

News Fenton's Dance Classes Go "On Top of The World"

By MINNEL VEGA



Advanced Dance poses at the end of their dance 'Needle.' (Photo by Rehansa Kulatilleke)

The Cypress Dance program has recently been busy preparing for the first Dance Concert of the 2024-2025 school year "On Top of The World."

Held on November 21st at Kennedy Performing Arts

Center, students' families and friends gathered excitedly before the show to watch the performances that the students worked hard to put on stage.

The fall dance concert allowed many students to perform on stage, helping them

step out of their comfort zone and try something new.

Freshman **Braelynn Vasquez** said, "It's my first time on stage and I'm excited to see my family watch me on stage."

Sophomore **Liana Arcilla,**

performing for the third time since being in Cypress dance, shared, "I'm excited to be on stage and perform with others."

Senior **Justin Vo** explains something he likes about this class is "the community he dances with" and senior **William Mack** adds he likes "the stuff we learn and the dancing itself is hard but it's fun."

Coming up with the theme is one of the big parts of putting the dance show together. Dance teacher, **Mrs. Kerri Fenton** came up with the theme, with the help of advanced dance. She said, "Last spring Advanced Dance was talking about the theme, and they decided they wanted to use it." Each dance show comes with a cost, but if the budget was unlimited, Mrs. Fenton says she would have it in Sofi Stadium or Orange County Performing Arts Center.

Regardless of the location, dancers will express themselves to their fullest by dancing to popular songs including, "Everybody Wants To Rule The World," "Needle," "We Are One," "Beautiful Things," "Easy," "Mt. Everest," "Say My Name," "Under the World," and "On Top of the World."

Mrs. Fenton likes "watching the students transform from the beginning to when they get on stage. It makes my heart happy."

Cypress Dance stands out from other schools because the students here are hardworking and like to dance. Through hours of work and practice in school and afterschool, dancers are able to showcase their performance at the end. Cheering the dancers on, Mrs. Fenton advises first-time performers: "Trust the process, smile really big no matter what happens, and have a great time on stage."

Cypress High Faces Parking Lot Controversy with Local Businesses

By YAZEED ALBADARIN

In the small business plaza neighboring Cypress High School, a growing problem has frustrated both local business owners and school administration. Due to limited parking around the school, many parents and students have resorted to using private parking spaces intended for nearby businesses, creating a wave of issues for those who rely on the spaces daily.

Principal **Jennifer Brown** of Cypress High has been working tirelessly to address the issue. She launched a "Good Neighbor" policy, stressing the importance of mutual respect between the school and surrounding businesses. "We are part of this community, and as a school, we need to respect it," she said. "I've made videos, attended meetings, and even hosted coffee talks with the parents to ask them not to park in neighboring lots. Our actions impact these businesses, and it's our responsibility to be considerate."

Despite these efforts, the parking lot conflict continues to affect local establishments, including Pieology, Bafang Dumpling, Kura Sushi Revolving Sushi Bar, and 85°C

Bakery Café. **Leslie Rosa**, a Pieology employee, described the frequent challenges. "Not just parents, but students especially seniors use our parking lot, and sometimes we run out of spaces. When customers can't find a place to park, it hurts our business and sales. We even struggle to find parking as employees, especially on busy days." Aside from taking up parking spaces, some students have been seen skateboarding on the plaza's patios or littering the area while waiting for their rides. Rosa said the disruptions have impacted the store's cleanliness and employee schedules. "We're busy with customers and don't always have time to clean up after them," she added.

The plaza has put up signs to deter non-customers from parking, but enforcement is a challenge. Since the lot is private property, local police have limited authority to intervene. Businesses could hire private security, but the cost is high, especially for smaller establishments. Principal Brown emphasized many parents seem unwilling to wait in line, instead opting to drop students off in the neighboring lot.

"Our actions are giving the school a poor reputation," Brown said. "The businesses want to work with us, and we want to keep a positive relationship with them. All we ask is for our community to respect this shared space."



To deter parents businesses put up a sign which reads, "NO SCHOOL PARKING, DROP OFF OR PICK UP" (photo by Yazeed Albadarin)

2024 Election: Narrow Republican Victory

By ZOE CHUNG



The 2024 Election raises tensions between supporters of Republican and Democratic party candidates (Photo by Zoe Chung)

In the 2024 U.S. presidential election, Republican candidate Donald Trump won the popular vote, defeating Democratic candidate and Vice President Kamala Harris. The Republican Party retained their majority in the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, giving the party a "trifecta" of power.

This year had a shocking increase in voter turnout, as people expressed their individual concerns about social and economic issues.

The conclusion of the 2024 election marks the second term of former president Donald Trump after losing in the 2020 presidential race against President Joe Biden.

The Republican victory was shaped heavily by an increase in Latino voters in the United States. Trump's campaign consisted of an appeal to conservative voters by promising to tighten border security and

immigration policies to save the economy. He planned to strengthen the economy of the United States by cutting tax on government regulations and slap tariffs on imports, order large scale deportation of immigrants

Harris conceded the presidential race while acknowledging that the loss should not discourage Democratic voters from fighting for their futures. "I know many people feel like we are entering a dark time, but for the benefit of us all, I hope that is not the case. But here's the thing, America, if it is, let us fill the sky with the light of a brilliant, brilliant billion of stars." she said.

The future of America remains up for debate between the citizens and divided parties as the trajectory of our nation may or may not change in the next four years.

Read about
Cypressmemes!
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Combating Substance Abuse: A Collective Effort to Break the Mist at Cypress High



Combating drug use requires a collective effort. By creating a shared commitment to safety and wellness, the student body can add support to making a substance-free campus. (Drawing by Grace Kim)

An ongoing issue in Cypress High school, the consequence of vape and drug use among students continues to affect our entire safety, privileges and rights. While a single mist released to sip out of a JUUL pod seems to disintegrate into thin air, the traces it leaves behind leaves a long impact in our communities.

One of the greatest issues on campus, substance abuse is prevalent in the student body through various forms. From marijuana, alcohol, vape juice, tobacco, and other various nicotine products, many uncertified substances are going

into students' that are altering the students physical and mental chemistry. Becoming a form of an inescapable addiction, students rely on drugs and vapes on a regular basis, needing to bring them into our campus. Exchanging drugs in restrooms, lockers, and lunch deliveries, These actions not only harm individual users but also disrupt the school environment and drain resources meant to benefit all students.

From the restroom policies, security walkthroughs, school locks, strict lunch delivery requirements, and ID verification for attendance, every rule

affecting the campus has been created in order to fight off the drug use on campus. Going beyond rules students need to follow, even restrooms are being shut down because vape sticks are being flushed down the toilet, clogging the pipes.

Principal **Jennifer Brown** adds on this issue saying, "We have to shut down a bathroom and it's costing us thousands and thousands of dollars out of our school budget to have to pay for the plumbers to come, which could be used for things for students instead. So it affects everyone on campus when kids make these choices."

In order to fix the ongoing problem, vape detectors along with the security measures are planned to be installed on school campuses to make a smoke-free environment if the district proceeds to approve the request. A chemical detector named HALO, any kind of harmful chemicals in the environment can be detected through the air, setting off automatic notifications to the campus safety, administration counselors of the lo-

cation, as well as the camera system. Also detecting loud voices, gunshots and charging languages can be detected.

Security measures are being strengthened as it is harder to identify who are being abused by drug usage. While it was easier to recognize who used drugs back in the day by the way someone dresses or behaves, now we confront a society where even straight As honor students are involved in substance abuse, struggling to seek help to deal with academic stress. Providing opportunities for students to learn and heal from drug and vape use, various events are being held from Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE) and Friday Night Live (FNL) Club to spread awareness of the dangers of drinking and smoking through programs such as Red Ribbon Week, Great American Smoke-Out, and weekly Friday meetings.

Meeting various students who are struggling, **Ms. Shelley Hawkins**, health teacher and advisor for these events, explains that the main issues stem

from exposure and exclusion: "Having drugs and alcohol accessible through family members or being disconnected from school has been the biggest ways students turn their eyes to drugs. I know some schools are different, being more focused on the education part of it, but smoking's not new. Drinking's not new. Those things have been around since the dawn of time, but it's how we get kids to focus on other things that are good in their life."

Combating drug use requires a collective effort. By creating a shared commitment to safety and wellness, the student body can add support to making a substance-free campus. As Principal Brown says, "Consequences don't go away. We always have consequences for our actions, whether good or bad, but it's not about the punishment, it's about helping them change their behavior so that way it doesn't continue to put them in an unhealthy, unsafe situation." Together Cypress High can become a place where everyone can focus on growth and success, free from the shadows of vapes and drugs.

California To Ban Legacy Admissions

By DEBORAH SON



California will be banning legacy admissions, giving equal opportunities for students with immigrant backgrounds. (Photo by Deborah Son)

Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation on Sept. 30, 2024, to prohibit legacy preference in the admissions process for private institutions. The AB 1780, also known as the "Merit-Based Educational Reforms and Institutional Transparency Act," states that it will prevent "an independent institution of higher education, as defined, from providing a legacy preference or donor preference in admissions, as defined, to an applicant as part of the regular or early action admissions process."

Elite universities in the United States including Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, Amherst College, and the University of Pennsylvania have already banned legacy admissions for all students.

The issue with legacy admissions is the disregard for students with immigrant fami-

lies by favoring students with a generational background. With low-income students and first-generation students, they were placed at a disadvantage. Addressing the unfairness of legacy admissions is necessary to maintain an equitable admission system. Banning legacy admissions in the future will give students an equal opportunity to be admitted into a top university.

As of Sept. 2025, California will become the fourth state to put an end to legacy college admissions along with Virginia, Illinois, and Maryland. This is expected to turn the tables and reverse the dynamics of admission systems at top universities in the United States.

Lynn Hwang, a senior at Cypress High School said, "College admissions should always be about the merit and potential a student has rather than their

family history. Ending legacy admissions creates a path for an unbiased admissions process."

Colleges considering legacy status in California are primarily private universities including Stanford University, University of Southern California, Santa Clara University, Pepperdine University, Claremont McKenna College, and Harvey Mudd College.

However, institutions must ban an applicant's legacy status after Sept. 2025 to practice an equitable admission protocol. With the new law banning legacy admissions, colleges and universities must provide an in-depth report regarding their admission processes. It ensures their fairness and determines criteria to prevent the consideration of legacy status in applications.

A merit-based admission process will stir up controversies among applicants to determine its efficiency. Universities with the highest rates of legacy admissions will be held accountable for dismissing legacy admissions.

Following the newly signed legislation by Governor Gavin Newsom, a growing number of universities have also considered banning legacy admissions to encourage diversity and inclusion. Breaking the traditional cycle of legacy admissions, this legislation will open up opportunities and shape the future generations to come.

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Mario & Luigi: Brotherhood Review

By YOSHI VAZQUEZ



A High Seas Adventure That Doesn't Quite Hit the Mark
(Photo by Nintendo Co.)

Mario & Luigi: Brotherhood, the latest installment in Nintendo's beloved RPG (Role Play Game) series, offers a promising start. If you were to only catch an hour of gameplay, you might walk away thinking it's one of the year's standout RPGs for the Nintendo Switch. Yet, as the game stretches far beyond that opening act, some of its charm starts to fade.

This time, they find themselves far from the Mushroom Kingdom, stranded in a fractured world called Concordia. Mario and Luigi's task is to reconnect these islands to the mystical Uni-tree, restoring peace to the oceanic realm.

The game's nautical theme is one of its strongest elements, bringing a sense of adventure to the traditional turn-based

combat. For younger players or newcomers to the genre, there's even a surprisingly deep system of customization, allowing you to tweak combat with collectible "plugs" that add unique effects to attacks.

Outside of combat, Brotherhood leans heavily on puzzle-platforming. While you can activate a fast-travel option, the lengthy journeys often feel like filler, encouraging players to step away from the game as they wait for their ship to arrive.

Ultimately, Mario & Luigi: Brotherhood is a solid entry that does many things right but rarely excels. Its engaging combat and appealing visuals are weighed down by a story that fails to leave a lasting impact, a stretched-out runtime, and a lack of standout moments.

As the first new game in the franchise in nearly a decade, Brotherhood's return to the spotlight lands somewhere between a nostalgic nod and an average adventure, but not quite the triumphant comeback fans might have hoped for.

Lego Group Releases Movie Collection

By JAYSON KAI LINAYAO

If you enjoy playing with Legos and listening to music, or just like good movies, then you should watch Piece By Piece (2024). This is a 93-minute long biographical movie about famous musician Pharrell Williams' journey through life and upcoming fame in the music industry represented with LEGO animation. Piece By Piece has a cast full of stars with some being Pharrell Williams, Chad Hugo, N.O.R.E., Daft Punk, Kendrick Lamar, Snoop Dogg, Jay-Z, and Gwen Stefani. There are many other celebrities and people in the movie that were important in Pharrell's life like his parents and grandmother.

This film is directed by Morgan Neville. Neville is an Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker. He mainly focuses on topics like music, politics, media, and culture in movies like Best of Enemies (2015) and The Cool School (2008).

Pharrell Williams wanted his story shown with Lego pieces because it was a natural way for him to express himself. "This is the best way I can really be my purest self without feeling weird," Pharrell said during an interview with the director Morgan Neville.

He has synesthesia, which means he associates different sounds with colors. "It's not something that you see with your physical eyes, it's some-

thing that you see in your mind's eye," Pharrell explains the feeling of synesthesia "beautiful hues of light cascading." This is shown throughout the movie when Pharrell hears music, colors start to fly around in colorful patterns. Another example of his synesthesia being shown is when he makes new beats or music, he could hold them as bright lego pieces of many different shapes and colors that he could disassemble and mix with other beats. It got a 7/10 from IMDb, 83% on Rotten Tomatoes, and 90% on Fandango.

Piece By Piece came out in theaters October 11th 2024 and now can be streamed on YouTube, Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, Google Play Movies & TV, and Fandango at home costing \$19.99 on all sites. This movie is rated PG, so if you don't mind some mild language, mild profanity, and some suggestive material, then this is a great movie to watch with family.



Lego Group Releases An Addition To Their Movie Collection (Photo by Jason Kai Linayao)

Top 5 Christmas Movies Voted by Cypress Students

By BRYANA BENNETT



The top 5 Christmas movies. (Photo by Bryana Bennett)

As the holiday season approaches, there's nothing like a Christmas movie. There are so many Christmas movies to choose from; these are the top five Christmas movies as voted by Cypress High School students.

1. Home Alone

There are six Home Alone movies made from 1990 to 2021. Home Alone (1990) is the original and classic comedy Home Alone movie, directed by Chris Columbus and written by John Hughes. The film follows Kevin McCallister, played by Macaulay Culkin, who is accidentally left home alone when his family leaves on vacation. Enjoying being home alone and doing everything he wanted to do Kevin is having the time of his life. Until two burglars named Harry (Joe Pesci) and Marv (Daniel Stern) break into the McCallister home. Kevin must protect his home and sets up a series of creative and funny booby traps.

2. Nightmare Before Christmas

The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993) is a stop-motion animated musical fantasy film that was directed by Henry Selick and produced by Tim Burton. The story follows Jack Skellington (voiced by Chris Sarandon and sung by Danny Elfman), the Pumpkin King, who stumbles upon Christmas town and is enthralled with the bright

lights, joyful spirit, and festive decorations. Inspired by Christmas, Jack gets help from the residents of Halloween Town to steal Christmas, but their scary nature leads to some comedic and chaotic results. One part of Jack's plan is to kidnap Santa and deliver Halloween Town's ghoulish gifts to children for Christmas. The story features other memorable characters like Sally (voiced by Catherine O'Hara) and Oogie Boogie (voiced by Ken Page), who truly make the film.

3. Polar Express

The Polar Express (2004) is an animated Christmas adventure film directed by Robert Zemeckis and is based on a children's book The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg. The story follows Hero Boy (voiced by Tom Hanks,) who is beginning to doubt the existence of Santa Claus. On Christmas Eve, he wakes up to the sound of the Polar Express, the train going to the North Pole. While on the Polar Express, Hero Boy learns about the true spirit of Christmas during the various challenges he encounters on his adventure.

4. Grinch

There are three Grinch movies that have been made from 1966 to 2018. How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000) is a live-action adaptation of Dr. Seuss's children's book, directed by Ron Howard. The film expands

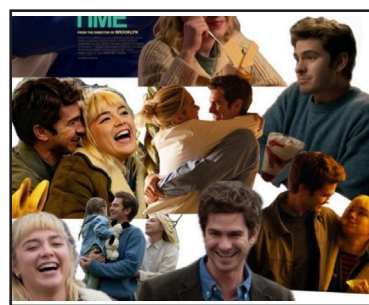
on the original story, giving the Grinch (Jim Carrey) and the residents of Whoville a deeper backstory. The Grinch is a grumpy green man who lives in a cave on Mount Crumpit and loathes Christmas and the Who's festive celebration. Determined to ruin Christmas, the Grinch devises a plan to steal Christmas. The plan entails stealing all of the Christmas decorations, gifts, and food. Disguised as Santa the Grinch and his loyal dog, Max, carry out the plan until the Grinch encounters a little girl who believes in the true spirit of Christmas, Cindy Lou Who (Taylor Momsen.) After meeting Cindy Lou Who and learning the true value of Christmas, the Grinch's heart begins to grow, and he becomes friendly to the Whos.

5. Elf

Elf (2003) a classic Christmas comedy directed by Jon Favreau and written by David Berenbaum. The film follows a boy named Buddy (Will Ferrell) who is accidentally taken to the North Pole and raised by Santa's elves. As Buddy grows up, his height and lack of toy-making skills force him to realize that he isn't an elf. After learning that he is human, Buddy leaves the North Pole and sets off to New York City with the hope of finding his biological father, Walter Hobbs (James Caan). While in New York, Buddy's childlike innocence and enthusiasm for Christmas clash with the cynical, fast paced city life. Buddy does find his father, who is on the naughty list and doesn't believe that Buddy is his son. Over time, Buddy wins over the Walter family and forms a romantic relationship with Jovie (Zooey Deschanel), an employee at Gimbels department store.

Tragedy and Romance Come Together For "We Live In Time"

By MIFRAH BAWANY



Only A Lucky Few Get The Promosals Of Their Dreams. (Photo by Rehansa Kulatilake)

We Live in Time premiered in theaters on October 11, 2024. It was directed by John Crowley and stars Florence Pugh and Andrew Garfield as the main characters, Tobias and Almut. This film explores pain and love throughout a couple's long relationship.

The plot of *We Live in Time* centers around the evolving relationship of Almut (Florence Pugh) and Tobias (Andrew Garfield), two individuals whose initial connection grows into something meaningful. While some audiences may find the slow build challeng-

ing. The character and their relationships can grow realistically and significantly. Crowley's direction ensures every scene has a purpose, building toward a heartbreaking and interesting climax. This movie is a lovely look into a couple's relationship and a tense drama.

As Tobias and Almut control their growing love, Tobias reveals that he is separated from his wife. Over time, they move in together, but Tobias's starts having deep feelings for Almut and wants to start a family. Almut, scared to commit, pushes Tobias away, but the two made up after a confrontation at a baby shower. However, Almut's life takes a drastic turn when she is diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Despite her doctor's recommendation for a hysterectomy, Almut opts for treatment and later becomes pregnant after several attempts.

The story about two people whom you begin to care about

more and more as the film goes on is one to watch. Many points leave the viewers wondering what will happen next for them. *We Live in Time* reveals the terrible truth of love and loss and the moments in between. It reminds us that while we can't change time, we can decide how we live with it. The final scenes convey a deep sense of love and resilience as Tobias teaches their daughter Ella how to crack an egg, a symbolic gesture that reflects the lessons Almut has taught them both.

Ultimately, *We Live in Time* is a story about love, loss, and timings. It shows how relationships evolve and how people find meaning in their shared moments, even when life's uncertainties and challenges appear. The film ends on a note of acceptance and its flow, as Tobias and Ella move forward, carrying the memories of Almut's love and strength. Overall, the IMDb rating for this movie is 7.3/10.

4 Features Cypressmemes_ Finally Shares Their Story To The Public

By REHANSA KULATILLEKE



The account has gained popularity over the past two years. (Photo by @cypressmemes_)

Over the past two years, many in the CHS community have grown to learn about the highly-acclaimed Instagram account—@cypressmemes_. The account has nearly 100 posts sharing both relatable and comical memes that only Cypress students are capable of understanding. With over 1,000 followers on Instagram, along with students creating merchandise and participating in “spirit days,” it’s clear to see that the account has grown to be admired by students from all across the campus. The account has inspired others from Cypress High School and students from schools outside of California.

The identity of cypressmemes_ has been kept as a secret that only a select few have known about. On November 20th, the owner of the account revealed their identity. **Nicole Thach**, a senior here at Cypress, had been anonymously posting on the account where she’s gained over 1,500 Cypress students’ support. Thach had previously attended Oxford Academy and transferred to Cypress by the time she was a sophomore. Thach states, “When I first transferred to Cypress, my relationship with school was terrible. Running Cypressmemes_ healed my perception of school in ways that I could never imagine.”

The account began its journey when she posted a photo of a carton of the school’s chocolate milk, with the initial goal of earning 765 likes on the post, surpassing the most-liked photo on the school’s official account. With other students’ enthusiasm, the account exceeded their expectations, gaining over 600

likes more than she expected—which was only the beginning of the support from others. Apart from the support shown online, students showed their appreciation for the account by participating in organized events, such as Black Out Friday, where students who admired the account, showed up to school wearing black, one of which even wore an “I <3 Cypressmemes_” shirt. Thach added, “I knew people would like the account, but seeing so many people love it was the most insane thing, and still to this day, I can’t believe what the account has been capable of.”

In addition to the support shown online, the account has also shown an impact in school—one of which includes the appearance of Cypressmemes_ in both this year’s and last year’s yearbooks. In one of the sections from last year’s yearbook, Thach was allowed to share the inside of the account’s locker, which showed an arrangement of gifts given by fans of the account. This year one of the senior yearbook standout categories included “Most likely to be Cypressmemes_.” Thach added, “It feels insane and I’m grateful for the opportunity. I think it’s really cool seeing my account be involved in school things such as the newspaper and the yearbook. It makes me feel like I am truly a part of the school environment and a vital part to Cypress.”

With the countless names being thrown out to the account as a theory, many people have guessed it was Thach, which she had to deny throughout the years. Thach claims that many people theorized based on dif-

ferent details. “Some people assumed it was me because I did comedy at Cypress Got Talent. Other people linked it to my music taste and graphic design skills... there’s a lot of things that were bound to rat me out.” After everything, Thach says that it’s been bittersweet letting Cypressmemes_ go, but the reveal has been relieving. After everything the account accomplished, she never planned on leaving the school without being able to reveal who was behind it.

With the growing amount of publicity the account has gained over the past two years, other schools have also followed in the footsteps of Cypressmemes_ including the neighboring junior high school just minutes away—Orangeview Junior High School. With the close-to-identical Instagram bio to Thach’s unique posts that students who attend the school also relate to, it’s visible that Cypressmemes_ has inspired people beyond the school’s campus—in fact as far out as schools in Nevada. Cypressmemes_ said, “I think it’s awesome knowing that I’ve inspired other schools to make meme pages. I think every school deserves some sort of @cypressmemes_ for themselves because seriously, it’s good for the community. Nobody can outdo Cypress though.”

What started as a small account run by a student bored in her room, turned out to be an account where current students and alumni grow to find joy. Although the journey of cypressmemes_ has come to an end, students continue to spread the amusement the account has helped create over the years.

New Guide to English Education

By MIFRAH BAWANY

Cypress High School has warmly welcomed a new English teacher to its staff this year, **Ms. Valerie Hamilton**, who has an impressive 35 years of teaching experience. Hamilton brings a great amount of knowledge and passion for teaching English 1 and 2.

Hamilton has taught almost every grade level, from 7th to 12th grade, as well as other various subjects, including American History, World History, Economics, Geography, Reading, and even Sex Education. “I do not get bored because I always have something new to learn and something new to teach,” she said.

ite subjects. “My 10th graders just read Fahrenheit 451, My favorite book of all time — I even met the author once! And with my 9th graders, I get to teach all about the Holocaust.”

Hamilton’s teaching style is based on self-exploration and study. “I don’t teach students what to think; I teach them how to think,” she said. One key reason she decided to go into the educational field was, “I had some really bad teachers, and I hated school because of it. I didn’t want to finish school, and I thought I could do better.” That realization inspired her to become a teacher and to create a positive, supportive environment for her students.

Before joining Cypress High, Hamilton taught at Brookhurst High School for 24 years and spent 10 years teaching in Texas. Having taught in five different schools, she believes every new classroom brings new learning experiences. Hamilton also holds a Bachelor’s degree in English, minors in Business Administration and History, and a Master’s in Curriculum Design.

Adjusting to a new school can be challenging, but Hamilton has found her transition to Cypress High very smooth. “All of my colleagues have been welcoming, offering to help me out, and the kids are nice,” she shared. Her excitement extends to the curriculum, which allows her to teach some of her favor-

Cypress High is very lucky to have such a passionate, and experienced teacher on its staff. Ms. Hamilton’s energy for teaching and commitment to her students will leave a lasting impression on the school community.



Ms. Hamilton is our new English teacher at Cypress High School (Photo by Valerie Hamilton)

New Intern Helps Students

By MINNELL VEGA



Mr. Ta is the new Counseling Intern (Photo by Minnell Vega)

Supporting students here at Cypress High School is one of the many different roles Cypress counselors play. Whether it is social-emotional, college and career, or academics, the counselors are always ready to help. The Cypress counselors meet with different students weekly who need extra support, extra motivation, or who just have any questions. The Cypress High School counseling team has a new staff member for the 2024-2025 school year, Mr. **Andy Ta**.

Ta is a first-year intern who attends school at Chapman University. He said, “I’m getting a dual degree in school counseling and clinical counseling as well; so supporting students with their mental health and overall well-being.” Ta is here on campus twice a week and apart from working here he

also works at a middle school.

Ta was surprised at how comprehensive the counseling team is, including many staff members, such as the secretary, registrar, records keeper, social workers, psychologists, and counselors. Ta mentioned, “We have a great counseling team, and there’s great mental health support here at Cypress; that can be overlooked at times.”

Ta works with students referred by the counseling team, focusing on the three core domains of counseling: academic, social-emotional, and college and career. Ta said, “We encompass all these three aspects and do it in three different settings. We can do it individually, in small groups, or in classroom lessons.” Apart from working with students who counselors refer, he works with students based on need. “We try to use data-informed decision-making as much as possible,” he said.

Ta enjoys rock climbing, camping, and trying out new restaurants in his free time. Make sure you make Ta feel welcomed in his first year of counseling.

Oh Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel! Comic By TYLER HERNANDEZ



New Disneyland Passes Raise Concerns About High Prices

By GIAN MATTEO VINATIERI

Disneyland in Anaheim, California, just raised the prices of admission, adding expenses to an already price selective experience. Starting in October 2024, one-day and one-park tickets to Disneyland cost \$104 on the least busy days and \$206 on peak days, the first time that a single-day ticket has touched the \$200 level. Multiday tickets also increased. A two-day, one-park ticket rises to \$330 (up from \$310), and three-day tickets rise to \$415 (up from \$390). Disneyland's annual pass: the Magic Key, which was introduced as a replacement to the original annual pass system – also increased. The Inspire Key now

costs \$1,749. Other passes, like the Believe and Enchant, grew 10% to 14%, respectively, depending on the tier of the pass.

For comparison, Disneyland's new prices make it one of the most expensive options for entertainment in Southern California. One-day tickets to Universal Studios Hollywood—a major theme park that offers looks at popular movies and franchises such as “The Wizarding World of Harry Potter” runs between \$109 and \$159, depending on demand. Annual passes at Universal Studios start at about \$179,

significantly lower than the top-tier Disneyland prices. Meanwhile, Knott's Berry Farm brings a more affordable offer to the table with more budget friendly prices: \$79 for a one-day ticket, \$150 for annual passes. Lastly, Six Flags Magic Mountain is an amusement park full of roller coasters and thrill rides, rather cheap if compared to the other ones at \$50 for an online one-day ticket and \$115 annually.

Despite the prices Disneyland still is about the immersive storytelling and unique attractions like its

recently added Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, Avengers Campus, and soon-to-open Tiana's Bayou Adventure that create the magic.

These high-demand experiences come with a growing price that outpaces many of its local competitors, placing Disney as one of the most if not the most enjoyable amusement parks in California. Moreover, with the Christmas season about to begin, even with the price increase, we might still see a fully packed park every day.

While it has been the ulti-

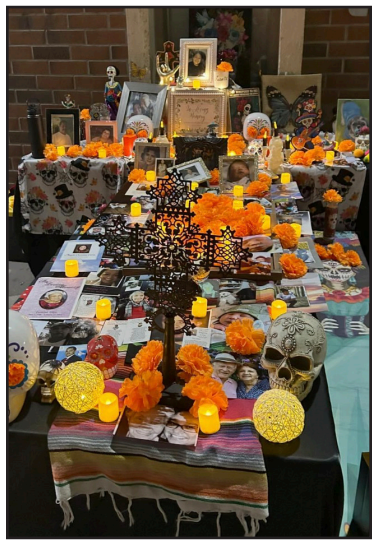
mate spot for many families, these increases have raised concerns about the unaffordability of the destination for most people. Disney lovers increasingly seek alternatives in other parks to have high quality experience without facing such a huge financial burden.



Disneyland California's ferris wheel and rollercoaster is the park's greatest attractions and photobooth among visitors. (Photo by Gian Matteo Vinattieri)

What is Day of the Dead?: History and Insight in Día de los Muertos

By ANTONIO SANDOVAL



A Día de los Muertos altar honors family members or loved ones. (Photo by Antonio Sandoval)

What is Day of the Dead?

Day of the Dead, or el Día de los Muertos, is a Hispanic holiday that celebrates dead family, friends, and animals. On November 1, they celebrate the souls of lost children, November 2nd, adults who have

passed, and November 3rd, pets who have passed. The celebration includes traditional foods and drinks. People who celebrate Día de los Muertos believe that the gates of Heaven open up at midnight on October 31st, and the souls of loved ones reunite with their families.

The origins of Day of the Dead go back 3,000 years; to the Aztecs that inhabited what is now modern-day central Mexico. They believed when somebody would die, they would travel to Chicunamictlán, the Land of the Dead. After reaching The Land of the Dead, they would have to go through seven challenges; which equates to a journey that would last multiple years. Once getting through the seven challenges, they would reach Mictlán, the final resting place. The Aztecs would offer food like pan de muerto and

drinks to aid them with their journey. This is why there is a tradition of putting a variety of foods and drinks on altars as offerings for their loved ones on the Day of the Dead.

A Spanish teacher, **Ms. Metry**, has personally experienced these celebrations. During her travels in Mexico, she was able to witness firsthand how Día de los Muertos was celebrated. The holiday is meant to celebrate the dead, and “Everything is meant to represent family,” said Ms. Metry. Vibrant marigolds, bright colors, and sugar skulls, it's all a part of the culture. It's not meant to be a day of mourning, but rather represents life and honors loved ones who have passed. “The Day of the Dead is all about celebration,” said Ms. Metry. In Hispanic countries, extravagant parades and celebrations

are thrown while people sell foods and festive items at the plaza for everyone to enjoy.

Another Spanish teacher, **Mrs. Rubio**, explained, “The meaning of Day of the Dead is its a celebration of life, it's remembering the people that are no longer with us, and there's of course the belief that on Day of the Dead, the spirits of loved ones that are gone get to visit us again.”

An ofrenda is an altar that represents a deceased loved one. A picture of the loved one is put on the ofrenda. Candles, marigolds, and food offerings are put on the ofrenda; all objects that the loved one liked when they were alive. According to Mrs. Rubio, “Everything that you put on the altar has a significance.” The fire from the candles are used to light the way

for the spirit, the picture is used so they don't mistake someone else's ofrenda with theirs, the pan de muerto and water is to nourish the spirit from their long journey, the flower of the dead is used for its strong smell to lead the spirit to the right place, and salt purifies the soul.

Sophomore student, **Alexa Arechiga**, personally celebrates Día de los Muertos with her family. They put up an altar, with candles, flowers, bread, candy, and other decorations. The ofrenda her family put up are celebrating her passed grandparents by putting photographs of them on the altar.

Día de los Muertos is a holiday to remember and honor loved ones, not as a day of mourning, but as a day of celebration and fun, with food, treats, and festive parades.

Effective Study Tips Given by Staff and Students To Overcome Finals Stress

By BETTY LANGRINE

Students often find themselves overwhelmed with the amount of material they need to review. To help ease the stress and ensure success, teachers and counselors at Cypress High School have shared their top tips for effective studying.

Zina Obid, a freshman at Cypress High School said, “I'm really worried about how this would affect my grades, and how they're all at the same time.”

Baseball Coach **John Weber**, stressed the importance of understanding one's learning style. “Some students learn better through visual

aids, others through auditory methods. Identify what works best for you and tailor your study sessions accordingly.” It helps to go over and memorize formulas and work on any practice problems. Weber also advises students to “not be afraid to ask questions,” asking questions can help you understand what you're doing better, and help make studying a little easier.

“Making schedules can help a lot with studying,” said Chemistry teacher **Sara Moore**. This structured approach helps students manage their time efficiently and ensures that each subject receives attention. It can also

help prevent last-minute cramming and reduce stress. History teacher, **Steve Cini**, advises students to make use of study groups. “With history you need to learn the material slowly and moderately over time.” Trying to learn everything quickly can be overwhelming and lead to confusion. By studying slowly and steadily, you can better absorb the information, make connections between events, and understand the broader context. In addition to these tips, it is also essential to maintain a healthy lifestyle. “Get enough sleep, eat well, and stay hydrated,” advised Lead Counselor **Mary Binford**. Re-

peatedly going over the concepts with other students and working over problems with each other can help with fully comprehend material given in class. Tenth-grade counselor **Amanda Lu** highlighted the benefits of staying organized and wants everyone to keep in mind that “it should be a reminder that one, you are all still growing, and two, you should engage with the material and not just memorize it.”

By incorporating these strategies into their study routines, students can approach their finals with confidence and a clear plan. Using these study tips helps reduce stress and makes studying easier.



Special Education Teacher and Baseball Coach Mr. John Weber stresses the importance of figuring out one's learning style. (Photo by Betty Langrine)



Head Counselor Ms. Mary Binford advises students to study together by creating study groups. (Photo by Betty Langrine)

6 ^{Sports} Girl's Volleyball No Longer Underdogs

By ADAM HAWARI and TONY RODRIGUEZ

With an appearance in CIF, Cypress High School's Girl's Volleyball Team claimed their position as a top team with a 3-1 win against Marina. The team's pace was constant throughout the tournament as they swiftly won against Santiago and St. Margaret, with box scores of 3-1. The Girl's Varsity Volleyball has pushed their limits and held through in times of pressure and demand.

Setter **Hannah Schoffstall** exemplified the strongest aspect of their team was teamwork. "We worked really well together on the court but we

would set goals before games about what we want to accomplish as individuals and as a team," she said. Hannah takes pride in her team and the accomplishments she has made as a group, as it pushes her to be a strong player. "It makes me proud because of all the hard work that myself, my coaches, and my parents have given to help me get to where I am."

Junior **Isabella Faro** reflected upon her team's performance during CIF and explained that consistency was their biggest strength and weakness. She said, "A majority of the time, we would

experience these peak moments and get distracted. We would dig ourselves into a hole we are unable to get back out of." To stay focused, the team worked on visualizing their game plan and setting their goals in stone.

As this is one of the first years for Cypress High School's Girls Varsity Volleyball Team to make it to the semifinals and state, the team is fueled with determination to go further next year. Showcasing the talents of every individual, their performance earned them the position of 10th in Division 3 and marked history.



Volleyball players Hannah Schoffstall and Isabella Faro helped the team reach CIF playoffs.

Flag Football Heads to CIF

By CARLY PEDROZA



The Centurions made it to CIF playoffs in their 2nd year. (Photo by Kyle Choe, Cypress Yearbook)

The highly ranked CHS girls flag football team lost to El Toro High in the first round of the 2024 CIF Southern Section Championships (Div. 2) by a score of 7-26.

With an overall record of 19-8, the Centurions were expected to dominate the field. Although the Centurions only trailed 7-13 half game, they were unable to score again and left their season on a bittersweet note.

Junior rusher **Chloe Carr** said the season was filled with pressure, but "it was all worth it." Carr loved how members of the team were always willing to uplift each other: "In every game, everyone always gave their all."

Senior **Emma Hannifin** said, "The last game our season was the first round of CIF. I'm su-

per stoked to have the opportunity to play in CIF this year for the first time in girls flag football history. I was pretty sad that we lost because that will be my last time playing a competitive sport in high school, so it does come with regret. But, overall we had a great season and we grew a lot. The bond between the girls is something I will never forget."



Senior Emma Hannifin was a captain on Varsity this year.



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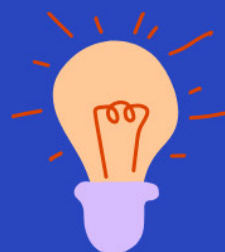


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Girl's Varsity Tennis Team Finishes Strong in CIF Playoffs

By JAYDEN KAY LINAYAO

Cypress Girl's Tennis closed their season on November 12th, 2024 placing 4th out of 5 teams in the second round of CIF. Varsity doubles **Ashley Park** and **Izampella Gavra** fought their way to #2 doubles in the league, with **Miia Thomas** taking fourth place in the league finals.

This doubles team has never played together, so finding that chemistry was a difficult challenge. "What really helped us to become first in the season was our ability to communicate with each other in the game." Park said. "Our friendship was another thing that helped us play really well together to earn our spot in the league." They have been able to overcome this barrier through their journey while learning about themselves.

"It felt like a lot of relief, and it was nice knowing that I made it to the second day knowing that all of my hard work has actually paid off." Thomas

reflects. Every season's end means new beginnings for the graduating seniors. After eleven years of dedicating her life to tennis, Thomas plans on committing to Cypress Community College to pursue her tennis career. "Even though I've played singles my whole life and I'm kind of by myself, I know that there's a lot of people supporting me, and that they're supporting me in spirit."

Coach **Joseph Paul** stated, "The girls worked really hard this season to develop their skills and improve, and they fought hard until the end."

As the girls are closing off the season, they are looking forward to improving, training, and establishing a tighter bond with their fellow teammates.



Junior Ashley Park swings for the ball showing off her skills on the court. (Photo by Rehansa Kulatilleke)

League Results: Girls Golf Fall Season 7

By ADAM HAWARI and TONY RODRIGUEZ



The varsity girls golf team valued supporting each other on the team. (Photo by Coach Metry)

After starting with a 4-1 record, Girls Golf came up short in league standings with their last match against Sunny Hills on Oct. 15. Varsity girls golf ended an eventful season with a record of 5-8-1. Although the league games roughed up the Cypress Centurion team, the past season will be a great reflection for new and upcoming players.

Girls Golf Coach, **Susan Metry** stated that tough matches did not shake their confidence but rather inspired players to improve. Coach Metry says the disadvantages in the league, "gave them the drive to try to improve to be better." She believes building confidence is key, considering how discouraging losses can be, and this shapes her coaching style.

Since she was five years old, varsity golfer **Tania Mahesh-**

wari has been interested in golf. She believes that girls golf isn't necessarily a "team sport," but a "mental game."

Sunny Hong one of the few freshmen on Varsity said, "We went against hard teams, like Troy and Sunny Hills, and I was anxious about that." She tried not "to think about it too much, and keep playing on."

Sophomore **Chloe Wong** agreed that the hardest part of golfing is mental. "If I didn't do that well, I felt kind of dumb." To overcome challenges she would tell herself to "move on, leave the past behind, and focus on the now."

Ari Chung, a senior in Cypress Girls Golf rediscovered her love for Golf within the Cypress High School Team. Upon entering high school, Chung joined the girls golf team to reconnect

with the sport first taught to her father prior to COVID-19. "I wanted to continue playing golf, especially with a team," she explained. For Chung, other sports don't compare to golf because, "It focuses on individual performance," testing both physical and mental skills. This season she worked on perfecting her accuracy and swing tempo while mentoring underclassmen and becoming closer with her teammates.

Junior **Kate Zapanta** improved her game this season by "focusing on [her] short game, and trying to be more consistent." She looks forward to being on the team again as a senior.

Overall, the Girls Golfers undertook a great challenge this past season. Despite some defeats, a great learning experience in sports is needed to excel. Hopefully, the upcoming season will show the tremendous effort of the Cypress Centurion Golf team.



The Centurions made it to CIF playoffs in their 2nd year. The girls are looking forward to apply their talents and practice into accomplishing another victory. (Photo by Coach Metry)



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Cypress Show Choir Presents Candy Cane Lane Winter Show

By AMY PARK

On December 12 and 13 at 7 p.m., Cypress Show Choir will be having their annual Winter show; tickets will be \$10 pre-sale and \$15 at the door. **Hollie Jones**, the director and teacher for Show Choir and guitar, has created a red, white, and silver program for the audience that should “should feel like everything is Candy Cane Lane.”



The choir Winter show is on December 12 and December 13 at 7:00 p.m. (Photo by Amy Park)

Audience members should expect to feel excitement and to experience the creativity that Cypress Show Choir has to offer. The theme of the show along with the songs and the dances are all supposed to come together in order to provide a unique winter show. **Megan Na**, the President and Voice Captain for High Voltage, stated that “there is a lot of dancing but we also have an acapella number to showcase our vocal skills and how much we have improved since last year.” The highlights of the show includes all of the group songs and the audience carols.

A song that the audience should definitely look forward to listening to would be “Do you Believe in Magic,” Cypress Show Choir has a surprise with this

song specifically that the younger audience would love. There will be multiple solos and duets, one that Jones wants to point out is **Josephine Beltran** and **Lia Delgado’s** duet and they’ll be singing “Santa Can’t You Hear Me?” Other songs that audience members would be able to recognize would be “Where Are You Christmas,” “The Chipmunk Song,” and “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.” What Cypress Show Choir really wants to present, that is different from previous years, is how much they have advanced in their showmanship and musicality. They are making all the efforts by having vocal coaches and bringing in more choreographers that will push them to their limits, just to give Cypress High School better performances that the audience will love and cherish. Mrs. Jones stated, “We have seen significant progress from even having our first show this year, we hope that from each show we step up in the student’s abilities, like their singing should be super great.”

Omar Swidan, the Director of Activities stated, “If you are planning on showing up to the show, just know that you are getting your money’s worth, we’ve put a lot of work into the show.” Cypress Show Choir is making all the efforts to step up their game and to present an amusing and cheerful show for the holidays, make sure to come by Cypress High School on December 12 and December 13, to enjoy the Candy Cane Lane Winter Show!!

Sound in Motion Begins Their Competition Season

By REINA TAKAGI

Cypress High School’s band and pageantry competed in the Placentia Band Review and the Kennedy Field Tournament on October 19, 2024, marking the start of their competitive season.

On the streets of Placentia, The Sound in Motion performed “The Centurion” by Dave Martyn. The band got 4th place out of all Class B bands with a score of 88.55. Colorguard won Auxiliary Sweepstakes with a score of 85.70.

At the Kennedy Field Tournament, the Sound in Motion competed in the 6A division along with Anaheim High School. Cypress High School took home first place awards for band, color guard, and percussion.

Pageantry Co-Captain **Annika Kim** (10) felt confident with her performances at Placentia and Kennedy. The team, coached by **Andrew Padilla** and **Emily Troxel**, is preparing for future performances. Kim shares her hopes for the season, “Trophies are great, but I want to see improvement.” She added, “Help others, because it’s a team effort.”

The band and pageantry competed at various locations in the following weeks, including at the Loara Band Review and Field Tournament, Irvine Field Tournament, and Bellflower Field Tournament. At the Second Annual Bellflower Field Tournament, held on November 6, the Sound in Motion performed their show “Unforgiven—A Western Saga,” and took home sweepstakes trophies for Band, Auxiliary, Percussion. They also won the High Music Award.

At parades, the band is led by Drum Major **Julian Lopez** (11). As the main spinner for the Sound in Motion, he hopes to improve. “Performing is a skill, as well as everything that comes before it,” he said. Lopez advises the band and pageantry to pay attention to their mindsets. He emphasizes, “A lot of people focus on how the other schools beat us... if you focus on how you’re going to beat yourself, then you’re going to do a lot better than other people. It’s not about other people, it’s about us. It’s about your performance and about how you do.”

Flute player **Alyssa Punsalan** (9) hopes to try her best this season. She emphasized how, “Preparing for the rest of the season takes a lot of dedication and commitment.” Along with sectionals and morning rehearsals, many members of the band and pageantry program have been practicing on their own time. Punsalan, who takes her instrument home to practice, shared, “Just remember that you can do anything if you keep trying.”

David Blackinton is a student teacher and visual staff for the Sound in Motion. Part of his job includes helping wind players

with musical skills and technique, making sure there’s uniformity and clarity in how students march, and helping design and improve the show with other staff. As the field season ends, the Sound in Motion is getting ready for the second half of the year. Band has their concert season, while pageantry and percussion have their own competitive seasons. “Marching season is a very long process and at this point, it’s easy to lose focus. We are starting to work with some more minute and smaller musical details in the classroom, which we are able to do in the concert season,” Blackinton said. He reflects on the Sound in Motion’s competitions. “They showcase all of the students from band and pageantry...and it gives a good representation of who we are as a school and as a program,” As the season is wrapping up, Blackinton says that the band is, “working hard on...the fundamental building blocks of creating great music, and using those skills to express ourselves.”

The Sound in Motion’s season has started off strong. Both students and staff have been working hard, and are continuing to prepare for the rest of the year.



The Sound in Motion competes at the Loara Band Review. (Photo by Laurel Velez)

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