THE FORGE

Vol. 112 No. 3 SANTA BARBARA HIGH SCHOOL - THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2025 Est. 1914



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Man made snow over Paseo Nuevo during 2025 holiday celebration. | **Image credit: Amelie Gridley**

THE FORGE
STAFF
2025 - 2026
700 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93103
(805)-966-9101
Room 87

EDITORS

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Clara Watson

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR
Natalie MacFarlane

NEWS EDITOR
Clara Watson

FEATURES EDITOR
Camila Garcia-Otero

STUDENT SECTION EDITOR
Amelie Gridley

SPORTS EDITOR
Ember Reiter

WEBSITE MANAGER
Ethan Maday

STAFF REPORTERS
Marley Bernsen
Lucien Dempsey
Micah Fore
Iris Heckes
Daniela Ortega Lopez
Kiki Oser
Fianna Peterson
Zander Peterson
Eli Prunckle
Claire Putnam
Lily Schumacher

ADVISER
Joanne Cloutier

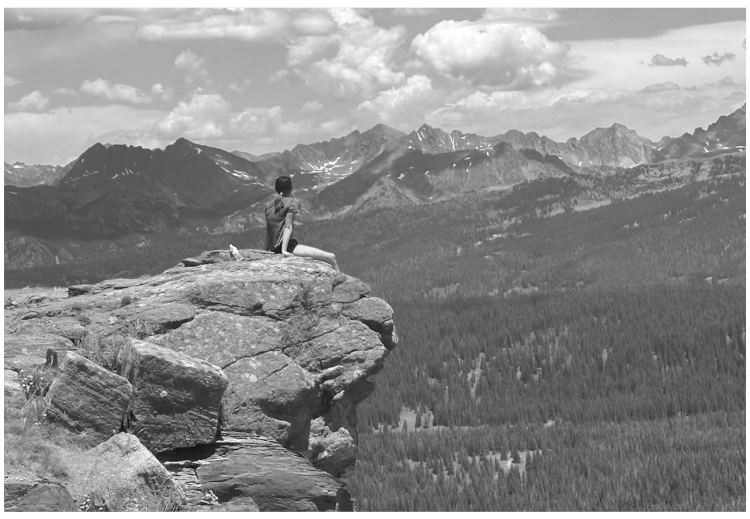
Letter From the Editor

BY CLARA WATSON

Dear Readers,
It may seem counterintuitive to keep printing a physical newspaper when U.S. print circulation of newspapers has dropped 70% since 2005. In essence, the very paper you're holding right now is a remnant of the past, grasping through cellulose fibers to stay relevant in a world turned digital. However, there is one caveat that ink has over pixels. And that is connection. Creating a print publication means a printer assistant every month making the journey from Los Angeles to my doorstep with 1,300 papers bound with twine. Through our work at *The Forge*, a print business helps keep its doors open. Those papers get loaded up in my truck bed, and staffers grab bundles to start passing out.
A knock on a classroom door. A friendly good morning to a teacher, *Forges* in hand to place by the entryway. Each little connection point aids in the humanity of a shared project. We work to serve you, to make this school: every student, every teacher, feel heard, inspired, or educated. There is something to be said in the exchange of a physical object, an entity composed of matter, quadrillions of atoms: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, all compressed together, billions of years of bonds broken and reborn again, in your very hand. For the rest of our lifetimes they will serve as the molecular web that assembles text printed on a page, to make YOU, the reader, feel something. How much more human can you get? So much of what it means to be a connective species seems to be eroding away. Letters have been replaced with emails and texts, photos used to be passed down through generations as a priceless heirloom, now they sit lost in iClouds. Existing only as binary code to determine the color of each pixel, instead of the physical compounds of colored ink stowed away in an attic.
The constant drone of consuming, scroll after scroll, dopamine dripping through our midbrain, more and more data being produced to sell to the highest bidder, this is a reality that is inhuman. For what is the connection of a digital avatar compared to living, breathing organisms? Yes, print media is dying. Yes, newsrooms are closing at an alarming rate. But in this world of less and less human connection, if *The Forge* can serve as one small cornerstone of human creativity and gumption in the physical realm, I will remain honored to serve as your editor-in-chief.

In other words, print is here to stay at Santa Barbara High. Statistics be damned, let's keep print media alive. Together.

With thanks,
Clara Watson



Clara overlooking the Colorado Rocky Mountians on a hike. **Image courtesy of Kristi Ward**

IN LOVING MEMORY



DEAN JOSEPH DEPHILLIPO

"He was a very impactful teacher here in our program, and he also inspired a lot of students who come through MAD to pursue film production in college and career"
- Shea Peinado MAD Academy Director

" I just think he was an incredible technical resource and he really encouraged the students to take their own initiative."
- Kate Hodges Family Engagement and Partnership Liaison

A celebration of life will be held on January third, 2026 at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum

Pentagon's New Press Rules Spark New York Times Lawsuit and Fears of Escalating Censorship

BY NATALIE MACFARLANE

On Dec. 4, *The New York Time*s filed a lawsuit against the Pentagon for "infringing on the constitutional rights of journalists" following a set of rules imposed by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell about military reporting.

The rules, put in place in October, limit journalists' access to the Pentagon and ask them to sign a 21-page contract upon entrance. Before this contract, journalists were only asked to fill out a one-page document in order to obtain a press credential, or Pentagon Facility Alternate Credential (PFAC), and agree to background checks, among other security measures. These rules primarily limit journalists from gaining access to coverage of unclassified documents. Through the First Amendment's freedom of the press, journalists are permitted to report on unclassified documents, unless they are putting the United States at risk during wartime, per the Espionage Act of 1917.

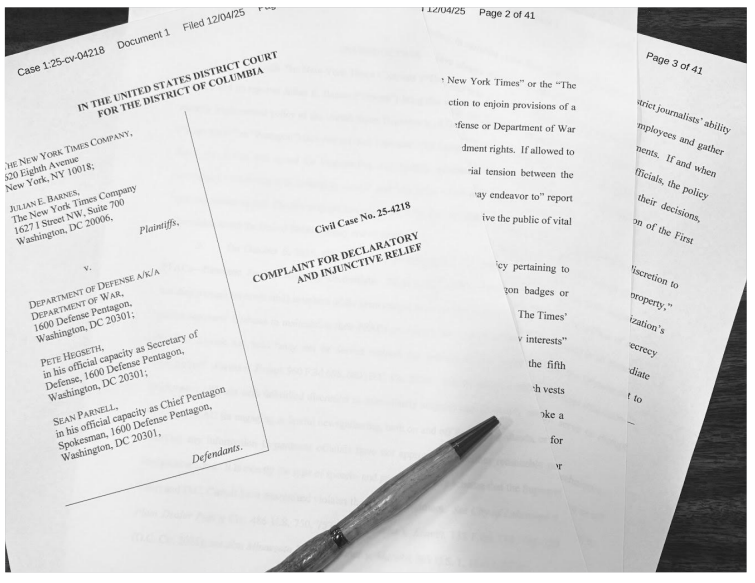
The Times described the new rules as a "stark departure" from the rules set in place previously, identifying that one of the new rules that puts reporters at risk of losing their press passes is a violation of the Fifth Amendment, because the Pentagon has assured that a PFAC can not be arbitrarily taken away without due process.

Looking at examples such as recent missile strikes on Venezuelan ships or cases such as the Abu Dhabi abuse cases, Philip Dracht, a local banker and consumer finance litigator, said, "The downside of this, going back 20 years or even further to the Vietnam war, if the press isn't allowed to track down stories, use sources of a combination of classified materials but mostly unclassified materials, there's no way to break stories."

Rules on the press mean that journalists aren't able to convey what is happening in the government to the general public. This has the potential to disadvantage not only journalists in reporting but also American voters. Santa Barbara High School (SBHS) world history teacher and former lawyer, John Tormey, says,

"If the citizens don't know what the government's doing, how can they possibly make educated voting decisions?" In *The Times'* complaint, it is stated that the restrictions "will deprive the public of vital information about the United States military and its leadership." When the rules were published on Oct. 6, many credentialed journalists gave up their badges rather than sign the document. Multiple news organizations, including CNN, Fox News, CBS, *The New York Times*, ABC News, and NBC News, released a statement that condemned the Pentagon's policy, stating, "This policy is without precedent and threatens core journalistic protections."

The Times and media lawyers further identified an issue with the Pentagon's use of the word "solicitation" in the policy released. According to an article published by *The Times* following the release of the lawsuit by Erik Wemple, the policy is essentially saying that the First Amendment lacks to protect reporters when they, "solicit government employees to violate the law by providing confidential government information," which has the potential to apply to reporters who "encourage Defense Department Employees to share "nonpublic" agency information."



The New York Times' official complaint against the Department of Defense. **Image credit: Natalie MacFarlane**

While many news organizations refused to sign the document, a few organizations have. These include numerous partisan organizations that report on the Trump Administration and the military in ways that may not maintain a constant state of accuracy.

SBHS senior and editor-in-chief of *The Forge*, Clara Watson, says, "If the *New York Times* were to not win this lawsuit, I think it would be very detrimental to journalism. I think it would be a catalyst for more infringement on the rights of journalists in America… it would accelerate the right-wing extremism of censoring free speech, especially in the current administration, and overall it would be a huge loss to journalism as an art and as a profession."

2025 Trends Students are Obsessed With

BY IRIS HECKES



Students compare their "Spotify Wrapped" with one another. **Image credit: Iris Heckes**

While some music has been popular for a while, many new songs and albums have come into the picture this year. From Bad Bunny to Benson Boone, 2025 has been a rollercoaster of genres.

Sophomore Ishan Pandya guessed "Pink Pony Club" by Chapell Roan was the most popular song of 2025. According to Spotify, "Pink Pony Club" was number eight in the US top 10 songs of 2025.

Junior Shae Fitzgerald guessed "Birds of a Feather" was this year's most popular song. In actuality, it took fourth place in the U.S. and second globally. The song is featured on Billie Eilish's 2024 studio album *Hit Me Hard And Soft*, a chart-topping album through 2025. Students at Santa Barbara High School (SBHS) are constantly surrounded by music and are always hearing new and returning songs. Many songs dominating charts are streamed in students' cars on their way to school, or in headphones on the way to class, contributing to the overall music trends as shown through applications like Spotify.

For fashion around campus, many students have ditched their backpacks in place for tote bags and large purses. Prints like leopard print are big in fabrics along with camouflage, stripes and florals. Denim is back in all colors and styles, especially larger, baggier shapes. Large jackets and blazers are selling out in favor of style over comfort. However, Ugg slippers and flip flops are substituted for sneakers, showing the "cozy chic" aesthetic students know and love.

It is no surprise Dubai chocolate was a favorite treat of 2025, and matcha is replacing morning coffee. Iced coffees, lattes and matchas are the best-selling item in cafes all over California. TikTok helped spread the popularity of rice cakes, as well as protein dessert bowls, smashburger tacos, cottage cheese, and the 'whole foods diet of steak, avocado, and eggs.'

The movies and shows on student televisions this year include *K-Pop Demon Hunters*, *Wicked*, and *Superman*. *K-Pop Demon Hunters* became the most-watched Netflix original film in 2025 and *Wicked*, too, was one of the most-watched movies across all platforms. In California, *The White Lotus*, TV show, was a big hit and many students on campus were buzzing over the show that dominated all charts this year.

Many trends this year were carried over from 2024, but some blew up and broke records. The student body represents all the trends from fashioning Ugg slippers to listening to top artists all over SBHS.

Milpas Holiday Parade Cancelled Due to ICE Concerns

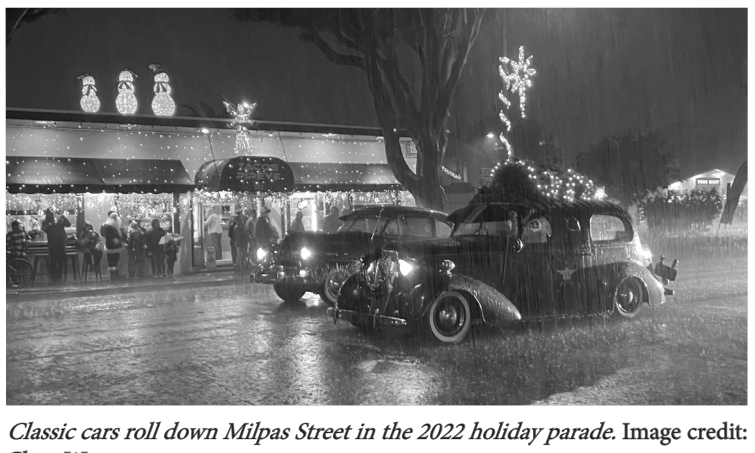
BY CLARA WATSON

Santa Barbara's longstanding Eastside Milpas Street Holiday Parade has been canceled due to fear of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids. This is following similar trends in Santa Barbara, in October the Museum of Contemporary Art canceled its Día De los Muertos parade due to ICE concerns as well.

As of late October, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has deported 527,000 people. ICE remains a constant presence and fear in migrant communities. According to a KCLU report, around 10% of Santa Barbara County's residents are estimated to be undocumented. The Ventura County Star estimates that roughly 40% of U.S.-born Hispanic children in the county live with undocumented parents. California Lutheran University reports 71% of undocumented migrants in the county have lived in the United States for over 10 years. Families with established lives in the U.S. remain at risk of forcible deportation in our community.

Santa Barbara High School's (SBHS) Band, Cheer, and Donettes dance team were all planning to perform at the parade. This would have been the parade's 71st run. SBHS's involvement in the community tradition has spanned decades. Pablo G. Villagomez Taboado, Captain of the Donnettes, comments on why school spirit in local events is so important, ".. we all show up and show out and show what the spirit is at SBHS… There's a lot of things here in the community that people don't know about, about the schools and about what we offer. And I know, me being a student, I wish other kids knew, the opportunities that are offered here… that students are here to engage... and share with the community." Taboado shares in the similar local sentiment of being "bummed" over the parade's cancellation, but cites understanding of the decision due to the need to protect peers and keep the community safe. Taboado elaborates on the presence of ICE in Santa Barbara, "I feel like it's something that we should be concerned about. I've seen so many distraught families and it's so sad to think about…I feel like we're just a community of happy people just wanting to do our own thing and it's just being ruined by people who have this opposite feeling of who we are."

The community shares in the feeling of not allowing ICE to break Santa Barbara's festive spirit. Tabaodo says, "just ,cause we couldn't celebrate as a community, we celebrate it with our families and just enjoying the moments that we have. I feel being with our family is like the most important thing we have and just share within each other. And even to strangers too. You might even be like, 'Happy Holidays' on the street. Just share with everyone as much as you can… It will be over soon. I have faith."



Classic cars roll down Milpas Street in the 2022 holiday parade. **Image credit: Clara Watson**

Jackson Gillies Feature

BY LUCIEN DEMPSEY

A red piano, the smell of alcohol, strings sounding on guitars, and the blues. When I met Jackson Gillies at The Red Piano, the first conversation we had was with our instruments. We connected through my piano and his guitar, and from that moment, I saw that he had something interesting to say. Gillies was born on July 17, 1999, in Plainview, New York, to parents Connie and Bill. Sadly, Jackson Gillies has had to deal with health struggles since a very young age. At three years old, he was diagnosed with type one diabetes, and at 13, after moving to Florida he was diagnosed with Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS). HS is a chronic inflammatory skin condition that develops abscesses in areas like the armpits and groin. After realising that the humid environment of Florida was not the best place for someone with a serious skin condition, Gillies' mom, Connie Gillies, proposed moving to Santa Barbara. "My mom visited Santa Barbara and saw the organic food, felt the weather, and said, 'Let's get out of Florida.'" After moving to Santa Barbara and while bedridden for months because of HS, Gillies received a guitar from his stepdad. He was taught his first chords by his stepdad, and took inspiration from The Avett Brothers, an American folk rock band. Gillies says he, "Wouldn't be doing it if it weren't for them." After regaining the ability to walk, Gillies continued playing around Santa Barbara growing up. His second time performing guitar in front of a live audience he won the Teen Star music competition in Santa Barbara. Afterwards, he continued playing gigs around Santa Barbara, but was deeply unsatisfied. "It's a blessing and a curse to start with a success like that, because for the next three years straight, I played two or three-hour sets every Friday or Saturday night in little bars and coffee shops to small crowds, sometimes for people who weren't even interested in hearing music." In 2019, Gillies went on American Idol, performing 'Make It Rain' by Foy Vance, and realized that he needed to learn more. "I'm not ready, and that's fine, I'm young, and I need to figure out what I really want, what I really want to do with music." When asked what he would say to young musicians trying to do what he does, he said, "Your practice in private pays off in public ... It's the only thing that separates professional musicians from non-professional musicians. We're all humans, we're all playing the same gear, the gear doesn't matter. It's when you're up on that stage are you telling the story really well, and are you engaging with the people that are in that room? And if not, that's beyond your control, just play for yourself. Somebody asked Wynton Marsalis 'Do you play for the player, or for the listener?' and he said 'The first listener is the player.' ... You're not just showing off who you are, you're telling the story of whatever song you're portraying." Now 26 years old, Gillies is a full-time musician. He mostly works private gigs around the Santa Barbara area, but also plays at venues like Fig Mountain Brewery and SOhO Restaurant and Music Club.



Jackson Gillies. **Image courtesy of Jackson Gillies**

Giving Back This Holiday Season

BY KIKI OSER

Santa Barbara Foodbank's logo. **Image courtesy of Food Bank of Santa Barbara County**

The holidays are an important time that brings communities together. Not only is it a time to receive kindness, gifts, and love but also it's the season of giving. It's hard to notice but many people don't have the luxuries to celebrate holidays as desired. Many lacking not only things like gifts under the tree but basic needs that are necessary to sustain them in their everyday life.

Organizations such as the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County have many opportunities to help out especially during the holidays. Such as the act itself of helping give out food, packing the food for the distributions, and warehouse work. Alissa Millar who is the Community Engagement Coordinator for South County volunteer operations at the foodbank described the foodbanks mission as to "Bring Santa Barbara county from hunger into health through good nutrition" also providing nutrition education, and programs for older adults, while working side by side with other nonprofits. For many of the volunteering opportunities you are required to be over 15 but they do have the backyard bounty program for all ages where in groups you can go to farms and orchards across Santa Barbara county and harvest supply.

During the holiday season they do specific events such as the holiday turkey drive where they collect turkeys, chickens and hams. They also put on "Hunger Heros", a competition throughout different businesses where they donate volunteer time and goods, giving everyone a chance to enjoy the holidays. But this does not mean help is not needed all year round. You can look for open volunteering opportunities at the Santa Barbara Foodbank through their social media and website.

If you're looking for ways to give back this holiday season there are many other non profits also needing help such as Toys for Tots, Adam's Angels, and The Giving Tree. Even the act of donating old clothes, unwanted food, and small donations can make the biggest impact. No matter the size of the act, everything can make a difference. The holidays are a great reminder to give back with many opportunities to help others, especially in your community.

Choir: a Sneak Peak into Their Upcoming Performance

BY ELI PRUNCKLE

Santa Barbara High School's (SBHS) choir group has a performance on Dec. 19 in the Trinity Episcopal Church at 7 p.m. Tickets are $10. As they are carolling around the school and working on other activities, they are practicing and preparing.

One of the choir's section leaders, junior Angie Valencia, is in charge of planning practices with the tenors of the choir. She remarks about the upcoming concert, "Come for the fun vibes and singing." The choir will be performing Hanukkah songs, more classical traditional church songs, and more festive songs like "Frosty the Snowman".

The choir is also caroling for Christmas all around Santa Barbara. Sophomore Rylan Nelson, says, "We get hired to go outside of school and go to parties and events." According to junior Camila Robles Quintero, an alto in the choir, the class usually spends around a month and a half to two months practicing every day in class for each performance.

Once the concert gets closer, they have after-school rehearsals where they will perform inside Trinity to accommodate the acoustics and adjust their sound accordingly. Nelson says people should expect lots of cool harmonies and good songs picked out for their show, stating,"You should expect to be surprised." Nelson also says they do lots of practicing in their sectionals, where each section that does a harmony works separately. This helps the choir improve on their respective musical role, so when they all perform together, they sound coherent and prepared. He thinks people should come to their performance because, "It's an event and we're raising money for the school. They should just support the arts, and also it's gonna be fun." Along with this, the hardest part of practicing, according to Nelson and Valencia, is memorising and learning your part. Valencia says, "If you don't know your part, you're fried because there's no safety net to catch you." Along with this, according to Valencia, they aren't allowed to have the music sheets in front of them during performances, and they have to memorise every single song by a certain due date. Adding onto this, Nelson says, "The hardest part is working it over and over, "

Come to the winter choir showcase to support fellow SBHS students. Robles Quintero says, "it's important to show up and support your fellow classmates, for us this is like our sport, and this is our competition."



SBHS choir practicing during their third period class. **Image credit: Eli Prunckle**

The First Annual AVID Car Show

BY DANIELA ORTEGA LOPEZ

The Advancement Via Individual Determinination (AVID) held its first car show on Sunday, Nov. 28. Over 273 cars were showcased. The success of this event exceeded expectations. AVID was able to raise 1,300 dollars, which was substantially more than they had anticipated. Games and raffles were held with ninth-grader Amrie Reveles as the Master of Ceremonies (MC) who also created the event. Joseph Velasco, AVID Coordinator and AVID 10 teacher, and AVID 9 counselor Francisco Ramos coordinated the event.

Reveles says "I chose a car show just because I grew up with a bunch of car shows and I grew up in that community. I always used to see fundraisers and car shows so I thought, 'hey let's do that.' Then we raised around 1,000 dollars. The purpose of this was to raise money for our program so that our students are able to go see colleges in different towns, cities, or different states."

Velasco says the event was intended to fundraise but found that community also stemmed from it. "You know, the cool thing about it was that I hadn't thought about it until the day it was happening or what a great community event it was. It really felt like this wholesome event."



Two of the cars displayed during the AVID car show. Image credit: Joseph Velasco

Ramos says this event vastly exceeded his expectations. "We had…about 40 cars, we had 10 vendors, a couple of food vendors and Food Connection was there serving up tacos and burritos. It was just a great atmosphere. It just went so smoothly and there were amazing cars, amazing people. It just went well."

Velasco also remarked on how big of a success the event was, especially for AVID's first-ever car show. "If we made $600-700 I'd be stoked. We ended up making $1,300. But more importantly we had over 200 people who just showed up on their own to just check it out." He says a lot of the community came out to support the event, there were tons of people who walked by and wanted to see what was going on. "This is a really wholesome, sweet community event that I think can definitely grow bigger."

This event brought the community together and sparked a ton of joy. One of Velasco's highlights was the food truck and seeing the community all together. "The food truck was awesome. Here's the deal about a food truck. I think wherever you have a food truck or food at any event, it turns into a party. It turns into something fun. Having the vendors there selling really different things from hoodies and t-shirts to makeup, to blankets, to homemade candles, it just felt like a party. It went so smooth. At one point, Mr Ramos and I had nothing to do because all the students were running everything."

Reveles's highlight was the car contest and judging. "The highlights were saying the awards because I had to go around and talk to the other judges and decide which car was best. Then the awards were also a highlight. I'm kind of proud of myself 'cause I did it all by myself. I barely had anyone helping me. But I liked it. It was fun." Ramos liked the prizes as well as the cars themselves, his personal highlight. "I think some of the cars themselves were highlights of the event. There were some beautiful cars out there. The details, and some of them were amazing. Amrie's dad created prizes for the contest. We had different categories for the cars and the winner each got a custom hand paint (job), (an) airbrushed, folding medal chair and…mini tool boxes."

Teacher Spotlight: Donovan Warrecker

BY LUCIEN DEMPSEY

Donovan Warrecker was born in 1977 at Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, and is a fourth-generation Santa Barbara resident. He and his five older brothers all went to Santa Barbara High School (SBHS). Growing up with two parents who were both teachers and had six kids to take care of, money was always tight. Because of that, free activities were the go-to, like going to the beach, camping, or spending time at SBHS. Being outside so much is what inspired him to be interested in life and how it works. "I'd go to the beach and then I'd come home, and on Sunday nights they'd have on PBS the nature series' … I loved it, so I was instilled with a love of nature from a very early age."

Warrecker was also encouraged to make art through his youth. In addition to being immersed in learning about the world and art, he also played baseball through most of his younger years. After attending SBHS, he lived with his grandfather for two years while attending Allan Hancock College, where he continued playing baseball. For his junior year, he was offered a 'walk on' spot on the baseball team at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB), where he eventually was the starting catcher for the team. After graduating from USCB, Warrecker got a job offer through an assistant coach at the school to coach and play on an elite team in Sweden, as well as coach the junior team. In addition, he ran a six-week baseball camp for kids aged from 14 - 17, and it's here where he realized his passion for teaching. "We were running through the forest in Sweden, and the kids were super into it. And I was like, god, this is really fun, and it's rewarding." Warrecker got his teaching credential at Cal State Channel Islands. His student teaching was then completed at Carpinteria Middle School, and at SBHS while being supervised by his high school biology teacher, Irene Kasai. "I remember at Cal State Channel Islands they asked what are the top three schools that you would like to teach at, you know, after you get your credential, and I just wrote Santa Barbara High, and that's it. I'm like, man, if I don't teach at Santa Barbara High ... This is the only place I want to do it." There wasn't an opening for Warrecker's position for a long time, until unfortunately a teacher fell ill, and he was thrown into the deep end as a long-term substitute teacher halfway through the year. Warrecker taught as a long-term substitute for two years, until SBHS switched the science sequencing, and didn't have a biology opening for him anymore. "Long-term sub pay is like sub pay, but you're teaching like you're a full-time teacher. It's kind of a raw deal. So I moved out of my apartment. I moved into one of my brother's garage, and I sold my truck, and I worked bartending." Instead of trying to continue teaching at SBHS, he instead moved in with a cousin of his who lived in Basque country. "He invited me to live with him in Basque country, so I moved to the Basque country in January. I was unable to work because of the work visa restrictions, but because I sold my truck and I had saved up a bunch of money from bartending (and) living in my brother's garage rent-free, I was able to live there and just hike and surf. I was completely immersed, nobody spoke English. Like not one person." It was a life-changing experience for Warrecker, and he didn't buy a return ticket.



Donovan Warrecker holding up his Tiger Shark jaws in front of two pieces of artwork made by him. Image credit: Lucien Dempsey



Some of Warrecker's artwork. Image credit: Lucien Dempsey

In June, he got an email from the Santa Barbara Unified School District that the Marine Biology teacher, Bill Kauth, had retired, leaving the position open for him. "I came back at the end of June, and I wanna say within a week of being back, I interviewed at the district office, and at the end of the interview they asked me do you have any questions? And all I could say was: Is this a full-time position?" He taught CP Biology and CP Marine Biology courses until 2018, when he began solely teaching Marine Biology. Warrecker has been teaching at SBHS as a permanent teacher for 17 years, and will continue to teach until he can make art as a full-time job. You can see Warrecker's art all over his classrooms, and you can even catch him working drawing between classes sometimes.

Student Section

Overheard in the Hallways

"Costco is the people's Walmart."

"Yo, Albus Dumbledore looks bad as hell in this one."

"Christ 2028!!"

"Oh god, I can't break in while I'm wearing my Versace jeans."

"Feel like Justin Trudeau used to be hotter."

"Let's take a mormon approach to this."

"Babe, don't make 9/11 jokes at my parent's house."

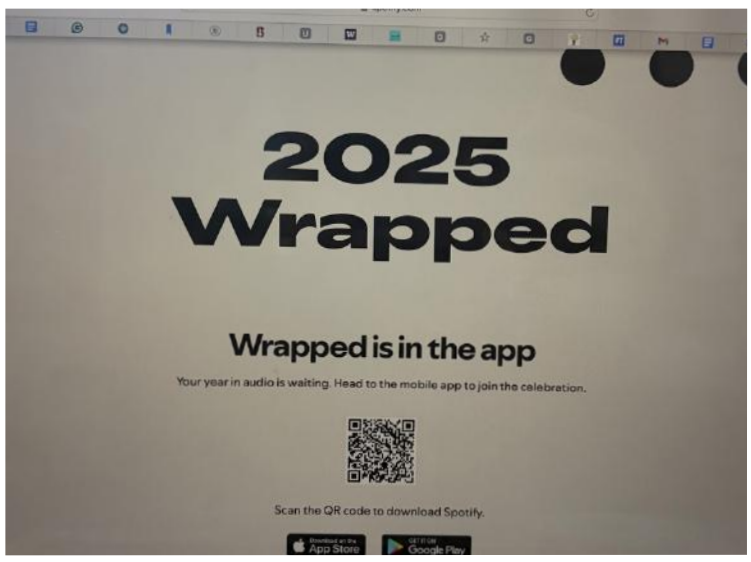
"His political awareness got me sweating."

"Peep this moggage."

Ho ho ho!

Spotify Wrapped: What's Listened to on our Campus

BY DANIELA ORTEGA



The banner for this year's Spotify Wrapped. **Image credit: Daniela Ortega**

Spotify is a widely used music platform with dozens of songs to listen to. The platform has a yearly tradition of summing up statistics and data to give users their "Spotify Wrapped." This is a widely anticipated feature that shows listeners their top artist, album, songs and minutes listened. Students were asked what their data showed about their music taste and what they believe will be the most popular artist across the school.

Vanessa Reynoso, a student at Santa Barbara High School (SBHS) shares that her top artist was Kendrick Lamar. She says that she finds his music to be poetic with great lyricism. "I like the instrumentals and the lyrics are really poetic." Sam Morello, a freshman, says her top artist was The Weeknd. "He's a big vibe and is just like a comfortable person to listen to. I just really like his music." Kendrick Lamar was brought up a lot by the student body as a top artist. Reynoso says her top song was "Poetic Justice" by Kendrick Lamar. "The thing that stands out to me the most about the song is the poetic lyrics. The song is about being poetic and writing songs, it's ironic." Morello shares that her top song was "Fantasy" by Bazzi. "What really stands out is the instrumentals. I just really love the song. My favorite lyric is, "Put some faith in me, take my hand to your fantasy."

Tons of different genres of music have flourished throughout the year. The student body has a variety of music tastes ranging from popular to underground . Reynoso says, "I think the schools top artist would be Taylor Swift because Taylor Swift is really popular and I think a lot of people listen to her." Morello says, "Maybe SZA, because I heard her music like all over the school. The cafeteria was playing it the other day, I heard one of the ladies working playing "All the Stars" and I was so confused."

There is a very diverse taste in music around the SBHS campus. Other students shared that their "Spotify Wrapped" top artist was Tyler the Creator and their most listened to songs were a mixture of Kendrick Lamar and Frank Ocean.

Holiday Happenings and Festive Fun Around Santa Barbara

BY MARLEY BERNSEN

Winter is upon us once again, as evidence by the chill in the air and the strands of colorful lights adorning the roofs and front doors of houses everywhere. 'Tis the season to explore what festive wonders this small town may have to offer - so dust off your ice skates and grab your puffer jackets because Santa Barbara has no shortage of fun, family-friendly activities to partake in during the holidays.

The Santa Barbara Zoo is a year-round favorite for locals, but winter brings a bright and colorful treat to the familiar animal enclosures. Lining the winding paths sit thousands of silk-covered lanterns depicting animal and nature scenes from around the world, with over 50,000 LED bulbs illuminating the massive display. Perhaps you'll find yourself face-to-face with an incandescent, terrifying tiger, or walk beneath dozens of glimmering butterflies suspended in the trees. Immersive virtual elements are also included - hop on a bike across from the grass hill to make a giant glowing panda ride along with you, or wave to new friends at the Los Angeles Zoo Lights via a live video stream! Scattered throughout the park, you can find snack carts and concession stands offering warm treats like hot chocolate, as well as other food and beverages. Zoo Lights runs almost every day from Nov. 12 to Jan. 11, from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. Prices range from $22 to $36, depending on peak times, while parking is an additional $11.

A necessary stop on every family-friendly list of holiday things to do is a trip to Lane Farms, where they've traded pumpkins for Christmas trees! Walk through the rows of Douglas and Noble Firs and breathe in the festive and nostalgic scent of evergreens. Stop in the corn maze, or visit the produce stand located at the front of the parking lot to find fresh fruits and vegetables for any holiday cooking needs. Don't forget to pet the pigs, goats, and donkeys on the way out! Lane Farms is open daily from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. until Dec. 19, when their hours will switch to 10 a.m. to 6 p.m for the end of the season, officially closing on Dec. 23.

A fun, free option is to visit Paseo Nuevo on State Street every Friday through Sunday to experience the magic of snow in Santa Barbara. Gather around the lit tree in the center court of Paseo Nuevo for a festive fake snow show every weekend at 6 and 7 p.m. until Dec. 21.

Another family-friendly holiday classic no matter where you live is ice skating! A visit to Ice in Paradise in Goleta is a great excuse to dust off those skates and experience the joy of gliding seamlessly around the rink. Don't forget to bundle up as protection against the harsh chill. The rinkside cafe is also a great place to warm up after a skating session, offering food, beverages, and a cozy welcoming atmosphere to relax in. Public sessions take place from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday through Friday, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Sunday, and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, although the schedule is subject to change. Admission is $15, and an additional $5 for skate rentals.

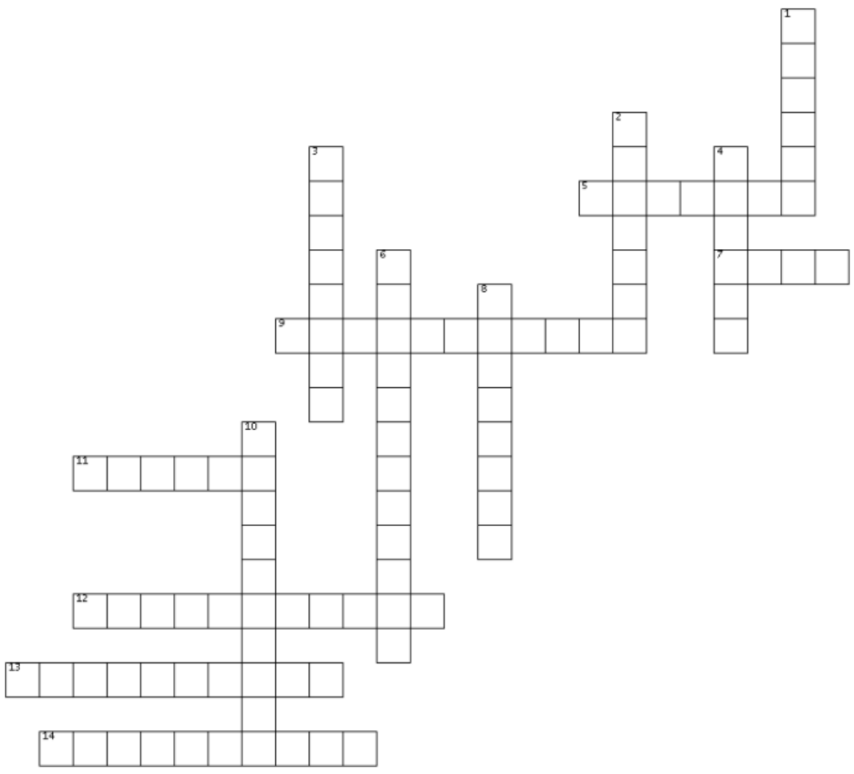


Visit Lane Farms Christmas patch to find the perfect tree for all your holiday needs. **Image courtesy of Autumn Richardson**

Even sunny, beachside Santa Barbara has no shortage of winter activities to indulge in come the holidays. No matter what you're interested in, there is sure to be something for everyone this festive season.

Sudoku and crossword

BY IRIS HECKES



The Forge Website is Launched!
Check out our new tool for communication and publishing.

Santa Barbara High School The Forge's specialty has always been print. The Forge is the second-oldest continuously running student newspaper in California. Now, The Forge's coverage is even more accessible through the redesigned publication online at their new domain, sbhsforgenews.com. The same sections featured in print are now online, including News, Sports, Features, Student Section, Arts and Entertainment. New additions online include student submitted work, opinion articles, and more overall The Forge info.

All printed articles are printed online as well. This addition will not change the printing process, however, it will expand the space for more student work, the accessibility of articles, and the quantity of articles published through the Forge. The homepage is live with all Vol. 112 issues, and previous volumes are coming soon! Scan the QR code to visit The Forge's redesigned digital publication right now!

ACROSS
5.What holds the candles during Hanukkah?
7.White, fluffy, and cold
9.Who plays Buddy in "Elf"
11.Light it with fire
12.Build a miniature home with ___
13.On New Years you make a New Years ___
14.Traditional Christmas flower

DOWN
1.The __ Does NOT love Christmas
2.Used for a children's game during Hanukkah
3.Oversized sock to hang on the fireplace
4.Famous Snowman
6. Próspero año y felicidad
8. What do you hang on a Christmas tree?
10. The flavor of a candy cane

Answers
1.grinch
2.dreidel
3.stocking
4.frosty
5.menorah
6.feliznavidad
7.snow
8.ornament
9.willferrell
10.peppermint
11.candle
12.gingerbread
13.resolution
14.poinsettia

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Give the Gift of Supporting Local this Holiday Season

BY MARLEY BERNSEN

The tradition of gift-giving has been around for thousands of years, bringing joy and holiday cheer to all, but giving gifts also benefits the businesses from which they are purchased. Supporting small, local businesses not only ensures unique gifts for loved ones but also supports fellow community members, lowers the environmental impact by decreasing shipping and packaging waste, and helps maintain the strength of the local economy.

"Helping the people in your community will eventually come back and be rewarding in other ways for you," said Andrea Jensen, the manager of Kariella and The Men's Den, a locally owned and operated store on State Street. "You get to not only get to know the people in your neighborhood, but you also are helping people [achieve] their dreams."

Riviera Towel Company

If you are looking for something to fit the vibe of coastal Santa Barbara, look no further than Riviera Towel Company, located on Gutierrez Street between Backyard Bowls and D'angelo Bakery. Their collections center around lightweight, hand-woven Turkish towels that are perfect for the average Santa Barbara beach-goer. They also have a variety of clothing options, from shorts to sweaters, as well as accessories like bathrobes, home decor, jewelry, bags, and more, all capturing the calming, beachy tone of Santa Barbara. Furthermore, the mission of Riviera Towel Company is to help preserve and heal our oceans, so 5% of their profits are donated to different marine organizations working toward ocean conservation.

The Yes Store

The Yes Store celebrates all types of artistry and craftsmanship by featuring a variety of handmade goods from local artists around the Santa Barbara community. At the heart of downtown Santa Barbara, this store is a block down from the Museum of Art. From delicate telescope necklaces to fully handcrafted suits of chain mail to painted glass vases, it's the perfect place to buy a unique and hand-crafted gift while simultaneously supporting local artisans.

"We put our heart and soul into what we make, and our hands as well. And I think that the energy of what an artist makes is felt through a personal connection," said Gaby Mendelik, an artist featured at The Yes Store. "So I just feel like it's nice to support, on a financial level, people who work so hard to make beautiful things."

Lewis and Clarke

Across the street and a block up from The Yes Store, nestled in La Arcada Plaza sits Lewis and Clarke - a cozy, charming favorite of locals and tourists alike. The narrow isles and cobbled brick floors add to the inviting ambience. Practical home goods like colorful tea towels, stainless steel cutlery, and decorative throw pillows can be found toward the back of the store. Or, check out the jewelry corner, where everything from wire-wrapped stone necklaces to strands of delicate gold and silver chain can be found. During the holiday season, rows of sparkling ornaments, snow-covered figurines and baskets of paper advent calendars adorn the shelves.

The Crafters Library

The Crafters Library is an inclusive co-working space located on Figueroa Street that includes classes, materials and tools like soldering irons and sewing machines, and a small shop that allows crafters of all ages to unleash their creativity. People can give the gift of experience via a gift card or membership, or book a class for family members and loved ones to do together. Feel free to visit the studio as well to create the perfect gift, like embroidered ornaments or a unique candle for that special someone who loves sentimental or homemade presents.

Other local favorites include Lovebird Boutique, Crimson Holiday, Vices and Spices, Il Fustino, Skin Deep, and Paradise Found.



Just a few of the local gifts featured at small businesses across downtown Santa Barbara. **Image credit: Marley Bernsen**

Studs, Fur, and the Esoteric Influence of the Zeitgeist

BY CLAIRE PUTNAM

In today's culture, trends spread at extraordinary speed, often appearing and disappearing before they can fully settle. Gianna Stump, a fashion student at Drexel University and a Santa Barbara High School (SBHS) alumnus, describes a trend as "a rapidly spreading shift in taste, behavior, or aesthetic that gains momentum through collective visibility," largely pushed by social media and constant online circulation. Kennedy Barnes — business owner and creator of the fashion brand Kiki Collection — adds that trends move so fast now that "it's easy to mistake a micro trend for something big," especially when audiences are overwhelmed by an endless stream of new content.

A major reason for this acceleration is the combination of fast-fashion economics and digital immediacy. Stump links this to "the unfortunate consequences of late-stage capitalism," pointing to companies that can replicate designs within days and sell them cheaply. This creates a cycle where people continually chase novelty, often with little awareness of the environmental and human cost. Barnes notes this pressure as well, explaining that with brands releasing new pieces weekly, "people these days are hungry for the next best thing," and low quality only encourages further consumption.

Algorithms now have immense power in deciding what becomes a trend. Instead of magazines or celebrities defining what's "in," digital platforms amplify whatever gains quick engagement. Stump explains that today's trends arise from "constant circulation, repetition, and validation across platforms," and that influencers have replaced celebrities as cultural tastemakers because they feel more accessible. She points to figures like Emma Chamberlain, whose relatability makes her influence stronger than traditional celebrity endorsement. Barnes echoes this shift, stating that "online communities and algorithms almost decide on what's becoming a trend," because they magnify small niches until they appear mainstream.

Whether trends reflect the cultural moment or actively shape it is a more complicated question. Stump believes it's both. Historically, she notes, fashion has mirrored politics and social norms. Restrictive Victorian clothing, for example, reflected restrictive gender expectations. Today, she sees a cultural echo: "with the cultural shift toward conservatism, women's beauty standards are once again leaning toward being very thin and fair," pointing to the rise of Ozempic and other weight loss medications as a symbol of this return. Barnes, however, emphasizes that trends often create the zeitgeist, particularly through cultural innovation. She explains that in the African American community, "box braids, streetwear foundations, along with music, dance, etc," have shaped mainstream culture and influenced how people dress, speak, and express themselves.

Understanding what ends a trend is just as important as understanding what starts one. Oversaturation is often cited, but Barnes argues it's not always the killer people assume. She says, "over saturation could be a powerful thing," pointing to examples like athleisure, Y2K fashion, and the clean-girl aesthetic—all of which have remained popular despite their ubiquity. Trends die when they fail to evolve or when their appeal relies solely on novelty; strong trends survive because they resonate with deeper needs or cultural values.

Most trends follow a recognizable life cycle: a small spark, algorithmic amplification, widespread adoption, oversaturation, and eventual decline or transformation. What used to unfold over years now happens in weeks. This speed contributes to cultural burnout, but it also reflects a society constantly searching for new forms of expression and identity.

For creatives navigating this rapid landscape, originality matters. As a business owner, Barnes explains her approach: she balances trend participation with uniqueness by "using older trends and modernizing them into something new," rather than simply recycling what's already popular. This mindset keeps trends evolving instead of becoming stale or derivative.

Ultimately, trends are more than fleeting aesthetics—they are indicators of collective mood, desire, and identity. They show us what people feel drawn to, what they reject, and what they aspire to imitate. They expose cultural anxieties, shifts in power, and the push-and-pull between individuality and belonging. Trends can reinforce harmful norms, but they can also elevate marginalized voices and redefine mainstream culture.

By examining how trends spread, why they accl-
lerate, and what
causes them to fade, we gain insight into the broader cultural forces shaping our moment. Trends don't just reflect the zeitgeist—they help create it, one viral moment at a time.







Kennedy Barnes's self-made website for her clothing business/fashion brand. **Image courtesy of kikicollection.co**

Into the Upside Down One Last Time (SPOILER ALERT)

BY FIANNA PETERSON

The popular show *Stranger Things* on Netflix has been taking the world by storm since its debut in 2016, and is now coming to an end with its fifth and final season.

The first four episodes of the fifth season came out on Nov. 26; another three will be released on Dec. 25, and the season finale will show on Dec. 31. This series has repeatedly claimed top spots in Netflix streaming charts, and its Season 5 premiere achieved the biggest opening week ever for an English-language show on Netflix.

This story started with Matt and Ross Duffer, who wrote, directed, and produced the show. It's set in Hawkins, Indiana, during the 1980s, and the first season starts with four boys, Will, Mike, Lucas, and Dustin, played by Noah Schnapp, Finn Wolfhard, Caleb McLaughlin, and Gaten Matarazzo.

One night, Will disappears, and his mom, Joyce (played by Winona Ryder), his brother, Jonathan (played by Charlie Heaton), and the town's police chief, Jim Hopper (played by David Harbour), launch a search. While Will's friends search, they find a mysterious girl named Eleven (played by Millie Bobby Brown), who has psychic abilities, and reveals that Will was taken to the Upside Down, an alternate dimension, by a monster called a demogorgon.

High school couple Nancy Wheeler and Steve Harrington, played by Natalia Dyer and Joe Keery, are also introduced, and they help in the search. The season ends with Joyce and Hopper rescuing Will from the Upside Down, and Eleven sacrificing herself to save Mike, Lucas, and Dustin.

Season two introduces step-siblings Max Mayfield and Billy Hargrove, played by Sadie Sink and Dacre Montgomery, as well as Hawkins Lab as the center of research on the Upside Down. Will starts having visions, and a new threat, the mind flayer, is introduced. Meanwhile, Eleven, who survived the season one finale, is secretly living with Hopper in a cabin, uncovering more about her past, including her mom, Terry, and "sister" Kali.

The season culminates when Eleven closes the gate to the Upside Down, while others in the group fight demogorgons, and free Will from the mind flayer.

Season three introduces Starcourt Mall, Robin Buckley (played by Maya Hawke), and Erica Sinclair (played by Priah Ferguson). The mind flayer escapes the Upside Down once again and possesses Billy to build an army of townspeople. Steve, Dustin, Robin, and Erica uncover a Russian base beneath Starcourt Mall with a gate to the Upside Down, and plan to destroy it.

The season ends in a showdown where Billy sacrifices himself, Eleven loses her powers, and Hopper is almost killed. After the mind flayer retreats, the Byers family moves to California with Eleven, and the town returns to normal.

Season 4 features the Byers and Eleven in California, while a serial killer from the Upside Down named Vecna (played by Jamie Bower), is loose in Hawkins.

Eleven leaves to regain her powers, and Joyce tries to find Hopper in Russia. In Hawkins, Max becomes Vecna's next target, and the group plans to kill him.

Using Max as bait, and with help from characters in Russia and Nevada, they attempt to capture and kill Vecna, but he escapes.

Season five, so far, shows the group gearing up to kill Vecna while trying to save Hawkins. Two new characters are introduced: "delightful" Derek (played by Jake Connelly) and Holly Wheeler (played by Nell Fisher).

There are several Santa Barbara High School students who have watched this show and voted for their favorite season, character, and predictions for the end. Out of 14 students, season three won the most popular with six votes, season five took second place, and season one came in last, with zero votes.

11 different characters were voted favorites, and out of 14 votes, Max won with three, and Steve took second place. There was a tie for the winner of the most popular ending prediction between Eleven dying to kill Vecna and Will and Vecna dying together.

However the Duffer brothers decide to finish the story, it will bring this epic adventure to a close and mark the end of the beginning of many of these actors' careers.



Stranger Things season five, part one, appearing now on Netflix. **Image credit: Fianna Peterson**

VADA Artist of the Month: Shae Fitzgerald

BY AMELIE GRIDLEY

Shae Fitzgerald, a junior at Santa Barbara High School (SBHS) and proud member of the Visual Arts and Design Academy (VADA), is an artist of many dimensions. Fitzgerald joined VADA as a freshman after her older sister Lauren recommended it to her. Fitzgerald has always loved art even before joining the program. VADA only strengthened her connection with the artistic world. "I do not remember starting art; I just remember people knowing that I did art," she said.



One of Fitzgerald's detailed art pieces of a rose. **Image courtesy of Shae Fitzgerald**

Painting is Fitzgerald's favorite form of artistic expression that she's focused on developing over the years. She described drawing and sketching as too restrictive compared to painting where there's an entire world of options. "I have more creative freedom when I am painting because I can change so many aspects of it." Fitzgerald said.

Freedom is a significant reason Fitzgerald wants to continue creating art as she gets older. It is an outlet for her that she has complete control over, with every detail and stroke being a choice for her to make. Isel Rodriguez, another junior VADA student, responded when asked about Fitzgerald's art, "My favorite part about Shae's paintings is how easy it is to see how hard she works on them and how much effort she puts into them. She makes sure every detail is perfect to her liking."

All of the choices that come with art take hard work and dedication. Fitzgerald shared that art has taught her strong working habits and skills, which follow her into other aspects of her life.

Her artistic abilities shine in one of her favorite paintings, a rose bouquet which she created in a class with Brandon Teris, a VADA teacher on campus, during her freshman year. "I got a lot of time to really work on it, and there were a lot of details. It almost felt like a puzzle I needed to solve; how to make it really what I want," Fitzgerald shared.

Kaya Miller, one of Fitzgerald's fellow junior VADA students, also described her painting, saying, "I love how she made the roses look old by putting in just the right amount of detail to the petals."

Along with the rose bouquet, Fitzgerald has created several other flower paintings. She expresses herself through flowers most of the time when she's painting due to the freedom she gains to choose the lighting and color of her flowers. "Shae's art is very unique, and you can see its originality," Teris said about the key characteristics of Fitzgerald's art.

Coming from a family full of artists, Fitzgerald is inspired by them. She shared that art has always been a constant in her life. "My family has a lot of artists in it, so we always go to museums, and I see stuff around the house and get inspired," Fitzgerald said.

Fitzgerald's artistic freedom has enabled her to learn about herself as a person. She has learned how far she can push herself and how not to give up when it gets hard. She shared, "It is frustrating to the point where I want to keep going. So it helps me with motivation."

Movie Review: Disney's Zootopia 2

BY ELI PRUNCKLE

Zootopia is a PG-rated movie, debuted on March 4, 2016. With a budget of $150 million, *Zootopia* became the second most successful original animated film, earning $1.024 billion worldwide. *Zootopia 2* was released in theatres on Nov. 26, 2025 and has already become a commercial success. As of early Dec. 2025, it has earned over $900 million worldwide.

Considering *Zootopia 2* had a budget of around $150 million, similar to their last budget, the visuals showcased that hefty funding. The art style had the same cute flair as the previous movie, all the character designs were unique and well thought out, and the animation was smooth and engaging. However, for such a big budget, the writing was lackluster and seemed to be not well thought out.

The movie starts off with Judy Hopps and Nick Wild, the two main protagonists, disobeying orders sent out to them from their police chief. They attempt to bust a smuggling operation, but it doesn't go as planned, leading to them ending up on the news, and in turn the police station's new laughing stock. They get demoted and sent to a group therapy meeting for carnivore and herbivore partners, where they reveal they've been dating. The next day Judy finds out there's a special event for the elites, where the Mayor and the family that owns Tundra Town will have the book that the original founder of *Zootopia* had written. The last time this book was seen, a snake had allegedly killed someone over it. The message this movie was trying to convey was incredibly lost at times, and felt like Disney was confused on what it themselves were writing about. The movie was about how reptiles founded *Zootopia*, and that the Tundra Town owners were evil and stole the credit of *Zootopia* from the original snake family.

The rising action of the plot conveys the discrimination the reptiles are facing because of the hate the Tundra Town family have encouraged in the public in a good and interesting way. The problem is the relationship with Judy and Nick and how the movie tries so hard, almost forcing their dating dynamic. They are constantly fighting for no apparent reason, and when they specify why they fought, the answer almost always feels small or like the escalation that happened wasn't justified. Disney tried too hard to push the romance between Judy and Nick.

Sophomore Amrie Reveles,-said,"They pushed the love thing too hard…and it felt kind of random." The movie kept trying to make it funny and quirky. These jokes weren't necessarily offensive, but if they were going to put those kinds of jokes in a kid's movie at least make them funny. Then, after making this bad attempt at a relationship dynamic, they try to wrap it back around to the theme of the movie which is that everyone is different, but that's what makes diversity great. Trying to tie Judy and Nick's dating and fights into the theme that we are different but that's why we should love each other also felt so forced and out of place. The movie as a whole was cohesive, beautifully animated, and had a good message for a kids' movie. The dating and random adult jokes that Disney tried to sprinkle in felt out of place and seemed completely unnecessary to the movie's plot.

Actor and Artist Spotlight: Joe Keery

BY FIANNA PETERSON



Djo performing his newest album at Lollapalooza Music Festival in Chicago this summer. **Image courtesy of Mary Padden-Rubin**

Musician in a band, solo artist for over a decade, and starring in one of Netflix's most popular shows, Joe Keery is in a constant juggle of being a popular artist and actor. That hasn't stopped him from releasing a multitude of music with bands and on his own under the alias Djo since 2014. He is most known for his hit song "End of Beginning".

Keery started making music early on as a drummer and guitarist in the Chicago-based psych-rock band Post Animal, with their debut EP released in 2014 and their first full album in 2015. Keery left Post Animal in 2019 to focus on acting and his solo music career. He launched as a solo artist in 2019 with his first album, *Twenty Twenty*, under the name Djo.

Keery debuted under the name Djo to create distinction between his acting career, which was gaining traction from his character Steve Harrington in the Netflix show *Stranger Things*. *Twenty Twenty* was known for its psych-pop sound, with the most popular songs in it being "Roddy" and "Chateau (Feel Alright)".

The inspiration for *Twenty Twenty* came from personal growth and change that was happening in Keery's life. He also touched on nostalgic memories from his earlier years with Post Animal. *Twenty Twenty*'s unique sound took inspiration from popular psychedelic pop and rock influences like Pink Floyd, The Beatles, Tame Impala, and Daft Punk.

Keery's next album, *DECIDE*, released in 2022, has a more synth-pop and alt-pop sound, influenced by combinations of 80s new wave, synthwave, psychedelic rock, and funk music. *DECIDE* features popular songs like "Gloom", "Change", and Djo's most popular song, "End of Beginning", with almost 2 billion streams on Spotify.

The inspiration for *DECIDE* came from similar themes to his first album, like personal growth and change, and in a SiriusXM interview, Keery said, "I got cast in *Stranger Things* and was swept into this other world…I didn't realize I was sacrificing everything I had built in Chicago when I moved for the show". *DECIDE* explores the time when Keery moved from Chicago, where he attended university, to Los Angeles to be closer to more prominent music and acting scenes.

Keery's third and newest album, *The Crux*, which came out in April, is also accompanied by *The Crux Deluxe*, which includes 12 extra tracks not in the original album. Keery's most popular songs from these adjacent albums are "T. Rex Is Loud", "Carry The Name", "Basic Being Basic", and "Delete Ya".

The Crux has more of a blended genre of indie rock, pop rock, and psychedelic pop sounds, with ideas from 1960s-1980s artists like The Beatles, Fleetwood Mac, and The Police. Keery says the inspiration behind *The Crux* comes from his personal experiences, like a significant breakup and the anxieties of turning 30. The album also includes themes of finding purpose, contentment, and authenticity while navigating fame and change.

In the future, Keery will continue acting and making music, but, in a SiriusXM interview, he describes his joint career as "a double-edged sword" and says it's hard to "differentiate the two careers". He is in the upcoming 2026 science-fiction movie *Cold Storage*, and is also working on new music, as he finished up his *Back on You* world tour for his album *The Crux* in October. He is also scheduled to play in a series of upcoming festivals in March.

Athlete of the Month: Katie Garcia



Katie Garcia's Donettes senior headshot. **Image credit: Patty Chachure**

BY ZANDER PETERSON

From the very moment she stepped foot in a ballet dance studio at three years old, Katie Garcia has spent her entire life in motion. At first, she was reluctant to enter the world of dance, almost feeling as though she were thrown into it without warning. As the years passed, Garcia grew to enjoy dancing, coming back to it time and time again. When starting high school, Garcia noticed some of her friends auditioning for the Donettes, she decided to join them, and found a place on the team. Since then, dance became the passion driving her life.

Looking back at her high school career, Garcia recalls not only the countless hours of practice, but also the confidence, discipline and close-knit, family-like community she found on the way.

Garcia's path as a team captain wasn't easy. When she first started as a Donette, she remembers looking up at those older and more experienced than her and constantly disregarding her own abilities; believing she would never become as skilled and dedicated as her peers. As time passed, through three-hour-long daily rehearsals, adrenaline pumping performances, and her daily commute all the way from Oxnard, she climbed up the dance ladder and found herself at the top. During that climb, Garcia faced (and still faces) many challenges and has been taught commitment like she'd never known before. "It takes a lot of discipline," she says. "You're constantly reviewing your material while still holding on to that balance with schoolwork." She noted that showing up every day has proved to be one of the hardest things, as missing even a second of rehearsal can throw off an entire piece for someone.

Before every performance, despite her experience, she still finds herself letting her nerves take over. Instead of fighting them, Garcia has mastered her ability to keep herself in the moment. "I try to stay out of my head, waiting until I'm performing to let my adrenaline hit," she says, "I'm going out on that stage regardless of how I'm feeling right now." Now, after all her hard work becoming a team captain, she's found that one of the best ways she can support her teammates is to almost pretend she isn't a leader; to blend in as another dancer, keeping the Donettes a community working together rather than one run by select individuals. She strives every day to give new dancers the same welcoming environment that lifted her up to begin with.

After acknowledging how harsh and difficult the world of dance can be, Garcia looks ahead with determination, hoping to continue in pursuit of her passion while also finding new ways to branch out and feed her love for performance. She stays committed to growing even further as an artist, constantly following her own advice to "...never be afraid of what other people might think of you," a reminder that one's confidence and authenticity are what's essential in a field of expression

Girls Water Polo Off to a Strong Start

BY LILY SCHUMACHER

As the winter sports season began, the Santa Barbara High School (SBHS) community was excited to see girls water polo back in action. Even though the team lost several players from last year, the Dons have started strong and shown they're ready for another season. With an 11-1 record so far, the team has surprised some with their dominance. "I think it's going good, we haven't lost a lot, and I think we will make CIF (California Interscholastic Federation) hopefully, and I hope to get far," said freshman player Violette Bailey, who is already making a huge impact in her first year.

Bailey has been playing water polo for over six years, so joining the high school team felt natural for her. When asked about switching from club to school teams, she said, "It's not very different, it's really just a different team," adding that the biggest change is not having to travel anymore. "With the high school team, I don't need to go anywhere for practice, I just stay, which is nice." What matters most to Bailey is team chemistry. "Bonding and being nice," is what she says is the most important part of being on a good team. She's also excited to spend the next few years getting closer to her teammates.

For senior Hope Smith, this season has been all about leadership. With so many young players joining the program, she feels a responsibility to help everyone feel included. "Our leadership, we have a really small and young team, so I think just making everyone feel welcome is really important because water polo is such a team sport and we really need that connection," said Smith. With three years of experience, she knows how important communication is. "I have learned a lot about how to work as a team, and leadership is just a huge part of the sport." Even though the team lost eight players from last year, the group has come together fast.



Jules Horton scores yet again for the Dons Carpinteria High. **Image credit: Lily Schumacher**



Jules Horton scoring for the Dons against Carpinteria High School on Dec. 12. **Image credit: Lily Schumacher**

Head Coach Mark Walsh, who also coaches the boys team, is just as proud of the group's progress. "We are 11 and 1, and we've had a really good start," he said. The Dons lost their first match to Dos Pueblos, but they've been winning ever since. "We've won a couple of tournaments and won a bunch of non- league games. We beat a bunch of teams that we lost to last year, so we have really improved a lot." Walsh says one of the biggest reasons for their success is that most of last year's players returned. "We didn't graduate many girls from last year so we have most of the girls back," he explained. "A couple of girls decided not to play, which would've helped us out this year, but we did get two incoming freshmen who have really made our team a whole lot stronger."

Overall, what he's most impressed with is how the players treat one another. "I think the way you treat each other is probably the most important thing, and that's something I'm really impressed with by this group of girls," Walsh said. He talked about how experienced players and beginners blend easily. "We have some very talented girls who are brand new to the sport, and they all treat each other with complete respect and support, and they are always there for each other. It's just an amazing group to coach." With great chemistry, strong leadership, and an amazing start to the season, the girls water polo team is feeling confident as they move toward CIF.

Boys Soccer is Back in Action

BY EMBER REITER



The boys soccer team gathers around for a team meeting with their coaches. **Image courtesy of SBHS Yearbook**

"We're all just hungry for wins", senior goalkeeper Sammy Ceballos said in a statement that seems to perfectly describe the SBHS boys soccer team this year. After last year's disappointing 6-17-2 finish, Nosotros is ready to reach their full potential this season. The squad started off relatively strong with a 1-1 tie over Carpinteria followed by a 2-0 victory over Lompoc.

"I'm really proud of how we're going so far…we're still growing as a team and learning new things but I'm happy with how we're doing," said junior forward Keoni Garcia when asked his thoughts on the season's beginnings. The winning streak extended into week three as the boys defeated Port Hueneme 2-1. From there, the team's confidence continued to grow with senior center back Pietro Nascente saying his goal for the season is "definitely to finish top four in channel league and qualify for CIF (California Interscholastic Federation)." These aspirations seemed well in reach as week four's matchup against Foothill Tech saw the teams biggest win yet as they shut out the Dragons 4-0.

However, the Dons encountered a rough patch following this victory as the team lost twice in a row against Newbury Park and San Marcos, the latter of which was marred by a controversial no-call in favor of the Royals. Dons Head Coach Ricardo Alcaraz stated that he believed an offsides penalty should have been called on San Marcos' game winning goal, an opinion he shares with his team as Nascente agreed that "we got robbed in [that game]". Regardless of this, the boys cited a variety of reasons for the pair of losses with senior goalkeeper Isaac Bay saying "I think in general we need to take practice more seriously and be more locked in to the games instead of messing around". Ceballos agreed, saying that the team "just needs more discipline towards the final third of the game…towards the end of the matches."

Nascente brought a different perspective to the issue, saying "I think right now our biggest challenge is having everyone healthy and making sure towards the end of the season we have healthy bodies and people don't get injuries or cramp up towards the end of the game because we struggled with that last year."

Whatever the reason for these losses, the squad redeemed themselves with a 1-0 win over Dos Pueblos at their house last Thursday. Overall, it's just the beginning for Nosotros this year as their season will continue through February. "Just getting to know each other a little more [will be helpful] because there's like five of us that haven't played on this level before and getting to help each other get to that level and understand one another more on the field I think will improve us a lot," Garcia said of the squad. As it's still early in the season, the boys are sure to become even more bonded as they continue on. Coming up, the squad will face many of their biggest rivals as they battle for a top spot in the Channel League. Currently, Ventura holds the top spot with Oxnard and San Marcos following at second and third. Pacifica and Rio Mesa follow at four and five with the Dons sitting below them in sixth place. Dos Pueblos and Buena are at the moment rounding out the bottom of the leauge at spots seven and eight, respectively. However, a lot can change quite quickly and the boys remain focused on their goal of placing within the top of the division and earning a coveted spot in CIF playoffs. Catch the Dons tonight on the road versus Pacifica or at their next home game against Saint Bonaventure on January 3rd.

The SB Ultimate Frisbee Club Prepares For January

BY MICAH FORE

SB Flow, Santa Barbara's ultimate frisbee league, is preparing for an upcoming competition in Santa Monica Beach called "Beach of Dreams," where schools and clubs from San Diego to the Bay Area compete in a bracket-type tournament.

Ultimate Frisbee is typically seven on seven with two teams on opposite ends of the field, similar to a football field. It starts out with one team throwing a frisbee across the whole field, and then the team that gets it has to work their way down to the end zone to score a point. One of the most important rules of the game is that you can only move while not holding the frisbee. According to Jim Ragetz, coach of the Santa Barbara Ultimate Frisbee Club, "it's like basketball that way, you have to pivot with it."

A turnover is when the frisbee touches the floor, flies out of bounds, or an opposing player catches it. Then the opposing team starts from wherever the turnover took place. Some rules depend on the tournament. For example, the game may be timed, or according to Coach Jim, "Some tournaments do it [scoring] by time, usually it's by points. I'd say the most common is something like 13 points, maybe 15 points." The final element is the place they play, as Beach or regular Ultimate. Beach Ultimate, which is four on four and played until time runs out.

The SB Ultimate club has been practicing for the Santa Monica tournament under the leadership of Coach Ryan Cey. Here is what a regular practice would look like under his coaching: first, the players warm up by jogging around the field and stretching. Then, they do catching and throwing drills. Secondly, they will do one or two kinds of strategy drills/plays. And finally, they will finish the day scrimmaging.

Three players on the team were asked about their favorite moment on the team so far, and they said, "There are a few moments, but so far it's been when we play against Cate and Dunn […], which are nearby private schools." Another player answered, "Stuff like team dinners, and it's just coming back from the summer." When asked about when they started playing Ultimate, they said, "So, both of my parents played, and they've been playing for a long time. I've been throwing since I was like two years old." They also answered, "In 7th grade, I joined the junior high team. And in 8th grade, I joined the high school team. And like, that just kind of doubled the fun."



Santa Barbara Ultimate Frisbee players play a game. **Image courtsey of SB Ultimate Frisbee Team**

If you would like to join the team, go to their website: sbyouthultimate.org or come to one of their many practices from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays at Santa Barbara Junior High School.



Happy Holidays from The Forge | **Image Credit: Natalie MacFarlane**