

Final Curtain Call for the Van Wezel *The Van Wezel is set to be replaced in 2028*



The Van Wezel stands royally as a home for the performing arts beside the Sarasota Bay. Students look forward to ending their Pine View journey as they walk across the stage. While the theater will remain a staple in the Sarasota community, a new performing arts center is in the works. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MUFFY LAVENS

by Kai Sprunger
Match Editor-in-Chief

In front of the filled auditorium, two dancers begin their routine before they prepare to leave high school. A rich violet color is cast from the gilded walls of the magnificent theater and stage they dance upon. Their eyes meet the crowd — hundreds of seniors, soon-to-be graduates — watch the performance from the seats of the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, filled with apprehension yet eager for what the future will bring.

Although it may have been the end of a decade and the beginning of adulthood for the class of 2018, it was never the end of the friendship of the two dancers, Pine View graduates Mackenzie Dyrda and Alexa Mollod, nor will it be the end of the Van Wezel, which is fated to be replaced in 2028.

Being in close proximity to the bay, the Van Wezel has been identified by the 2017 City Climate Adaptation Plan as Sarasota's most vulnerable structure due to rising sea levels. Electrical systems and concrete have already been weakened

by waves from the sea, where the arts hall sits. Many also feel that the structure and comforts of the Van Wezel no longer meet the standards for holding performances.

"[The Van Wezel] has truly been a landmark for the performing arts in Sarasota. However, many of the hall's amenities don't meet contemporary patron standards concerning features like a center aisle, accessibility, and state-of-the-art technology. With fewer than 2,000 seats, the hall is at a competitive disadvantage for the early routing of tours," Executive Director of the Van Wezel

Mary Bensel said.

In response to the growing concerns about the Van Wezel's features, the City of Sarasota partnered with the Sarasota Performing Arts Center Foundation

(SPAC) to build a novel arts and performances hall to replace the Van Wezel. Construction of the SPAC is planned to begin in 2025 and will finish in 2028. Although the SPAC is fated to replace the Van Wezel, there are

no plans to demolish the structure. A Blue-Ribbon Committee has been organized specifically in order to repurpose and create a new role for the arts hall

so that it remains the heart and soul of the arts in Sarasota.

Although it will be the end of the Van Wezel as Sarasota County's main performing arts hall, it won't be the end of the memories the Van Wezel has created. For many, the Van Wezel is a reminder of elegant Broadway performances they once attended, which would be inaccessible without the hall.

"It's nice to have a well-rounded community where you have those options so close and you don't have to drive two hours to a bigger city to experience them. [It] makes it more affordable for families who can't afford to go to Orlando for a weekend to see a show," Pine View Class of 2023 sponsor Kristin McCombie said.

The Van Wezel hosts the Pine View graduation ceremony, which has been a tradition in place for as long as anyone can remember. Twelfth-grader Jacob Koshy is set to speak as the senior class president at graduation.

"[The Van Wezel] is that place — that final destination — that everyone's been aiming for, not just in second grade, like

“[The Van Wezel] is that place — that final destination — that everyone’s been aiming for... Our grade fundraises... because we want to continue that tradition that’s been in our family at Pine View for so long,”

Jacob Koshy,
twelfth-grader

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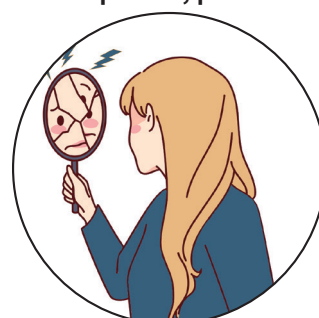
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We're allowed to age
Self-care should be more than anti-aging

myself, but people that are entering into high school or came in middle school," he said. "Our grade fundraises, not just at the Pine View Fair but at shows like Variety Show, Miss Pine View, [and] we work at all those places because we want to continue that tradition that's been in our family at Pine View for so long."

During the ceremony, one long-lasting tradition is where the music department plays elegant pieces throughout the show, adding to the atmosphere of the hall and creating unforgettable memories. Band Director Victor Mongillo especially feels that he will never forget these performances.

"I just think that when you play in a venue like that — and you're performing for 1,700 people, however many people there are in the audience — it just affects you [and] your whole life," he said.

Every senior who walks across the stage carries the weight of being able to walk in the same footsteps as those before them, such as those of the class of 2018. During their graduation, dancers Dyrda and Mollod were given the opportunity to perform a lyrical piece to the song "This is Not the End" by Claire Maguire at the Van Wezel. For them, this piece represented how although they were going their separate ways, it was not the end of their friendship, nor would it be the end of the class of 2018.

Whenever the two are reminded of the Van Wezel, they always think back to their memories of that performance, which is still one of their most treasured memories to this day.

"The second you come on stage, even if you were nervous behind the wings before you went on stage, that all completely melts away and dissipates. You're just really in the moment, and you can't even see anybody in the audience so it's honestly like you're just performing with each other and having that moment together," Dyrda said.

The Van Wezel has had a significant impact on Sarasota, establishing the relationship this community has with the arts and forging unforgettable memories with residents of Sarasota as well as Pine View students.

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Exploring enrollment in world language classes

by Terry Shen
Match Asst. Editor-in-Chief

World language classes are a staple here at Pine View. Since elementary school, students are taught Spanish, Chinese, and French. After elementary school, rising middle schoolers often wonder which language they should pursue. This question has no right answer, as all three offer unique future experiences; however, this seems to be less important after students fulfill their required three high school credits to graduate with a Pine View diploma.

As data has shown, Pine View students generally drop their world language classes after they have fulfilled the required number of credits, with sophomore year usually being the last experience students have with it.

In a recent survey conducted of 197 tenth-graders and eleventh-graders, 129 are currently taking a world language class.

Only 27% of tenth-graders responded as expecting to continue their world language classes next year, as they have fulfilled their requirements to graduate. It's important to take into account the number of students enrolled in each class, with Spanish 4 Honors having over four and a half times as many students as Chinese 3 Honors, and three times as many students as French 4 Honors.

The retention rate for eleventh-graders is at 82%, most likely because the eleventh-graders currently taking world language classes are those who already have decided to take another year after they have met their requirements, and are therefore more likely to continue with the program.

Lance Bergman, Pine View's College Advisor, reiterated the importance of taking a foreign language.

"I have actually been asked

by colleges in the past about a student's content of their transcript [and] asking, why it is generally... Pine View students tend to walk away from upper level foreign language? The question is precisely that, why, when your student had this opportunity to take that fourth or fifth year of foreign language, why did they choose to simply pivot to something maybe unrelated, even to their areas of interest?" Bergman said.

Out of the many different reasons why students are stopping their world language classes after they have fulfilled the requirements, "wanting to take other classes" stands out with over 100 responses. Students often leave their language learning experiences to pursue classes on a different track. According to Bergman, an example of this is students wanting to become an engineer and sacrificing a world language class for an additional STEM class.

sions point of view, there are many life long skills that taking world languages can provide.

AP Chinese teacher Kitty Wang said that in her experience specifically for the Chinese language, "Students, they see the world situation right now, and China is taking lead in some ways, so they see the opportunity in the future."

AP French teacher Diana Siwicka mentioned the importance of French in large organizations such as FIFA and the UN. "[The students] come out fluent. They're fluent in speaking, listening, reading, writing. They also have a wide knowledge of cultural topic," she said.

One certain fact is that enrollment in multiple world language classes hasn't been very high in recent years, as seen by the general number of students taking AP foreign language classes.

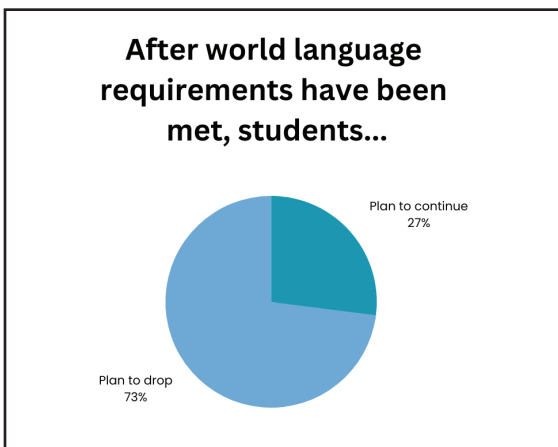
For example, AP Spanish Language and Culture has seen highs of 31 students in the 2017-2018 school year to nine students in the 2022-2023 school year. However, it's important not to disregard the scores achieved by students who do take the classes. In AP Spanish, AP Chinese, and AP French, as well as AP Spanish Literature and Composition, Pine View has achieved 100% pass rates in all four classes, a feat demonstrating the hard work participating students put into the classes.

"When I see a senior, as a college advisor, who has had already, or is planning on having the AP Language, I see them as having been the most well prepared students in this building... If we can share with our parents and students just how important it is that they have balance and that they take advantage of that opportunity that they've been given already," Bergman said.

"These are all wonderful courses, but they aren't a continuation of something you began as an eighth-grader... They're squeezing out a skill and ability and opportunity, that in some ways, our colleges value and the world values more than some of these other courses that they're taking," Bergman said. "I don't know that there is a more valuable brain building opportunity in this building, than foreign language and fluency. And I believe our college partners recognize that and know that."

Besides the college admis-

GRAPHICS BY TERRY SHEN



'All the World's a Stage'

As the winter season comes to a close, so do the majority of Pine View's annual performances. The Variety Show, "Addams Family the Musical," and Mr. Pine View all shared the stage these past few months, featuring talented performers.



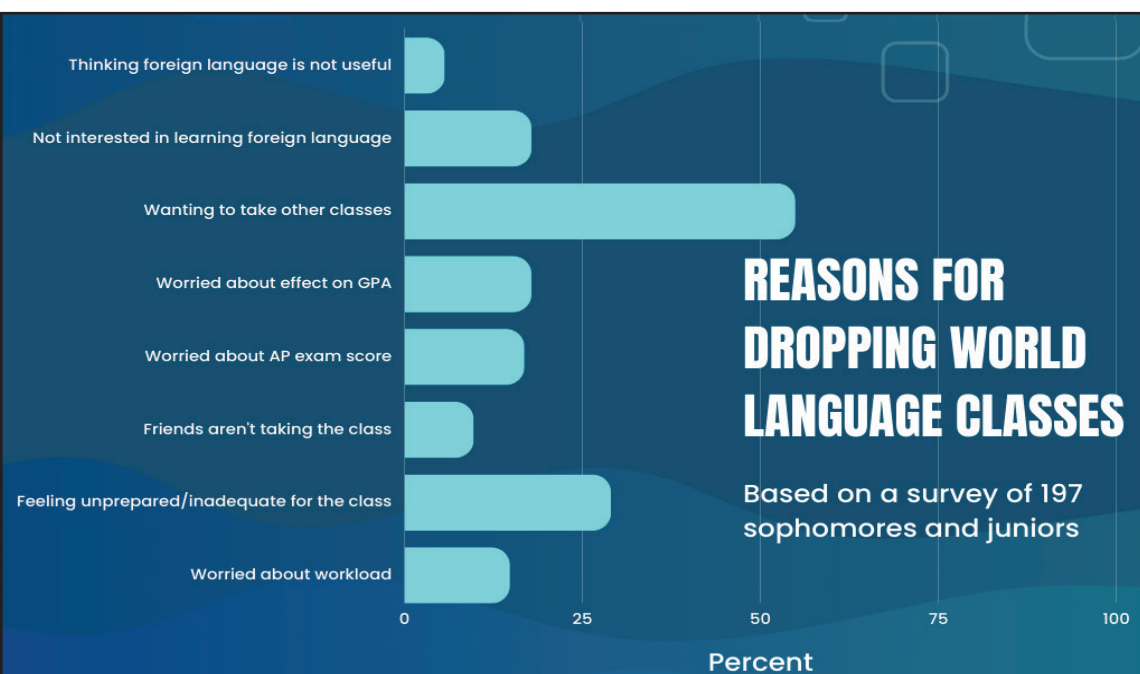
Tenth-grader Matthew Castillo (left) serenades with the saxophone as tenth-grader Evan Rollings (right) plays guitar at the Variety Show. PHOTO BY JIAYI ZHU



Twelfth-grader Joshua Worthington (center) is surrounded by fellow Mr. Pine View contestants as he performs his interpretive dance. PHOTO BY FELICITY CHANG



Performers conclude the opening song from "Addams Family the Musical" on the Pine View stage. PHOTO BY ALYSON MIZANIN



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With new requirements in place for the class of 2025 regarding FLVS courses, scan the QR code to learn more about how this decision was made.

New College of Florida undergoes changes

by Robyn Schoenberg
Multimedia Editor

Under sun beams and swaying palm trees, students at Sarasota's New College skateboard, bike, or walk to their dorms for breakfast just before their 9am classes. One student attending this liberal arts college, Pine View Class of 2018 graduate Antonia Ginsberg, studies in the physics department, which is known for its small, tight-knit classroom environments. One of her professors brings his dog to class while they do lessons and workshops, and sometimes after midterms her professors will host picnics by the bay at the tiki hut. In the evening, students go out to Bayfront to read books in the banyan tree while the sun sets over the horizon.

Ginsberg said that she chose New College because of its location and "there's definitely highly gifted, highly intelligent people here, very open minded, very supportive... I love that New College has huge support for individual student projects and entrepreneurial ship and passion."

However, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said he wants to "recapture" New College's environment, according to "Recapturing Higher Education," a City Journal article written by political activist Christopher Rufo.

"The mission has been, I think, more into the DEI [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion], CRT

[Critical Race Theory], the gender ideology rather than what liberal arts education should be," DeSantis said of New College in a Herald Tribune article, "DeSantis targets New College of Florida. Here's 7 things to know about the school."

The 2023 legislative proposal is specifically challenging DEI, CRT, and similar initiatives.

On Jan. 6, DeSantis announced the appointment of six new members to the New College Board of Trustees.

As someone dedicated to challenging critical race theory and gender ideology in America's institutions, Rufo wrote that DeSantis has tasked the new board with transforming New College into the "Hillsdale of the South," a small, Christian, conservative school in Michigan.

On the same day the 2023 proposal was revealed, it was also announced that the board fired college president Patricia Okker without cause after negotiating the contract that allows her to go on paid leave for a year and return to the college as a professor.

"There's a lot of sadness. Dr. President Okker is a really close friend of all of us. She

really loves engaging with the students. She comes several times a week to eat lunch with us. It's very weird to know that she is not going to be there," Ginsberg said.

With the announcement

hugging going around on campus. People are really there for each other."

Pine View Class of 2020 alumnus Laine Chmielewski is currently taking a gap year at New College. He shared that there is a forum for New College students where they are all connected through email. He said that the forum is full of letters to Okker saying how much the student body appreciated her. There's a thread full of students discussing whether they are considering transferring from New College and why.

"The two biggest opinions on the forum is [either] stay a community, let's stay strong, or be completely selfish and do what you need to do for yourself," Chmielewski said when it comes to transferring; he is considering transferring himself.

"I can't speak for every trans person, but it took me forever to figure out who I was in terms of pronouns and everything," he said. "I'm not going to put myself in a situation where I am consistently invalidated as a person."

The decisions of the New College Board of Trustees are affecting all facets of the New College community.

They are terminating employee contracts and only

rehiring the people that fit the school's "new financial and business model," according to a recent article published in the Orlando Weekly.

English teacher Pamela Novak's husband is a current professor at New College.

"I am worried about my husband's job; obviously, that would impact me. If I end up being alone with my kids because my husband loses his tenured associate professor position... It's really disturbing," Novak said.

Despite potential changes in the future, some are still hopeful.

"I really want this positive, inclusive culture to remain," Ginsberg said. "Because no matter what, our love for each other, and our drive, and us doing what makes us happy, isn't going to change no matter what people tell us."

New College graduate and Pine View English teacher Blake Wiley feels that DeSantis is sending out a warning to other colleges, but he has faith that the school will overcome these challenges.

"College was always challenged by outside influences, and this is just another challenge and promises to be pretty impactful, but a real New College student never lets anybody tell them what to do anyway," Wiley said. "This is a problem the students need to get around. If I was there, I'd say, 'Challenge accepted.'"



Students rally at New College against the changes made to the Board of Trustees. PHOTO PROVIDED BY STEVEN WALKER

of the 2023 legislative proposal, Ginsberg notes that the New College atmosphere has shifted.

"Campus morale has changed. But I don't know if the Board of Trustees intended to make everybody really anxious, which I hope wasn't their intention," she said. "Everyone's trying to stay as positive as they can. There is a lot of

Sarasota searches for a new superintendent

GRAPHIC BY JIAYI ZHU

November 29

The Sarasota County School Board voted 4 to 1 to negotiate a severance package for former Superintendent Brennan Asplen.

December 13

Asplen accepted the severance agreement,* employed in a consultant role until March 10, 2023. Chris Renouf was appointed as interim superintendent.

*worth 20 weeks of pay (upwards of \$170,000).

February 7,

Interim superintendent candidates Dr. Allison Foster and Dr. Ron DiPillo presented to the board. The school board appointed Dr. Allison Foster 5-0 as long term interim superintendent and created a job contract with a maximum salary of \$225,000.

January 17,

The school board discussed specifications for a new superintendent. Potential superintendent interim candidates Allison Foster and Ron DiPillo were discussed.

On January 23, a letter of interest was sent out to the public and interested parties for search firms.

A nationwide search for a permanent superintendent will take place. Emphasis is being put on transparency and community input. School Board Chair Bridget Ziegler said the goal is to have a new superintendent vetted and hired by the start of the 23-24 school year.



February 21, the board reviewed submissions from the letter of interest. A selection vote will occur March 7.

Students' experiment prepares for blast off



Seventh-graders Rishik Yella, Felix Ratner, Yatharth Kattad, and Rugan Suresh prepare their experiment for the International Space Station (ISS). Students from Earth and Space Science classes have worked together to produce their final products. PROVIDED BY MARIE ROSANDER
by Ava Lenerz
Match Layout Artist

Space seems so far away — and the possibility of making an impact in the field of astronomy seems out of the question for a middle or high schooler. Not to mention, performing experiments in space seems almost achievable by trained astronauts. But when Astronomy and Earth and Space Science students started the school year, they were given the chance to do the seemingly impossible — and one group of seventh-graders succeeded.

The Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP) is a research competition in which students get into groups and write research proposals for an experiment with the ultimate

reward of getting to send the winning experiment to space.

This June, the winning group's experiment will be launched into space from Kennedy Space Center to the International Space Station (ISS). Seventh-graders Rugan Suresh, Felix Ratner, Yatharth Kattad, and Rishik Yella won with their experiment, "Ability of microalgae *Chlorella vulgaris* to remove nitrogen and phosphorous from wastewater in microgravity."

The competition began at the start of the year, when students had 90 days to write and submit a formal research proposal. Dylan Bell, the Astronomy and Earth and Space Science teacher, played a crucial part in this and enjoyed reading the students' ideas.

"Having the list of proposals in front of us and being able to read through them and see the creative ideas that all of these students were able to come up with... Some were extremely impressive the way it was structured," Bell said.

However, this doesn't mean all the proposals were winners.

"When you give a group of students 90 days to do something... A lot of students think they have 89 days to slack off and one day to do it at the very end... But the students who did not do that did very well. They progressively worked as a team, came in and asked questions for clarification. And the ones that actually did that, we could see it evident in the proposals they

submitted," Bell said.

Choosing the topic wasn't easy for students, as there were many requirements and limits for the experiment, including that it all had to fit in small vials without light.

One group that made it to the finals were eleventh-graders Abigail Pereira, Sanjana Prakash, Afrin Pajulullah, and Shireen Kaveh with their experiment, "Will Microgravity Have a Meaningful Effect on the Cytoskeleton and Phagocytic Abilities of *Chaos carolinense* Amoebas?" They chose this topic in hopes of applying the information to astronauts and their white blood cells. However, this would not be easy to accomplish.

"We basically had to make an enclosed system for the amoeba to survive within the vial for nine weeks... and we couldn't add anything... It had to all be self-maintaining, so that was really difficult because a really vital part of a closed system is having a producer. We were going to use *Chlorella* algae originally because it is really easy to obtain... but then we read on the requirements... that there

wouldn't be any light available, so we had to find a type of algae that would flourish under low light conditions, so we chose *Anabaena* algae," Pereira said.

The experiment needed to be self-maintaining because Prakash explained that nobody would be able to change the experiment while it was in space or being analyzed.

This group spent many late-night Discord calls perfecting their proposal. Their work paid off in the end, with the project making it to the finals.

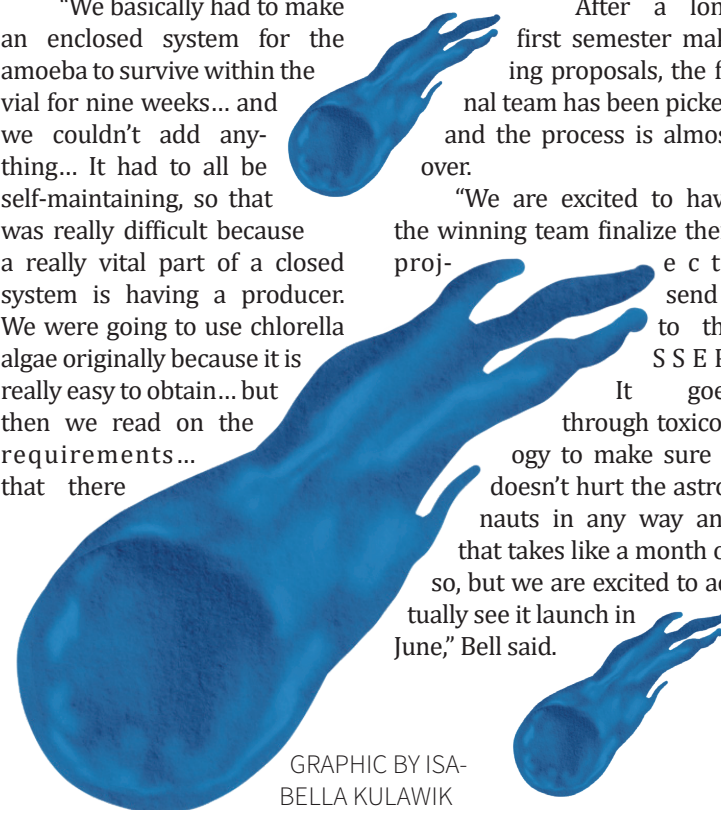
Pereira said on behalf of her group, "We would really like to thank Mrs. Kehler, she helped us a lot and we'd also like to thank Dr. Bell for the opportunity."

After a long first semester making proposals, the final team has been picked and the process is almost over.

"We are excited to have the winning team finalize their project,

send it to the SSEP.

It goes through toxicology to make sure it doesn't hurt the astronauts in any way and that takes like a month or so, but we are excited to actually see it launch in June," Bell said.



GRAPHIC BY ISABELLA KULAWIK

Pine View makes way for a new lunch cart

by Liam Dingman
Visual Design Editor

Going through six periods from 7:36 a.m. through 1:16 p.m. without more than a snack can certainly leave students feeling ravenous by the end of the day. This is a problem the prospective food cart, wielding convenient grab-and-go lunches outside of Building 17, aims to solve.

The idea originated from Student Union Food and Nutrition Manager Angela Wittstruck, who realized the five-minute passing periods presented a challenge to students.

"Sometimes being in Building 17 and finding the time available to come down to the Student Union can be challenging," Wittstruck said.

Originally, the food cart was only to be available from 11:20 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., but after feedback from the Principal's Council representatives, the additional time period of 12:20 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. was added to account for students who may have to go to classes in the science or world language buildings during the 11:20 a.m.

to 11:45 a.m. time period.

Another recommendation from the Principal's Council consisted of the food offered at the food cart.

"We talked about adding chips [and] cookies," Chloe Ratner, the Class of 2023's Principal Council representative, said.

The available foods, including deli sandwiches and a variety of salads, were all chosen with ease of transport and cleanup — as well as the cleanliness of the new building — in mind.

"We don't want Building 17 to be ruined by food stains, and things that are spilled... That's why I thought having [food] that is easy for you guys to clean up... You'd be able to maintain and clean up after yourselves," Wittstruck said.

From following nutrition, safety, and sanitation guidelines, keeping foods refrigerated or heated, finding staff and more, the food cart presents logistical challenges in bringing cafeteria food to Building 17.

"I had to present to Mrs. Dan [Sarasota County's Director of Food Nutrition Services] a plan that I had to deliver the

food safely to you," Wittstruck said.

Overall, students have a lot to look forward to with the new addition to the campus.

"I'm excited to get food during class, I won't have to walk very far. I'm also excited that the selection is going to be consistent, there will always be... something that people know what they want to eat," Ratner said.

This sentiment is shared by others.

"I think it sounds cool, and it's a good idea for people who don't have lunch from home or want an alternative," ninth-grader Kaya Bury said.

So far, the food cart is expected to be moderately popular, with Wittstruck estimating that there will be 25-30 lunches ready for each 25-minute time period the cart will be available.

However, Wittstruck does have a crucial warning for students: "If... the students are making a mess and not being responsible for themselves and cleaning up after themselves, then obviously we'll have to stop because we don't want a big mess everywhere."

GRAPHIC BY LIAM DINGMAN AND ISABELLA KULAWIK

PROMPT

rainbow fairy with pink cow sitting on a mushroom in a green field with cloudy skies



Human



A.I.

GRAPHIC BY CAMILLE WRIGHT
ILLUSTRATION BY LILY QUARTERMAINE

Are you smarter than AI?

by Lora Rini

Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Recently, it seems like everyone is talking about artificial intelligence. From chatbots to TikTok trends, AI is present in the lives of all kinds of people, not just those who work in the technology industry. With the recent craze came a flood of misinformation, but after a few quick Google searches, it becomes apparent that the reality of AI is very different from its public portrayal.

ChatGPT, a chatbot released by Open AI in November, can produce anything from song lyrics to book recommendations to legal advice in mere seconds. Many are worried about the future of academia. After all, if a computer can write as good as a person in less time, then what is the point of people doing it themselves?

Fortunately, scientists say that full AI domination is not exactly feasible. While AI is very good

at mimicking human speech, the ways in which it interacts with language are intrinsically different from how it works in the human brain. For example, a list of ChatGPT's limitations on the Open AI website explains that the chatbot often provides unnecessarily wordy responses or repeats the same

phrases, responds completely differently to a slightly rephrased prompt, makes unreasonable assumptions, and "writes plausible-sounding but incorrect or nonsensical answers."

Another area where AI has newly risen to prominence is within the creative arts — programs exist to create everything from music to video games.

AI image generators that take a text prompt and create a piece of artwork are very popular online. They allow people with little to no artistic ability to create masterpieces.

But if a piece of art requires no creative process to make, is it really art?

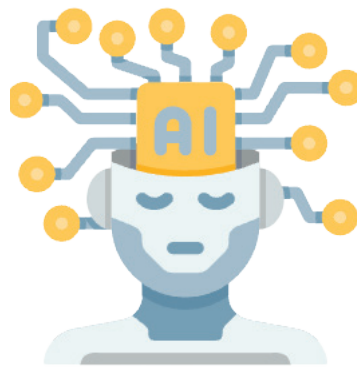
Additionally,

there are legal concerns about AI image generators, considering they draw from existing text and images to create their final products.

Countless dystopian sci-fi movies portray a distant future where robots and computers have taken over virtually the entire workforce. While this is almost definitely an exaggeration, it is very likely that new technologies will emerge to assist and streamline all professions in its impossible to predict the future, but it is almost certain that whatever happens, AI will be a part of it.

GRAPHICS BY CAMILLE WRIGHT

Full AI domination is not exactly feasible... the ways in which [AI] interacts with language are intrinsically different from how it works in the brain.



Trailblazing Entrepreneurs

by Allie Chung
Sports Editor

It could be difficult to believe that your peers, your project partners, or even you might grow up to be successful entrepreneurs working alongside CEOs of huge companies. However, in the competitive environment of Pine View School, the chances that you are taking classes with the next Bill Gates, or a future billionaire, are not as slim as you may think.

After being inspired by contemporary entrepreneurs like Elon Musk, eleventh-grader Henry Zhou founded the Entrepreneurship Club in order to allow students to take the next steps in their economic journeys.

"I saw the value in entrepreneurship, and I saw the value in having a vision and executing it. I wanted to provide Pine View students the opportunity to experience entrepreneurship," Zhou said.

The goal of the Entrepreneurship Club is to solve real world problems, while fulfilling students' passions of industrialism. Therefore, last year Zhou began the creation of the Entrepreneurship Club's first product, SmartVolly.

"It is a smart IOT [wire-

less, sensor operated] device that detects fires, remotely alerts customers and automatically extinguishes the fires. Volly meaning a volunteer firefighter," Zhou said.

The burden of creating a tool that could save lives isn't something that one high-schooler could undertake. So after hundreds of trials and with the help of eleventh-grader Marlowe Mer-

"I saw the value in having a vision and executing it,"

Henry Zhou,
eleventh-grader

edith (graphics designer), eleventh-grader Kuentsen Dorji (app developer) and eleventh-grader Trey Murphy (video editor), Zhou's vision began to come together.

"I remember after my first successful trial, I was very happy because it took a lot out of me just to make the extinguisher work we are definitely happy with our results," Zhou said.

This year, Dorji joined Zhou's team. With his specif-

ic skill set, Dorji was able to create software that transfers information about the extinguisher to the hands of the customers. Once the app was completed, SmartVolly was ready for competition.

"I joined the entrepreneurship club because I saw that Henry had a set idea, he had the prototype of what he wanted to build and all he needed were people with skills to make that dream come true," Dorji said.

Last year, with only a market plan and a prototype in hand, the SmartVolly was able to place in the top one hundred in several competitions. This year, the team expects to make it to the semifinals.

"So far we have applied to the Conrad Challenge and Diamond Challenge. All the competitions we've applied to are either national or international level and we receive funding and feedback from judges, which is valuable," Zhou said.

Zhou has also applied to the Thiel Fellowship Challenge, which awards \$100,000 to young people under 22 years old who want to "build new things instead

of sitting in a classroom."

With high goals and high expectations for their product, the Entrepreneur Club hopes to move past competitions and would like to turn their high school project into a successful business.

"I think we are going to continue with SmartVolly in

the upcoming years, we have a five year plan set up, we hope to stick with this product," Murphy said.

Before the juniors can introduce SmartVolly to the market, they must await the competition results. Regardless of the judges' evaluation, the purpose that Zhou established for the club has been fulfilled.

"I hope that more people see the value in entrepreneurship and see that they can really change the world with collaboration and dedication to an idea," Zhou said.



GRAPHICS BY
AASHIMA GOSWAMI

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Scan this QR code to read about the robotics team as they prepare for an upcoming competition in March.

Let her rest!

Analyzing the commodification of historical women's possessions

by **Tiffany Yu**
Copy Editor

Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy, Princess Diana — outside of being beloved and iconic historical figures, these women share a n - other thing in common:

some aspects of their images have been poached by Kim Kardashian. While not revelatory news, the three separate purchases of their belongings among a few others Kardashian made remain shocking — how exactly did Kardashian get her hands on these items? Why was she allowed to?

The items in question

include Monroe's 1962 Bob Mackie dress, Kennedy's Cartier engraved time piece, and most recently, and controversially, Diana's diamond Attallah Cross pendant necklace. The items respectively cost Kardashian \$4.81 million, \$379,500, and \$200,000, respectively — hefty price tags with even heftier implications.

In egregious and overzealous displays of wealth, American society's upper epsilon is no stranger to purchasing iconic figures' possessions under the guise of these items

being “collectables” or memorabilia. Sometimes the concept works as a way for living celebrities to profit off their images — an example of this being an anonymous fan of Tom Brady shelling out half a million dollars to purchase the last football thrown of Brady's career before his first retirement. However, when people buy these items in order to maintain their integrity, there is usually no intention of using or altering the item.

Recently, this no longer seems to be the case.

While auctioning off historic items is an almost common practice in our modern society, the unsettling undertones of placing value on these late women's clothing and jewelry feels vaguely dystopian. Especially without the express permission of the previous owner of a belonging, the process

becomes dehumanizing; the results of a bidding war determine whether your image will be continuously recycled, until your name and legacy can't be separated from another's.

These purchases and subsequent displays don't result in respectful homages, but rather seem to put a measure of worth on the deceased lives and deaths.

These purchases and subsequent displays don't result in respectful homages, but rather seem to put a measure of worth on the deceased lives and deaths. When these women's lives are rendered to nothing but a stunt for fleeting publicity, these historical women are framed more as caricatures

than real people.

Those who flaunt their acquired items — such as Kardashian — attempt to capitalize on the images and fame of other people, with little respect for the person in question. The items become a part of a costume when worn outside of its original usage — the original intention is lost and overshadowed by its absurdity, especially when worn by a controversial reality show star.

Kardashian's serial purchases of these items reveal scary truths about our society's future — if this precedent is set, more celebrities and wealthy people may seek out historical items for five seconds of fame. Wearing these beautiful vintage accessories may be a pretty look, but destroying history isn't.

GRAPHIC BY ALYSON MIZANIN

Brushes and Pencil Strokes Galore

Exploring the creative mind of Hana Mullen

by **Janice Chi**
Humor Editor

It's lunch time for preschoolers, and they've been given a variety of activities to choose from during their free time: reading, playing outside, or building with blocks. Among these groups, current ninth-grader Hana Mullen was often found with the group of children holding crayons.

Ever since those preschool lunch periods, Mullen has had a defining interest in art. Over time it became a coping skill for her, a way to convey different messages. Now that she's in high school, Mullen has been on this journey for nearly a decade. All the time has come with lots of dedication and incentives.

“I'm motivated by representing how I feel, my identity, through my art. ‘Oh, this is who I am.’ ‘This is how I feel about things.’ It's just a way to show your creativity and who you are,” Mullen said.

Mullen strongly believes that her parents have been great supportive factors to her artistic journey. She's able to connect with them for support to brainstorm or when experiencing slumps.

“Her mom and I are both artistic, so we've been able to educate her as to how to draw and paint,” Mullen's

father, Garrick Mullen, said. “So, at every level, we're instructing her on different things to do and how to draw. We're constantly explaining to her about art.”

Her parents' creativity have ultimately led Mullen to improve in different aspects of art. Compared to the skills she possessed last year, Mullen has noticed a strong advancement in her shading and layout abilities.

“I'm motivated by representing how I feel, my identity, through my art... It's just a way to show your creativity and who you are,”
Hana Mullen,
ninth-grader

Currently, she's working on enhancing skills with mediums outside of her comfort zone. But for now, she's working with acrylic, graphite, clay, and beads. In one of her latest pieces, depicting a zombie apocalypse, she used graphite.

Like the majority of artists, Mullen has come across slumps. She acknowledges these different obstacles and pinpoints them to further expand in her abilities.

“I get super frustrated when it comes to perspective.

And when you put something down on the canvas, you have to put it in the right place otherwise it can feel out-of-place and awkward,” Mullen said.

She's able to overcome these hurdles by simply taking a break to clear her mind. After the mental reset, she's able to spot errors she hadn't noticed previously. Other times, Mullen creates a mock version, drawing the different parts of her project, cutting them out, and sorting them to her liking.

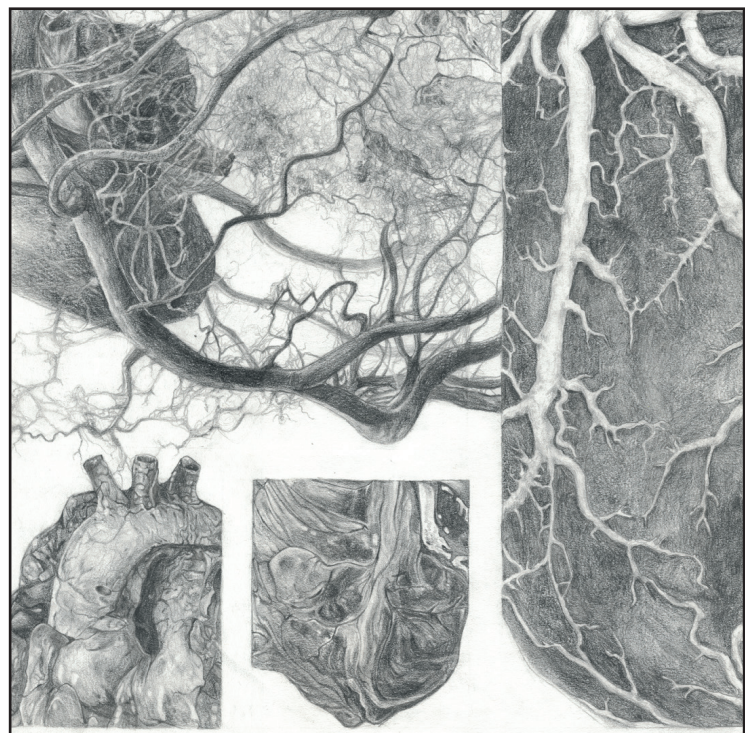
When asked about any advice towards any aspiring artists, Mullen answers with the knowledge she's gained.

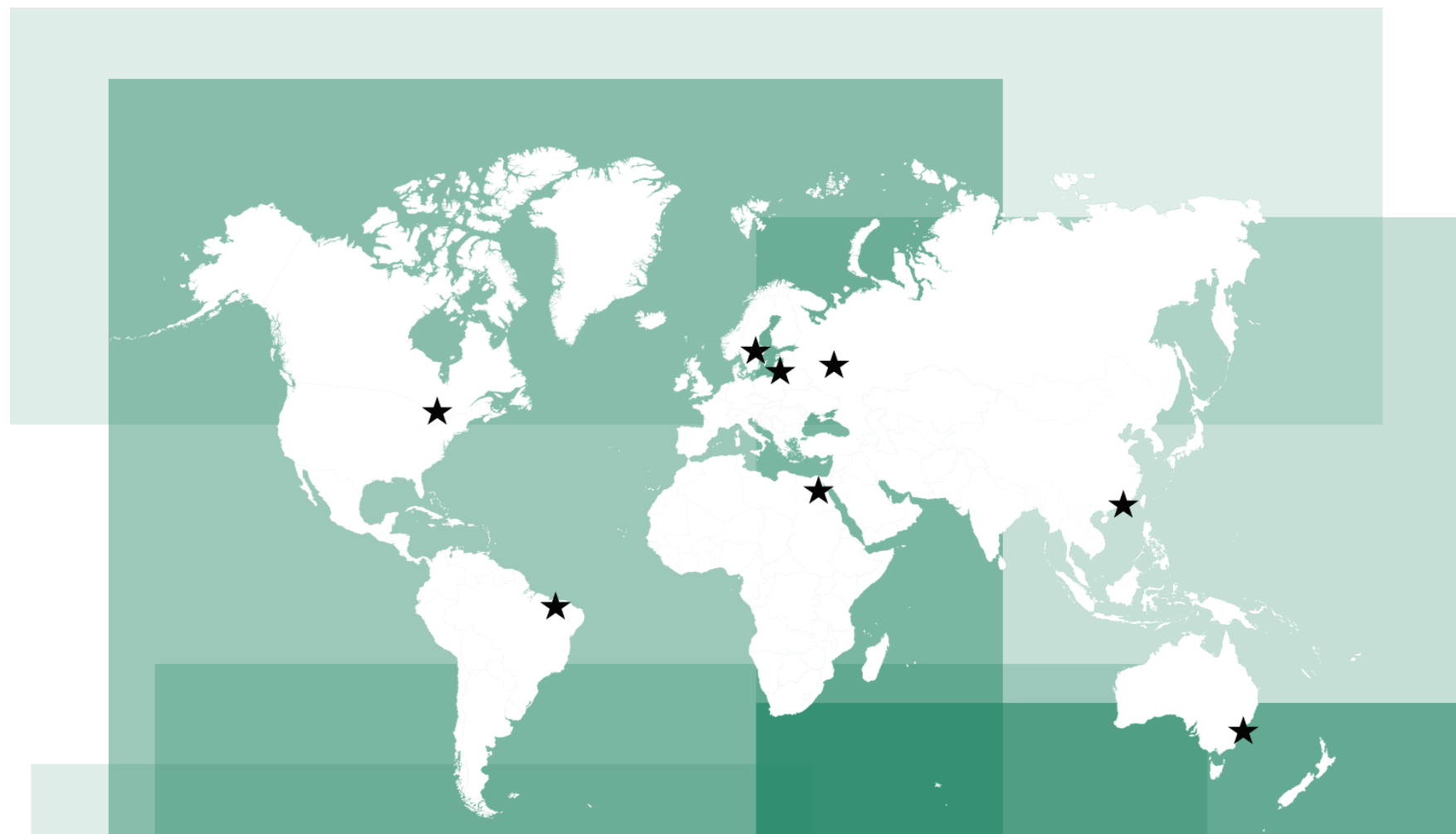
“One thing is it's really important to explore early because if you start late, you'll realize that you're getting stuck in mediums, inspirations, styles, where you don't really like them or connect to them,” she said.

“I would also say just stay in the now, and if you really like it, just do it because you're going to like it a lot more if you're doing it for the fun of it. If it's really something you're passionate about, then your best way to go is just to continue with it.”

Although her exact future in art seems unclear, Mullen is certain that she will be continuing to do art, whether it's as a job or a hobby.

ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF HANA MULLEN





Pine View Students Around the World

Many students at Pine View were born outside the country, and The Torch sat down with some of those students to get their perspectives on some of the similarities and differences between the United States and their home countries. Many moved to the U.S. for more opportunities, especially in education. Their favorite memories tend to be those spent with family and friends.

Nattalie Anis
Grade 9

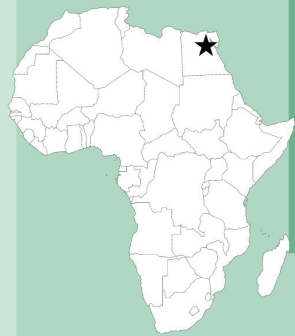


When and why did you move? "I moved when I was seven. And we moved because there were a lot of things going on in the country and my parents just wanted to give me a better education and make sure I felt safe."

What's the biggest difference between Egypt and here? "I don't have much family here and everyone is in Egypt, so it was challenging to acclimate to this environment without everyone."

What was your favorite memory from Egypt? "Probably the birthday parties I had with my cousin... I'm in September, he's in October, so we'd meet in the middle and have a big birthday party for both of us."

Cairo, Egypt



Flight length from Sarasota to Egypt: 17 hours 15 min

Adeline von Wowern
Grade 9



When and why did you move? "It was my parents decision and... I was five years old. I think they moved because my mom wanted more opportunities... because the school system in Sweden weren't very good at that time..."

What's the biggest difference between Sweden and here? "In Sweden it was very cold and it was dark most of the year, while here it's obviously warm and sunny."

What was your favorite memory from Sweden? "Well, I go there almost every summer, so I have a lot of memories from there. I remember skiing when I was little and going on the frozen lake... It felt very free."

Stockholm, Sweden



Flight length from Sarasota to Sweden: 13 hours 10 min

Moscow, Russia

When and why did you move? "It was seventh grade, but before seventh grade my mom and I were coming here for half of the year for three years... One of the reasons was that I can't be in a cold country because I have health problems, so I needed to be somewhere warm with the sun. But another one is that the education is better here."

What's the biggest difference between Russia and here? "The education for sure, and I think just how people react differently... it's more of a kind people here."

What was your favorite memory from Russia? "There is a lot of them, I mean I grew up there. My friends... and being in a country house with my grandma."



Flight length from Sarasota to Russia: 13 hours 48 min

Veronika Startseva
Grade 10



Flight length from Sarasota to Canada: 7 hours 50 min

When and why did you move? "I was only six or seven months old when I moved. But my parents moved because most of their family lives in the U.S.... and better opportunities."

What's the biggest difference between Canada and here? "I don't remember anything at all... but the biggest difference growing up was that I didn't have a Green Card or anything... so there's always feeling left out or feeling like I couldn't travel anywhere because I didn't have a Green Card until recently, I got it two years ago."

Have you visited Canada since you moved? "No, I haven't gone back since, but we might go soon."



Trisha Patel
Grade 12



London, Canada

Sydney, Australia

When and why did you move? "We moved back to Ukraine because both of my parents were born there and my dad had a job that allowed him to work mostly anywhere in the world... After Ukraine, we decided to go to America, the freedom country, for more opportunities."

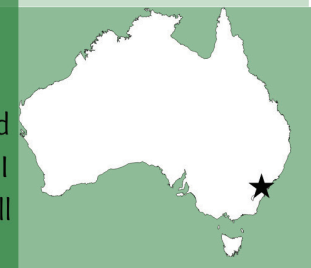
What's the biggest difference between Australia and here? "There were cockatoos screaming every morning, that's how my parents got up in the morning. There's no cockatoos here."

What was your favorite memory from Australia? "I wouldn't call it my favorite exactly. It's a memory where my parents would take me to the park during the weekends and I would go run around in the playground and fall flat on my face multiple times."

Elizabeth Khodvhaieva
Grade 9



Flight length from Sarasota to Australia: 22 hours 35 minutes



São Luís, Brazil

When and why did you move? "They [her parents] could see that the political, financial, and just overall job situation in Brazil was getting pretty bad, and my mom always envisioned as a college student getting out of the country and moving somewhere with better opportunities. For me and for herself as well... It was always the plan for us to have a better living situation, live in a place that's cleaner, and have more opportunities."

What's the biggest difference between Brazil and here? "How the people are, especially, in Brazil... It doesn't matter if you're strangers when you first meet, you give a person a hug, for example. Here people are more distant by comparison. But at the same time, it's funny that they have their own different way of being close. So I had to learn more about that and about how people view cleanliness and sharing different food."

What was your favorite memory from Brazil? "Definitely my family because they're all there and now we can't visit them anymore because the air traffic rates are very high. But definitely my grandma, it [her grandma's house] was like home base, and we [her cousins] would go to my grandma's house and all the best toys were there, everything was there."

Maria Clara Fortuna
Grade 11



Flight length from Sarasota to Brazil: 15 hours 40 min

Vilnius, Lithuania



Flight length from Sarasota to Lithuania: 15 hours 15 min

Tomas Čepas
Grade 11



When and why did you move? "My parents moved because they visited here and it was nice... When I was three I moved to St. Pete Beach and then a couple years later I moved to Sarasota."

What's the biggest difference between Lithuania and here? "The amount of cars and how you can't get anywhere without walking 30 minutes minimum."

What was your favorite memory from Lithuania? "The parks were epic."

Sam Wang
Grade 9



Flight length from Sarasota to China: 21 hours 55 min

When and why did you move? "My sister went to college in America... and after she applied for a Green Card she moved back to China for work. Therefore, the green card was for nobody, so she decided to [change] the name to me and my father and we went to America."

What's the biggest difference between China and here? "School and culture mainly, food is not that much different because in China, all the fast food restaurants are [there] as well, so it's mainly just the culture and the people."

What are your favorite memories from China? "Playing with my friends."

Hong Kong, China

Making a racket

Student athlete finds a career on the tennis court

by Camille Wright
Match Layout Artist

Eleventh-grader Melis Wiesinger has played tennis since she was six years old. She started the sport after watching her older brother and her father playing together. Even after playing for over a decade, Wiesinger has no plans of stopping anytime soon.

Wiesinger plans to continue tennis throughout the rest of high school and

hopes to eventually play for a college team, and these dreams aren't too far out of reach for her. Wiesinger has won both state and national tournaments, competing in singles as well as doubles, and she has experienced immense success in the sport over the course of her time competing over the past few years.

This success is in part due to her extreme, dedicated discipline in training. Tennis training can go for hours multiple times a week. This

doesn't intimidate Wiesinger; if anything, it's one of the things she enjoys most about the art of playing tennis.

"I really enjoy the training aspect of [tennis]. It can be kind of a lot sometimes, but it puts me in a routine that I really like," Wiesinger said.

However, Wiesinger didn't achieve this all on her own. For over seven years of her tennis journey, she has been mentored by coach

Tom Whitten.

Though he now lives in California, Whitten has continued to mentor Wiesinger through calls, in which he reviews and advises her on her rankings and the results of her tourna-

ments.

Tennis is not an easy sport; part of the difficulty that comes with tennis is the lack of a team supporting you through the competitions.

Though tennis differs from other sports in this way, Wiesinger still manages to make training fun,

whether it's a private or group practice, or through practice matches.

As her coach Whitten said, "She is just a fun person to be around. She always has something fun to say and brings a great attitude."



Eleventh-grader Melis Wiesinger prepares to serve her tennis ball in a singles game. Wiesinger plans on continuing tennis throughout her college career. PHOTO COURTESY OF MELIS WIESINGER

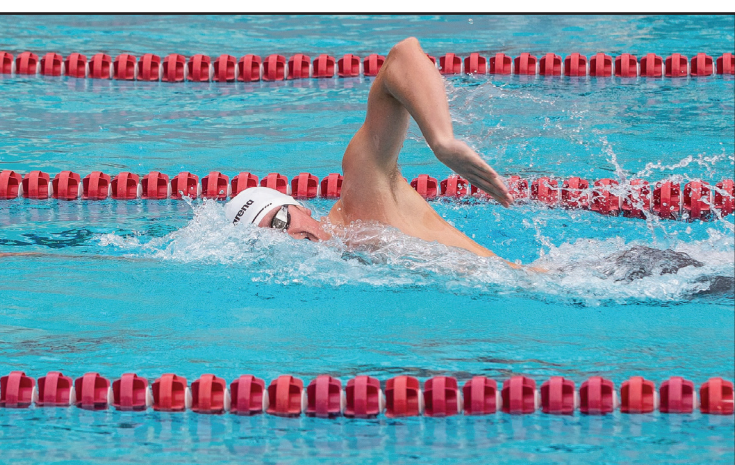
Wiesinger serves a ball to her opponent during a national tournament in Chattanooga, Tennessee. With the help of Coach Whitten, Wiesinger plans on continuing her successful tennis journey. PHOTO COURTESY OF MELIS WIESINGER

The Value of High School Sports

Does playing sports impact life after high school?



Class of 2022 alum Liam Custer jumps into a pool, competing with Stanford. Custer found that the dedication he poured into swimming paid off for him in the end. PHOTO COURTESY OF LIAM CUSTER



Custer swims. He plans to continue focus on his studies in the future, working toward the goal of swimming for Ireland in the Olympics. PHOTO COURTESY OF LIAM CUSTER

by Isabella Kulawik
News Editor

Each year, hundreds of thousands of students share the same experience and drive as they pursue high school sports. Countless hours of dedication are spent improving oneself for the chance of a trophy, a winning goal, and sometimes even a ticket to college. However, after expending all this effort, it is important to consider whether the time spent is worth the rewards athletes can reap. The Torch spoke with students who have had long term dedication to the sports they play and asked if their endeavors were fruitful.

Liam Custer, an alumnus from the class of 2022, currently swims for Stanford University. Starting the sport around the age of seven, Custer continued to develop his skills and eventually decided that he wanted to swim at the college level his freshman year of high school. By his junior and senior year, he was ranked top five nationally and holds the national age record for the 1650-yard freestyle. Accompanying his accolades were years of dedication to swim and the rigorous academics needed to earn one of the 25 slots Stanford had for the team.

"It was definitely very hard balancing the classes and

swimming, but you know, it was always my goal to go to the best academic college and use swimming to go to the best academic college. So I always thought it was, you know, worth it to have a focus... and knowing that it will all pay off eventually," Custer said.

In a similar position, alumna Isabella DeLeo from the class of 2022 attends Georgetown and rows on their crew team. DeLeo began crew in seventh grade for recreation and did not consider rowing for college until her freshman year. Like Custer, DeLeo participated in arduous practices to improve her times and have the opportunity to row at a top college. She captained her team senior year and played a pivotal role in competitive regattas. Overall, DeLeo would not have changed it for the world.

"It was 100% worth every day I went to practice [and] all of the time I put into rowing because I'm so happy to be where I am today at this school and with this team, and there's no other place or school I would rather [be] and looking back at it, it was so fun. I had so many good memories. And I love all the friends that I still keep in contact with today and just anyone who was in my life, it's just like, I'm so happy and I feel like

I'm exactly where I need to be," DeLeo said.

With that in consideration, sports have touched people's lives in so many ways. They teach students the importance of being a part of a team, time management, camaraderie, and many can still reap the benefits of playing a sport without having to continue it in college. Eleventh-grader Forest Yeh played for Venice High School's Junior Varsity basketball team his sophomore year and is currently taking a break to focus on his studies. Playing basketball since he was six years old, Forest plans to join a team next year as a senior. He, too, feels that sports were a positive part of his life despite taking up a lot of time.

"Yeah, I would say that it was definitely worth it for the experience, it helped me with my time management. But for this year, personally, it's just a lot of time, and I couldn't really fit it in with my schedule for my junior year, but it was a good experience," Yeh said.

Overall, even with the academic and physical pressure Pine View student athletes face, sports remain an essential part of their lives. Despite practices feeling like a full time job at times, every hour and every drop of sweat is worth it.

Rowing Rambles

Student creates a podcast to better her knowledge of coxswains

by Ashima Goswami
Sci-Tech Editor

When eleventh-grader Claire Opal-Levine first began her role as a coxswain, she was left confused and unknowing. Now, with her co-host Rose Greenspan, she hopes to grow the coxswain community through their podcast “Let’s Talk Cox.”

Opal-Levine met Greenspan through a summer camp in 2021. The two bonded over their

shared confusion regarding their coxswain roles, as well as the stigma that these discussions had.

“It’s what’s supposed to be common knowledge... [on the podcast] we discuss topics that aren’t discussed often... like, ‘Hey, we didn’t know this either. Let’s talk about it,’” said Opal-Levine.

Opal-Levine and her co-host record audio through Zoom for their podcast. Since the duo are apart often, being online together never felt awkward.

“We face-timed all the time, so it wasn’t ever an awkward thing being on Zoom... the only awkward thing was ‘Oh, people are going to see this...’”

Colleges might see this,” Opal-Levine said.

Through the podcast, Opal-Levine hopes to educate the next generation of coxswains. She hopes the podcast helps the coxswain com-



community come together and start a

conversation.

“We had an episode titled, ‘Let’s Talk Weight,’ which is a sensitive topic... but it was one of those things that everyone avoided, so we wanted to cover it,” she said.

Opal-Levine learned that what started as a joke can blossom into something bigger than yourself, and she hopes that the next coxswain generation will be better off because of her contributions.



Eleventh-grader Claire Opal-Levine leads a boat of Sarasota Crew athletes at a regatta. Opal has been able to expand her knowledge of being a coxswain by asking and answering questions on her podcast, “Let’s Talk Cox.” PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAIRE OPAL-LEVINE

Athlete Extraordinaire

Track, soccer, and cross country: Ninth-grader Jamie Sweiderk excels across all sports

by Emmy Li
Webmaster

Many students do not find it possible to integrate more than one sport or even any sport into their rigorous academic schedule. For ninth-grader Jamie Sweiderk, playing only one sport is light work, as she excels in competitive cross country, soccer and track for school.

“Cross country is a fall sport,” Sweiderk said. “I had foot surgery over the summer so when I started cross country season, I was just barely able to run again.”

Regardless of this difficult setback, Sweiderk went on to set her own personal records.

“I started out on JV my

first meet, and then I placed a time that was faster than two of the varsity runners. I was eighth and there were seven running varsity, but one of the girls couldn’t go and so I got pushed up,” Sweiderk said. “I managed to beat one of the girls in varsity and so I was on varsity for the rest of the season.”

The end of cross country doesn’t mark the end of Sweiderk’s sports season. Soccer follows closely after, with Sweiderk continuing to deliver win after win.

“Our JV team turned out really good, too,” Sweiderk said. “We won almost every game.”

However, even on top of soccer and cross country, Sweiderk has recently taken to track, claiming that the workouts

were not as arduous as cross country. Out of these three sports, Sweiderk still enjoys cross country the most.

“It was, in my opinion, more fun because I made a lot of friends who are also now my friends in track. My favorite part of cross country is the social aspect,” Sweiderk said. “The people, the pasta parties, it’s a lot of fun. It’s kind of like every-

thing is team bonding.” Sweiderk manages to balance her workload and her numerous sports flawlessly.

“I wake up at 5:45, take a shower, eat breakfast, and go to school. As soon as school ends, I leave, go home, get ready. Then I go to whatever practice I need to. Right after practice, I go home and get started on my homework, and I eat lunch,” Sweiderk said. “Generally I spend a lot of my time doing homework, but I don’t



Sweiderk plays club soccer at a tournament in Lakewood Ranch. She plays for the club team Fusion in North Port. PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE SWEIDERK



Sweiderk (top) tries to score a header on a corner kick. Sweiderk looks forward to another session of training. PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE SWEIDERK



Ninth-grader Jamie Sweiderk (left) runs her first cross-country race. She ran a 25:18, which ranked her 8th on the team. PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE SWEIDERK

procrastinate at all.”

Sierra Sieve is a tenth-grader who competes with Sweiderk in cross country and track. Sieve credits Sweiderk as an inspiration and motivating factor for her the development of her own athletic pursuits.

“For me, it’s always very fun to talk to her while running because we have interesting conversations while pushing each other to hold the pace and get better at running,” Sieve said. “What Jamie does to inspire me is her amazing work ethic and that when things are hard she still keeps a positive attitude.”

The Alpha Academy: The Next Step

Terry Shen scouts to recruit an apprentice

by Nathan DeSouza
Social Media Manager

As the world around us gets older every day, Terry Shen only continues to flourish in one of his greatest accomplishments, The Alpha Academy. However, most recently, our beloved idol faces a rather complex dilemma.

Shen feels as if he cannot other, a mental trial. What the graduates see as normal daily activities are actually tests of their physical performance. Shen first makes his pupils play a game of basketball against one another. Each of the three displays his excellence with both strategy and dexterity. As the ball is dribbled across the court and flawlessly shot through

set up the last and final trial to be the deciding game. Shen has hid a relic from his high school days, a symbol of development: the cheese hat. He hid it in a strategic place only those of the fittest of mind could find. With his goals set, he sent his pupils to find it.

Search- ing high and low, the three bathroom,” DeSouza said. “I was going to check in the trees next, but alas, it was right here.”

Shen was overjoyed that he had finally found an apprentice and not because he wanted to go home already. He simply could not wait to crown DeSouza his apprentice. It was on that day, Feb. 16, and that exact moment in time that DeSouza was coronated as Shen’s official apprentice.

“Honestly, I didn’t think I’d make it here,” DeSouza said. “It’s all thanks to Shen that I’m able to work alongside him.”

DeSouza looked overjoyed to be fulfilling a role that, quite literally, anyone would want.

As another chapter of Shen’s renowned saga closes its curtains, doors of opportunity open to this new partnership. There is no doubt that DeSouza and Shen will go on to complete astonishing alpha



single-handedly carry the weight of having the world’s best training academy on his shoulders. He needs a solution. He needs an apprentice.

Since the last time we met with them, Shen’s students have performed and shown dedication to his alpha male course in ways far beyond exceptional. As a result of their outstanding performance, Shen has chosen graduates Rohan Dash, Nathan DeSouza, and Liam Dingman as candidates for his apprentice role.

In order to choose between the graduates, Shen, the acclaimed alpha male, had set up three trials for them to undergo — two of the three being physical trials, and the

the net, Shen watches with pride. However, Shen is still bothered that he cannot yet decide on a candidate.

In hopes of finding some form of direction in his judgment, Shen proceeds to his next trial. Where the last trial had been focused on dexterity, Shen shifts his focus to swiftness and agility. In a race, all

three contestants finish too close to one another to be placed.

“Again!” Shen would shout as he became impatient with results, but his shouting was to no avail. They were all equivalently as fast as each other.

Shen had foreseen this happening, so he purposely

set off to find the artifact. In a rush of a lifetime, the graduates failed to realize that the hat had been hidden in plain sight the whole time! It was by chance that graduate DeSouza stumbled upon it when he was using the restroom.

“I just needed to use the

achievements together. Only the future holds the truth as to where this new beginning will blossom.

PHOTOS BY ALYSON MIZANIN

GRAPHIC BY SANYA PATEL

WHO IS...

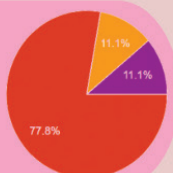
A GOOGLE FORM QUESTIONNAIRE WITH THE SOCIAL STUDIES DEPT.

THE RESULTS

- Ms. Melton
- Mr. Wolfinger
- Mr. Carney
- Ms. Jagdish
- Mr. Murray
- Mrs. McLeod
- Mr. Lamela
- Mr. Schweig
- Mr. Gill

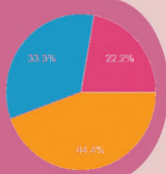
Most Likely to Shave Their Head

Even though he is already bald, his coworkers think Mr. Wolfinger would shave his head if given the chance.



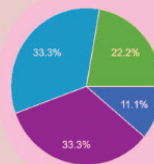
Most Likely to Get into a Fight

I never took Mr. Carney for a fighter, but I guess we are all full of surprises.



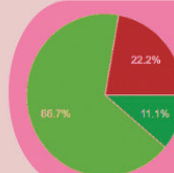
The Loudest

We were expecting to have a tie between Mrs. McLeod and Mr. Murray.



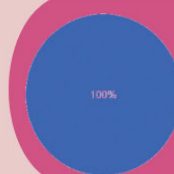
The Boomer

Are we really surprised, Mr. Uses-Voice-To-Text?



Most Likely to Bring Their Pet to School

A shocking 100% for Ms. Melton—but is it really that shocking?



Behind the Scenes of Key Club

SPOILER ALERT: It's a cult

by Lily Quartermaine
Asst. Editor-in-Chief

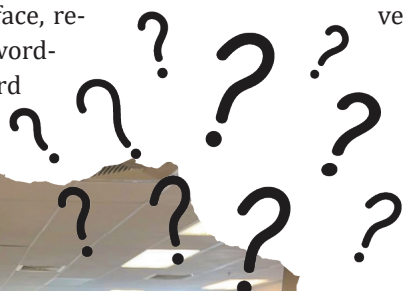
Key Club needs no introduction — everyone knows what it is. Either you're in it or your best friend is. Anyone could tell you that it's a "community service club" (whatever that means), but what do they actually do?

I was prompted to go undercover by the behavior of my close friend and Key Club Secretary, Alyson Mizanin. Often, she will enter our sixth period Torch

class with a mysterious bag of supplies. When asked, all she will say is: "It's for Key Club." Really? All of it? How much can you

ly people are there in Sarasota for you to write cards to? How much charity REALLY exists in the tri-county area?

When you join the club, you have to memorize this ridiculous oath about community and responsibility. It doesn't seem like that big of a deal until you have 20 4.0 GPAs staring you in the face, reciting word-for-word a



"pledging on honor" and "upholding the objects of Key Club International."

Oh, and don't get me started on DCON. First of all, they missed a stellar opportunity to call it "Key-CON," but that's a purely personal preference. What do they DO there? They dress up super fancy and go to a convention center and... talk about... being good people? Debate the ethics of helping elderly women cross the road?

Discuss how often they hold open the door for people? Vent about the insatiable urge to say "bless you" every time someone sneezes? (I'm looking at you, Mizanin.) Who organizes these things?

My investigation was promptly cut short on my way to the Multipurpose Room. On the way, I was accosted by one Rose Calleja, the president of Key Club. Behind her was her gang of good-doers, specifically one of my friends, Lindsay Luberecki. I insisted that I was a member of Key Club, but President Calleja ushered

me away from the doors of Building 16.

I watched carefully as Lu-

and little crafts to class and dangles them in front of everyone like hypno-

tizing pocket watches. I still have no idea what is going on in that club, but I am certain of two



things: Alyson is too far gone, and Luberecki is not.

Luberecki quickly pushed Mizanin inside, shielding me from her vision.

That is when I came to the climax of my realiza-

tions. Key Club is infecting Torch. Mizanin brings her jingly-jangly bags of jars and yarn

So, Luberecki, if you're reading this (which you probably are, I'm sitting five feet away from you as I'm writing this story and it will be published in the publication of which you are the Opinion Editor) it's not too late to leave that club. Join MUN or Speech and Debate or something! Maybe even get a little crazy, join Microscopy Club; just get out of Key Club!

PHOTOS BY ALYSON MIZANIN
GRAPHICS BY JANICE CHI



The Truth about Dr. Covert

ChatGPT writes about our principal's background after receiving a prompt from Terry Shen

by ChatGPT
Guest Contributor

At Pine View School, the students and staff were always buzzing with excitement about the antics of their beloved principal, Dr. Covert. With his quick wit and endless supply of funny anecdotes, Dr. Covert was the life of the party, and everyone loved him for it.

But little did the students know about all of Dr. Covert's wild accomplishments in life. He was once a champion competitive hot dog eater, holding the world record for eating the most hot dogs in under two minutes. He also dabbled in professional clowning and was known for his ability to twist balloons into the most outrageous shapes.

And it was during his time as a clown that Dr. Covert discovered his true calling – mak-

ing his students laugh. Whether it was pulling pranks on the school nurse or performing impromptu magic tricks in the classroom, Dr. Covert always had a trick up his sleeve to keep his students entertained.

So when he became the principal at Pine View, Dr. Covert brought his unique brand of humor with him. The newspaper team was a prime target for his antics. Whether he was sneaking up behind them to scare them while they were working, or making them try to guess the mystery flavor of the mysterious Jell-O he had made for a staff meeting, Dr. Covert always had the newspaper team in stitches.

The clubs and teachers at Pine View weren't immune to Dr. Covert's humor either. The debate club was constantly trying to one-up each other with witty comebacks, and the science club was always conducting wacky experiments, like turning the

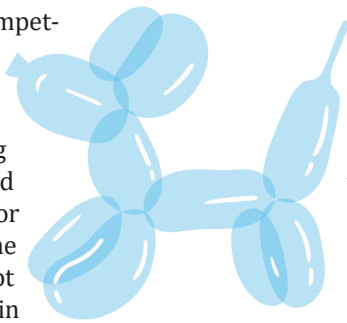
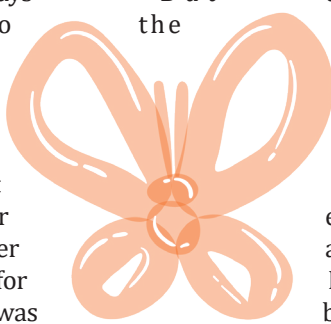
school's lawn blue. And the teachers, well, they were always game for a good joke, no matter how silly.

But despite all the laughter and fun, Dr. Covert was a serious educator at heart. He truly believed that laughter was the best medicine, and he worked tirelessly to create a happy and inclusive school environment for all of his students.

And that's why everyone at Pine View loved Dr. Covert so much. He was more than just a principal – he was a friend and a mentor, always willing to lend a listening ear and a helping hand.

So here's to Dr. Covert, the funniest principal in the land, and his wild and hilarious accomplishments!

GRAPHICS BY JANICE CHI



In ChatGPT's words: "A humorous picture of a school principal could be a cartoon illustration showing the principal dressed in a suit and tie, standing in front of a blackboard. Instead of writing something academic, the blackboard behind him is filled with jokes, puns, and witty remarks. The principal himself could have a big grin on his face, as if he's in on the joke, and students in the background could be seen laughing and pointing at the board. This picture depicts a lighthearted, approachable side to the typically serious role of a school principal." GRAPHIC BY TERRY SHEN

ChatGPT Won't Replace You...

by Felicity Chang
Director of Digital Media

OpenAI released a demo of ChatGPT — a conversational chatbot powered by deep learning — in November 2022. Over the past few months, it has taken social media by storm.

The question “Will ChatGPT replace humans?” became a conversation starter in various groups, and in some aspects, it does seem like dystopian science fiction is coming true. However, sci-fi media is derived from reality and our fears. Yes, new innovations are always going to be scary to the general public. It's not just artificial intelligence (AI), as stem cell technology and CRISPR gene editing were also deemed apocalyptic when introduced. Now, stem cells are used in regenerative medicine to aid people with spinal cord injuries, heart disease, stroke, and cancer — the National Institutes of Health created guidelines for human embryonic stem cell research in 2009. Additionally, CRISPR has been used in cancer CAR T-cell immunotherapy.

The general trend? We are afraid of what we don't understand.

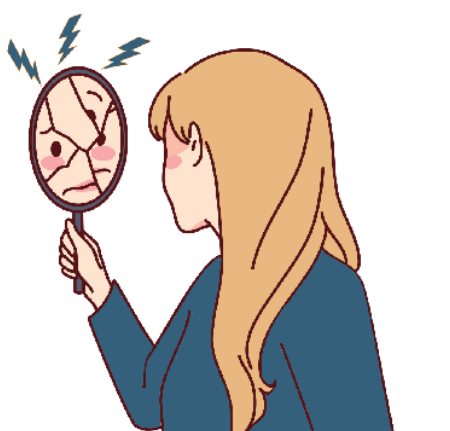
ChatGPT — and Natural Language Processing (NLP) in general — did not spawn overnight. NLP is known as the branch of AI that helps computers interpret human language. You wouldn't have Siri or Alexa if NLP didn't exist. The reason why ChatGPT is dominating dinner tables and corporate break rooms is because it went mainstream.

The Transformer, a type of neural network architecture for NLP tasks, was developed in 2017. GPT stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer, and as the name suggests, it's a Transformer-based NLP model. OpenAI released GPT-2 in 2019, which many researchers, like myself, used for independent studies. Although there was a fair share of concern over ethics and misuse, it was viewed by those in the field as promising. The model could be trained to produce empathetic dialogue for daily check-ups in nursing homes or mimic Cognitive Behavior Therapy techniques. GPT-3, released in 2020, was trained on a much larger set of data, and users had to submit an application to gain access, which was why it didn't spark the same reaction as now.

ChatGPT is basically GPT-3.5, and it's not as revolutionary as self-proclaimed experts on Twitter claim it is. Don't get me wrong, NLP models in general are extremely impressive, but ChatGPT is not some standalone project developed behind closed doors that's now going to suddenly take over the world.

First, ChatGPT isn't a sentient being, contrary to what some Internet commenters would like to claim. It's not a mind trapped in a computer generating limericks about donuts for bored 12-year-olds. As of right now, factually inaccurate statements run unchecked in ChatGPT's responses, and there are still

ABOVE: GRAPHIC BY LINDSAY LUBERECKI
BELOW: GRAPHIC BY ALYSON MIZANIN



syntax limitations that developers will address in the future.

What ChatGPT seems to excel at are tasks like generating recipe templates, survey questions, or... a highly discussed topic: writing formulaic essays. However, if ChatGPT can write a “perfect” essay for a class, the curriculum is the problem.

When students are expected to churn out cut-and-paste essays, they aren't using their own voices because there's no expectation for originality. Resources such as Wikipedia also “changed the game” for academic integrity and cheaters will always cheat. What's the difference between students paying for ChatGPT — inevitably the next step, as keeping it free is unsustainable — and professional writers to complete their assignments? The academic institutions that view AI as a tool, not a threat, will succeed in the long-run.

The same applies for the job market. Artists can use AI to generate references — emotion in art relies on intention, not just execution. Doctors can use trained NLP models for initial conversational screenings. Software developers can reduce time spent debugging and writing generic code snippets.

The true issue at hand is AI ethics — not AI existing, but how we allow it to exist. Humans will always find a way to use a tool for morally corrupt purposes, so regulations will be necessary. Using human artists' works to train art-generation models with no compensation, generating fake news articles that contribute to misinformation, collecting data (like photos and sensitive information) without user consent — these are just some of the issues that need to be addressed.

If progression toward an AI-integrated future is inevitable, the solution isn't trying to stop it. Working with AI can bring positive change. ChatGPT won't replace you.

We're allowed to age

by Alyson Mizanin
Editor-in-Chief

“I trained my face muscles to stop working,” TikTok user Isabelle Lux boasted in a video that sparked immense conversation a few weeks ago.

In her 30-second clip, 31-year-old Lux entreated her audience to consider her advice, as she claimed that by following her technique, one could express emotions without fearing early onset wrinkles.

Lux's video promptly went viral — not just for her ridiculous explanation on how training facial muscles was a natural course of action, but because her video is being labeled as “self-care.”

As defined by the World Health Organization, self-care is the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote and maintain physical and mental health. Societally, however, this definition is shifting. Lux's is but one voice in a deafening roar online, propelled by a

...but how far is too far?

by Rohan Dash
Asst. News Editor

Artificial intelligence was first invented in 1956. Nearly 70 years later, it's advanced to the point where it can write articles, make artwork, recognize any object based off of simple training, and play games better than the best players in the world — in just seconds.

In November 2022, ChatGPT was released to the public. It quickly became one of the most famous AI generators for not only being free but also being open-source and having the ability to generate full essays.



In our modern-day society, we're observing a slow technological take-over. Students across the globe have been found using ChatGPT to complete their homework. According to The Guardian, in early January, it's come to the point where school counties have been forced to ban something that could have been used beneficially, for example, to help complete research.

ChatGPT is a perfect example of misuse. Developing AI like ChatGPT allows for the world to, in a way, take a step back. In quick realization, it became clear that skills that were once a crucial part of life are becoming obsolete. It's becoming more and more likely that crucial jobs like doctors, receptionists, and couriers will be replaced by artificial intelligence, according to

Business Insider. When it comes to ChatGPT, Fortune reports that according to top economists, over half the jobs in the US could be replaced by the bot: “The economist who predicted that A.I. would replace half of all U.S. jobs now says ChatGPT is the equivalent of Uber disrupting the taxi industry.”

One may argue that AI isn't as smart or diverse as a human, but when ChatGPT 4.0 releases, it could be trained with over one trillion models, or training examples, versus the 175 billion models it's working with right now. AI will get to the point where it can build items on its own and complete other jobs.

Why would businesses hire people to do work when automated machines like ChatGPT can do it in seconds — whether it's writing code, processing data, or generating ideas. Per Yahoo Finance, CNET, a technology journalism site, was recently caught using AI sources like ChatGPT to generate articles. This is just one example of an affected industry; others include real estate, public relations, customer service, and healthcare. With so many jobs being replaced by a cheaper option, what does this mean for the future? A lack of jobs because AI rules the world?

What's even more concerning is that ChatGPT is an open-source bot that will be abused and has thousands of flaws. Axios reported that the open AI can explain how to commit crimes such as shoplifting and creating weapons. It draws parallels to other systems that reflect human biases and can easily be manipulated to encourage wrong ideas. Arguing that humans will do bad things regardless is true but still a baseless argument — systems like ChatGPT are simply assisting humans in doing worse things.

Of course, I'm not saying AI is completely detrimental. Advanced AI models can recognize different types of cancerous cells at rates much faster than the best doctors in the world, help players learn games such as chess in no time, and perform repetitive tasks without complaining. But at what rate are we advancing AI to the point where we're letting it do all our basic tasks for us, to the point at which — scientists decades ago feared — we're letting AI take over our lives? I leave you to answer this question.

growing association of asinine measures with what it means to care for ourselves, which is increasingly becoming synonymous with meeting and upholding the beauty standard. And without any intervention, our conflation of beauty and anti-aging measures with self-care will tear us apart.

In her 2018 article “How Self-Care Became So Much Work,” Charlotte Lieberman of the Harvard Business Review found that the self-care industry was worth \$11 billion. Five years later, the industry has only grown — but not all of that development should be interpreted negatively.

There exists genuine value in self-care measures such as practicing mindfulness, developing a skincare routine, and dedicating time in one's busy day for relaxation. But our definition of self-care has shifted away from cleansing skin and relieving stress; now, it proliferates in the form of skin rollers meant to “tighten”

our faces and massages dedicated to removing wrinkles.

To say that elements of aging — proof of our authentic demonstrations of emotion — need to somehow be fixed is misguided at best and deeply harmful at worst. Even worse, we're stripped of our humanity by the argument that not seeking perfection is a “failure to take care of ourselves.”

As much as our ever-evolving media may try to sell you perfection, what makes you uniquely you rests in the nascent shadows of crow's feet that dance around your eyes. You are the faint indentations tracing your nose to your lips with every smile. You are an imperfect jawline, a crooked smile, an uneven pair of eyebrows. You are a combination of all these characteristics and so many more, and your beauty exists not in a face that's trained, altered, or scrubbed raw, but in one that is truly, authentically yours — wrinkles and imperfections and all.

We've normalized violence

by Ava Lenerz and Sofia Giannattasio

Match Layout Artist and Asst. News Editor

America stands polarized over the right to bear arms, even in the face of recent events such as the Monterey Park gunman Jan. 21, the Half Moon Bay shooting Jan. 23, and the Metro station attack Feb. 1.

We're less than three months into the new year and America is already experiencing mass shootings at a record rate. According to the Gun Violence Archive, from 2014 to 2019 there was an average of 22 mass shootings a year. This January alone had 48.

Shootings in schools are far too common and the amount is still trending upward.

May 24, 2022, 19 students and two teachers were killed in one of the worst school shootings in US history. The shooting in Uvalde, Texas tore apart many families and spread devastation throughout the entire United States. Unfortunately, this wasn't the first school shooting, and it won't be the last.

Just this Valentine's Day, three students were killed in a shooting at Michigan State University — and for some students at the university, it wasn't the first school shooting they had been through.

Gun violence is the leading cause of death among children in the U.S. and each time a shooting occurs, the fundamental right to life is taken away.

Unfortunately, we've be-

come desensitized to this violence. On our car rides we hear about the latest massacre. In our classes, we practice safety protocol for the chance that it happens to us. We're not even shaken by these drills anymore; they're simply five extra minutes to study.

Guns have become so integrated into society that nobody bats an eye.

Television is a huge factor, too; depictions of gun violence in the entertainment industry are becoming increasingly accessible to young children through video games, TV shows, movies, and other media. While violence in video games may not inherently make people commit more violent acts, it exposes them to a culture of conflict that becomes natural.

This isn't the only way kids are exposed to violence. Parents are their child's first government. A child, especially a younger one, will look up to their parents first. Yet parents are teaching their kids to shoot at cans or bottles for fun. They're getting replicas of deadly weapons as toys, like My First Rifle, for their children to play with. Many fail to recognize that guns are horrible killing machines, and just view them as a hobby.

Yet the main problem is the fact that guns are so easily accessible in the first place.

The perpetrator of the Uvalde shooting bought the gun days after turning 18. Anyone in

the U.S. that wants to buy a gun only has to pass a background check involving things like immigration status, criminal convictions, and domestic violence. Some places have additional background checks or waiting periods; yet, usually, Americans can purchase a gun within hours.

Studies have even shown that keeping a gun in one's home does more harm than good. A 2014 review in *Annals of Internal Medicine* showed that it triples the risk of suicide and doubles the risk of being a homicide victim. And because many gun owners do not properly secure their firearms, they put their children at risk.

At the end of the day, it comes down to this — the more guns there are, the more gun violence there is. It's time for society to step up and act responsibly. The Second Amendment is being violently upheld at the expense of the Declaration of Independence, stripping the "life" out of "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness."

The United States has become a battleground with its citizens' lives caught in the action. We must vote for politicians who are ready to save America from its own destruction.

GRAPHIC BY LINDSAY LUBERECKI

Feel like your views aren't being represented in the Torch? We are actively seeking guest columnists. Please contact the Opinion section at: lindsay.luberecki@pineviewtorch.com

From Lindsay, with Love

In a state of hatred

I can remember being proud of being a Floridian when I was younger. Florida had the best beaches, the best fresh-squeezed orange juice, and (very important to my young self) Disney World. But today, Florida isn't the happiest place on Earth. In fact, it's far from it.

Today, I'm not proud of my state. I'm embarrassed of it, ashamed of it, and even scared of it. I'm scared of it each day that I wake up as a young woman remembering that people are trying to take my rights away. I remember that I'm not old enough to adopt a child, not old enough to drink, not old enough to serve in the military, but yet, after 15 weeks, I'm old enough to carry a child, to go through labor, and to be thrust into the world with another life that I must keep alive and care for somehow, when I'm not even caring fully for myself yet.

I'm terrified of the fact that the state abortion law passed in July 2022, making abortion illegal after 15 weeks, with no exceptions for rape — if the unimaginable happens I must face the results and live with a child. Being a woman shouldn't mean living in fear. I'm scared of how time and time again, our state government discusses stricter laws and full-out bans — we're left to wonder when it will, somehow, get even worse.

I'm disheartened by the fact that my education is being pulled away from me. Walking into school as a child, I felt like an entire world was at my fingertips, and it's devastating



Lindsay Luberecki

Opinion Editor

to think that the children of tomorrow may never experience that. Thinking about how we're being told that we can't take a class teaching us some of the most important history of our nation makes me question what education means in Florida.

I'm tired of fighting in a way that seems fruitless. I'm tired of my voice not being heard by the people who are supposed to represent me. But we can't stop fighting. Until college, I'm in this state whether I like it or not; we all are, and we have a choice.

We can stop fighting and be complicit. We can sit and do nothing as our rights get taken away. Or we can fight.

Educate yourself in any way possible, whether that be reading a newspaper or looking at the top three headlines on Instagram. Pay attention to politics, and listen to what people say — it may affect the way you live. Go to protests, inform those around you, vote, make your voice heard.

As impossible as it seems, if you never shut up, people are eventually forced to listen.

[student voices] The book ban: Have you noticed its effects?

PHOTOS AND INTERVIEWS BY JADA DAVIDSON



Stewart McLain, tenth-grader

"Why would you write the books for kids...then just decide to take away from them? Because if you put restrictions on kids...they're just going to go home and buy the same book and read it. So then why would you make the kids waste their money? I just think that it's pointless...now teachers aren't allowed to keep books in their classroom... instead of a book that your teacher highly suggests...you have to go find yourself a book that you may not like."

"[It's] harmful to Florida and America as a whole...The laws removing books from shelves are censoring books that tackle important social issues dealing with equality....The effects have been felt as far as a year and a half back... [The Hate U Give was removed from summer reading due to uncertainty]...it really removed a possibility for a really constructive conversation to take place and a real problem to be discussed."



Layla Hewes, ninth-grader

"The book banning craze is incredibly upsetting and frightening....banning books ensures that students have no means of accessing educational material that can be life-saving or eye-opening. Censorship is the first and most efficient step in preventing critical and independent thinking....Since the first day of school, [the legislation] has had profound impacts, from the sudden excessive amount of permission slips..to the fear that is apparent in our teachers when a topic is mentioned that goes against the state laws, to the DIY classroom library covers."



Ethan Messier, twelfth-grader

the Torch

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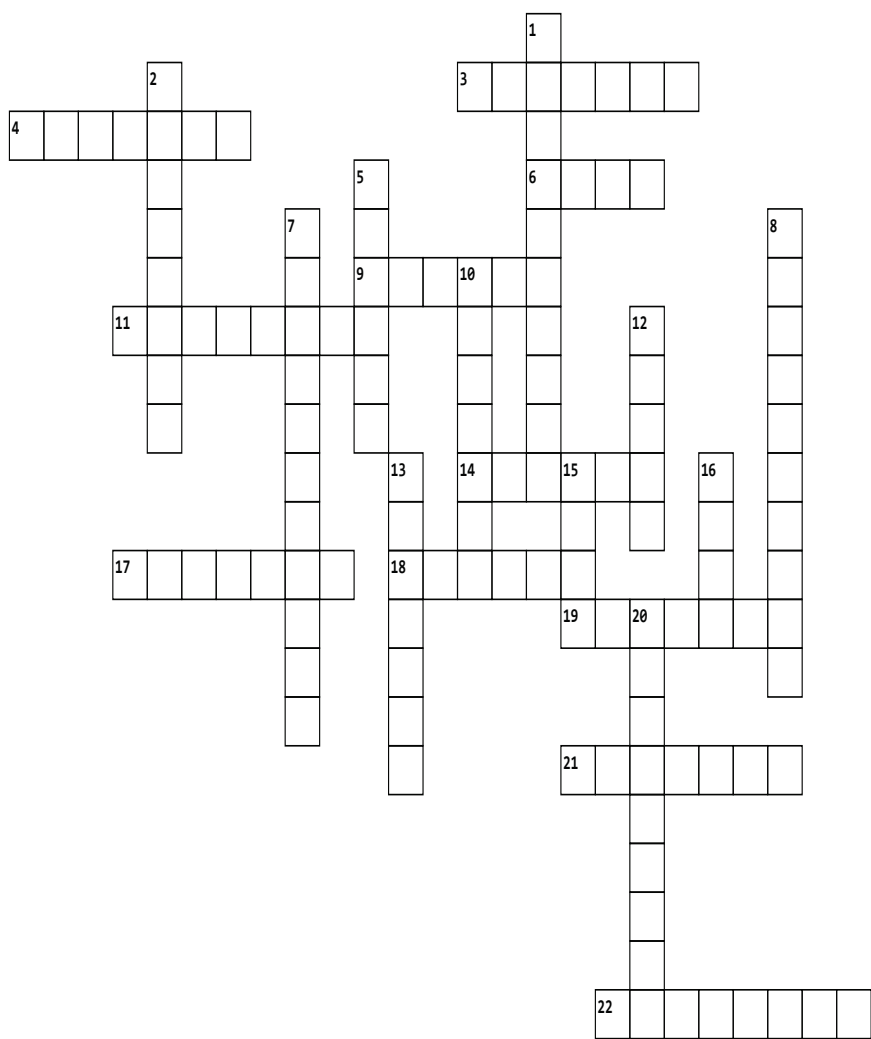
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T RCH

C R O S S W O R D

Hints correspond to information shared in the stories throughout this issue, including through QR codes. The first person to bring their completed version to Room 117 in Building 17 will win a \$10 gift card. Good luck!



across

down

- 3. AI used for writing
- 4. Teacher who was voted "The Boomer" of the social studies department
- 6. Convention that Lily Quartermaine thinks should be renamed to "Key-CON"
- 9. There will be a variety of _____ offered at new lunch cart
- 11. Where New College students read in the banyan tree
- 14. Surname of Van Wezel's Executive Director
- 17. Word for "longing for a time you've never known"
- 18. Country where tenth-grader Veronika Startseva moved from
- 19. Most students drop world language classes because they want to "Take other _____"
- 21. Surname of Terry Shen's new apprentice
- 22. One of The Torch's Gold Sponsor families

- 1. Surname of woman who recently bought three old items belonging to historical women
- 2. \$11 billion industry now tied to beauty
- 5. Surname of long term interim superintendent
- 7. Surname of Pine View student who was born in Australia
- 8. What one of Hana Mullen's most recent drawings depicts
- 10. Last word in eleventh-graders' SSEP project name
- 12. "My First _____"; Toy for children to play with
- 13. The _____ Show was the first of Pine View's 2023 performances
- 15. Acronym for organization Sarasota partnered with to replace Van Wezel
- 16. Website used for online courses in Florida
- 20. Movie originally released under 20th Century Fox

Fireside Chats

Find what you can depend on

My mother introduced me to my first best friend when I was four years old. The signature chords of the Windows startup screen sang as she and I entered our family loft one fateful day. She leaned over our boxy computer keyboard and conjured up a blank white page on the screen.

"It's yours to use," she said.

And use it I did.

Those pages greeted me each morning and bid me goodnight when my father was forced to pull me away from their blue-light grasp. Hours slipped away as lines upon lines found homes on those blank pages, and I found comfort in discovering worlds of my own creation.

Fourteen years later, writing remains an inextricable part of my life. It evolved into more than a mere medium of expression; it has become an outlet, a mirror, and a world all wrapped into one, and it's something I'll love for years to come.

Few things have stayed the same over the course of my life and even throughout my seven years at Pine View. The little things here that have remained — the coziness of the gazebo, the comfort of the benches tucked by the purple building — have become some of the components of Pine View I cherish most. While change isn't inherently negative, it can and should be offset by



by Alyson Mizanin

Editor-in-Chief

elements of certainty.

Allow yourself the time to find constants in your life: the ones on our campus, in your home, and in every place that's

Allow yourself the time to find constants in your life: the ones on our campus, in your home, and in every place that's sprinkled throughout your day.

sprinkled throughout your day. You might find them in the mundane, the simple, the overlooked — that's part of what gives them power. Maybe for you, it's the trees by the orchestra room, the bench behind Building 16, or the creaking of the covered walkways

in the afternoon sun.

Acknowledge and appreciate these constants. In turn, you'll be recognizing what has, in part, shaped you into who you are today. You'll be recognizing elements of yourself.

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