

# accolade

February 2025 | Volume LXV | Issue 3  
Sunny Hills High School  
1801 Lancer Way, Fullerton, CA 92833

**Be my Valentine | pg. 14**

A look into the longevity of adolescent relationships

**Go, go, go Joseph | pg. 20**

Preview of March spring musical

*All images used with permission from The Orange County Register or The Los Angeles Daily News; SEE PAGE 2 FOR PHOTO CAPTIONS*



(1) Photo by Hans Gutknecht

*Could the Santa Ana wind-swept flames that devastated parts of Los Angeles County ever happen in Fullerton or other areas of Orange County? What can we do to better prepare and provide relief to victims of inferno-ravaged homes? The Accolade investigates with a special report.  
SEE NEWS, PAGE 6*

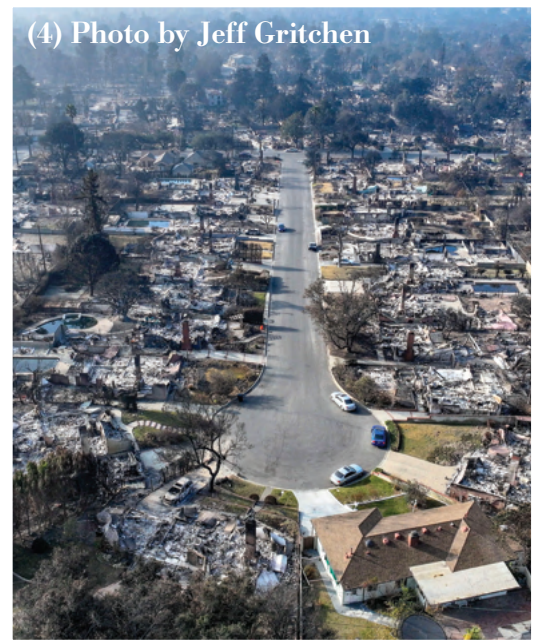


(2) Photo by Will Lester

*Does reposting on social media, especially about the Palisades and Eaton blazes, truly have the desired effect?*

*SEE OPINION PAGE 20*

(4) Photo by Jeff Gritchen



(3) Photo by Sarah Reingewirtz

## Fire Watch



# EDITOR'S NOTE

XV. Those Roman numerals represent 65, and that's the number of years our publication has been in existence.

If you look closely at our logo on the cover of every magazine or past newspapers, you will see not just the date or issue number, but also the volume number. This school year marks our 65th volume and, therefore, our 65th year of publishing.

I feel so honored to be a part of this long-standing program and to have contributed to some of our greatest accomplishments over my past three years on staff. We would not have experienced such success (our back-to-back NSPA Pacemaker and CSPA Silver Crown plaques these past two years) without the support of our readers. From fourth-period teachers allowing students to be released for interviews to students responding to our follow-up questions to school officials and teachers taking the time to talk to our reporters to community parents and leaders responding to our email requests seeking comments, thank you.

All of you helped us produce articles and issues that resulted in the commendations this program has received since its first issue on March 31, 1960. I am also incredibly grateful to be editor-in-chief during such a milestone for *The Accolade*.

In accordance with the Journalism Education Association's "Power of the Press" Scholastic Journalism Week, which will be held Feb. 24-28, we dedicated a large portion of our Feature pages (starting on page 9) to showcase *Accolade's* history and to discuss our future — will we reach a Diamond Anniversary celebration 15 years from now? (page 22)

Our News section features a different type of article from what we traditionally produce. News editor Irene Park's News Analysis (page 6) explains whether the Santa Ana winds that fueled last month's L.A. County blazes could ever wreak such devastation here in Orange County and specifically, Fullerton.

Following the November voter approval of Measure L, one of our co-sports editors weighs in on school officials' decision to prioritize a new turf and all-weather track over other facility upgrades (page 30).

Lastly, I want to once again thank all of our readers for motivating us to produce what our adviser Mr. Li usually tells us to. *Los Angeles Times*-quality work. This will in turn allow us to continue the legacy of this amazing publication. We are already 65 years in and hopefully, we will see many more to come — though the format and staff will definitely change. Thank you and cheers to 65!

Best,  
  
*Editor-in-Chief*

### CAPTIONS FROM THE COVER:

1. In the midst of the Eaton fire, neighbors Nikki Lewis (left) and Anteres Anderson Turner hug outside their homes on Jan. 17.
2. The Eaton fire reaches a local Altadena Market on Jan. 8.
3. Csaba Buzay attempts to stop a fire from spreading at his neighbor's home on Jan. 8 during the Eaton fire.
4. Numerous structures sit in ruins in Altadena on Jan. 19.

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Visit [shhsaccolade.com](https://shhsaccolade.com) to see our Photos of the Week feature.

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accolade file photo

**GLITCHING OUT:** Installed in February 2017, the jumbotron has been prone to malfunction lately, as in this case last May.

# BIG SCREEN NEEDS BIG UPDATE

story by KEVIN LEE

With a nearly decade-old jumbotron that has been prone to breaking down in recent years, school officials plan to replace it with a more modern and reliable one – though the cost has not been determined.

“The way someone described this situation to me was like the jumbotron is an iPhone 8, and now the newest one is a 16,” said Associated Student Body [ASB] adviser David Fenstermaker, referring to the need for an upgraded big screen. “Right now, that one works, but we’re just worried like you would with your phone as sometimes it doesn’t take an update, which means you don’t have access to new stuff.”

Fenstermaker said he has been working with a couple of companies that he declined to identify to receive an estimate from each for an updated version of the 20-foot-by-10-foot board, which when originally installed in February 2017 was referred to as “Lancer Visions” by then-principal Allen Whitten.

“I know it sounds crazy, but we can’t do anything until we get that invoice [from each company],” Fenstermaker said. “We’re trying to figure out if we can afford a new one, if the district can help us [finance it] or how we can utilize some money to buy a new one.”

Once school officials have the chance to review the cost from each firm, principal Craig Weinreich would then submit that invoice to

“  
**UPGRADING THE  
QUALITY OF OUR  
FACILITIES IS  
DEFINITELY WORTH  
IT IN THE LONG RUN**

- sophomore Benjamin Martinez

the district to process the payment for purchase, Fenstermaker said.

As of the first week of February, no specific timelines have been provided for when any of the procedures would be completed by.

School officials have been considering a replacement for the large electronic marquee for the past few years when it experienced various power and panel breakdowns.

In February 2024 — the wettest month of the year — school officials powered down the jumbotron to prevent any short-circuiting; then last May, it fell victim to a senior prank as rotten

egg stains were found on parts of its panels.

“The jumbotron is like a Lego set of pieces, and what we currently have is 36 panels,” Fenstermaker said. “Since three of the panels were out [last fall], it affected eight other panels, which meant we had to find three new panels.”

That explains why students returning to school last August didn’t see anything on the screen until late November; then early in the next month, the ASB was able to host a movie night in the quad for sophomores and juniors.

Most students said they have grown accustomed to the jumbotron working and have used it to help them determine the date and time and other promotional information such as sporting events and school spirit week. They also agreed with Fenstermaker that it’s time for an upgrade.

“I think it will be a great purchase as students of Sunny Hills tend to use the jumbotron as a way to catch up on school news such as spirit week or student scholarships,” sophomore Benjamin Martinez said. “Upgrading the quality of our facilities is definitely worth it in the long run as we will probably use it for years to come.”



For the full story, go to [shhsaccolade.com](https://shhsaccolade.com)

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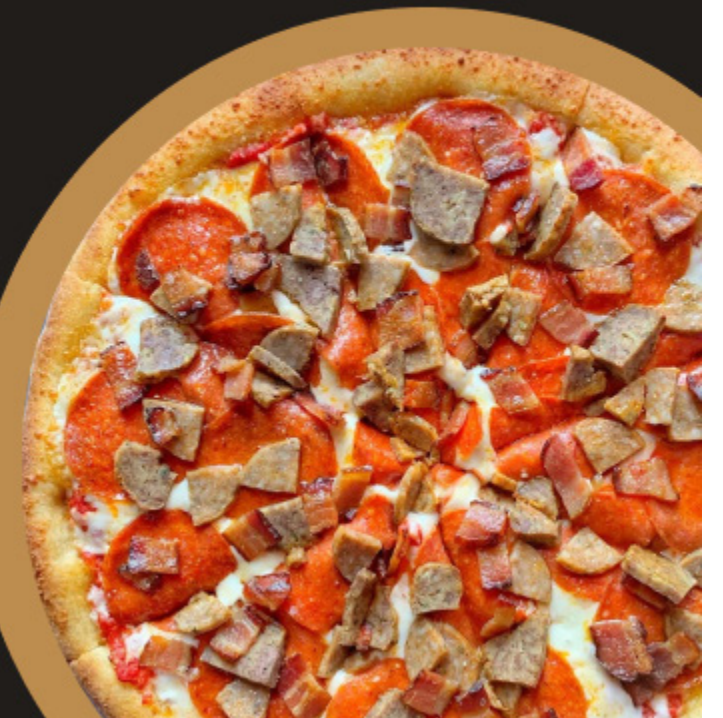
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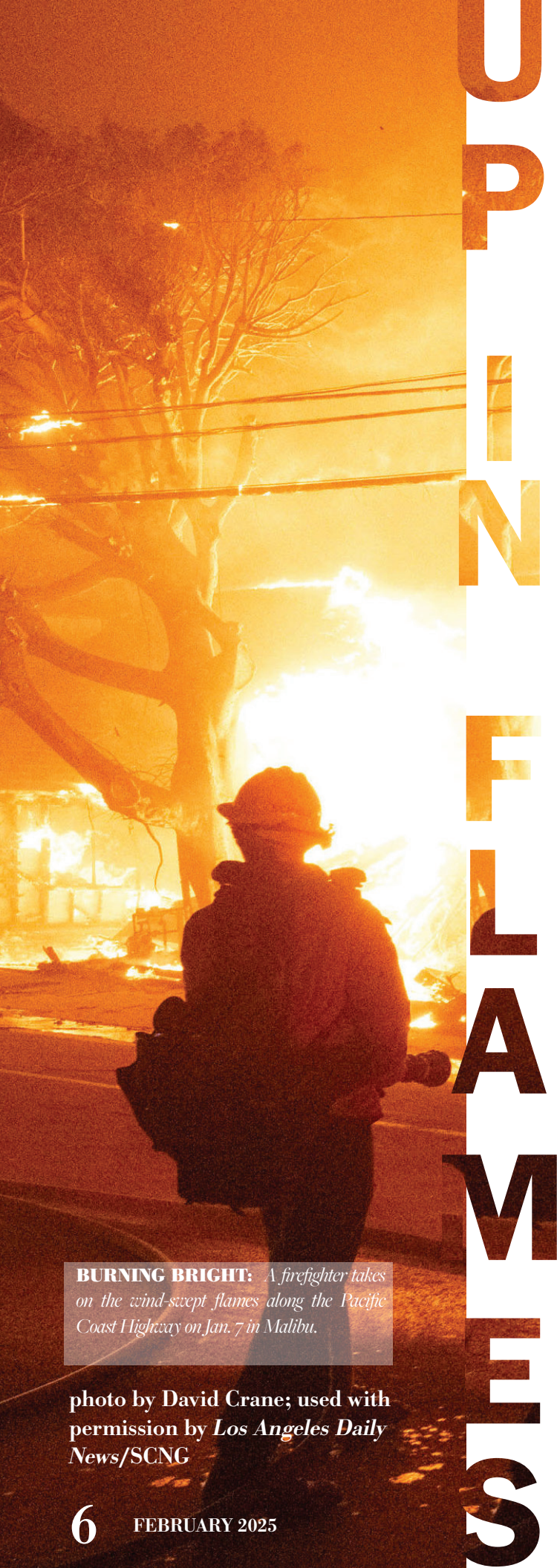
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**BURNING BRIGHT:** A firefighter takes on the wind-swept flames along the Pacific Coast Highway on Jan. 7 in Malibu.

photo by David Crane; used with permission by *Los Angeles Daily News*/SCNG

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# Be prepared — fire storms can happen in Fullerton or anywhere

story by IRENE PARK

Few in Los Angeles County will forget what happened on Jan. 7. It all started with over 80 mph Santa Ana winds, which the National Weather Service had warned would start swirling through Southern California starting at 10 a.m.

Though the causes remain unknown for what sparked the Palisades and Eaton fires — both over 40 miles away from Fullerton — the destruction left behind the following jarring numbers:

- total 37,469 acres burned
- at least 29 deaths
- dollar damage estimate at \$35-\$45 billion
- 17 total blazes in Southern California from Jan. 7-31

And those who survived these infernos now turn to recovery efforts.

Meanwhile, many Sunny Hills students and staff couldn't help but check their phones for notifications about the latest news of the havoc those fires wreaked. Some walking in the hallways complained of the ash smell in the air; others asked if anyone's friends or relatives had to evacuate or lost their homes.

"I initially felt extremely worried when I heard about the fires because I have a lot of family extremely close to the Altadena area," senior Melanie Ulloa said. "I was concerned about the evacuations of family members and preparing my place for them to stay at if necessary."

Other concerns centered on the many unspoken words in the form of questions like, "Could this ever happen here in Fullerton?" "Am I and my family prepared if we had to evacuate our home?" and "What can I do to help?"

### DORMANT RISKS AND PRECAUTIONS

Outside the SH campus and toward the border of the shopping center known as Amerige Heights Town Center lies North Gilbert Street, which heads upward toward the 22,000-square-foot Coyote Hills area.

Motorists driving up toward La Habra can see to the left a hill covered with vegetation.

Senior Jenna Forster's father, Shon Halvorson, works as a firefighter-paramedic for Compton in L.A. County and recalled that Coyote Hills used to be classified as a fire hazard zone because of its dry brush and weeds, though it hasn't been considered a fire risk area in recent years.

"[The] city of Fullerton does a pretty good job of weed abatement and making sure that we keep all of our weeds at a good level in our open areas," Halvorson said.

Nevertheless, Fullerton Fire Department deputy chief Jona-

## NOTABLE NUMBERS

The National Honor Society sponsored a relief drive for fire victims.

**Items Collected:** clothing, shoes, plushies, non-perishable food items, water bottles, masks and toiletries

**Duration:** Jan. 13-15

**Brought To:** Rooms 5, 6 and 35

**Donated To:** Council District 11 Office in Los Angeles

**Address:** 7166 W. Manchester Ave.

**Contact:** Julio Torres, 310-568-8772

source: Sophia Kiker  
compiled by IRENE PARK

than Fugitt said fire risk is always present no matter the region.

"Just because it was in L.A. doesn't mean it can't happen [here]," said Fugitt, who was assigned to assist with firefighting efforts in Palisades. "And where the fire was burning was in a neighborhood, just like any neighborhood in Fullerton.

"When a fire gets established with high winds like that, the fire just goes from structure to structure. So I think it's very important to have a well-staffed, well-trained and well-funded fire department."

Fugitt was referring to the six fire stations in Fullerton that are fully staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition to that level of protection, the city has contractual agreements from surrounding cities' fire agencies if Fullerton's firefighters ever need assistance.

"So if there is a fire or a disaster in Fullerton, ... they can assist us if we need additional resources," he said. "And then we're also part of the California Mutual Aid System. So when you see a big fire or disaster anywhere in the state, you'll see fire engines from all across California."

### COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Class of 2019 SH alumna Aleeya Mitsch, who lives in Sylmar where the Hurst Fire ignited on Jan. 7, was one of many people affected and could have used a more reliable communication system to help her respond to what was happening in her neighborhood.

"That day was very windy, so we were kind of debating whether or not to leave, but when we looked outside, we could see the fires," Mitsch said. "So we just evacuated, and then 30 minutes later, we got the evacuation warning."

She said it was around midnight when she and her mom noticed the fires and quickly packed and left.

"I think a lot of people were asleep because none of us really expected there to be a fire here," the alumna said. "I realized how unprepared I was, and I've never actually packed expecting not to have a home to come home to."

Following the evacuation, she regularly checked the Watch Duty app. This non-profit and non-government organization uses verified sources to provide the public with safety information through an app and an online browser.

Mitsch said she regularly checked the app after evacuating to figure out when she could return to her home.

In the end, she said her home was not affected, and she returned to the neighborhood within five days, although the smell of smoke persisted in the area.

To better be prepared for a disaster in Orange County, Fugitt encourages all residents to sign up to AlertOC, a mass notification system that is run by Orange County and participating cities to provide alerts about emergencies in the area.

"It's pretty devastating to what the fires did to the communities surrounding the Eaton and Palisades fires, and I think it serves as a reminder to be firewise and to make sure that we have a fire-safe community," the deputy chief said.

### FINDING CREDIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

Associated Student Body [ASB] adviser David Fenstermaker said the biggest issue in setting up a schoolwide campaign is finding the right group to donate to because while the ASB wants to help, the risk of someone stealing the money for selfish gains is its main concern.

Only one effort was promoted on campus to help fire victims.

National Honors Society [NHS] president senior Sophia Kiker organized an opportunity for students to donate goods from Jan. 13-15. Anyone wanting to help brought items to rooms 5, 6 and 35, Kiker said.

Canned food, clothing and other items were donated to the L.A. City Council District 11 Office, which was accepting and distributing the donations to the affected community, she said.

"While we don't have a quantifiable number of donated items, the stacked bags and boxes filled up half of Room 35 and took three cars to transport," Kiker said. "We wanted Sunny Hills to also be included in this, the entire school, so that everyone else would experience what



photo used with permission by  
Jonathan Fugitt

**TEMPERING SPARKS:** A firefighter assesses the situation in an attempt to limit the spread of flames at the Palisades fire site on Jan. 8.

Meanwhile, a large-scale effort was organized on Jan. 30 that brought out several musical artists like Lady Gaga, Billie Eilish and Red Hot Chili Peppers to encourage viewers to support fire victims. The proceeds were given to the Annenberg Foundation, an L.A. non-profit group that was helping to distribute the goods to those affected.

"I only had clothes to give, which on the news they had said they didn't need anymore due to mass donations so I ended up not donating them," Ulloa said.



Go to [shhsaccolade.com](https://shhsaccolade.com) news to read more fire coverage.



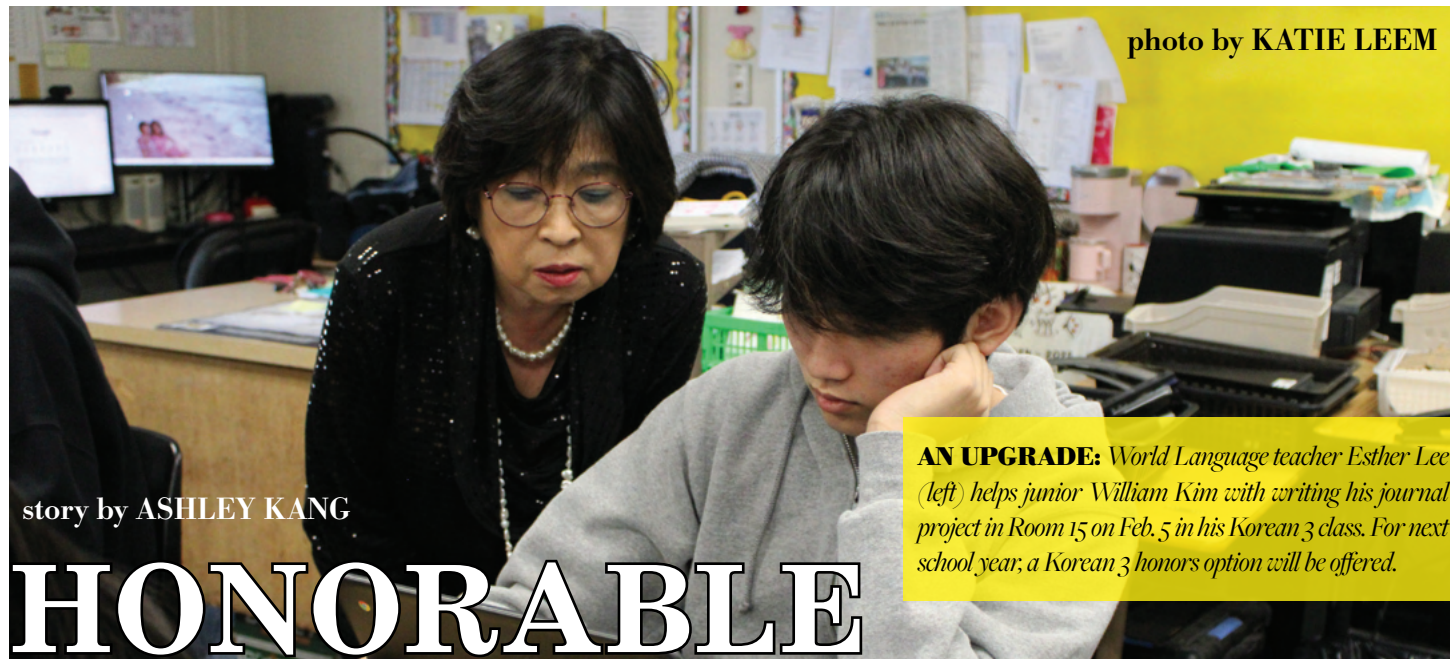


photo by KATIE LEEM

story by ASHLEY KANG

# HONORABLE OPTIONS

*Returning students can choose  
more rigorous classes*

Students returning for the 2025-2026 school year will have five new courses to consider signing up for, two offering honors designation.

Following honors level German and Spanish classes, for the first time the World Languages Department will provide an honors option for Korean 3.

"I think it's great that there is going to be a Korean 3 Honors class," Korean 2 student sophomore Kaylee Houston said. "[Students can] benefit with honors credit while learning something they are passionate about."

Korean teacher Esther Lee said the class will serve as a bridge to prepare students interested in joining the Korean International Baccalaureate [IB] program the following year.

"It's very good for students who need more of a challenge," Lee said. "They can have a more strong foundation for the Korean language, reading comprehension, vocabulary and history."

On account of their rigorous curriculum, the Regional Occupational Program [ROP] Engineering Design & Development class will provide honors credit to participants.

"I am excited for the opportunities that [the class] can present to the students," Engineering Pathway to Innovation & Change program coordinator Martin Rodriguez said.

This yearlong project-based capstone course provides students with the opportunity to identify real-world issues and develop solutions.

Previously approved by the district, IB Environmental Systems Standard Level [SL] will also be offered for the first time here.

According to the attachments in the agenda for the Jan. 14 regular meeting

**AN UPGRADE:** World Language teacher Esther Lee (left) helps junior William Kim with writing his journal project in Room 15 on Feb. 5 in his Korean 3 class. For next school year, a Korean 3 honors option will be offered.

of the board of trustees, IB Environmental Systems SL will be a year-long college preparatory course covering the impact of humans on the ecosystem.

"I'm excited to offer more courses to our students in areas of their interests," English teacher and IB coordinator Scott Rosenkranz said.

Digital Art will also be joining the SH course offerings, replacing its previous title as Communication Design.

Following the steps of Troy, Buena Park, La Habra and Sonora high schools, Academic Tutoring will be offered to juniors and seniors.

Responsible for peer tutoring one period per day, to qualify for this semester-long course, participants must be honors or Advanced Placement students and receive teacher approval, according to the Jan. 14 board of trustees meeting.

Assistant principal Sarah Murrietta said Academic Tutoring will only be offered to Advancement Via Individual Determination [AVID] 3 and 4 students for the next school year.

"We want to start with AVID because AVID students are already trained how to tutor, so we already know that they have this background," Murrietta said.

Peer tutors will be expected to apply their training from previous AVID courses to assist AVID 1 and 2 students, she said.

"One thing that we do know about is the best way to learn something is to teach it," Murrietta said. "So this will only strengthen our students' knowledge base of concepts."



For the full story, go  
to [shhsacolade.com](https://shhsacolade.com)



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DID YOU KNOW?

65th year  
of publishing



## CHEERS TO 65:

The Accolade staff of 1997 work in Room 15 for its upcoming issue. Before the staff had its home in Room 138 in 1999, the majority of the work would be done in the computer lab in the 10s wing.

image used with permission by Kimberley Harris



For the full versions of our other stories related to the program's 65th year of publishing, go to [shhsacolade.com](https://shhsacolade.com)

story by ALEXXA BERUMEN

As a continuing feature, we take a look at our own program as we promote the Journalism Education Association's Scholastic Journalism Week's theme, "Power of the Press," Feb. 24-28. We send editor-in-chief senior Alexxa Berumen to investigate how we endured to reach its 65th year of publishing. We also have assigned our other staff writers to look into the origin of an "Accolade St." sign in staff photos appearing in the yearbook during the 1990s and how the program has impacted teachers who are Acco alum.

## "WHY THE ACCOLADE?"

Those words appeared as the title of a brief editorial on page two of the first issue of the Sunny Hills High School newspaper.

"When the journalism class began to select a name for the paper, we wanted most of all a name which would denote a serious approach, a name which would indicate our desire for quality..." wrote the anonymous author of the first two paragraphs of the March 31, 1960, article.

The writer then continued with the following: "Remember-





**SIGNING TIME**  
The Accolade Class of 1999 takes its staff photo. To uphold a tradition, a member in the front row holds the logo that went missing by the 1999-2000 school year.



**HE'S BACK:**  
Current adviser Tommy Li helps a member of The Accolade in 2016 during his first production night following his departure in the fall of 2008.

ing that we think of Lancers as a kind of knight, the connection is not hard to see, for the accolade was the name of the action which climaxed the ceremony of conferring knight-hood."

Figuring out how the school newspaper (now a news magazine) inherited its moniker was easy. But in the more than six decades of existence and application of the "Power of the Press," it takes digging to obtain answers to the following questions:

- How many advisers have overseen the program to ensure its longevity and teach "freedom of the press"?
- How long did it take before the program started earning recognition to live up to its name?
- How and when did *The Accolade* transition from fully in print to posting stories on our online news website?

#### THE GHOSTS OF ADVISERS PAST

Ten advisers supported the endeavor of honoring the program's name.

"When you're a journalism teacher, you're kind of

alone," said Kimberley Harris, who was first hired upon graduating with a journalism degree from California State University, Fullerton, in 1993 and took a break after the 1996-1997 school year to return from 1999-2001. "Sometimes teachers didn't understand that *The Accolade* wasn't just a newsletter for listing the names of award winners and league champions."

When she began teaching journalism here, she had to fill the shoes of her predecessor, Carol Hallenbeck, who replaced Ben Jones in 1969 and expanded the staff in her time there.

Harris – a journalism adviser at Fullerton Union High School since 2012 – said Hallenbeck developed the program and helped it make a name for itself in the Fullerton Joint Union High School District.

After unforeseen circumstances in the teacher's life and on staff, Harris said she decided to take time off, handing it to a recent college graduate: SH alumna Jennifer Kim in the fall of 1997.

After her hiatus, Harris came back for another two years before handing the program over again to current adviser Tommy Li in

2001.

With years of experience from his time majoring in print journalism and English at USC to his job as a reporter, Li started his efforts to get the staff to its award winning level.

For family reasons, Li resigned as adviser, but school officials accepted his request to return in the 2017-2018 school year. In the meantime, English teacher Charlene Dagampat took over from 2008-2009. The next year, yearbook adviser Lindsay Safe watched over *The Accolade* until Li's return.

"I felt I wasn't done teaching, training and encouraging the efforts of our young journalism scholars," he said.

#### ONLINE TRANSITION

Before Li left his adviser position in the fall of 2008, he predicted that the future of journalism would be online.

**Past editor-in-chiefs reflect on journalism shaping their post-high school experiences**

- Double majoring in public health and molecular biology at University of California, Berkeley
- Volunteer for Highland Hospital in Oakland



Kate Yang  
2022-2023

- Double majoring in journalism and Asian languages & cultures at Northwestern University
- Currently pursuing the Segal Design Certificate at Northwestern



Michelle Sheen  
2021-2022

- Obtained a bachelor of arts in journalism at USC
- Currently attending USC Gould School of Law



Tyler Pak  
2020-2021

"*The Accolade* helped me develop valuable communication skills that I rely on every day."

"My time at *The Accolade* has definitely shaped me a lot... I sought out a variety of opportunities at Northwestern to put my creativity skills to the test."

# Did you also know?

## ACCOLADE ST

story by ALICE CHAE

It made its first appearance in *The Accolade* staff photo in the 1992 *Helios* yearbook.

Then-sophomore Barksdale — soon to become editor-in-chief his senior year — wears a dress shirt while sitting in the front slightly left of center.

Barksdale raises his left knee, allowing his left elbow to rest on it so he can use his left fingertips to hold up a rectangular object above a bundle of *Accolade* issues.

"I think when the yearbook photographer came to take the staff photo, someone just thought to include it," he said.

So far, no one can solve the mystery of how that sign labeled, "Accolade St.," made its way into *Accolade* lore.

What is known is this: That sign continued to show up in subsequent *Accolade* yearbook photos for nearly a decade.

Class of 1997 then-editor-in-chief Janice Yoon also can be seen in possession of the object in her year's staff photo. "I don't remember why I held it," said Yoon, who majored in sociology

studies at Harvard University and currently works as the deputy director of Christian non-profit organization, Reah International. "When it was time for yearbook pictures, everyone was grabbing the trophies and the sign."

In that last year of appearance, current English teacher and Class of 1991 graduate Jennifer Kim was overseeing the journalism program and doesn't remember a thing about it.

Harris, who now teaches journalism at Fullerton Union High School, offered some clarity about its value — or lack thereof.

"I do remember the sign, but I did not care about it," Harris said. "I certainly don't remember saying, 'Make sure you grab the *Accolade* sign for the yearbook photo.'"

# Looking forward

Adviser, staff share their thoughts on the future of journalism in the next decade

story by ELISE PAK

I'll be another decade before *The Accolade* reaches its diamond jubilee. "Print might go away, but I think *The Accolade* itself won't go away in 10 years because we still need to stay informed," co-Opinion editor senior Kayden Kim said.

On the other hand, editor-in-chief senior Alexxa Berumen said she feels disappointed that print journalism is becoming less popular. "I'm extremely sad about the fall of print journalism because print products have always been something that I value," Berumen said.

**AI DOES NOT STAND FOR "ACCOLADE INTELLIGENCE"**  
Enrollment numbers in either journalism classes may not make a difference by 2035 because

of artificial intelligence [AI], Li said. "I think 10 years from now, if we do even have a journalism class that exists, it will be all about how to teach students to post TikTok videos and how to teach students to post news stories on social media," Li said.

Likewise, web managing editor senior Justin Pak agrees with that prediction. "I feel like everyone nowadays gets their news from TikTok or social media, and people don't have the attention spans to read an entire article anymore," Pak said.





Michael X. Corrado 1960-1961   Clyde J. Browne 1961-1962   Frances Obler 1962-1966   Ben Jones 1966-1969   Carol Hallenbeck 1969-1993   Kimberley Harris 1993-1997; 1999-2001   Jennifer Kim 1997-1999

# Accolade advisers from year one to now

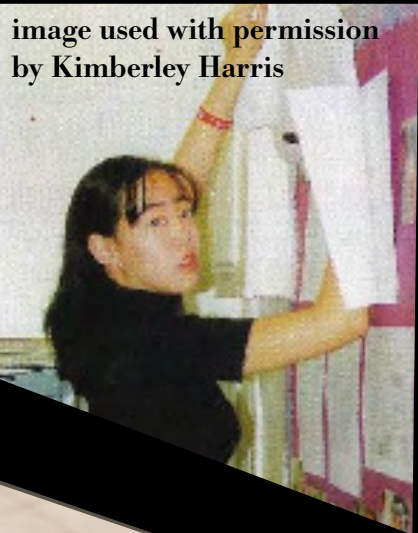
all images sourced using yearbook



Charlene Dagampat 2008-2009   Lindsay Safe 2009-2016   Tommy Li 2001-2008; 2016-present

**POSTED UP:**

An Accolade staff member from the 1996-1997 school year holds a paper attached to the wall of the newsroom.



But Li never had a chance to usher in such a transition. Instead, that opportunity went to Safe, who helmed the newspaper two school years after. "I said [to my staff], 'Look at all these award-winning schools all across the nation. Look at the schools in California that are doing this. Why aren't we?'" said Safe, who recalls referencing programs such as Redondo Union High School's *High Tide* and Palo Alto High School's *The Campanile*. With the online website taking a pause upon Li's return, it rebooted in the 2018-2019 school year and has continued since, earning a Distinguished Site award from Student Newspapers Online for three consecutive years.

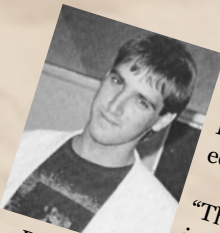
**65 YEARS IN PRINT**

For many, *The Accolade* is more than just a student publication. Its longevity has made it one of the oldest on the campus, prompting an even bigger impact for current students and alumni alike, Li said. Managing editor senior Christine Yoo added that without such an academic student body, the publication would not be as successful. "Whether we're working on a magazine during late nights or writing stories for an online cycle, working hard is a huge part of our culture," Yoo said. Li agrees with Yoo's sentiment, adding that is also because of his predecessors' value of California Ed Code 48907. "Being around for 65 years isn't surprising; that's because most of the advisers in this program have been stellar and value journalism and the freedom of the press," he said. "We've also continued to attract motivated students to the staff each year, so that has kept the program going as well."

**Candid:** English teachers reflect on their experiences working on *The Accolade* staff as SH students



● School Year: 1996-1997  
● Position: Business staff  
"The program wasn't just about creating content — it was about creating change [and] using our voices to inform, challenge and connect with others."



● School Years: 1985-1987  
● Positions: Staff reporter (first year), Entertainment editor and managing editor (second year)  
"Through the program, I certainly improved my writing skills and learned how to become a good problem-solver through the stories."

compiled by SOOJIN CHO



**ED CODE 48907**

*The Accolade* operates under California Education Code 48907, which grants student journalists editorial independence without administrative censorship — unless content is obscene, libelous or disrupts school operations. This law ensures they can report freely on school and community issues while upholding journalistic integrity and responsibility. The publication has evolved from a tabloid to a broadsheet to its current format of a newsmagazine.

page compiled by ALEXA BERUMEN

EIC	EIC	EIC
KENT LAM	NOAH SOMPHONE	JAMIE CHUN
1999	2018	2023

First broadsheet issue	First tabloid issue	First specialty newsmagazine issue



# BE MINE?

**CANDID: Do you think your relationship will last past high school?**

"I feel like if we were still together in senior year, I feel like I would commit to our relationship."  
- Stephanie Park

*Statistics suggest high school sweethearts won't last following graduation; SH couples share their thoughts*

story by **NICOLE PARK**

"Cause when you're 15  
And somebody tells you they love you  
You're gonna believe them."

In her 2008 hit, "Fifteen," singer Taylor Swift reflects on the innocence of young love.

However, how real is this concept of high school sweethearts?

Though every story may be unique, the facts remain unchanged: relationships made during this period are often short-lived.

In fact, according to May 2017 statistics published by Brandon Gaille Marketing, less than 2% of all marriages are to a high school sweetheart.

California State University, Fullerton, professor of human communication, Tara Suwinyattichaiorn, attributes these statistics to changes within high school students as they grow.

"Five years later, 10 years later, they realize, 'Oh, wow we're completely different people and I'm no longer attracted to this person;' so, I think that just a natural development of a person is a huge factor," Suwinyattichaiorn said.

## NOT-SO-SWEET SWEETHEARTS

English teacher Jennifer Kim said students' lack of development contribute to short relationships.

"I just don't think adolescents are mature enough to know what goes into a long-lasting relationship, like marriage, meaning compromise, sacrifice and standing up for what you believe as well," Kim said.

According to 2003 research published by the University of Denver professors Wyndol Furman and Laura Shaffer wrote in *The Role of Romantic Relationships in Adolescent Development* that romantic involvement and sexual behavior have been found to be negatively correlated with academic achievement.

Similarly, Suwinyattichaiorn said high school relationships may distract students' academics.

"For some people, it can consume them and become such a huge distraction, and it negatively affects every other aspect of their lives," the professor said.

Freshman Stephanie Park, who has been in a rela-

tionship with freshman Hunter Barnhardt since May 18, 2024, said she experienced struggles with balancing her relationship and studies.

"I feel like because high school is a big transition from middle school, getting to kind of maintain that balance has been really hard for me," Park said.

## IT'S ALL PART OF THE EXPERIENCE

Despite the cons, Suwinyattichaiorn said high school relationships can benefit students as they learn to create meaningful relationships.

"You have to learn communication skills, negotiation skills and how to become more empathetic because now you have a romantic partner," she said.

Junior Christopher Serrano, who's been dating junior Ashley Lato since Valentine's Day, 2023, said the support from his relationship is his favorite part.

"It's having someone to rely on, like you can really trust, knowing they won't stab you in your back," Serrano said. "They're really true to you."

For senior Hanna Park, her almost three-year relationship with senior Kevin Chung allowed her to grow her emotional intelligence faster than her peers.

"I feel like I matured emotionally really quickly compared to all my other friends because there's a lot of issues, obviously, in relationships," Park said. "When you bring it up, you have to be super understanding about it even though you don't want to."

## CHEERS TO FOREVER?

An urgent problem high school sweethearts experience may be the deciding factor in continuing their relationship to college.

"When you're committed in a relationship and the partner isn't at the same college, it's limiting exploration, so I would say college plays a big role in breaking up relationships," Suwinyattichaiorn said.

Faced with such a roadblock, Chung said communication would play an important role if he and his girlfriend decide to follow through with long distance.

"If we do have a long distance [relationship], I think communication would be a big part," he said. "It's definitely intimidating, but I feel like if both people are willing to try, then it'll eventually work."



For the full story, go to [shhsacolade.com](https://shhsacolade.com)



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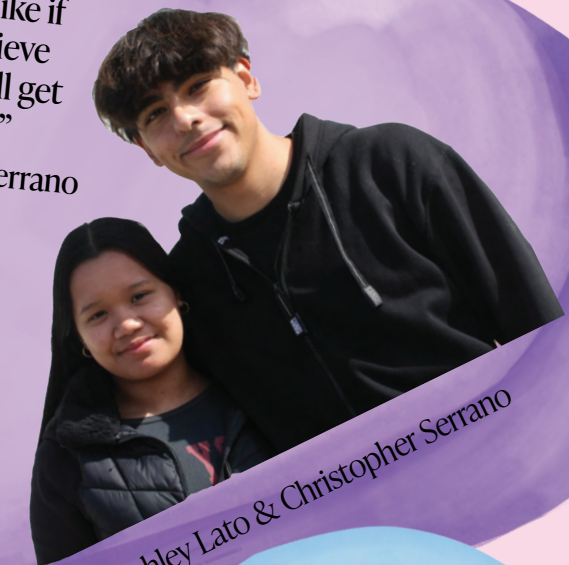
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"The statistics show we're not going to last, but I feel like if you really believe in it, then you'll get through it."

- Christopher Serrano



Juniors Ashley Lato & Christopher Serrano

"If there is a will, there is a way; you got to really want to be with that person and you could make anything happen."  
- Ethan Castro



Seniors Ethan Castro & Sloanne O'Connor

photos by **KATIE LEEM** and **NICOLE PARK**  
compiled by **NICOLE PARK**



# Q&A Lancer Life

As a continuing segment of the 2024-2025 school year, The Accolade finds out more about students on campus. For the third “Lancer Life,” staff reporter Caroline Shin interviews sophomore Melanie Castillo about her move from Murrieta to Houston and back.

**Q** When did you move to Texas and why?

**A** “I moved to Texas in February 2021. We moved to Houston because we thought it would be a better change for us as a good way to experience and try new things.”

**Q** What was the name of the high school you attended over there?

**A** “Klein High School.”



photo by RACHEL YOON

**Q** Share one or two similarities and differences between that campus in Texas and Sunny Hills.

**A** “The school in Texas was all indoors, and it wasn’t really a positive environment. But over here, it’s a lot better. Like the school in Texas, people were very rude and loud, and the teachers didn’t seem to care about the students as much. Here, it’s quite different because I feel like all the teachers are nicer and more caring.”

**Q** What has been the most challenging thing about moving to a new state?

**A** “Being alone and not knowing anyone.”

**Q** What is the most challenging thing about returning to Southern California?

**A** “Well, it has been challenging not knowing anyone, but no one has given me a hard time here, so it’s been easy to adapt. Also, all of my family lives very close, so they’ve been helping with a lot of things.”

**Q** Why did you move back?

**A** “My parents really missed SoCal, and Texas wasn’t really what they thought it would be. They were hoping for better schools and a better job, but it wasn’t really the case.”

**Q** How did the move back impact your sophomore year of high school?

**A** “I think it’s impacted me in a better way. I’m more focused and less distracted. I’m not distracted by bad people here, and I’m not near any bad company. In Texas, it was kind of different.”

**Q** What are your goals for yourself 10 years from now? What major and colleges are you considering and what career do you hope to pursue?

**A** “To get a good stable job and a college degree. I really want to be a therapist, and I want to major in psychology at USC.”

**Q** What advice would you give for those whose family are considering a move out of state?

**A** “That it’s going to be OK. It might be uncomfortable at first, but you’ll get used to it. I would say it took me about three months for the uncomfortableness to go away after moving, but I would say do things you’ve never tried before.”

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# SPITFIRE

## Should Feb. 14 be a legal holiday?

story by AASHNA DIALANI and KAYDEN KIM

Welcome to the first print edition of Spitfire. For those unfamiliar with our online series, we, as co-Opinion editors, have created a format in which we debate about a topic and then seek feedback from our readers on whom they believe won the discourse. So for this inaugural print version, Kayden's comments will be *pink*, and Aashna's will be *green*.



**K**

Since the 14th century, Feb. 14 has been a day dedicated to celebrating love. It's pretty much already a celebration for couples, and we should take the final step to make Valentine's Day an official holiday. To make this happen, it would take approval from Congress and our president in the executive branch — but it's worth advocating for because as The Beatles once sang, "All you need is love!"

**A**

There's nothing wrong with a celebration, but "as The Beatles once sang," "Let it be," and leave Feb. 14 to the couples. According to research presented by the *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, high school relationships typically last six months for 16 year olds and about a year for 17 and 18 year olds; promoting Valentine's Day to the extent of an official holiday is only further supporting a futile relationship. Instead of making yet another three-day weekend in February, the school could just host a Valentine's Day Spectacular for both friends who would like to make memories with each other and couples who would like to engage in those stomach-churning, lovey-dovey activities.

### Here are the rules:

1. No profanity
2. An editor attacked by the other will be given three sentences to respond.
3. The readers will decide who wins through a poll on the online website.
4. Once a rule is broken, the debate ends.

illustrations by NATHANIEL COVARRUBIUS



**K**

Yeah, a school event sounds good, but it doesn't account for couples who don't have enough time in their daily routines to spend any together. Making Valentine's Day an official holiday is more than just promoting high school couples — by the way, high school relationships can help students mature and grow as people. With a nationally declining rate of natural increase, officiating the holiday could show the world that America takes love seriously.

**A**

A day off will take precious time off education or work just for romance, which arguably everyone can find time for eventually. High school is a time to prepare for the future, and a relationship shouldn't be prioritized so early on in our lives because it might distract us from our goals. Plus, Valentine's Day doesn't need a special mark on the calendar because every day can be filled with love.

**K**

Corny, but good point. You might think it'll just unhealthily promote teen relationships, but like you said, high school is a time to prepare for the future, and since every day of the week is for work/school, giving people time to spend with their Valentines and work on relationships is great for them. For the lonely few struggling to find that love, Feb. 14 might become a day to actively pursue that overlooked romantic part of their lives. The time off can help singles meet other people looking for companionship, or long-distance couples can take the time to meet and catch up. Plus, I'm sure other students want an excuse to have one less day of school. I know I do.



For the full story, go to [shhsaccolade.com](https://shhsaccolade.com)

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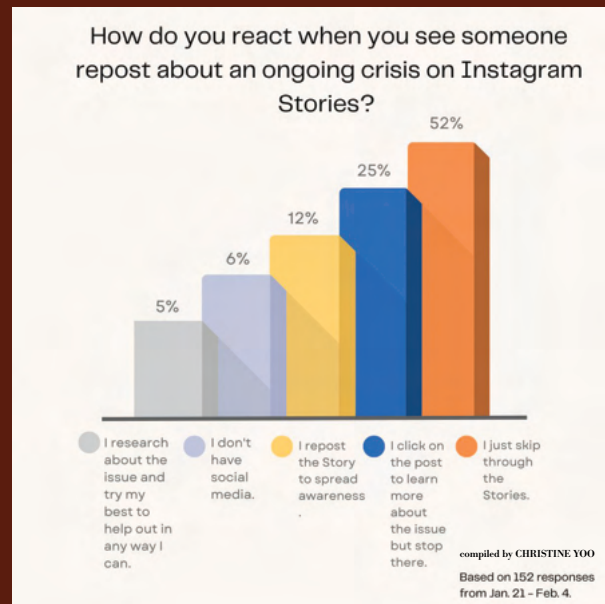
million, according to a Nov. 4, 2024, article posted by *Audacity Magazine*.

Barber's success in using her platform to help a cause displays the power having a large following on social media can have. She not only takes action, but also propels her millions of fans to do the same; her reposting actually makes an impact. However, even though the comedian made a positive achievement in helping raise \$50 million, gathering such a large sum of funds is not an easy feat for everyone.

While these influencers typically amass thousands to millions of followers, the average Instagram user only possesses between 150- 200 followers, according to an Aug. 21, 2004, post on Sides-Media. As a result, for the ordinary person, posting about global or local news on social media most likely won't reach a large audience, proving the attempt ineffective.

Therefore, while some may argue that doing something is better than nothing, it's highly less likely for an individual to create a true impact or enlarge support for an issue compared to a celebrity with overexposure.

Alongside the rather ineffectiveness of attempting to raise awareness through reposts, individuals could also accidentally spread false information. According to a December 2016 survey by the Pew Research Center, 23% of U.S. adults have shared false news with friends and others, unknowingly or knowingly. Even though one might post with good intentions, without proper self-research, people can spread misinformation about serious issues. Therefore, it remains crucial to turn to reliable sources such as new outlets and look into current events before spreading it around.



Instead of just reposting stories, we recommend that users do more by researching ongoing issues, donating necessities to local charities like the Salvation Army or volunteering at organizations like the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank to relieve those impacted by the L.A. fires.

In a world of growing technology, it's vital to know how to show activism not only through a screen but with actions.

**“B**reaking News: L.A. goes up in flames.”  
“Pray for L.A.”  
“Donate to the GoFundMe.”  
With every swipe, posts like these fill up social media feeds.

Whether a natural disaster such as the Palisades and Eaton fires in L.A. County hits or a humanitarian crisis in Third World countries like Afghanistan or Ukraine, the tendency for those in the social media generation is to repost news articles on their Instagram Stories in hopes of gaining traction on the issue.

Although posting about such issues may help spread awareness initially, it won't achieve a lasting change in the long run. Instead, we should consider taking action to back up our words and social media advocacy.

According to an *Accolade* poll from Jan. 21-Feb. 4 based on 152 responses, 52% skip through repost Instagram Stories about ongoing crises, while 26% click on the post to learn more about the issue but stop there.

Reposting on social media may seem like spreading awareness when, in reality, most users simply swipe and go to the next Story, peeking at the issue being publicized but not truly paying much attention.

Moreover, once stories about a singular hot topic start circulating repetitively, it can become more likely that users will start ignoring relevant posts because of their overexposure.

According to a May 6, 2019, article posted on *Psychology Today* by Michael Pittaro, an associate professor of criminal justice at American Military University, society is exposed to a constant flow of negativity and violence on news networks and social media, causing the public to slowly become desensitized.

“For example, last week, I mentioned to my university students that there had been another campus shooting, which occurred in North Carolina, hoping to start a healthy, productive dialogue about such acts of violence, but the news did not seem to spark any interest, which only confirmed my thoughts that we are becoming desensitized and that is troubling,” Pittaro said.

Alongside growing indifference toward critical news, unfortunately, spreading the word about crises on social media and publicizing for charities or GoFundMe accounts can only have the potential for a substantial impact if done by those with a large following, such as celebrities.

For example, when the Australian bushfires occurred in 2020, comedian Celeste Barber spread awareness about the issue to her 9.6 million followers on Instagram and showed support for the New South Wales Rural Fire Service fundraiser, collecting over \$50

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## STAFF EDITORIAL

# THE NEXT GENERATION OF NEWS

*The Accolade's future adviser should be experienced and dedicated to usher the program toward its 75th year*

In light of the upcoming Scholastic Journalism Week, Feb. 24-28, that celebrates the role of student journalism and its societal impact, The Accolade editorial board unanimously agrees on its vision for the future of the program and the qualities it seeks in the next adviser.

The Journalism Education Association [JEA], a national organization that supports the foundation for teachers and students, has been sponsoring Scholastic Journalism Week each February, aiming to commemorate the freedom the First Amendment of the Constitution guarantees to the media.

Accolade students and their adviser have historically participated at a less than moderate level ranging from displaying the poster promoting the week to sending in images of the staff and its working environment for JEA's social media posting. We acknowledge that we could do more to promote the importance of the First Amendment, which also guarantees the freedom of speech.

Such introspection leads us to the driving force behind high school journalism — its adviser. Sunny Hills has been blessed with an array of teachers who have guided the program these past 65 years since its first newspaper issue published on March 31, 1960. It especially rose in prominence when it started winning local and regional awards under Carol Hallenbeck (Sept. 12, 1969-June 11, 1993).

Our current adviser, who's finishing his 16th year, took us to the next level, guiding staffs from 2001-2008 and 2016 to now to gain national prominence with the JEA, the National Scholastic Press Association and the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. Tommy Li has shared with us the sad reality that he will not remain in this role by the next decade.

When the principal has to hire a successor

to Li, we urge the administrator to solicit our recommendations for the qualities this candidate should embody. We know we cannot clone our current adviser, so here are a few non-negotiables:

- an experienced journalist who can bring the staffers to the professional level
- while the age shouldn't be the absolute limit, preferably younger in the 30s to empathize with students better and stay with the program longer
- pursuit of awards at all levels to motivate students
- work ethic beyond school hours to hold late production nights

When readers pick up a copy of *The Accolade* newsmagazine, scroll through our online news website or see our reporters interviewing their sources, it's easy to take it all for granted. But everything — the in-depth reporting and staff production nights — happens because of a shared commitment to journalism. We look forward to seeing who can lead us into the next generation of news and beyond.

The Accolade Editorial Board is made up of the top editors and section editors on the 2024-2025 staff with the guidance of adviser Tommy Li. If you have a question about the board's decision or an issue for the board to discuss and write about, please send an email to [theacoladeshhs@gmail.com](mailto:theacoladeshhs@gmail.com).



illustration by JOANNA JOO

## FOR THE RECORD

The Accolade would like to clarify some information provided in the Dec. 16, 2024, issue. In a sports preview titled, "SPLASHING TO VICTORY," Keith Nighswonger should have been listed as a co-head coach instead of an assistant coach. At press time, the reporter was not informed of the co-head coach scenario. The story has been updated in the online version of the sports preview. *The Accolade* regrets any confusion this might have caused.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Reader response to the Dec. 16 "FINALS SCHEDULE CHANGES" news article:

While I do understand the goal of making finals week more consistent, it is important to consider how these alterations will affect students. Nicole Park's article helped me understand that the addition of a zero-period final on the first day of finals week is a good idea as it will make the schedule clearer, reducing confusion for those who do partake in a zero-period class.

However, for those with both a zero and sixth period, having three finals on the same day could be exhausting. With no proper lunch break or enough time to rest, it might be hard to stay focused for the third exam.

I hope the school takes these concerns into account and makes adjustments if necessary for the spring semester.

— Caleb Kang, freshman

### Reader response to the Dec. 16 "SETTING THE PACE" news article:

After reading Yena Oh's article, it really struck a nerve knowing that there is competition everywhere — not just what we see on TV— but even in newspapers and online news.

It is interesting to see that it takes a lot of revising and corrections for *The Accolade* staff members to show the world what they are capable of as students, exhibiting great potential and dedication.

— Ryan Jang, senior

### Reader response to the Dec. 16 "FUN AT WHAT COST?" feature article:

Reading the magazine, I couldn't help but notice the festive aesthetic of the whole product. I enjoyed flipping through the pages and seeing all the graphics and holiday-inspired stories.

However, Justin Pak's article especially caught my interest as it went in depth about the complicated inflation issue present in our economy today. I never really took the time to understand how inflation works, but reading about how it affects students and lo-

cal shops in my own school and neighborhood sparked my interest to continue reading into the numbers that affected people in various ways.

The story left me more educated on how inflation affects our lives holistically and during the holiday season.

— Kaylynn Park, freshman

### Reader responses to the Dec. 16 "DID YOU KNOW? ELF ON THE ROOF" feature article:

During finals week, my friends and I noticed the elf on the roof that appeared sitting upon buildings on campus at break. Throughout the stress of finals, I found that the small laugh I gained seeing the elf in a new spot each day was a short relief from a test-filled day.

In Lauren Kang's article, I found out that my current Honors Chemistry teacher Mason Morris took part in making this tradition come to life.

Understanding the history behind this brought me joy in knowing that one of my favorite teachers was involved in the creation of one of my most treasured Sunny Hills' traditions.

— Tatiana Galvez, sophomore

Excited, my friend showed me a picture of an elf on the roof during finals week. My friend and I were both confused but also entertained, as for a minute, the mysterious elf made us forget about finals and laugh together.

Ater reading Lauren Kang's article, I was surprised that Santa's helper on top of the building had been a long-time tradition at Sunny Hills even before 2018.

— Amy Lim, sophomore

### Reader responses to the Dec. 16 "WE'RE MORE THAN Seaside Donuts Bakery" editorial:

All of the articles were great, but Christine Yoo's column stood out to me in particular.

Coming from an Asian background, I have heard of so many stereotypes made about our community. Actually, when people from other schools ask me what high school I go to and find out



illustration by LINDSEY UM

## EXTRA! EXTRA! X-MAS

*Readers react to the December issue, "tis the season" — The Accolade's second non-specialty magazine.*

*The responses we received covered such articles as the new finals schedule, elf on the roof and the economy's impact on students' holiday shopping.*

that it is Sunny Hills, they always say something about how the school is full of "boba-drinking Asians."

This article relates to a lot of Asian Americans who have experienced being generalized, and I think it is a great way to spread awareness about what is happening in our society.

— Julianne Tubiera, sophomore

I was interested in several different stories from this magazine, but the one I enjoyed reading the most was Christine Yoo's column.

I see the Asian Baby Girl/Asian Baby Boy stereotypes online all the time, but after reading about it some more, it really enlightened me on why these SoCal Asian stereotypes are an issue and that it shouldn't be taken lightly.

I hope readers understand that just because something is funny it doesn't mean it's always a good thing.

— Kaylee Won, sophomore

### Reader response to the Dec. 16 "HOLLY JOLLY SEASONAL JOBS" feature article and "Lookie Lookie" A&E review:

Overall, I really enjoyed the second *Accolade* issue of this year. But, Irene Park's "HOLLY JOLLY SEASONAL JOBS," and Jenna Kim's "Lookie! Lookie!," stuck out to me the most. As a freshman, I have been looking forward to applying for jobs in the near future, and "Holly Jolly Seasonal Jobs" helped me with that.

Also, "Lookie! Lookie!" struck me as relatable because Crumbl cookies have been gaining traction recently, and I was surprised to see that it made it into *The Accolade*.

— Bradyn Chiang, freshman

**The Accolade welcomes signed letters to the editor with full name and grade level emailed to [theacoladeshhs@gmail.com](mailto:theacoladeshhs@gmail.com).**



# THAT'S BUZZZ

*New Fullerton coffee shop  
brews up a storm*

story by JENNA KIM

**W**hether in need of an Americano to power through a particularly long study session or craving the sweet taste of a trendy matcha latte, students are often on the lookout for a drink that fuels both focus and flavor.

And when it comes to looking for a beverage that provides a real “buzz,” we have no better place to start than Better Buzz Coffee.

Located at 1329 Harbor Blvd, the establishment that opened December 2024 is part of the Better Buzz Coffee franchise, which according to its website was founded in San Diego in 2002.

Better Buzz started as a small coffee cart ran by college students and has since expanded into a popular chain known for its high quality drinks and unique atmosphere. Now, it joins the growing number of coffee shops in Fullerton, offering bin-door and outdoor seating options as well as a versatile menu.

The cafe's arrival offers a space for students and locals to enjoy the efforts of Tim Langdon and Stephanie Garden,

whose goals of blending quality coffee with a welcoming atmosphere remain true in their newest location.

During a visit to the cafe on Jan. 18, a matcha tea latte (\$6.25), horchata ice latte (\$6.25) and bacon ciabatta (\$9.50) were ordered, bringing the total cost of the meal to a moderately priced \$22.

The matcha latte is a blend of ceremonial matcha powder with milk and sweetener. At Better Buzz, the drink boasts a rich flavor for those who enjoy something sweet but not too strong. Compared to the popular Starbucks matcha latte, the Better Buzz version tends to have a more pronounced matcha flavor, offering a smoother, less sugary taste for those who appreciate the depth of matcha without it being overwhelming.

On the other hand, the horchata latte has a noticeably stronger profile, both in caffeine and sweetness. The blend of cinnamon, vanilla and espresso creates a flavor that's comforting while energizing, making it an excellent choice for those craving something bolder.

Finally, the bacon ciabatta, though slightly small, was fresh with scrambled eggs, cheese and bacon, a solid choice for a

light bite.

But the experience at Better Buzz isn't just about the food and drinks — it's the overall vibe that draws in its diverse clientele, from students looking for a place to study to career folks seeking a cozy place to work. The moment customers enter, they are greeted with a bee-inspired interior, spotlighting walls in black, white and yellow, whether striped or in the pattern of a honeycomb.

Following this theme, the furniture ranges from yellow honeycomb-shaped tables to sleek black marble, combined with the warm ambiance of hanging lights to create a comfortable atmosphere.

During that Jan. 18 visit, the cafe was noticeably packed upon entrance, as the chain has gained significant popularity in past years. However, the wait was short for the amount of active diners there.

Overall, this place has successfully whizzed its way into Fullerton — a place to gather, relax and enjoy drinks, Better Buzz has clearly become a space that reflects the energy of its buzz-y body community.



For the full story,  
go to [shhsaccolade](https://shhsaccolade.com).



photos by  
JENNA KIM

**TIME TO BUZZ:** The new dining spot features a pick-up space for online orders (left), indoor seating and bar for customers.



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# A COLORFUL MUSICAL

New director leads Lancer Theater Department in adaptation of ‘Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat’



For the full story, go to shhsacolade.com

story by CLAIRE LEE

With spring right around the corner, the stage is set for a colorful act.

The curtain will rise on “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” in the Performing Arts Center on March 6 and will continue until March 15.

The musical, a vibrant reimagining of the biblical story of Joseph, follows his journey as the favored son with a multicolored coat that faces betrayal from his jealous brothers.

Infused with eclectic musical styles ranging from rock and roll to calypso, the production will showcase themes like perseverance and forgiveness.

With a new directorial team, this production showcases a different theatrical style.

Annie Pagano, the musical’s director, said it is her first time working at Sunny Hills, though she has an extensive background of working with La Habra High School’s theater department, Fullerton Children’s Repertory Theater and Rancho-Starbuck Intermediate School.

Pagano said the choice of this year’s spring production came from theater teacher Christian Penuelas.

“After having conversations with him, a lot of the reasons [why we chose this musical] was because he had students that were right for those parts,” the director explained.

Penuelas, recently on paternity leave, entrusted the production to a capable team, including co-director and choreographer

Brennen Logan, who was familiar with the musical’s demands.

“It’s really heavy on vocals and choreography, and I think our strength is in the choreography,” she said.

Leading the cast is senior Caleb Van Hook, whose standout audition secured him the role of Joseph, Logan said.

“He’s extremely confident and not afraid to stand up and collaborate with the directors,” she said. “That confidence, the willingness to make choices while he was acting definitely makes him stand out.”

Van Hook said it’s exciting to experiment with new acting methods and hopes the audience views his character on a deeper level.

“During rehearsals, I think having the chance to practice different ways to deliver my lines was helpful,” he said. “I hope they’ll see he is comical, but at the same time there’s something deeper about him.”

Behind the scenes, set design is crafted to match the musical’s vibrant energy.

“You’re going to see interesting costumes that represent things you’re familiar with in popular culture adapted to fit the musical,” Pagano said.

She said the cast wishes the audience leave not just entertained, but inspired.

“Hopefully, understanding the story of Joseph and the brother, [they] will enjoy the talent of the Sunny Hills High School students,” the director said.



photo by NOAH LEE

**WATCHA GONNA DO?:** Senior Caleb Van Hook (right) portrays the title character in “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” a musical about Old Testament patriarch Jacob’s favorite son and his trials and tribulations stemming from his jealous brothers’ evil deeds. During this Jan. 29 rehearsal in the Performing Arts Center, junior Elliot Park, who plays Pharaoh, wraps his left arm around Joseph as he tries to interpret the Pharaoh’s dreams while those in the ruler’s court await in anticipation for what Joseph will say.

## MAIN CAST

Joseph	Caleb Van Hook
Narrator	Kathleen Handley
Narrator	Leah Nyberg
Narrator	Kensington Van Hook
Narrator	Abigail Veyna

compiled by CLAIRE LEE  
source: Lancer Theater Department

## BEHIND THE SEAMS:

Four days in, and I’m thrilled to act with the rest of the colorful crew



Serenity Li

Red, yellow, green, brown.  
Scarlet, black, ochre, peach.  
Ruby, olive, violet, fawn.

These 12 colors are among the 29 hues I needed to learn for a song in “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” a musical based on an Old Testament Bible story about the son of Jacob — considered to be among the patriarchs of the Jewish nation.

So here I was on a Saturday afternoon, running up the stairs of the PAC. Although we have no props to work with yet, the challenge for me was to envision 29 different colors and how we have to follow the unique dances moves for each color.

It became a confusing endeavor. I already didn’t know the lyrics well, and, on top of that, I had to memorize each movement for each hue.

I wondered if others around me felt the same way. My friend Celeste, who plays the wife of another of Jacob’s sons, kept forgetting some of the moves.

“How are we going to sing and dance this at the same time?” she said, out of breath.

“All we had to do was practice,” I told her as we started to run through the motions again with each other.

Back to me.

I kept mistaking a later verse for an earlier one or vice versa (pun intended). I found that running small movements while going through daily life helped me practice anytime, anywhere.

The day after that rehearsal, I served as a crossing guard for my church’s second service. At a time when pedestrian traffic stopped, I was basically alone. I used this opportunity to lightly go over the basics of the steps. I wouldn’t be surprised if years after this musical I still remember it.

While we were practicing the first half of that song, my castmates playing Jacob’s sons had to act like they hated my friend Caleb, who played Joseph. At the end of the rehearsal, I was exhausted, but aside from my tiredness, I was excited to see how the different rehearsals would play out.

At the end, we gathered on the stage and listened to the choreographer’s notes about our performances. After, we are all dismissed, we head back out of the PAC, to resume our normal lives again.

Well, until our next rehearsal that is.



For the full story, go to shhsacolade.com

illustration by NATHANIEL COVARRUBIAS



# 3-sport athlete impresses with speed, agility on field

story by YENA OH

*This is the first in a series on underclassman athletes playing a sport during each season in the 2024-2025 school year. The Accolade profiles their contributions and what they do to keep them on top of their game.*

Fast.

That's the assessment that then-eighth-grader Madelyn Sooter recalled her Parks Junior High School PE teacher had surmised about her after seeing her place first in all three of the running heats she competed in at Parks.

"He'd ask me what my dream college would be, and at the time, I wasn't sure," Sooter said. "He told me that I would be able to make it into any if I keep working hard because of my athletic talent."

And in the following year as a freshman, that athletic talent to run fast culminated in her setting a new Sunny Hills record at the April 13, 2024, Orange County Championships at Mission Viejo High School for the fastest 200-meter runner among previous Lady Lancers, according to athletic.net.

With a 26.63 time, she surpassed Jazmin Montalvo's 2019 time of 26.7 seconds; in the 100-meter race around two months before that at the Feb. 24, 2024 Fullerton City Meet at Fullerton Union High School, Sooter's 13-second performance bumped her to second behind Montalvo's 12.79 time.

Those performances capped a school year in which the then-freshman also competed in fall and spring sports – junior varsity girls tennis and JV girls soccer. Such feats have caught the attention of not only her track and field coach, but also athletic director Paul Jones.

"Breaking the 200-meter school record as a freshman is a very impressive accomplishment," Jones wrote in a Feb. 6 email to *The Accolade*. "We are excited to watch how Madelyn does this [upcoming] track season and continue to encourage and support our student athletes who play multiple sports."

## HOW TO RUN ... FAST

As a sophomore entering her second season on the Lady Lancers track and field squad, Sooter said she has come to realize that her secret to success has been her determination and her diet.

"Something that I would say that has helped with my speed a lot is through consistency, hard work and starting sports at a young age," said the sophomore, who started playing soccer at age 4. "In starting sports when I was young and consistently continuing, participating and working hard in them, it ultimately has been a big factor in the speed and

endurance that I have today."

Genetics also play a role in her athleticism, the three-sport athlete said.

"My dad grew up doing sports, and similar to him, I, too, am doing so, obtaining his height and athleticism through genetics," Sooter said.

In fact, it was her father's idea that she add tennis to her sports skillset. Though she said she has played recreationally with her sister and family when she was younger, it was during the summer before the start of her freshman year that he took her out to the courts to work on her game.

"I decided to start [tennis] because it kind of goes hand in hand with agility and coordination with the other sports such as soccer," Sooter said. "My dad also self-taught himself how to play tennis, so I kind of adopted that, too, and started playing it myself."

Those summer workouts helped her get accepted onto the JV girls tennis squad last year, playing fourth-seeded singles, and she continued last semester, moving one rank up to third-seeded JV singles, though she also played doubles earlier in the season.

Sooter said she has yet to lose a singles match for the Lady Lancers.

"She's special; she's faster than every girl out here, and she's very athletic," tennis coach Christopher Ghareebo said. "She has good footwork when she plays tennis, and soccer and track might be what helps her with that."

## GIRLS SOCCER HURDLES

Though soccer has been the sport she grew up playing the most, it came as a disappointment for Sooter when she was unable to play at the varsity level as a freshman.

"Ultimately, it was a goal to get into varsity and play on that level as I had always been a very competitive player. ... But [I] accepted it, and now am so glad I was able to meet those people through JV that I'm still close friends with," she said.

Her persistence paid off, as Sooter was able to move up from JV as a sophomore.

First-year girls soccer head coach William Allgeier praised his player for being able to play multiple sports in a school year.

"She is an unbelievable athlete that is incredibly hard working, and it is difficult to be a three-sport athlete, but she does an amazing job handling them with her amazing academics," Allgeier said. "As her coach, there isn't too much I can do other than do my best to ensure that she is mentally and emotionally happy."

image by NOAH LEE

**TRIPLE THREAT:** *Sophomore Madelyn Sooter showcases her skill in all three sports she plays during the school year: soccer, tennis and track.*

image by KATIE LEEM

# STRIKER

# SERVER

image used with permission from  
ISABELLA ZIA

image used with permission from  
JOEL CAHN

# SPRINTER



photo by NOAH LEE



**UPGRADE NEEDED:** Track and field's sprints, hurdles and jumps group runs its warm-up lap on the dirt track before starting drills on the backstretch on Jan. 23 during sixth period. An all-weather track will be installed from bond money.

# COLUMN: School officials made the right call in prioritizing track and field needs

story by LAUREN KANG

With the passage of Measure L for facilities' upgrades among the campuses in the Fullerton Joint Union High School District, school officials prioritized the track and field as the first improvement project on our campus. I know siding with school officials and Jones sounds biased: I've been on the track and field and cross country teams since my freshman year. But let me give three main reasons why an all-weather track and turf field deserve to be No. 1 on the list.

## REASON NO. 1: THE DISGUSTING, SLIPPERY SLUDGE ON THE CURRENT TRACK, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT RAINS

"Ew, ew, ew, ew, ew."  
This two-letter phrase is a running joke between me and my friends over our three years on this track. Every year, like clockwork, I repeat this word as the mud engulfs my running shoes. As much as we laugh about it now, this phrase stemmed from pure frustration and disgust over the fact that I had to run in the disgusting sludge during rainy seasons. The grossness of the mud isn't the only issue. The slippery surface is a big safety issue. Looking back, I almost fell many times. Every time it rains, footprints leave holes throughout the circumference of the track. During speed work, it often got

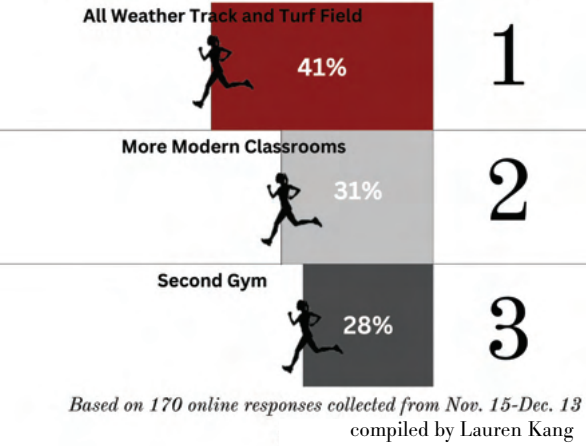
illustration of Lauren Kang  
by JOANNA JOO



## NOTABLE NUMBERS

- Sunny Hills High School creates a master plan list for proposed improvements to the school. The following items are the suggestions and the costs.
- Second gym = \$35 million
  - Lockers rooms = \$13 million
  - Landscape Improvements = \$713,907
  - All-weather track and artificial-turf field = \$10 million
  - Baseball field = \$18 million
  - Bleachers = \$3 million
  - Hard play area = \$331,774
  - Sport field lighting = \$2 million
  - Restrooms/concessions = \$2 million
- source: fjuhsdplan.org  
compiled by LAUREN KANG

WITH THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE MEASURE L SCHOOL BOARD WILL HAVE ENOUGH VOTES TO BE APPROVED, WHICH SUNNY HILLS MODERNIZATION PROJECT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE FIRST?



in the way of efficiently finishing each lap, since I had to be wary to not roll my ankles, going beyond just annoyance.

## REASON NO. 2: THE EQUITABLE FACTOR

Sometimes we had to attend a second practice every week on Tuesday evenings, just to use the Buena Park High School all-weather track. I was grateful for the privilege to train on such a track once a week, but it was frustrating that Sunny Hills didn't have its own for us to practice on. Since we could only practice when our event coach was available in the evenings, I felt the unstable schedule limited our ability to race at our best. I wished we could've experienced the feeling of a real track more, as running on the road and dirt track is very different.

## REASON NO. 3: THE TURF FIELD WILL BENEFIT OTHER SPORTS

Football and soccer players can practice on an all-weather track, rain or shine. Currently, the grass and rain lead to muddy grounds. When cleats contact the malleable field, it destroys the surface. A turf, however, will allow for regularly scheduled practices because the top won't get ruined. Some

athletes may wonder, how about a second gym? Their frustrations over scheduling early morning and late night practices to accommodate different sports' schedules is valid. However only two sports to my knowledge rely on a gym: basketball and volleyball. This isn't to say that these sports aren't as important as outside sports, but more athletes can utilize the new facility: cross country, football, marching band, soccer and track and field. If I'm being honest, I personally want the process to be expedited so I can run on a real track before graduation. Despite the bitterness I might hold to the unfortunate timing of this situation, I'm really glad that it'll benefit the next generation, and I think it's a great addition to our campus. Now, instead of shouting "Ew, ew, ew, ew, ew," with every stride I take on a rainy day, perhaps this new track will change my most-used practice phrase into a more positive one.



For the full story, go to [shhsaccolade.com](https://shhsaccolade.com)

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