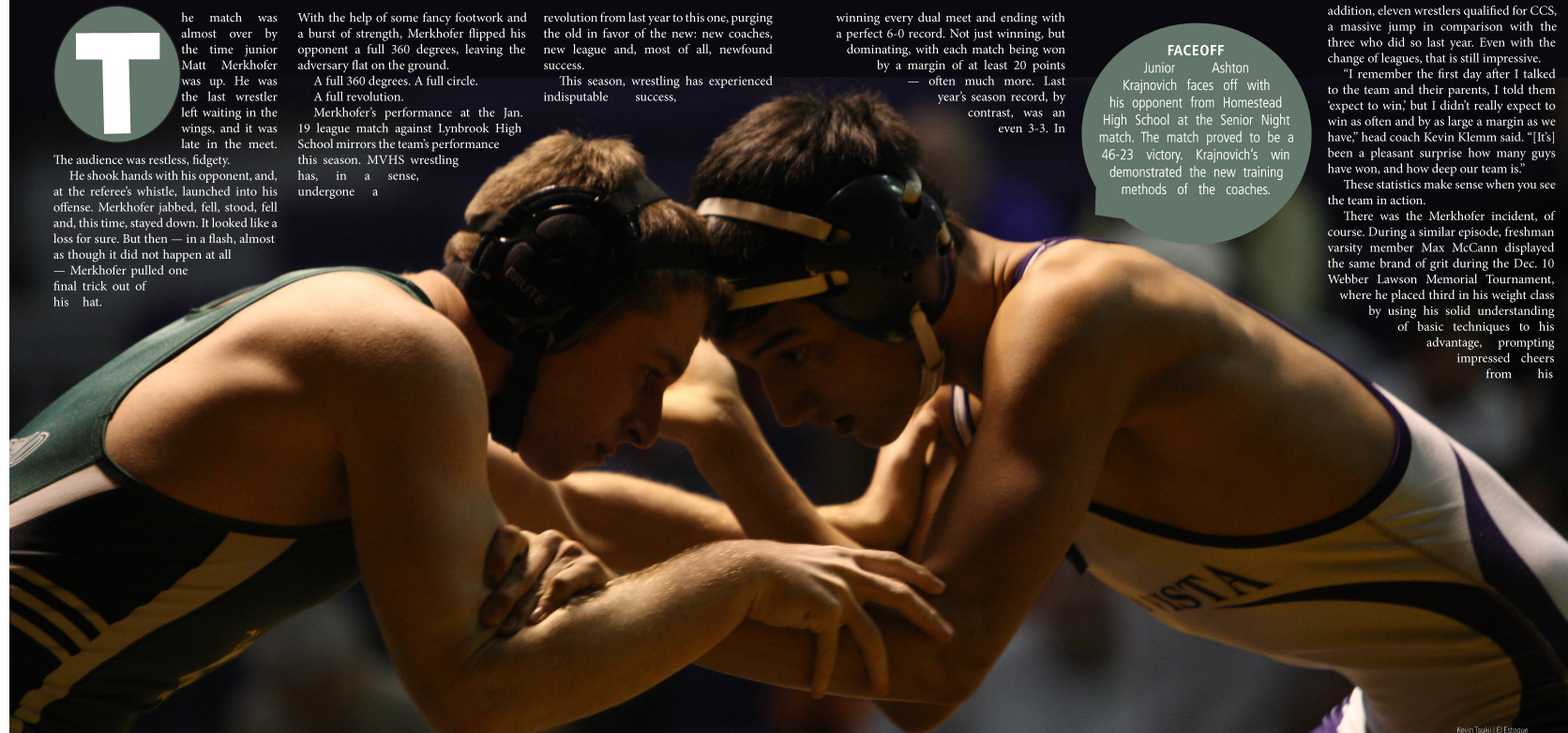
# WRESTLING REVOLUTION

Changes in wrestling team spur it onward to success

by Amrutha Dorai and Howard Lee

*For this story about our wrestling team's comeback season, I wanted to design a spread that would be bold and striking — just like the team itself. Bold text, white-on-black, and that stunning central image help create that impression.*

Published March 2012 in El Estoque



**T**he match was almost over by the time junior Matt Merkhofer was up. He was the last wrestler left waiting in the wings, and it was late in the meet.

The audience was restless, fidgety. He shook hands with his opponent, and, at the referee's whistle, launched into his offense. Merkhofer jabbed, fell, stood, fell and, this time, stayed down. It looked like a loss for sure. But then — in a flash, almost as though it did not happen at all — Merkhofer pulled one final trick out of his hat.

With the help of some fancy footwork and a burst of strength, Merkhofer flipped his opponent a full 360 degrees, leaving the adversary flat on the ground.

A full 360 degrees. A full circle. A full revolution. Merkhofer's performance at the Jan. 19 league match against Lynbrook High School mirrors the team's performance this season. MVHS wrestling has, in a sense, undergone a

revolution from last year to this one, purging the old in favor of the new: new coaches, new league and, most of all, newfound success.

This season, wrestling has experienced indisputable success.

winning every dual meet and ending with a perfect 6-0 record. Not just winning, but dominating, with each match being won by a margin of at least 20 points

— often much more. Last year's season record, by contrast, was an even 3-3. In

**FACEOFF**

Junior Ashton Krajnovich faces off with his opponent from Homestead High School at the Senior Night match. The match proved to be a 46-23 victory. Krajnovich's win demonstrated the new training methods of the coaches.

addition, eleven wrestlers qualified for CCS, a massive jump in comparison with the three who did so last year. Even with the change of leagues, that is still impressive.

"I remember the first day after I talked to the team and their parents, I told them 'expect to win,' but I didn't really expect to win as often and by as large a margin as we have," head coach Kevin Klemm said. "[It's] been a pleasant surprise how many guys have won, and how deep our team is."

These statistics make sense when you see the team in action.

There was the Merkhofer incident, of course. During a similar episode, freshman varsity member Max McCann displayed the same brand of grit during the Dec. 10 Webber Lawson Memorial Tournament, where he placed third in his weight class by using his solid understanding of basic techniques to his advantage, prompting impressed cheers from his



**PITCHING TO CALIFORNIA** Senior Nikitas Kanellakopoulos speaks at the FBLA State Conference in April. Three months of extensive campaigning later, he would be elected FBLA National President.

Photo used with permission of MVFBLA

**T**he seventeen-year-old splashed his Green Lantern toy around in the tub. The hotel's jacuzzi might have been full, but that wasn't going to stop him from relaxing. His friends climbed in their room's bathtub, Happy Meal toys in hand, and joined him in the childish games. **Meet your new national FBLA President.**

by Rachel Beyda and Morahd Shawki

After spending the previous night preparing for the worst, senior Nikitas Kanellakopoulos was elected Future Business Leaders of America's National President.

**The campaign**

Kanellakopoulos ran a tongue-in-cheek campaign, pointing out the clichés often used by candidates running for office. He quickly realized that people relate better to a sense of

humor than a formal figurehead.

His selling point was his realism. In his campaign speech, which was given to 12,000 people, Kanellakopoulos emphasized that he would not make any large promises that he couldn't keep, and would instead take small steps toward bettering FBLA. This emphasized the major theme of his campaign: "take the first step." But it was more than just a motto. His booth at the national conference

was at the top of a small flight of stairs that he set up. People had to walk up the steps to speak to him, intriguing voters and setting him apart.

"I was expecting these blinding lights that block most of the crowd from your sight, but there was none, so I could see everyone," Kanellakopoulos recounted. "I screwed up a lot, so I had to admit a lot of the speech. I got comfortable and it became less of a speech

and more [like I was] just talking to them. People came up to me saying they liked that."

Business teacher and MVFBLA advisor Carl Schmidt believes that one of Kanellakopoulos' strongest assets is his humility. Instead of simply listing his strengths like most typical high school candidates, Kanellakopoulos spent his time listening to members.

"He learned how to differentiate himself early on," Schmidt said. "Instead of saying 'here I am,' he said 'there you are.'"

Around Kanellakopoulos' vision was a strong network of supporters that helped him in ways ranging from manning his booth to getting him food. According to MVFBLA member senior Cathy Ang, one of Kanellakopoulos' campaign managers, many were more

interested in helping his campaign than preparing for their own events.

"We were at his campaign booth 24/7. Every day we'd look at our feet and there'd be blisters from the heels," Ang said.

**The election**

In the end, the support paid off.

The final election took place on July 2 at the FBLA National Leadership Conference. Due to confusion in the delegate voting system, it was decided that all delegate ballots were to be counted by hand. As the rounds of voting began, Kanellakopoulos was only ahead by a handful of votes. Time went on and soon he gained a very wide lead. But when the final round began, he found himself neck and neck with other candidates.

"[As soon as that happened], I spent the whole day thinking, 'I was okay if I was going to get dropped during that voting section because I had time to deal with it. But if I lose when they announce 'And your next national president is...' and it wasn't me, I was going to be devastated. That's what led to the whole jacuzzi meltdown,'" Kanellakopoulos said.

Fortunately, it was Kanellakopoulos' name that was announced to the crowd.

According to his mother, Georgia Kanellakopoulos, who watched the results through a live stream, Nikitas was modest and

told her not to expect good news. The family did not doubt his ability, but rather figured a win would be unlikely because the odds were stacked against him. Not only were there many other qualified candidates, but California had not produced a National President in 10 years.

"The moment we heard 'Nikitas,' we just started screaming," Georgia said.

For Nikitas, the victory didn't sink in immediately. It was the reactions from his friends and the people around him that made the moment special.

"It banded the chapter together," said senior Barak Gila, MVFBLA President. "It was something that we could all share regardless of how we did in our individual events."

After the election, when walking into a nearby McDonald's, Nikitas was recognized and the entire room erupted in applause.

"The happiness came from the people around me," Nikitas said.

**His background**

Nikitas and his older brother, 2010 alumnus Panos Kanellakopoulos, joined FBLA simultaneously when Nikitas was a sixth grader at Kennedy Middle School and Panos was a freshman at MVHS. Inspired by the much larger scale projects being undertaken by his brother, Nikitas continued to pursue FBLA through middle and high school.

"Freshman year, he was kind of thinking out loud that [being National President] might be something he wanted to do," Schmidt said. "I wasn't sure if he was serious."

After being a programming officer of MVFBLA his sophomore year, Nikitas followed in his brother's footsteps once more and became a state officer as a junior. Along with his National President title, he currently holds the Executive Vice President position.

According to Gila, Nikitas' passion for FBLA and charismatic personality made his hopes of holding a national position possible.

"Gradually, as he got more experience and networking, he began to realize his potential," Gila said.

**What it means for MVHS**

Although Nikitas' new responsibilities may give him less time for MVFBLA, his title is expected to help the chapter in other ways.

"It's on more of a symbolic level," Gila said. "It gives the chapter prestige and is a good selling point."

According to Schmidt, the chapter will most likely become larger and more competitive because Nikitas' success will appeal to people deciding between FBLA and other business organizations.

"It's tremendous brag rights. There's competition with DECA and other organizations here. People say, 'Now gee, if he's National President, maybe I could be too,'" Schmidt said.

Gila also expects that Nikitas has set a precedent for other chapter members who want to get involved on the regional, state or national level.

**What's next for Nikitas**

With Nikitas' new position, he can't afford to have senioritis. Aside from answering around 50 emails a day regarding assignments, questions and demands, he is also expected to attend many conferences and conventions that FBLA is affiliated with. In fact, he will be traveling for 20 days in October and November alone. In order to balance the duties of his presidency, his role as ASB Social Manager and his school work, Nikitas was careful to pick a manageable course load. However, most of his work as President hasn't begun yet, so he has time to be working on his college applications.

"[Right now I do not [feel like a president],]" Nikitas said with a laugh. "Right now I feel like a guy who answers a lot of emails."

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*This spread ran as part of a three-page package on the new FBLA National President. I wanted to keep the spread clean, with the intense image as the focus; I also wanted to incorporate a staircase somehow, since it was a major motif of his campaign. I'm happy with the way the staircase turned out: subtle and integrated with the overall aesthetic of the page.*

Published September 2012 in El Estoque

**SECOND PLACE  
DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD**  
2013 NFPW competition

**2006**

Kanellakopoulos joins the FBLA chapter at Kennedy Middle School as a sixth grader.

**2009**

His freshman year, Kanellakopoulos joins MVFBLA. With his two teammates, he wins first in his event at the state level.

**2011**

After serving as an MVFBLA officer as a sophomore, Kanellakopoulos becomes the California FBLA Secretary-Treasurer.

**2012**

After months of campaigning, Kanellakopoulos is elected FBLA National president at the 2012 FBLA National Leadership Conference in San Antonio.

Replacing cigarettes

Stay awake, stay ahead

Myths about millennials

Boss with a black belt

MONTA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL  
ELESTOQUE.ORG  
FEBRUARY 5, 2014  
ISSUE V, VOLUME XLIV

# el ESTOQUE

**MACBOOK PRO**  
★★★★★  
based on 945 reviews on Amazon

**PRIDE AND PREJUDICE**  
★★★★★  
based on 1,186,050 reviews on Goodreads

## RISE from the RANKINGS

Discovering our true interests in a world defined by ratings

26 SPECIAL REPORT

**VERDE PMT**  
★★★★★  
based on 913 reviews on Yelp

**RATATOUILLE**  
96%  
based on 223 reviews on Rotten Tomatoes

For our cover for this issue, I wanted a striking visual that would capture just how pervasive review culture is in our lives. Overlaying an image that is familiar to most students with brightly colored pop-up boxes made sense — it calls to attention an unnoticed but common practice.

Published February 2014 in El Estoque

### FREE LEARNIN'

BY AMELI PARE

What do students do during their free periods?

- 11 percent have a free first period. 27 percent would want a free first. **Junior Gayatri Ketavaru** usually sleeps in to recover from water polo practice and late night studying the night before. **44 percent of students sleep during their free period.**
- 3 percent have a free second period. 8 percent would want a free second. **Freshman Jeremy Jacob** sits in a booth having breakfast with his father. Jacob gets to sleep in on any breakfast with his father on Wednesdays because of his free second. Other days, he can be found with friends during his free second.
- 6 percent have a free third period. 4 percent would want a free third. **Junior Faisal Al-Harbi** said, "I get to do my math homework." **74 percent of students do homework during their free period.**
- 4 percent have a free fourth period. 4 percent would want a free fourth. **Senior Justin Cena** said, "I'm moving from a free fourth to a free second." **88 percent of seniors will have Government and Economics during the same period.**
- 3 percent have a free fifth period. 6 percent would want a free fifth. **Junior Oindrill Dutta** said, "I like [my free period]. I've made new friends." **51 percent of students socialize during their free period.**
- 16 percent have a free sixth period. 17 percent would want a free sixth. **Junior Erin Luke** free sixth period allows her to finish her homework before cheer practice, therefore enabling her to study. Her free period also gives her more time to work at the stable and attend tutoring. **13 percent of students participate in sports during their free period.**
- 33 percent have a free seventh period. 32 percent would want a free seventh. **Junior Anup Sankarman** said, "So if I were to have a seventh [period], I would have to miss 30 minutes of class each tournament." **74 percent of students surveyed in an online survey of 252 students do not have free periods.**

© psm@elstoque.org  
E. ESTOQUE

This started out as a traditional article, but I suggested to the writer that we turn it into an infographic — why would we represent an issue grounded in numbers any other way? The design is uncluttered and logical, just like the idea we're exploring.

Published November 2013 in El Estoque

### NEWS | CLUB SECURITY

With many similar clubs on campus and more awaiting review, how does Club Commission decide which to accept and reject?

**The application process**

Online application

4 Club Commission voters

Two votes against, two votes for

Three or more votes of approval

Fewer than two votes of approval

Club Commission voters meet with club applicants to negotiate

Applicants request a repeal meeting

Club Accepted

Club Rejected

**According to Club Commission, the ideal club must:**

1. Spark interest in the student body
2. Not be too similar to any other clubs on campus
3. Have serious potential for long-term success
4. Have a purpose not so specific that it would attract little interest

With 90 clubs on campus, there are bound to be similarities. Some of the biggest divisions include business, volunteer and modern language clubs. Here are their shared traits and differences.

**DECA**  
Encourage students to pursue business related activities

**TSA**  
Technology Student Association

**CHINESE CLUB**

**INTERACT**

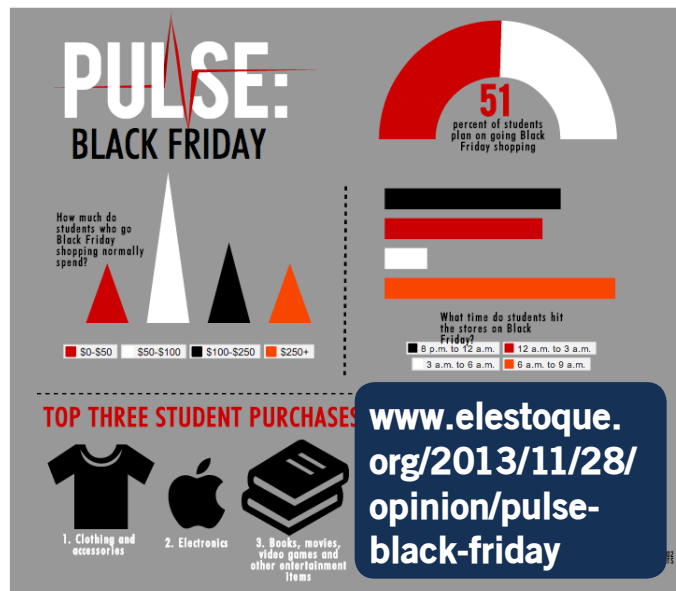
**OUYAGON**

Here's another infographic-centric design. Clean, poppy, dynamic. There are a lot of different elements, but it doesn't feel like there's too much going on.

Published December 2012 in El Estoque

*I made this on Piktochart – the version posted on our website is interactive. Basic, engaging design. Super easy to make. I've been pushing the staff to produce more infographic-centric content for the web.*

*Published November 2013 on elestoque.org*



[www.elestoque.org/2013/11/28/opinion/pulse-black-friday](http://www.elestoque.org/2013/11/28/opinion/pulse-black-friday)



*Published January 2014 on elestoque.org*

ABOUT US

[www.elestoque.org/about-us](http://www.elestoque.org/about-us)

EL ESTOQUE IS A NATIONAL AWARD-WINNING STUDENT PUBLICATION THAT HAS REPORTED ON AND FOR MONTA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL IN CUPERTINO, CALIF., SINCE 1969.

Our print magazine is published once a month and our website is updated daily. Our content — which is entirely generated and produced by a journalism class of around 50 students — ranges from traditional coverage like in-depth investigative stories and breaking news to multimedia features like videos and photo galleries. The goal of all our content is to inform and entertain the student body and local community.

Staff applications for the current academic year are closed. To join next year's staff, please check back in April. New staff members are selected through a written application process as well as interviews.

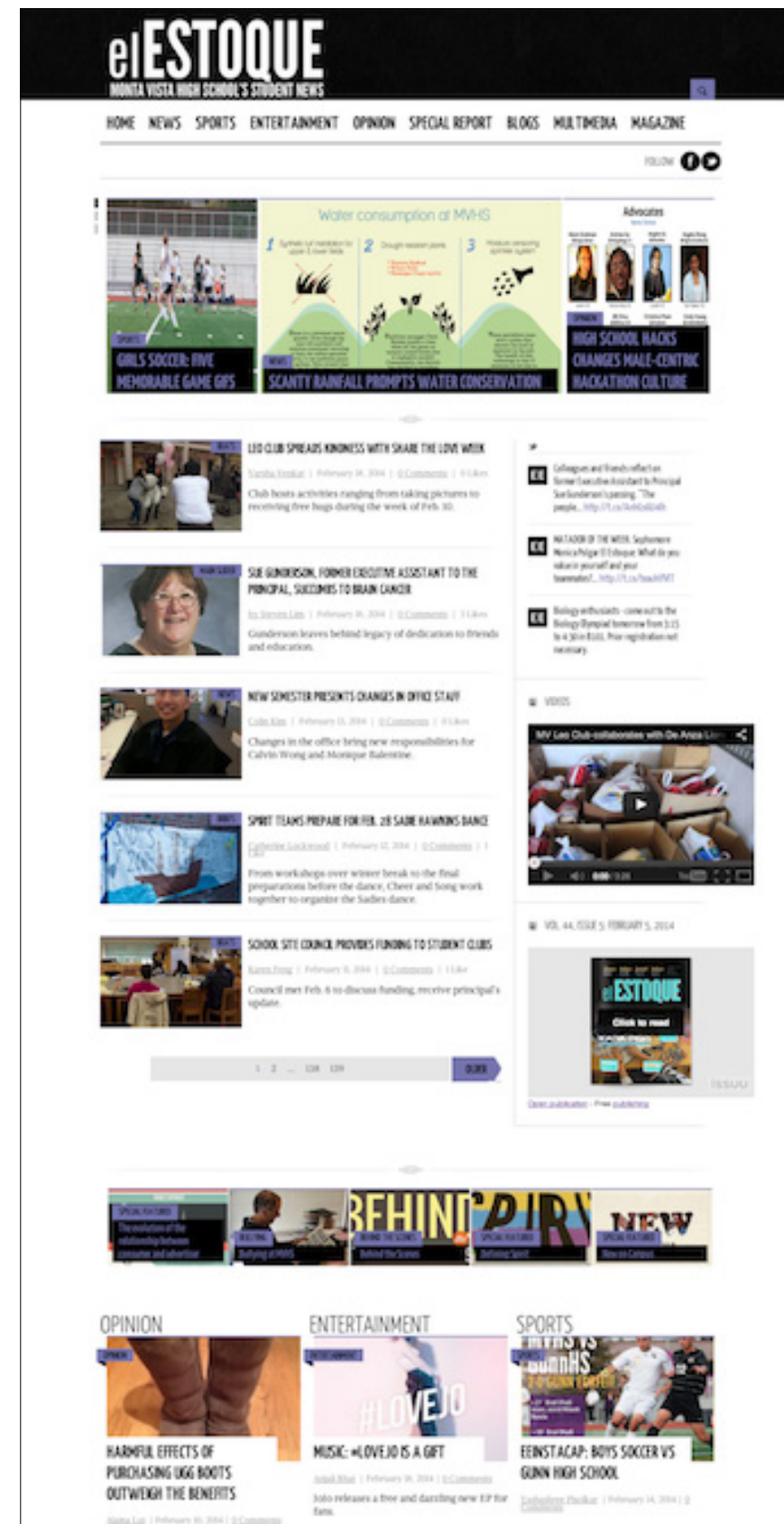
Contact us at [mv.elestoque@gmail.com](mailto:mv.elestoque@gmail.com) or through [this submission form](#).

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR STAFF.

VIEW A LIST OF AWARDS WE'VE WON.

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*So many of the posts on our website are simply blocks of text. I mixed up these posts with pull quotes, infographics and typography. That's part of the reason I pushed for this new theme at all; it simplifies the process of creating aesthetically pleasing posts.*



visit **EL ESTOQUE .ORG** to see the main page in action

*This year, my editorial staff and I decided to transition our website to a radically new theme. What started as a river of posts transformed throughout the year into a dynamic homepage. This new, young, modern theme befits our audience.*

# photography & videography

## PHOTOGRAPHY



*I think these photographs all do a great job of capturing the emotion of the moment. The dominant image in particular, taken at a Drama department production of "Amelia Earhart," does justice to lead actress Anna Shabrova. It's a story about a girl looking for light in the darkness, and that comes across more than clearly.*

# VIDEO

*I love video projects like these ones – go in, immerse yourself in the event, talk to new people, and then throw a piece of work together. It's a stress-free creative challenge.*



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Cupertino Carnival, Christian Club prayer session, 50th anniversary of Hollanderry Place block party, county chess tournament**



# community involvement

*THE SUMMERS AFTER MY SOPHOMORE AND JUNIOR YEARS, I INTERNEED WITH THE STANFORD DAILY. THE FOLLOWING IS A SAMPLING OF MY WORK FOR THEM.*

## AN INTERVIEW WITH EDGAR WRIGHT AND SIMON PEGG OF “THE WORLD’S END”

There aren’t many film series quite like director Edgar Wright’s Three Flavours Cornetto trilogy, which left plenty of room for discussion when The Daily talked with Wright and stars Simon Pegg and Nick Frost in advance of the concluding film’s premiere later this month.

Each of the three films — “Shaun of the Dead,” “Hot Fuzz” and “The World’s End,” out Aug. 23 — represents a collaboration between Wright, Pegg and Frost, but feature different characters, are situated in a different genre and tell a different story.

While “Shaun” was a send-up of zombie flicks and “Hot Fuzz” did the same for buddy

however, with each pub featured in the film named after one that exists somewhere in the United Kingdom.

“Every pub name has a bearing on what happens inside,” Pegg said. “The pub names are a key to the plot of the film in a way, down to the fact that the signs are even like tarot cards that will tell you what’s going to happen inside.”

After writing the script, Wright and Pegg sifted through names of pubs to determine the ones best suited to the plot. They applied a similar approach in selecting the tracks that appear on the nostalgia-heavy soundtrack — the pair listened to a mixtape of songs released from 1988 to 1993 on repeat while writing, and some of those songs found their way into the script.

“It wasn’t just a case of you get to the end and you see what works,” Wright said. “A lot of them were written into the script and even played in on set whether it was Primal Scream or Soup Dragons or Suede. There’s that scene where they’re walking through town, and it’s playing ‘So Young’ by

Suede and the actors all had it in their ears — we had earwigs and they were listening to the songs and walking along.”

A choreographer helped to coordinate movements to music and also to simulate the drunken swagger the majority of the characters needed, as they spend the better half of the film utterly intoxicated.

While pubs play prominent roles not just in “The World’s End” but in all three films in the trilogy, Wright, Pegg and Frost emphasized that they aren’t encouraging alcoholism or hedonism.

“This film isn’t a celebration of alcohol, it’s not a celebration of the manchild and ‘Let’s get drunk all the time and have fun,’” Pegg said. “That isn’t the answer in this film. In a way, that’s Gary’s disability — his desire to do [so].”

“We are celebrating smashing robots’ heads in, though,” Wright noted.

Gary’s story, and the plot of “The World’s

*“Shaun of the Dead” is one of my all-time favorite movies, so having the opportunity to speak with these guys face-to-face was honestly surreal. I’m proud of myself for maintaining professionalism throughout the interview and not succumbing to fangirly incoherence. Journalism makes dreams come true!*

End” as a whole, functions as a cautionary tale of the dangers of nostalgia and of living in the past. It’s also a critique of the increasingly homogenized, even robotic, world we live in. Upon their return to their hometown of Newton Haven, the friends find that the pubs they left behind have become eerily similar to one another, a result of what Pegg refers to as the “Starbucks factor.”

It’s a defining characteristic of the Cornetto trilogy: what starts as parody of a genre evolves to become an outstanding example of the genre itself, bringing fresh and thought-provoking ideas to the table.

“A lot of comedies are so ephemeral and completely dissipate in your mind by the time you’ve gone to the parking lot,” Wright said. “We like films that might stick with you a bit longer, and even though they’ve got laughs in them and it’s silly and exciting, there are deeper themes that hopefully resonate longer.”

# STANFORD STARTUP GUIDE

Stanford University, with its array of resources and location in Silicon Valley, is a breeding ground of student creativity and technological innovation. Not surprisingly, it has been home to a number of startups over the past several years. Twenty-four of these have been helped along the way by StartX, or the Stanford Student Startup Accelerator, which provides Stanford student entrepreneurs with advice and resources to get their organizations off the ground. Here, we take a look at a few of the most recent of these StartX-incubated startups.

## PREDICTIVE EDGE

Marty Hu '11 spent the summer after his sophomore year in college working at Cisco Systems, a technology company. While many of his friends and classmates at Stanford enjoyed their summer internships in the Silicon Valley, Hu was unimpressed. Unhappy with his lack of control at the company, his experience led to an epiphany.

"I realized that it really sucked," he said. "I don't know how other companies are, but I know that my experience working for a company really, really sucked."

Future COO of Predictive Edge, Steven Wu '11, whom Hu, the startup's future CTO, had met the previous quarter in a class on entrepreneurial communications, felt the same way about his sophomore summer gig at Amazon.

After many IM conversations, the two returned to Stanford at the start of their junior year with a goal in mind: launch their own startup. They teamed up with Wu's high school friend and future CEO Kevin Liu, then an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania and also a member of the class of 2011, and Predictive Edge was born.

"So we all got together, and we were like, all right, we're going to do a startup," Hu said. "We don't really know what it is, but we're going to go sit down and figure it out."

According to Hu, brainstorming yielded one particularly promising idea: designing a point-of-sale system for the Web.

"The idea was that if we could build some kind of point-of-sale system, we could collect all this information about buying patterns [online] and then save that all and do some cool stuff algorithm-wise with that," Hu said. "[The question was,] what can we do with all these algorithms? And one thing we came up with was pricing."

What the team knew was that there was really no competition for Amazon in the field of dynamic pricing. It was, in Hu's words, "the dinosaur of retail," one that was "basically killing the competition."

Their goal? To try to make e-commerce more intelligent, building upon Amazon's model with different algorithms.

"We're trying to create a platform to enable small, medium-sized or even large e-commerce businesses to compete with Amazon," Hu said.

The summer after their junior year, the Predictive Edge team worked at the company full time, a blur fueled by a \$40,000 grant from the Lightspeed Summer Fellowship program, an organization aimed at providing funds for de-

veloping startups. It's now been a year since all three graduated, and they're still hard at work on expanding their fledgling company.

"There's a future that I'd like to see, and that's the company continuing to grow, becoming a good place for people to work," Hu said. "But it's hard to say. I mean, as long as I'm working on stuff that I really like and I'm doing something that I think is important, I think that's good enough."

## WIFISLAM

By 2011, WiFiSLAM co-founders Joseph Huang M.A. '11 and Dave Millman M.A. '10 had already nearly founded their startup. During

current Google employee, WiFiSLAM was launched.

"We decided to start the company as we were all finishing our master's programs, and our goal was to commercialize [this] indoor positioning technology," Tsoong said in an email.

According to WiFiSLAM's website, it provides users with a variety of functions, including indoor navigation, location-based coupons and gaming, automated check-ins and in-store product search.

"We have made significant progress to date — we have released our indoor positioning API and have begun integrations with a variety of mobile applications," Tsoong said. "We have essentially built a location platform for any mobile application to use our indoor positioning."

## 6DOT

For 6Dot co-founder Karina Pikhart M.A. '12, the assignment was this: solve a problem at home. The prompt was that unspecified and open-ended.

Pikhart, at the time taking a design class during her senior year at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, found it eye-opening.

"[In this class,] we came across this experience that many blind individuals have, which is trouble locating or identifying or distinguishing between very common items, like medication or canned foods," Pikhart said. "A lot of the tools that are available to attempt to solve those problems are pretty dissatisfying to use."

Her in-class team designed and prototyped a product that would hopefully solve this problem more effectively: a Braille labeler. After moving to Palo Alto to attend graduate school at Stanford, Pikhart teamed up with Silicon Valley-based engineers and fellow 6Dot co-founders Robert Liebert and Raphael Hyde to create a startup that would make the Braille labeler widely available.

"[Our] aim is to provide tools or bring independence to the blind and people with other disabilities, and help people reach their full potential through developing innovative technology," Pikhart said.

It hasn't been an easy road, though; 6Dot has faced numerous difficulties, from assembling the right team to creating a sustainable business plan to actually making the jump from prototyping their idea to manufacturing it. After years of work, 6Dot put out its first Braille labelers in 2012. However, Pikhart is still hesitant to say that they've reached their goals.

"We're a long way off from being successful at meeting that goal," Pikhart said. "The vision of wanting disability to not be seen as a disability, the vision of wanting assisted technology to just look like any other technology is a long way out."

## JETLORE

We use it as a verb now: "Google" this, "Google" that, "Google" anything and everything.

If Eldar Sadikov, a Stanford Ph.D. candidate in computer science, has his way, "Google" may soon be replaced with the name of his company: Jetlore.

Sadikov and his co-founder, Montse Medina, a Stanford Ph.D. candidate in mathematical engineering, founded Jetlore in January 2011 in order to create a smarter search engine for consumers. Jetlore, by using a social content aggregator called Qwhisper, personalizes results according to user's activities on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

"The big vision from the very beginning was that we wanted to help any consumer out there...be able to [use] social content in decision making," Sadikov said.

While this vision may have remained unwavering since Jetlore's initial launching, their methodology has changed drastically. At first, Sadikov and Medina created a prototype that would refer you to someone likely to have the desired information. The example Sadikov provides is of someone wanting to purchase tickets to a Giants game but wondering where to find the best seats. The prototype would dig through previous Facebook or Twitter posts to pinpoint the friend most likely to have answers. But then the startup's staff — originally composed of just Sadikov and Medina but now extended to include six others — had a revelation.

"Rather than having people provide the information, a lot of the information is already out there, already among the Facebook posts and the Twitter posts," Sadikov said. "And we can show the existing information rather than helping people find the [right] person. We started working on really understanding content."

Other companies have attempted similar feats before, but it's not an easy task: much of the content on social networking sites is so colloquial and unstructured that designing an algorithm capable of decoding it requires a herculean effort. But Jetlore has thus far been successful, and it hopes to extend this success in the future.

"I think that's where our future is, sort of making companies' consumer services smarter, allowing them to personalize the experience for users and bring in the context they need — that's really the future of search," Sadikov said. "And I think that's why we see ourselves as the next big search company."

*The best part of journalism is meeting cool people — and my sources for this story were very cool. Being able to discuss cutting-edge ideas with cutting-edge entrepreneurs was thrilling. Plus, this ran as the cover story of The Stanford Daily. I don't want to over-use the word "cool," but...*



## GSB ECONOMIST USES BIG DATA TO SHAKE UP THE INTERNET

The Internet. Economics. The two fields fall into separate departments, but according to Graduate School of Business Professor of Economics Susan Athey Ph.D. '95, there is a considerable overlap between them.

Athey, who has worked with Microsoft to develop new theories on the effect of the Internet on advertising, news consumption and more, is one of the leading experts in the field. Her research on the convergence of big data and economics, moreover, has even shaken up the way the web works.

### DIGGING INTO DATA

Athey first became involved as a consultant at Microsoft in 2007, while she was a professor at Harvard University. Since then, she has played an active role in Microsoft Research, the branch of the company focused on cutting-edge science.

Collaboration with industry is fairly common among Athey's colleagues. Many professors in fields at the intersection of the Internet and economics, such as e-commerce, seek relationships with companies, according to Athey.

"Most of the research that's taking place with very large data sets is in some way collaboration with either industry or government, because universities just aren't creating and generating those large data sets," Athey said.

According to economics department chair Jonathan Levin '94, who has collaborated with Athey on research, Athey's focus is those self-same large data sets. Levin took classes with Athey while completing his graduate studies when she was an assistant professor at MIT.

"I think she's always been interested in the application of sophisticated economic theory to real-world problems," said Levin. "She has been, in her career, often very methodologically oriented.

### CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Much of Athey's work with Microsoft has focused on optimizing the efficiency of the al-

gorithm that place ads alongside Bing search results and in the process generates millions of dollars in standing bids on certain keywords.

"What the job of the market designer is for these platforms is to try to set rules at the auctions and to manage the marketplace in a way that provides enough profits for advertisers so that they keep participating in your marketplace," Athey said. "You're also trying to make sure that you get the best advertisements to the users so that you create the most value in your market and, of course, the search engine wants to make money from these auctions."

Athey has also done research on the impact of the Internet and social media on how people find and read news.

### A FUTURE TRANSFORMATION

According to Athey, the evolution of the Internet is transforming the field of social sciences research in exciting ways.

"Economics has always been pretty empirical, but a lot of other social sciences have become much more data-driven once you can use Internet data," Athey said.

In addition to allowing academics in other social sciences – like psychology, anthropology or political science – to obtain quantifiable data through mediums like social networks rather than simply through observations, big data techniques have found applications as diverse as fostering more efficient governance and administration in cities like New York and Chicago.

"The data created on the Internet came along, and it just opened up a whole bunch of new questions...and the ability to answer policy questions that weren't really possible to address in the past," Athey said. "It's an incredible opportunity where professors in universities can really help push the ball forward by creating new methods and doing new research that's going to affect the productivity of many different parts of our economy."

*Here's another cool person. I enjoyed writing this story because of the predictive element; exploring these new ideas, these ideas that are going to shape our future, exhilarated me.*

*Published August 2013 on stanforddaily.com*

## IN REPOSE, GUARDS MAKE LASTING IMPRESSION

At first glance, the life-sized photograph suggests that the woman in the painting is modeled after the woman seated next to the painting, and further inspection only supports this conclusion. The similarities are uncanny: same white shirt, same periwinkle coat, same cropped, copper-colored hair. Even their facial structures seem to correlate.

Of course, it's impossible. The photograph—one of 16 by Andy Freeberg that constitute the Cantor Arts Center's new exhibit, "Guardians: Photographs by Andy Freeberg, an Exhibition in Three Parts"—is titled "Altman's Portrait of I.P. Degas, State Tretyakov Gallery." The woman portrayed in the painting is I.P. Degas; the woman sitting beside the painting is a nameless guard at the Russian State Tretyakov Gallery.

When Freeberg traveled to Russia in 2008, his goal was to capture the way in which capitalism had transformed the formerly communist nation. Upon visiting, however, he changed his focus to rest on the elderly women who serve as museum security guards, who appear to possess a deep passion for their work despite long hours and little pay.

Their passion—as well as Freeberg's—is apparent in "Guardians." The photographs, shot on a 35-millimeter digital camera, are elegantly composed, with gorgeous use of shadows and negative space. But although Freeberg, a San Francisco-based photojournalist, has tremendous talent, it's also inarguable that he was given some compelling material to work with. The guards, sitting by the paintings entrusted to them, are beautiful. Freeberg does them justice.

The exhibit is divided into three portions, with the first two, "Antiquity to the Enlightenment" and "19th & Early 20th Century,"

focusing on specific time periods and the last featuring photographs by Freeberg of Cantor's own security staff. While these images fall short of the breathtaking beauty of the first two sets—no doubt hindered by the fact that, unlike the Russian guards, Cantor's guards are required to wear uniforms—they are nonetheless a sight to behold. Also, it's pretty exciting when you recognize a face (as the woman standing next to me so astutely noted when she asked, "Hey, isn't that the girl from the lobby?").

This last portion of the exhibit is accompanied by a five-minute documentary on Cantor's security staff, directed by Josie Johnson '13 and

**It's inarguable that he was given some compelling material to work with. The guards, sitting by the paintings entrusted to them, are beautiful. Freeberg does them justice.**

produced by Justin Warren '09. The brief video has Cantor guards reflect on their favorite pieces of art at the museum, a question that prompts the subjects to launch into amusing anecdotes on everything from Sunday school to childhood vacations in England.

As delightful as "Guardians" is, however, be warned: the three parts of the exhibit are located in three different portions of the Cantor Arts Center, leading to much confusion. This difficulty in navigation is only exacerbated by the fact that the building is currently undergoing some remodeling. Arm yourself with a map, but even so, expect to have to ask one of Cantor's helpful guards for advice.

How fitting.

*Published August 2012 in The Stanford Daily*

*I thought about this exhibit for days after attending. I thought also about how I would never have seen it without this assignment. Being a storyteller is an amazing job.*