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DISTRICT

CUSD student board representative's preferential vote, required by law, still pending

BY GRACE GRAHL

When Carmel High School junior Jasmine Jin, the 2026-27 CUSD school board representative, was researching roles and responsibilities for her position, she came across a section of the California Education

Code which stated she was required by law to have a preferential vote, cast before official votes by the board. This vote wouldn't be counted in the formal vote, but it would solidify students' position on any given issue.

Yet no CUSD school board representative has ever received this

vote, and when Jin brought this up to CUSD superintendent Sharon Ofek during a meeting in August between the two of them, Jin says Ofek asked her if they could discuss it later.

During the Sept. 9 board meeting, CUSD board president Matt Glazer said that the board is "working with staff, leadership adviser, Jasmine, and council to clarify how the student representative participates at future board meetings."

As of Sept. 28, Jin has not received word whether she will have the preferential vote starting with the October board meeting.

"It's important as a school board we are following the code given by the California Board of Education," Jin says. "It's important that students get to express their thoughts, and as the school board representative, it's my entire responsibility to represent the voices of students in the school district."

According to Section 35012 of the Education Code, "Preferential



courtesy of JASMINE JIN

Jasmine Jin, the secretary and treasurer of CHS Mock Trial, uses her skills of public speaking and articulate thinking in trials and during CUSD board meetings.

CONT. 4

DISTRICT

Teachers raise concerns at board meeting, shining light on strained relationship with district office

BY GRACE GRAHL

On Sept. 9, approximately 90 teachers from across Carmel Unified School District banded together to voice concerns about an exemption waiver they were unaware of until it was disclosed in the board meeting agenda the prior Friday... on page 79 of a 134-page summary of the Summary of Unaudited Actual Data Submission. This waiver was presented by the school board as a way to bypass the rule that 55% of expenses are to go to classroom teachers and instructional aides.

Ultimately, board members passed the waiver, along with the unaudited actuals financial report of the fiscal year, further deteriorating the bond of trust between the teachers and the district.

The district this year paid \$1.1 million less than the law requires, compelling them to file a waiver. CUSD pays the teachers in this district more than other comparable districts, such as Pacific Grove Unified School District and Beverly Hills



courtesy of CUSD

The Association of Carmel Teachers, led by president Bill Schrier, is an organized, tight-knit community of teachers who are advocating for transparency from the CUSD district office.

Unified School District, allowing them to use the exemption waiver, the result of a 97-year-old rule in the California Education Code in Section 41372 stating that a unified school district must spend 55% of their ex-

penses on the compensation of classroom teachers, which includes teachers and instructional aides. CUSD

CONT. 5

DISTRICT

CUSD's \$250 million bond measure up for vote Nov. 3

BY RUBY IRANMANESH

On Nov. 3, voters of the Carmel Unified School District will decide whether to approve a \$250 million bond proposal, titled Measure I, aimed at setting aside tax assessed money for district-wide facility projects.

Adopted by the CUSD Board of Education in June, the bond resolution—if approved by voters—would be used to improve schools within the district by updating old infrastructure and athletic facilities, replacing portables with permanent classrooms, improving accessibility, enhancing campus safety and upgrading electrical and sewer systems.

"We are bringing the bond forward now because our facilities continue to age while construction costs steadily rise," says CUSD superintendent Sharon Ofek. "Ongoing repairs cannot replace major systems like roofs, plumbing and aging portables that have reached the end of their useful life. Delaying these projects only drives up long-term costs."

Despite the bond's goals of improving student safety and well-being, many community members are still reluctant to support the bond and express a desire for further clarity and information about the district's long-term plan.

"I support substantial facilities investment," says Art Fernandez, a candidate for the CUSD Governing Board in Trustee Area 2. "However, I do not believe the current proposal gives voters enough clarity about which projects are most urgent, what order they will be completed in and how this bond fits into a district's long-term facilities strategy."

A school bond would allow the district to borrow money for major facility projects. Over time, the borrowed money would be repaid through a dedicated property tax paid by property owners in the district.

The estimated tax rate would be up to \$36 per \$100,000 of assessed value, determined by the tax assessor of Monterey County. This rate was based on the amount of the bond, the number of taxpayers in the area and the period of time it would be paid off, typically 20 to 30 years. Essentially, property owners within CUSD would pay this additional tax as part of their annual property tax bill.

"The financial adviser recommended this specific type of bond because it qualifies us to apply for state matching funds," says CUSD board president Matt Glazer. "But we don't borrow that money all at once, so it's unlikely that taxpayers would see the \$36 value in any one snapshot in time."

CONT. 2



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Bond
cont. from page 1

Unlike operating funds, which pay for salaries and day-to-day operations funded by existing property taxes collected by the county, bond funds would strictly be used for facility projects.

“The biggest misconception is that bond funds can be used for salaries or operational costs,” says Ofek. “State law strictly forbids this, ensuring every dollar goes exclusively to voter-approved facility projects with independent oversight.”

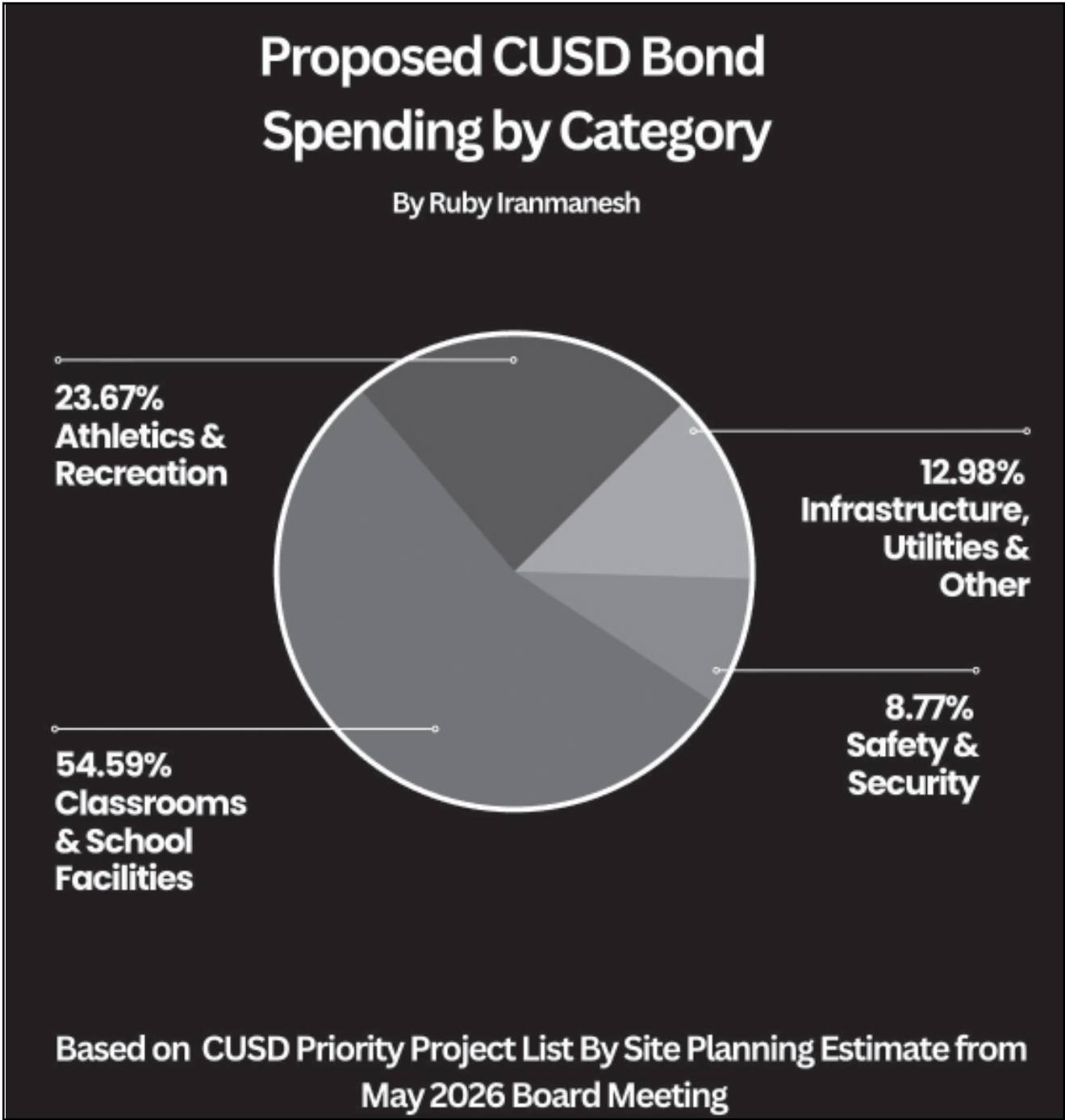
Although CUSD invests nearly \$3 million annually in maintenance, the district claims that unfulfilled facility needs remain a pressing concern. Examples include roof leaks and worsening adobe walls in

presents a health, safety or infrastructure concern? What has reached the end of its useful life? And what can reasonably wait? Answer those questions clearly, put the critical needs first and then determine the appropriate size of the bond—not the other way around.”

Because athletic facility updates are included in the Facilities Master Plan, they will be included in the bond.

“Urgent infrastructure projects, which may include athletic or PE facilities, will be the priority if the bond passes,” says Ofek.

Overall, the bond would fund projects listed in the CUSD Facilities Master Plan, which was established to define the district’s long-term goals for facility plans. The top priorities of the plan include updating plumbing, electrical systems, security fencing and



Carmel High School classrooms, aging pipes at Carmel River Elementary School and severely cracked asphalt at Tularcitos Elementary School.

“If the bond passes, the community will likely notice visible upgrades first in infrastructure projects, including restroom refurbishment, roof replacement and painting while larger projects are in the design process,” says Ofek.

Throughout all schools within the district, the oldest classrooms were built nearly 90 years ago, meaning that there are outdated electrical systems, plumbing and pipes. CUSD emphasizes that many of these buildings are becoming irreparable and require immediate replacements to minimize costly future repairs.

“I went to Carmel River, Middle and High School in the 1960s and ‘70s, and many of the facilities are exactly the same as they were when I was a kid,” says Carmel-local Graeme Robertson, a member of the Carmel High School Foundation’s board of directors and president of the Carmel Residents Association. “There’s an opportunity now to upgrade the facilities and bring them into the new century. Therefore, I support the bond.”

While the district has communicated several of their facility needs with the public, many CUSD voters are still unsure about the timeline and urgency of these projects.

“My question is, what absolutely has to be done now?” says CUSD parent Evelyn Dincer. “What

cameras, classrooms and Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility.

“The Facilities Master Plan includes an extensive list of projects, including athletic facilities, and the bond reflects a range of the identified needs on that list,” says Ofek. “Given that needs and priorities change over time, the list should be viewed as a framework, not a guaranteed list of projects.”

Although the Facilities Master Plan was completed in June 2019, the funding process for these projects was paused in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2025, the board began the process of updating the plan to fit current necessities and, after finalizing updates in January, formally adopted a bond resolution for funding in June.

While this is the greatest bond measure proposed by CUSD, the district has had a couple of facility update bonds in the past. In 2000, the board proposed a \$20 million bond to modernize district facilities, and it was approved by 82.1% of voters in May 2000 according to S&P Global. In 2005, the board proposed a facility upgrades bond once again for \$21.5 million that was approved by 74% of voters in November 2005, according to Fitch Rates, making it the last successful school bond passed by the district. This bond funded the building of the CHS performing arts center, swimming pool and permanent classrooms to replace portables.

“I was around for the previous bonds, and they did a fairly good job addressing the deferred maintenance,”

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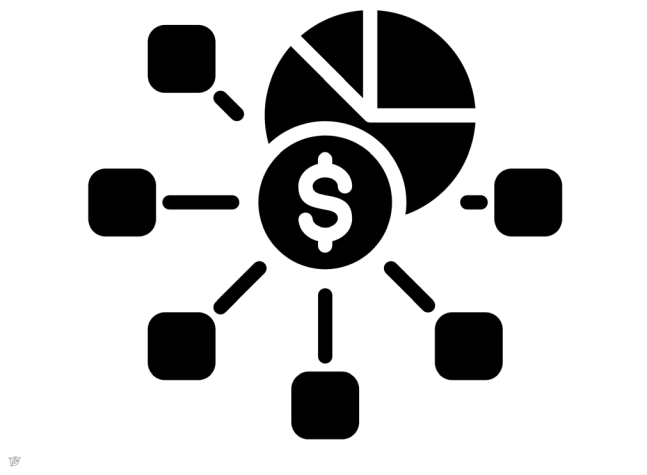
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says Robertson. “However, these facilities constantly need to be upgraded and maintained, so I think now’s a good time to be doing it.”

If this bond is passed in November, a citizens oversight committee would be introduced to overlook voter-approved facility projects and spending. Apart from the committee, community members add that it would also be nice to have regular and transparent project updates from the board.

“Ultimately, this is about stewardship and trust for me,” says Dincer. “We hand our most precious responsibility—our children—into the care of our schools for the better part of every day. I want them to have excellent teachers, programs and facilities, and I am willing to invest in those things.”



ACADEMICS

Graduation requirements altered for future Carmel High classes

BY JADE GRANBERY

Three long-standing Carmel High School graduation requirements are being adjusted: The technology requirement has been eliminated, the community service requirement has been reduced, and beginning with the Class of 2030, passing the swim test will no longer be necessary to graduate.

These changes followed years of discussion among CHS counselors, administrators and teachers before a proposal was brought to the school board for approval in June. Staff worked to determine what changes would be necessary through reviewing California’s minimum graduation standards and University of California and California State University A-G requirements and comparing CHS with nearby districts.

The swim test, which requires students to swim four laps and tread water for 15 minutes, has long distinguished Carmel’s graduation requirements from other schools. The test dates back to the 1960s when teacher and swim coach Bob Walthour worked to make swimming proficiency a requirement after a student drowned at Carmel Beach. Although the test will no longer be required to graduate beginning with the Class of 2030, students will continue to complete the same swim curriculum and take the test as part of their physical education class.

“It’s necessary to give all students the opportunity to learn to swim proficiently,” says P.E. teacher Debbie French. “It’s also good to have a standard set, and I’m not sure removing the requirement was the right choice.”

CHS principal Libby Duethman attributes the decision to differences in students’ access to swimming opportunities outside of school.

“The problem is that not everyone took swim lessons or had access to a pool growing up,” says Duethman. “It’s not fair to expect the same from each student when that’s the case.”

Similar equity concerns were considered in the reduction of community service hours. In previous years, 60 hours, 15 hours per year on average, were required. Starting this year, the requirement is only 40 hours, or 10 per year. Duethman explains that the change was influenced by students’ varying access to volunteer opportunities as well as similar changes in other districts.

For some students, the reduction makes little difference.

“It’s not that difficult as long as you don’t fall behind,” says sophomore Neelima Solano Ramirez, who has already obtained nearly 200 hours from summer volunteering.

However, Duethman estimates that about half of seniors will still have a large number of hours left to complete when she checks their progress around January.

“If you’re a procrastinator, it’s not going to matter if it’s 60 or 40 hours,” says Duethman. “But for those people who really struggle to get the hours done...it will probably be a relief to them.”

Unlike the swim test and community service requirement, the technology requirement was reconsidered because CHS staff questioned whether it still served its original purpose.

Before every student received a school-issued Chromebook, students were required to complete a course that provided hands-on computer experience. Now that technology is integrated into students’ everyday work, the requirement has become outdated. It is also not included in California’s minimum graduation requirements, and there are no other districts in Duethman’s comparisons that maintain one.

Yet photography teacher Holly Lederle believes technology education remains important.

“As of right now, the requirement is not structured effectively,” says Lederle. “However, some kind of requirement with clear standards for what a ‘tech’ class should address could be helpful.”

Lederle explains that many students still lack adequate tech knowledge and suggests that a course covering how computers work and essential technology skills could replace the former requirement.

Removing the requirement could also potentially affect enrollment in technology-related courses. Classes like Video Production and Photography attract students due to their satisfaction of both the visual and performing arts and the technology requirement, and whether enrollment in these classes will drop significantly is unclear.

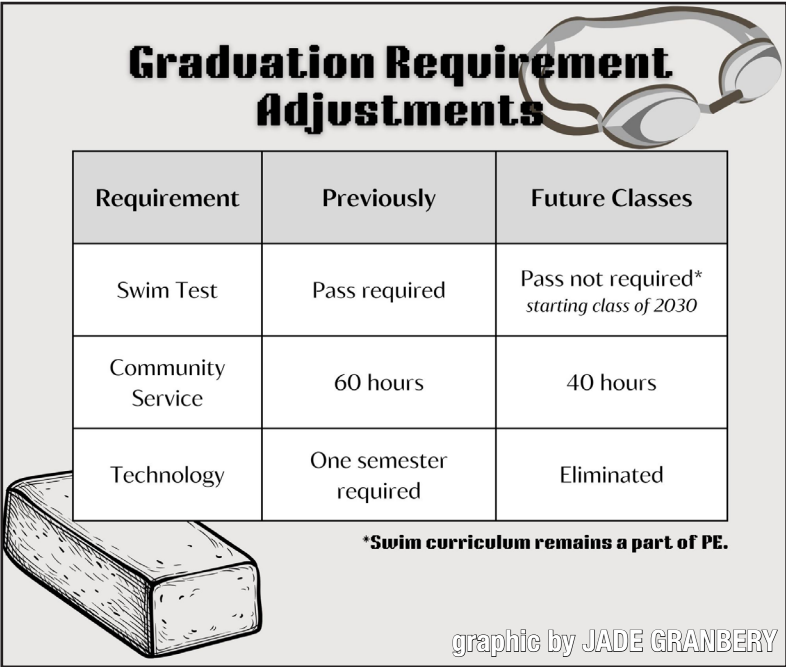
The district approved the first phase of changes, including the swim test, technology requirement and community service hours, in June. The school is considering a second phase that would examine other graduation requirements, though no additional changes have been executed.

Graduation Requirement Adjustments

Requirement	Previously	Future Classes
Swim Test	Pass required	Pass not required* <i>starting class of 2030</i>
Community Service	60 hours	40 hours
Technology	One semester required	Eliminated

*Swim curriculum remains a part of PE.

graphic by JADE GRANBERY



COMMUNITY

Montage Health buys Carmel Rancho Shopping Center for \$37.5 million

BY JUNE EMERSON

With a vision of broadening access to healthcare for Monterey County residents, Montage Health purchased the Carmel Rancho Shopping Center for \$37.5 million on April 16, with plans to transform portions of the shopping center into an outpatient medical center.

Montage plans to preserve the shopping center’s existing buildings while developing a range of healthcare services for patients in one location, including a full-service imaging center with radiology, CT scans and MRI services, as well as laboratory and rehabilitation treatments in the new medical complex.

The nonprofit health system says their goal is to consolidate multiple outpatient services in one location, making specialized care more accessible to Carmel residents, allowing patients to meet more of their medical needs in one place and elevating the experience.

“Throughout this process, we remain committed to serving the community and being a responsible steward of the Carmel Rancho property,” says Monica Sciuto, Montage Health’s communications manager. “An experienced property management team will support existing tenants and help ensure the property remains well-maintained with services for our community as plans evolve.”

The expansion intentionally addresses a gap in specialized healthcare services in Carmel. Before the purchase, the company’s chief operating officer, Daniel Chibaya, said the company saw an opportunity to bring more jobs, careers and care closer.

“We have no cardiologists, neurologists, surgeons or OB-GYNs in Carmel, making us want to bring those services closer to where people live,” says Chibaya.

Montage plans on hiring dozens of new healthcare professionals as the project develops, creating additional career opportunities on the Monterey Peninsula.

The nonprofit collective currently operates 67 healthcare-focused facilities and has more than 100 doctors and providers across the Monterey Peninsula. About 80 providers are in the Monterey and Ryan Ranch areas, 20 are in Marina and eight are in Carmel, though they are not currently accepting patients.

“The Montage Health Foundation is raising \$20 million to assist with the building renovations, equipment and technology that will go into the new Carmel Rancho medical campus,” says Michele Young, director of the Montage Health Foundation.

The purchase of the Carmel Rancho Shopping Center gives Montage an opportunity to expand its presence in Carmel and meet patient demand without replacing the shopping center entirely. Rather than relying on heavy demolition or major infrastructure changes, Montage plans to accommodate the center’s existing businesses

and services while developing healthcare facilities into vacant spaces, including the former Prim’s building.

The project remains in the early stages of development, and Montage has not yet selected the companies to design the medical spaces. They expect new healthcare services will open on the property within two to three years.

As plans move forward, the Carmel Rancho Shopping Center will allow Montage Health to expand specialized care in Carmel while maintaining the role the shopping center has in the community.



photo by JUNE EMERSON

Montage Health buys out Carmel Rancho Shopping Center for \$37.5 million in hopes to further access to healthcare on the Monterey Peninsula.

COMMUNITY

Big Sur local spreads awareness about issues threatening coastal community

BY JOHANNA MELTON

A resident of Big Sur for 35 years, Keep Big Sur Wild co-founder and former captain of the Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade, Marcus Foster found his passion in the protection of the area’s unmarred wildlife, working over the years to extinguish and prevent fires, respond to emergency calls, run a nonprofit and caretake a coastal property.

During his 12 years captaining the Big Sur Fire Brigade, Foster enforced preventative measures including addressing illegal campfires and conducting educa-

tional patrols to avoid wildfires. Foster also worked as a first responder, tending to any emergency, whether it be fires, car accidents or cliff rescues.

“[Big Sur] is an extreme place to be a first responder because it’s a fire-prone area,” explains Foster. “It’s very mountainous, and we have to do a lot of trail rescues.”

When the recent Timber Fire started, the former captain and a group of experienced locals worked for 36 hours defending a section of houses. With the help of hoselines and pumps, they kept the flames at bay until large-scale firefighting agencies arrived.

As the fires continued, Foster aided helicopters by supplying them with water from the ponds at Rancho Grande, the property he caretakes and lives at with his family. He managed to provide the helicopters with two million gallons of fresh water, a viable resource for

firefighting in Big Sur due to the rugged terrain.

“He’s devoted so much to the community,” says Richard Mole, a longtime friend of Foster. “Whenever we have emergencies like mudslides or roadslides or fires, he’s involved in one way or another.” Shortly after the popularization of social media, the longtime local noticed major changes in tourist behavior. Big Sur, a haven for those wishing to spend time off the grid, became a collection of popular photo-op locations, congested with selfie-takers causing overcrowding, which the area is under-equipped to support.

“Most of my life, people came to Big Sur to escape urban patterns and find an inner passion for nature,” says Foster. “Then it seemed like it became a selfie tourism destination.”

Combating this, Foster co-founded Keep Big Sur Wild, a nonprofit aiming to protect Big Sur’s natural beauty and maintain the language of the Big Sur Land Use Plan, a 45-year-old document holding the intention of protecting the Big Sur coast from development and overuse.

“Our board is made up of longtime Big Sur locals who care deeply about Big Sur and are trying to protect it not just for ourselves, but for future generations,” says Foster.

The primary caretaker for Rancho Grande, a 300-acre ranch on the coast of Big Sur, Foster acts as everything from a security guard to a farmer, dedicating much of his time to keeping the ranch up and running.

“He’s what a person should be in a community like this,” says Martha Karstens, former chief of the Big Sur Fire Brigade. “It’s nice when people take an interest in the community that they live in.”

A true jack-of-all-trades, Marcus Foster has dedicated much of his life to maintaining Big Sur, urging people to treat Highway 1 as the scenic experience it was originally meant to be, uphold a “look, don’t touch” mentality when visiting and avoid promoting specific areas on social media, all to prevent Big Sur from being loved to death.

As Foster says, “If there’s any place in the world that shouldn’t change, it’s Big Sur.”

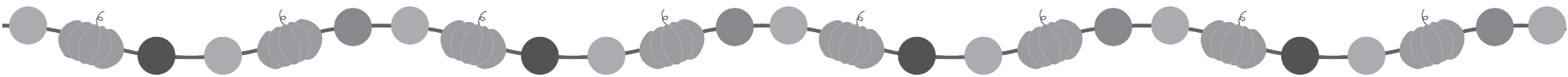


photos courtesy of MARCUS FOSTER

Marcus Foster fights against local issues such as overtourism, illegal campfires and changes to the Big Sur Land Use Plan.



Having grown up in Monterey, Marcus Foster developed a love for the area early on.



Board Rep cont. from page 1

voting, as used in this section, means a formal expression of opinion that is recorded in the minutes and cast before the official vote of the governing board of the school district. A preferential vote shall not serve in determining the final numerical outcome of a vote. No preferential vote shall be solicited on matters subject to closed session discussion.”

During a presentation to the board, such as the results of last year’s California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress or a financial report during the board meeting on Sept. 9, Jin was able to ask questions, voice concerns and give her perspective as a student. However, when the board members officially voted, she was left out of the voice vote.

Although Jin has not yet been able to exercise her preferential vote, Ofek says the student board representative is able to share her perspective on topics and is able to be heard during board meetings.

“The student board member is an important role for schools throughout California,” says superintendent Sharon Ofek. “Like the student board members who served before her, Jasmine helps elevate the student voice and provides the student perspective on topics that come before the Board. She represents the students on the dais as the Board makes decisions that directly

impact students.”

On the day of a board meeting, Ofek meets with the student board representative in the early afternoon to share the agenda and discuss what Jin will talk about during her allotted time. During one of these meetings with the superintendent, Jin says she asked about her preferential vote and how she could begin enacting that right. According to Jin, she feels this vote would allow her to cement her opinion rather than comments after a presentation vaguely revealing her feelings on a topic.

“I asked Ms. Ofek about it during our first meeting, and she told me she had reasons why she didn’t want to push for the vote to happen and she didn’t find it necessary because she thought I could speak or ask questions to express my concerns either way after presentations,” Jin remarks. “This preferential vote wouldn’t just be a vote given to me, it would be all the students who take on this role as board representative in the future.”

The role of student board representative was originally included in the job description for the CHS Associated Student Body president, but that changed for the 2024-25 school year when then-ASB president Marcus Mitchie proposed the change. Cullen Pritchard took on the responsibility for 2024-25. During Pritchard’s time in the role, he felt like Ofek and the other board members were helpful and accommodating to him and his goals.

“We are seeing the value of student representation

firsthand,” says Ofek. “It is important that the student board members continue to share their and their peers’ perspectives during board discussions to make sure that the student voices they represent are part of the conversations and decisions that shape their educational experiences.”

Jin hopes to continue creating a bond with each school even though she frequently communicates with representatives from each school, so if one of the schools is facing an issue or wants to speak up, she can express their concerns and advocate for them effectively to the board members.

“As CUSD student board representative, it is my responsibility to make sure all voices, not just the students in Carmel High School, are all heard,” says Jin, also the president of the Principal’s Advisory Council. “I want to do my best to make sure I accurately represent all students of the school district at board meetings to the best of my ability.”

The next CUSD Board of Education Meeting is Oct. 7.

COMMUNITY

Local family brings Polish-Japanese fusion restaurant to Carmel Valley

BY OLIVIA FORT

Local chef Matthew Zimny and his family are bringing their longtime vision to life with Gather, a new Carmel Valley restaurant that blends Polish roots, Japanese influence and local farm-to-table ingredients.

Having opened Aug. 6, the space reflects the combined work of Matthew, his sister Heather and his wife Michelle, who have spent years in restaurants from Alaska to Monterey County. Their backgrounds range from Polish home cooking to wine service and hotel management, shaping the direction of the restaurant.



photos by OLIVIA FORT

The family-run restaurant occupies the space that previously housed Roux.

The Zimny siblings grew up in Hamtramck, a historically Polish neighborhood in Detroit, where food and family traditions shaped Matthew’s early cooking. He began working in the restaurant industry at 18, cooking in Michigan before moving through kitchens in Minneapolis and Chicago, including time at Charlie Trotter’s, then moving to Alaska for eight years, where he eventually met Michelle.

“I was the sous-chef there and she was hired as a front-of-house supervisor,” explains Matthew.

The two later moved to northern Alaska, where Michelle transitioned into hotel management. She now manages Casa Palmero at Pebble Beach, but has re-



Gather focuses on community-driven dining with a rotating menu and locally sourced ingredients.

mained involved in Gather’s operations. Matthew later cooked in several local kitchens, including Mission Bistro, Casanova, Affina and Corkscrew Cafe.

Heather, a certified sommelier, oversees front-of-house operations and brings years of experience from restaurants in Alaska, Hawaii and New Zealand. After moving to Carmel, she worked at La Bicyclette before joining her brother in opening Gather.

“I want the wine list to reflect the eclectic feel of the space,” Heather says. “And I want a bit of everything for everyone.”

Since opening, Gather has focused on house-made pierogi, placki and dishes incorporating miso, mushrooms and wagyu, reflecting Zimny’s Polish upbringing and Michelle’s Japanese heritage. Local ingredients such as Carmel Valley Creamery cheese, Ad Astra bread and locally grown heirloom tomatoes are also featured across the diverse menu. The wine list also highlights Monterey County producers, selected carefully to complement the menu.

“We’re not taking Polish and Japanese food and morphing it all together,” explains Matthew. “I’m elevating Polish dishes and integrating Japanese ideas where they make sense.”

The unique blend has set the restaurant apart, offering diners something new while still full of local seasonal produce.

As Gather moves through its first month, the team continues refining pacing, service and seasonal dishes while focusing on approachability, with their main goal being to maintain a welcoming atmosphere as the restaurant settles into Carmel Valley’s fine dining scene.

Waiver
cont. from page 1

pays more employees than just this category, such as janitors, office staff, health technicians, school psychologists, librarians and others.

“It leaves out our counselors, our nurses, our psychologists, our mental health clinicians, our librarians, our social workers and many more,” CUSD superintendent Ofek said during the Sept. 9 board meeting. “Some of the very people who support our classrooms every day are not counted in that calculation at all even though the district compensates and values them fully.”

The exemption waiver is not a new introduction to the district, as this is the fourth consecutive year that the waiver has been filed and approved by the Monterey County Office of Education. Last school year, the district spent 53.57% of expenses on classroom teachers and instructional aids. This calculation is the total compensation for classroom teachers and aids divided by the current expense of education.

Ultimately, this waiver and all the tension that comes with it is not the real issue, according to multiple teachers during the board meeting. The real issue, they say, is that the board and the teachers do not have the connection of trust to make plans for the new year, or focus on the one thing that brings each employee to school every day: the students.

“We’re not here because of a waiver that was being made,” said Carmel Middle School science teacher Joe Guzzi during public comment at the board meeting on Sept. 9. “We’re here because there’s an underlying issue of trust, of collaboration, of building our strength, of looking to each other to make a better place for our children.”

If CUSD schools have under 28 pupils in grades kindergarten through eighth and under 25 pupils in grades nine through twelve, the 55% law would not be applicable. While the elementary schools and CMS follow this requirement, CHS class sizes frequently exceed this number. Nora Ward, an AP Psychology and history teacher at CHS, has five out of six classes she teaches exceeding 25 students.

“We have larger class sizes and less help,” Ward said. “We have teachers retire and not be replaced. We have more teachers teaching extra classes. We have more work. Personally, this year I have one prep pe-

riod. I have 165 students that I am following. My senior government economics classes are larger than they have ever been in my 25 years.”

CHS English department chair Shelley Grahl also faces difficulty when performing day to day tasks required for her job.

“When I ask for a new overhead projector because I’ve been using the same one every single day for 10 years, and it’s about to break, I am told that not only will they not buy me a new one, but they do not support my use of it,” said Grahl. “Ten years ago, each member of the English department was given two paid days per school year to grade essays when our load got to be too overwhelming. Today, those paid days are gone. And if I need a day to catch up on grading essays for my 123 students, I have to use one of my sick days to do my job.”

After the unaudited actuals financial report is completed, it is published on the district website along with the Summary of Unaudited Actual Data Submission where the official exemption waiver is filed. Although the district is completely transparent with what they are going to approve, it is difficult to find the important information within the 134-page document filled with expenditures and expenses.

“When they are completed, they are publicly posted,” said CUSD board president Matt Glazer in an interview with The Sandpiper. “What we heard at the board meeting was that that is not sufficient outreach or sufficient transparency, but that is complete transparency by the letter of the law.”

Bill Schrier, president of the Association of Carmel Teachers, remembers a time when the association’s president and vice president would meet bi-weekly to converse with each other on issues and discuss solutions. Now, he says the relationship has dissolved and the district office and schools seem to work as different entities rather than cooperating to build a better experience for all students at every school.

“Transparency is an important value in any organization, but especially in a public school system,” Schrier told The Sandpiper. “I’m hopeful that there will be greater emphasis on that in the future.”

Looking forward into the 2026-27 school year, it is up in the air whether the waiver will be filed again, as the bargaining between the district and the teachers association begins Oct. 5. Glazer said that solutions

will only be reached to administration issues if everyone comes together to work towards a compromise that is fully transparent to teachers and is equitable for the compensation of all staff members of CUSD schools.

“When the teachers association, the classified association, the district cabinet and school site leaders sit at a table together, we can solve problems in a better way,” Glazer told The Sandpiper. “I am calling upon association leadership. I’m calling upon the district leadership to figure out what it’s going to take to create a bigger table and to do the work of collaboration.”

While some teachers may believe that they are unable to sway board members or their concerns are falling on deaf ears, the Sept. 9 board meeting demonstrated that with collaboration and communication, their words can move the board, as shown with CUSD board member Rita Patel, who dissented the vote to pass the 2025-26 unaudited actuals financial report.

“I feel backed in the corner to vote yes on this,” said Patel. “And this amount, \$1.1 million, is huge. Coming in I thought one thing. But now listening to the entire discussion, I think we need to do more than just having more updates. We need to take a serious look at this. I know the board’s probably not happy with my vote, but I’m not comfortable with the direction that it’s going in.”

Whether the waiver is filed next fiscal year or not, the teachers demand transparency and accountability. They believe that problems can be solved if teachers are involved in the decision-making that directly impacts educators and the students they teach every day.

“I think of the classroom as the center of our value system as an Association,” said Kristine Aguirre, Organizing Committee Chair for ACT. “At the moment I don’t get a sense that teachers feel that their experiences are being valued. Both sides need to listen, even when the conversations are difficult, and I believe that a common ground exists. For now, there is a sense that teachers don’t have a seat at the table for important conversations, and that can erode morale when our focus is always on doing what is right for students.”

The author is the daughter of CHS English department chair Shelley Grahl.

CLUBS

Great Outdoors club helps students connect on and off campus

BY ANYA GRIESSER

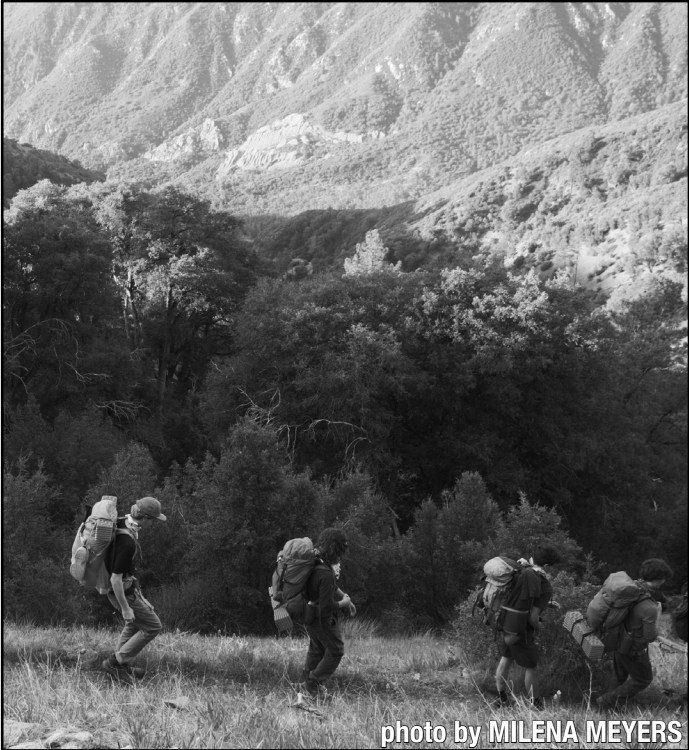
The Great Outdoors—or GO—club is an outdoor recreation club that hosts hiking and backpacking trips ranging as far north as Big Basin Redwoods State Park, as far south as Big Sur and everywhere in between.

“We’re capitalizing on the fact that we live in this incredible place,” says club adviser Victoria Deckelmann, a science teacher at Carmel High School. “Within 100 miles both ways, it’s incredible pretty much everywhere you go.”

The club’s mission is to help students expand their comfort zones and connect with their peers in nature by hosting outdoor adventures throughout the year for various skill levels, ranging from short day hikes to multi-day backpacking trips.

GO club has an upcoming three-day backpacking trip planned for Halloween weekend, which will feature fall-themed meals, candy and costumes. The club is also planning several other trips all over the county, including local trails, regional parks and an annual trip to Pinnacles National Park.

In the upcoming year, junior co-presidents River Mello and Liam Stafford plan on building the club’s



The Great Outdoors club backpacks through Ventana Wilderness, one of the many club efforts throughout the year.

outdoor skills, such as safety, knot-tying, navigation and cooking, all of which can be applied to future expeditions.

“Helping kids experience the outdoors and also be social in that environment—it’s really powerful,” says Mello.

The club meetings offer a place for members to connect and plan their own outdoor adventures.

“The mission of GO club is to get young people outside,” Stafford says. “We live in a generation where we spend an increasing amount of time indoors. It’s important to foster that connection, sustainability and a future healthy life exploring the outdoors.”

Another value of the club is to form deeper connections with the land and other members by abandoning phones. Aside from pictures, members are strongly encouraged to stay off their screens and fully immerse themselves in nature.

“It’s a reminder that grinding up a mountain, capturing an amazing view of the Pacific Ocean is better than anything you can do on your couch,” club adviser and social science teacher Marc Stafford points out. “If you’re not out there experiencing nature in a meaningful way, you’re missing out on a big part of what it means to be a human being.”

Carmel Model UN to host first ever conference

BY LEO IRANMANESH



The Carmel High School Model U.N. club traveled to U.C. Berkeley last March to compete in an annual conference.

Carmel High School’s Model United Nations Club plans to host its first conference in school history, Monterey Bay Model United Nations, on Nov. 7, where several schools from across the peninsula will come together and participate in a friendly competition at CHS.

“Our main purpose with hosting the conference is to provide an affordable, beginner-friendly environment so students nearby can learn about Model U.N.,” says club co-president Patrick Reeves, who works alongside fellow senior and co-president Olivia Fort.

A conference consists of student delegates who each represent a nation in a specific United Nations committee, prompting them to engage in debates and discussions over global issues. At the head of each committee are chair members who help oversee committees by creating guidelines and assisting delegates.

At MBMUN, the committee chairs will be CHS club members, with two to three leading each committee. Some committees include the World Health Organization and a Crisis Committee.

“This conference’s impact on our community will be really positive,” says senior club member David Bogart. “We need to make sure we have events like Model U.N., so students of the Monterey Peninsula

can educate each other on not only the United Nations, but also how to change the world we live in.”

Students from local schools may attend the conference include Pacific Grove High School, Santa Catalina School, Monterey High School, Stevenson as well as Carmel Middle School.

“Model U.N. allows you to improve your public speaking skills and learn more about the history of certain issues,” says Reeves.

The club goes to conferences across California, where they compete for awards. Some notable conferences the club attends are the Santa Clara Valley Model United Nations, hosted at Santa Teresa High School and Berkeley Model United Nations, located at U.C. Berkeley.

“Hopefully, we can create a conference that’s on scale with Santa Teresa,” says club adviser and CHS Spanish teacher Vanessa Gibaut. “Providing students from across the peninsula with experience in Model U.N. is our main goal.”

Club meetings take place in Room 13 every Thursday at lunch. More information about MBMUN can be found at sites.google.com/cusd.me/mbmun.

Reforestation community service club finds its roots

BY SPARROW PICARD

Roots in Motion, a Carmel High School club focused on youth’s plant-oriented environmental impact, is thriving through community partnerships with MEarth and Friends of Carmel Forest and plans to fundraise for the global nonprofit, One Tree Planted.

“The purpose of Roots in Motion is to bring awareness to deforestation issues and the loss of native plants—locally, but also globally,” says junior copresident Jasmine Jin, the club’s founder. “It’s also to get the youth more involved in helping plant trees.”

Volunteer opportunities are scheduled to be weekly or biweekly for one to two hours and will focus on trail restoration, monitoring sponsored trees, planting in the fall and tree siting, or finding the best locations for trees. Timing will be catered to students’ availability.

“We have wanted to partner with a group from Carmel High School for years, and our board, comprised of basically retired residents, is aging out,” says Ramie Allard, president of Friends of Carmel Forest.

Friends of Carmel Forest, Roots in Motion’s main partner, is an organization dedicated to protecting, enhancing and sustaining Carmel’s forest and canopy.

They consider it a gift that this club sprung to life.

“I’ve only seen one [meeting], but there was a guest speaker from a local nonprofit that replants trees in Carmel and a lot of interest from the students,” says CHS science teacher and club adviser Victoria Deckelmann.

The idea of the club arose after Jin’s deforestation research for her English project last year. Originally hesitant on the idea, she accredits CHS sophomore copresident Sophia Wetzel with helping take initiative.

Inspired by Jin’s passion for the environment, the club is quickly amassing members of environmentally conscious youth.

“I joined it to make an impact in the world,” says CHS sophomore Ava Ruskell. “I want to go into veterinary medicine when I’m older because I think the environment is really important, and I want to help restore nature.”

Meetings occur every Friday at lunch in Room 34 to discuss incoming volunteer opportunities and events, aiming in the short term to help locally and aspiring to make a positive global footprint in the future.



Friends of Carmel Forest president Ramie Allard (left) and Roots in Motion founder Jasmine Jin share details regarding volunteer opportunities.

CLUBS

Ultimate Frisbee becomes outlet for inclusion and passion

BY MADELEINE WILLFORD

The Ultimate Frisbee club is quickly becoming known at Carmel High School for its originality, bringing students and teachers together for the spirit of the game and a friendly match.

“We’re just playing the game for the love of it,” says senior club president Niko Rachuna.

Rachuna was introduced to the concept of the spirit of the game by a friend. At the start, Rachuna did not believe it to be a big deal, but after joining the club, he began to show up even more, gaining greater passion for the game and looking forward to showing up to play a friendly match every week.

Ultimate Frisbee is a low-stakes sport, which allows an environment with no stress, more teamwork and entertainment. On a prep sports team, pressure can fixate on improvement and instruction, whereas in a club fixated on sport, there is more focus towards connection and having fun.

“The club opens a door for students and teachers to have something in common,” says club adviser and math teacher Juan Gomez. “It allows me to talk about something non-classroom related and learn more about them.”

Not only is this a sports club, but also a club that facilitates good relationships with teachers. This little interaction between students and educators creates a

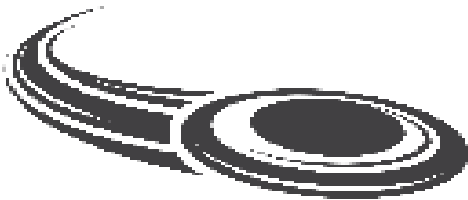
more inclusive school environment.

Many CHS teachers participate in this club, including Kevin Buran, a biology teacher; Marc Stafford, a social studies teacher; Juan Gomez, a math teacher; and Jason Maas-Baldwin, a science teacher.

“Mr. Buran and Mr. MB are absolute beasts,” says Gomez.

Though there has been talk of turning it competitive, the club does not focus on instruction or teaching of the sport. However, they are workshopping this idea and hoping that with the right amount of funds and passion, the club may turn into a sport in the future.

Ultimate Frisbee will be held on the football field every Friday at lunch. All students are welcome to join, and no knowledge of the sport is required.



Firefighting Club teaches about local fires and emergency medical services

BY CORA LANDRY

The new CHS Firefighting Club, run by a real firefighter, provides medical and fire-suppressing skills weekly with expert guest speakers visiting monthly.

In the club’s first meeting, senior president Matthew Thomas, a firefighter with Cachagua Fire, and senior vice president Matthew Villa, a volunteer firefighter with Menlo Park Fire Protection District, taught how to take respiratory rates, blood pressures and pulses from the wrist. Patient protocol and special procedures for infants were discussed, and members learned about medical equipment in emergency vehicles, like blood glucose and blood oxygen monitors, and how they work.

“Obviously, these guys know what they’re doing, and they’re showing other people, and that’s wonderful,” says club adviser Victoria Deckelmann.

In the second meeting, club leaders described how to fight a fire by hosing it down, creating containment lines with dozers and retardant, and performing managed burns to keep control of the spread.

As for the Timber Fire, Thomas said he believes it may go on for weeks or months until rain comes and emphasized that civilians should stay out of firefighters’ way in the meantime.

Rich Villa, a captain of Menlo Fire and Matthew Villa’s father, visited in

September to speak of his work as a paramedic. Matthew Thomas’ father, Jon, an EMT and Cachagua Fire captain, is expected to visit in the following months, as well as Sierra Sans, a wild-land firefighter transported by helicopter.

“The point of this club is to help people get a jumpstart into their careers and futures,” Matthew Thomas says.

But it is not only for aspiring firefighters.

“Absolutely, this club could be beneficial to people who want to be firefighters, EMTs, paramedics or doctors,” says Matthew Villa.

Most firefighting work in Monterey County is medical, the younger Thomas adds, so this club largely aims to build medical expertise. It will provide experience to many upcoming emergency workers and give an advantage in the job market.

The Firefighting Club meets every Monday in Room 34 to spread awareness in CHS about fire safety and first responder positions.



A black and white advertisement for Lashify. It features a woman with long, dark hair holding a box of the product. The box shows a woman's face with long, dark eyelashes and a tube of Lashify product. The background is a light, textured surface.

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STUDENTS

Three student films to grace big screen at Carmel International Film Festival

BY GRIFFIN STEELY

Three Carmel High School student films tackling issues teenagers face, including grief, identity struggles, and stress, will be played at the Carmel International Film Festival alongside movies from directors throughout the world.

“The students at Carmel High School need to know that they are the inheritors of a world-class artistic legacy in Carmel that encompasses some of the most prominent artists in the history of California,” says event director Lawrence Roeck. “To see students in our community make such incredible films is a confirmation that Carmel’s artistic legacy will not be fading anytime soon.”

Seniors Dorian Jeffers and Ava Daniels have both created films featured in the festival in the past, but for junior Christian Beltran, this is his first time at the festival. He directed and produced his first film, titled “Shenandoah,” on his own last year and with that,

made it into the festival.

“We had a death in the family and around me, people were expressing emotions in different ways,” says Beltran. “Some people were silent, some people were visibly upset and some people just lashed out without reason. I decided to put the complexity of those emotions into a film.”

The film takes an experimental approach with no dialogue and features several stages of grief and loss. By utilizing this, he opens a door for personal interpretation. Beltran hopes people take the time to find meaning in his film, even connections that he never intended.

In contrast to Beltran, Jeffers had a large team behind him including a band consisting of Carmel seniors William Drumright as well as Matt and Eli David. He filmed the movie over the course of six months and heavily incorporated VFX to create an atmosphere not possible in the Carmel region.

“I couldn’t really live in the moment,” says Dorian Jeffers, who plans to go into the film industry. “I was always stressed about something, like either something I regret from the past or worrying about college and my future. I wanted to make a film about learning to live in the moment and not letting things tie you down.”

Jeffers’ specialty is in the realm of visual effects and with his movie “Deep Above,” he takes this to the next level, creat-



A skillful manipulator of emotion, senior Ava Daniels hopes to become a director after she graduates college.

ing a world that seamlessly binds his actors into the backdrop.

Meanwhile, Ava Daniels leans heavily into the emotional aspects of her film “Right Handed.”

“I decided to make a film that portrays a teenage boy who is in love with his best friend, but doesn’t know how to say it,” says Daniels, who also plans to go into movie making. “It ends up kind of creating a void in their friendship and explores how he feels through an essay that he has to write.”

The festival provides an opportunity for students to share their work and effort with a larger audience than the school itself can provide.

“It’s a great opportunity for students to get their work out there because we create things in class, then it just evaporates into the cloud,” says Video Production teacher Brian Granbery. “That’s not what film and video are for. They’re to be seen.”

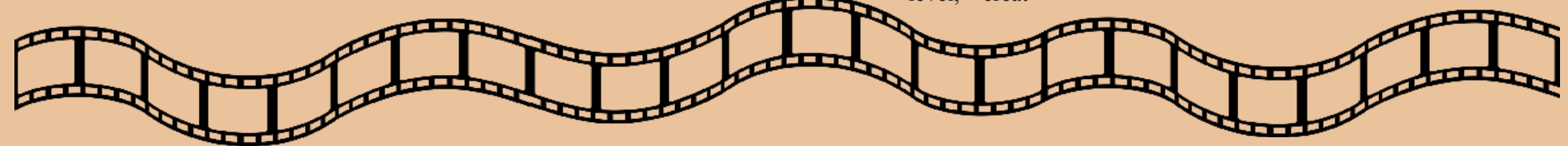
The festival will take place Oct. 1-4.



Junior Christian Beltran leans into the experimental style of filmmaking.



Senior Dorian Jeffers is a mastermind in visual effects.



Psychological-horror play will entrap audiences with fear

BY CHOICE MUIVAH

Beneath the stage lights of what at first appears to be a regular Carmel High School play, things quickly take a turn as investigators and audiences try to solve a case of an entire high school ensemble mysteriously falling unconscious—all except for one survivor.

“‘Trap’ is almost like a Russian nesting doll,” says Jeff McGrath, stage manager of the CHS Performing Arts Theater. “It’s a play within a play within a play.”

Set in the fictional town of Menachap, California, “Trap” mimics verbatim theater, where scripts are made from the words of real people, and through fictional witness accounts and investigator reports, the play creates a documentary-style performance from which the audience must piece together the truth.

While Menachap’s case continues to bewilder investigators and victims’ loved ones, the mystery deepens as a pattern is uncovered, with the exact strange circumstances seeming to resurface every 16 years.

“You really have to be paying attention because there’s a lot of little details that’ll help you try to figure out what’s real or who’s telling the truth,” says senior Lily Phillips, who will play detective Gwendolyn Heche.

As audiences and actors alike dive deeper into the case, it becomes clear that someone—or something—is causing these people to fall unconscious. Audiences, be warned: They may be closer than you think...

With preparations starting in June, the show fea-

tures a large cast that envelops the house and audience, creating an immersive experience, only to be shattered by fourth-wall breaks as the audience itself becomes a part of the performance.

“Eventually, the audience is drawn into the performance, and they also become a character,” says McGrath.

With contrasting perspectives from a trail of eyewitness accounts, the psychological-horror play poses questions about what is real and what is fake, building

a narrative that will keep the audience on the edge of their seats.

“The plot twist at the end is really fun,” says junior Fallon Lykken. “It’ll make the audience and cast have a lot of fun.”

“Trap” will open Friday at 7 p.m., with shows running Oct. 3-4 and 8-10, with a matinee Sunday, Oct. 4, at 2 p.m.

Audiences, prepare to be scared!



With witness Canderlaria Ortiz (Mireya Barnes) and sole survivor Angela Lure (Bella Moet), it is up to researcher Rickenoch Baynor (Pepper Christou) to uncover an old secret.

Adventurous junior trains to hike the Pacific Crest Trail

BY SOPHIE CANAN

Setting himself apart from his peers, CHS junior River Mello is planning to graduate early and has started the long preparation process to hike the Pacific Crest Trail, the strenuous, 2,650-mile hike that spans from the southern border of California to Washington’s northern border.

For experienced hikers, the hike takes around five months to complete, requiring extensive training in order to maintain a pace of about 20 miles per day. Despite having school for most of the day, Mello finds ways to fit training into his schedule.

“I train whenever I have the time,” says the hiker. “A few days ago, I got a backpack and walked to Seaside after school.”

Besides walking in his freetime, Mello also walks to school as part of his training. He completed a nearly 17-mile hike from Marina to school at a pace of about 20 minutes per mile, requiring him to wake up nearly six hours before school started. By increasing his walking amount throughout his training process, the junior hopes to eventually be able to increase his hiking pace to 25 miles per day. With this pace, he anticipates finishing the hike in September in order to avoid the snow in Washington. Mello is also planning various backpacking trips before starting the PCT, including trips to Big Sur, the Trans Catalina trail and hiking from Santa Cruz to Monterey.

Besides training physically for the hike, Mello is also spending his time outside of school working to earn enough money for the hike, which costs around \$4 per mile because of the cost of gear, meals and gear replacements.

Although he’s hiking alone, Mello emphasizes how his father played a large role in his motivation to do the hike in the first place.

“People ask why I would let my son do this,” says Carmel Valley High School teacher Joe Mello. “When a kid makes a goal in seventh grade and then works really hard for the next five years, there’s not much more you could ask for.”

From a young age, River describes how his



photo by RIVER MELLO

Prior to his interest in the Pacific Crest Trail, River Mello has gone on various hiking trips, including to Sierra Nevada, Big Sur and the Trans Catalina trail.



parents encouraged him to be outside, whether it was hiking in Big Sur with his friends or going on the CHS desert trip with his dad. He found that constantly being on the move brought him peace.

“It’s exciting to be in an ever-changing environment, and I really like pushing myself to try difficult things,” describes River. “Camping is really tranquil and grounding for me.”

Even after the hike, the junior hopes that nature will continue to be a central part of his life, as he begins to pursue careers.

“I want to go to Lake Tahoe Community College to pursue outdoor education,” explains River. “I also am hoping to get my Wilderness first responder certification.”

In preparation for the hike, River reflects on his excitement to meet new people and jump between various groups along the way since he is hiking solo.

“Always moving is something I’m looking forward to on the PCT,” says the hiker. “Every day is going to be something new, from deserts to mountains to even snow.”

By putting in hard work and effort into his training, River Mello hopes to be able accomplish his dream and begin the long, treacherous hike up the Pacific Crest Trail by May 2028.

‘Kite Runner’ author individually responds to English class letters

BY JOHANNA MELTON

When the students of Kristine Aguirre’s English class drafted letters and drawings to send to Khaled Hosseini, the award-winning author of “The Kite Runner,” they could have never guessed that Hosseini would respond individually to each student with personalized messages and autographed photos.

“The Kite Runner,” a bestselling historical fiction novel published in 2003, discusses themes of betrayal, guilt and redemption and is typically taught as a part of 11th grade curriculum. Aguirre, who has always believed in reaching out to authors, decided to teach her class letter-writing conventions by having them draft messages to Hosseini.

“I believe in cold letters,” says Aguirre. “Even before I became a teacher, if I found an author’s writing to be really impactful I would send them an email. Almost every one of them has responded.”

The letters consisted of the students’ gratitude toward Hosseini for writing the book, where they read it and what they learned from it. Many students wrote how moved they were by the story and feel that reading the novel led them to greater self-awareness, appreciation of family and interest in Afghan culture.

“It makes me happy to know that young readers

like you are learning about my homeland, Afghanistan,” the author wrote in one reply letter. “Reading can bridge gaps between people of all different backgrounds and remind us of our shared ubiquitous humanity. We’re all in this together.”

Hosseini also offered multiple students writing advice, detailing how he does not restrict his creative process with outlines or planners, but prefers to just start writing.

The same opportunity was given to two of Aguirre’s English classes in past years, making this bunch of letters the third sent by Hosseini. While it would be easy to compose one letter to the class as a whole, Hosseini took the extra time to write each student their own unique response.

“The fact that he takes the time to write a personalized letter with a personalized response really resonates with students,” says Aguirre.

Touching students and teachers alike, Hosseini’s kindness shows his commitment towards young readers and writers.

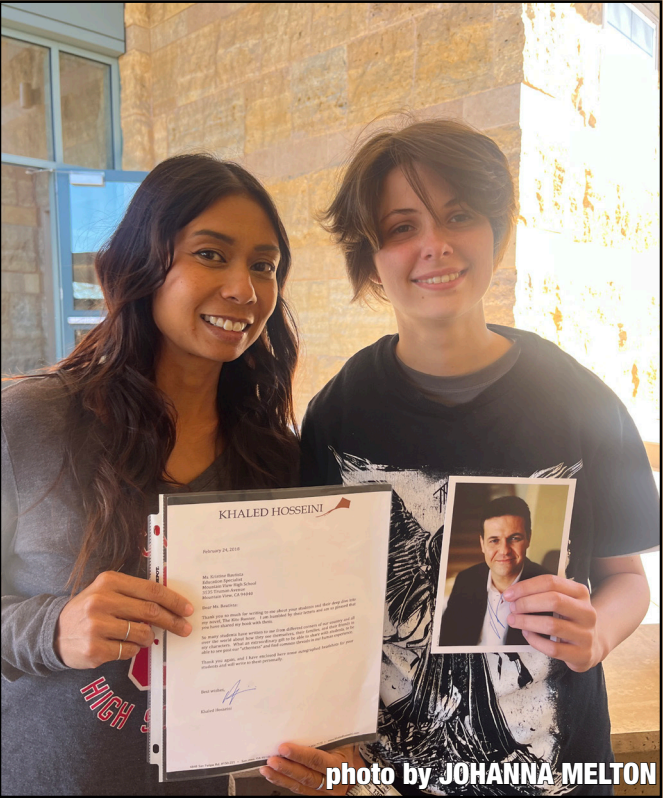


photo by JOHANNA MELTON

Kristine Aguirre (left) believes strongly in reaching out to authors, finding that most of them are happy to respond to her students.

CLUBS

Film Appreciation Club welcome future film critics

BY IAN COLLINS

Film Appreciation Club, intended for anyone interested in the vast world of film and movie critiquing, was introduced to CHS earlier this year, providing students with an opportunity to step behind the scenes of some of the world’s most treasured films.

After meeting outside of school on Saturdays to watch their movie of choice, the club focuses on discussing films and their importance. Film Appreciation Club hopes to span a wide range of students, from experienced film enthusiasts to students wanting to watch their first classic, and create a beginner-friendly environment.

Founded by seniors Maya Steinberg and Ava Waroff, with some support from CHS Video Production teacher and club adviser Brian Granbery, the club was created as an alternative to the currently existing Student Television Network Club, which requires an enrollment in Video Production class.

Granbery says he’s “just an adviser,” really pushing leadership and the idea that it’s a fully student-driven club.

“Our turnout was pretty big the other day, and I hope that it continues to grow,” says club secretary and senior Ava Daniels.

Film Appreciation Club is structured as a book club for movies. In their meetings, they pick four films and vote as a group on which one to watch. This lets students have a space where they can speak freely about different movies and expand their knowledge of film together.

“It’ll give our members the chance to discuss films with a larger group of people,” says Steinberg.

The first film they watched outside of school was



photo by IAN COLLINS

Club presidents Ava Waroff and Maya Steinberg (from left) hold a discussion on “The Godfather.”

“The Godfather,” released in 1972 and directed by Francis Ford Coppola. It was a successful viewing with students from all grades showing up.

“They’re going with more of the classics that students probably haven’t seen before, that are a little older and less appreciated by high school kids, and

analyzing those films,” says Granbery.

Steinberg and Waroff are truly pushing a beginner-friendly atmosphere and welcoming anyone who is even slightly interested to come check it out.

They meet every other Thursday at lunch in room 28.

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CLUBS

Pottery Club provides opportunities to all levels of potters

BY ELINOR KONING

Led by junior Isa Patch, the new Pottery Club has been working to make pottery more accessible to beginners and to show newcomers and advanced artists techniques.

“I want people to find new passions and develop the same love I have for pottery,” says Patch.

The idea of starting the club came from adviser Steven Russell, the art teacher at Carmel High School. Patch, who had been interested in pottery since her freshman year, was an ideal candidate for club president and ended up getting the position. Her twin sister, Maya, who shares her love of pottery, took the spot of vice president.

In the future, the Pottery Club plans to host after-school pottery workshops and possibly sell some of their best pieces at a show in April. Isa notes the club will mostly make sculptures and pinchpots during their time together.

Members such as junior Jeraldin Guillen Perez have also expressed interest in making bowls and mugs.

“I joined the Pottery Club because it seemed like a club that was fun and where you could express your feelings by painting bowls,” Guillen Perez says.

Pottery Club is taking a lot of inspiration from Russell’s Handbuilding class, as many of their projects are similar to the pottery created in the class.

“Most of our members of the Pottery Club are also in Handbuilding,” Russell says.

Isa has also mentioned that many members are just beginning to learn how to make pottery, though a few are experienced. This led her to take up the responsibility of teaching them methods of making their own pottery.

The process includes sculpting, firing and glazing. A single piece can take weeks from start to finish, as it has to be fired in a kiln, an insulated oven used to bake the clay, once before glazing and once after.

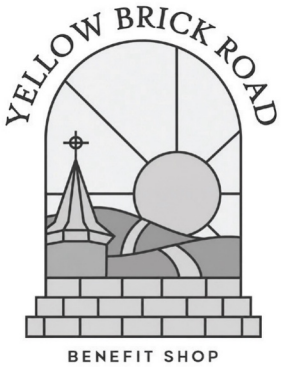


photo by ELINOR KONING

Pottery Club president Isa Patch has dedicated herself to sharing her love for pottery.

The Pottery Club meets Wednesdays at lunch and everyone, regardless of skill level. has become a space for creatives to define their style, learn the process of pottery making and have a good time.

The club is seeking members and welcomes



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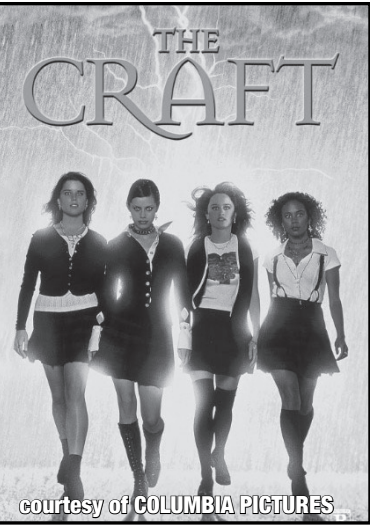
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 Nate Barnes Carmel High School	 Ashley Bishop Baylor University	 Claire Bonnygo Carmel High School	 Luis Caballero Monterey High School	 Joseph Chung Monterey High School	 Michael Dwyne CSU Fullerton
 Makensie Gullinar Pacific Grove High School	 Sofia Gordon Trinity Christian School	 Deisy Gracida-Gabriel Hartnell College	 Laura Hodges University of Southern CA	 Victor Ibe-Sandoval Trinity Christian School	 Megan Beehiya Carmel High School
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REVIEW

Five non-terrifying movies perfect for the spooky season

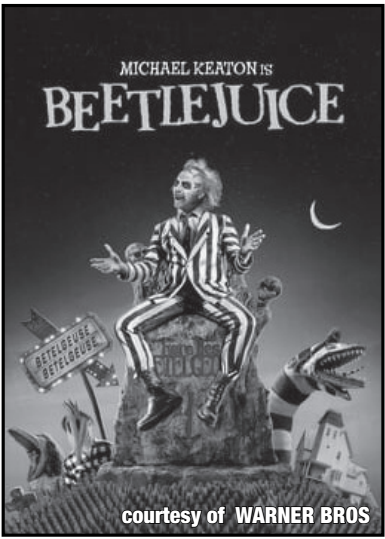
BY RUBY IRANMANESH

Want to get into the fall spirit of Halloween, but hate scary movies? Here are five entertaining films to watch during October that don't cause recurring nightmares. Everyone deserves to enjoy Halloween, not just the thrill-seekers.



'90s vibe, teenage nostalgic empowerment and impressive acting performances make this film an entertaining watch for the Halloween season.

"Beetlejuice"
With a funny but spooky storyline, "Beetlejuice" is about a recently deceased couple who is stuck



"The Craft"
Released in 1996, this eerie film tells the story of three high school students who are interested in witch magic, but are unable to practice spells until they find a fourth member. Miraculously, a new girl moves to town with a set of unique talents and joins the group. The gothic feel, young women's

haunting their house and the obnoxious family that moves in. The couple attempts to scare the newcomers away by themselves, but is eventually forced to hire another ghost, known as Beetlejuice, for help. With an incredible cast, "Beetlejuice" blends dark comedy, satire and fall aesthetics to create an unconventional but entertaining film.

"Edward Scissorhands"
Starring Johnny Depp and Winona Ryder, the perfect acting duo for a Tim Burton film, "Edward Scissorhands" is a funny but spooky fairytale about an artificial man with hands made of scissors who is taken in by a suburban family and falls in love with their teenage daughter. Burton's use of dark lighting, sharp shadows and spooky visuals make this movie perfect to watch during a gloomy fall afternoon.



"Lost Boys"
This 1987 film tells the story of two teenage brothers who move to a California town to live with their grandfather and quickly discover that their new home is crawling with vampires. The storyline combines comedy, pop culture, teen angst and gothic horror. Plus, aspects of the film feel especially similar to '80s teen-adventure classic "The Goonies," making it very nostalgic-feeling.

"Scream"
Released in 1996, "Scream" follows a masked serial killer known as Ghostface who terrorizes teenagers in the small town of Woodsboro. After high schooler Sidney Prescott becomes the killer's main target, she works together with news reporter Gale Weathers and local Deputy Sheriff Dewey Riley to investigate the suspicious situation. The fun jumpscare, iconic scenes and constant unpredictability make an exciting film, keeping watchers on the edge of their seat.



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REVIEW

Starbucks autumnal drinks to spice up your fall season

BY GRACE GRAHL

Sweater season is officially here, and whether you are falling into leaves or behind in your classes, these autumnal drinks from Starbucks are bursting with flavor and filled with pumpkin pie spice, pecans and espresso. Whether these drinks warm your hands or sour your taste buds, this fall drink drop was on most autumn-minded people’s calendars and deserves an honest review.



photos courtesy of STARBUCKS

This pumpkin cream chai blends the best parts of fall to create a comfort drink, perfect for even cold days.

Pumpkin Spice Latte

This flavorful pumpkin spice taste is the hallmark of fall. But why do I have to break the bank and my healthy eating habits just to savor a semblance of fall? At \$6.95 and 370 calories for a 16-ounce drink, this is a guilty pleasure I can only enjoy in secret. Maybe other cafes have perfected this classic, but Starbucks clearly still has some work to do.

4/10

Pecan Crunch Latte

Upon first sip, this drink tastes like the perfect latte. However, it tastes nothing like pecan. Even with the addition of holiday baking spices and crunchy pecan-flavored sugar, there is no trace of any nuttiness of smooth butter pecan. Is it a great latte? Sure. But the focal point is pecan, and the main ingredient seems to have vanished from the drink.

5/10

Pumpkin Cream Shaken Espresso

This drink blends the most delicious pumpkin cold foam with the beauty of a shaken espresso, seen in other flavors such as brown sugar, hazelnut, vanilla and horchata. It creates a great contrast, but the oat milk throws it off just a little bit. While this may excite dairy-free Starbucks-goers, it also may induce a stomachache.

6/10

Hedgehog Cake Pop

This little woodland treat wins hearts over just from looking at the little face, and the chocolate sprinkles add the perfect crunch to the smooth and rich vanilla cake inside. This treat is delectable, but is ultimately gobbled down in four bites. Could a baker easily make this at home for \$3.95 less? Of course. But it is still a



The hedgehog cake pop is a cute treat filled with vanilla cake and coated with chocolate.

fun treat and the perfect addition to the Starbucks fall menu.

7/10

Pumpkin Cream Chai

The creamy pumpkin cold foam with the pumpkin spice topping blends a beautiful and rich sense of fall only these flavors can bring. Although the cold foam overpowers and makes it hard to taste the chai, as Starbucks chai is notoriously known for being watered down and tasteless, this drink ultimately spices its way to the top of the list.

9/10

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REVIEW

‘Resident Evil’ creates terrifying experience without requiring prior lore knowledge

BY GRIFFIN STEELY

“Resident Evil,” a horror movie filled with stupid characters, plentiful jumpscare and even zombies, provides a gory experience mixed with the perfect amount of silly bits.

Directed by the creator of “Weapons,” Zach Cregger, the story follows Bryan (Austin Abrams), a medical courier delivering an important package to Raccoon City—the fictional city created for the “Resident Evil” franchise. After hitting a woman while driving on a snowy road, he is plunged into a terrifying series of events, mostly caused by his choices, as he makes his way to the hospital where he must deliver his package.

The film is an easily accessible addition to the franchise, allowing anyone to understand the plot without any prior knowledge of the series due to the fact that Cregger does not use any characters featured prior in any “Resident Evil” content.

The tempo throughout the movie is slow at first, but quickly builds into a full-out race to deliver his package through a city plagued by monsters. The pacing feels very solid through the first half of the movie, but the high number of close calls featured during his journey to the hospital feels like a fever dream.

One of the main issues that plagues this film is the poor choices prevalent throughout. While this is a common trend throughout horror, this movie takes it to an extreme. Every character is either below the teenagers-in-a-cabin level of stupidity or on the same level. Bryan either makes brilliant life-saving decisions or choices so terrible that make the audience wonder if he’s even human.

The cinematography is brilliant, featuring several POV shots that add even more suspense to the film, putting the viewer in Bryan’s shoes. For a horror movie, this works perfectly.



Resident Evil is the latest installment in a 30-year-old franchise and a good way for new fans to get into the series.

Overall, “Resident Evil” is not a happy-go-lucky franchise, and this movie follows suit. The violence featured in the film is extreme, with graphic injuries and morbid scenes that, some of which, are entirely unnecessary to the plot.

On the contrary, Abrams and Cregger are able to find the perfect balance between humor and horror, making entertaining quips that don’t take away from the terrifying encounters Bryan faced.

The movie definitely deserves its R-rating because of the intense gore and violence, but also because of the 125 f-bombs, as counted by IMDb. In a 95-minute-long film, that’s more than one f-bomb per minute.

With a mix of disturbing imagery, humor and utterly stupid characters, “Resident Evil” takes its place as a good horror movie to watch with friends for a good scare.



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Aries

Stop procrastinating! That thing you’ve been putting off—yes, that thing that has constantly been nagging at you—is going to bite you in the butt if you don’t lock in and do something about it!

Taurus

Stop supporting fast fashion! No one needs three Halloween costumes but if you must, go thrifting! Your lack of consideration for the environment will be scarier than your costumes.

Gemini

While some look to spring for new beginnings, this fall may be yours! Look, and you will find many good omens and even a new opportunity... The stars encourage you to take it when it presents itself.

Cancer

Cancer, sitting in cafés and sipping a pumpkin spice latte with your computer open for three hours is—surprise, surprise—not actually productive! Maybe crack a book open once in a while, yeah?

Leo

Don’t even think about starting that new project when you’re not even close to done with the last one! Finish what you started and see it through. The stars predict it could end up turning out better than you think.

Virgo

Virgo, it’s the spooky season, but the only scaring you’re doing is scaring away others with that attitude! Halloween is no excuse to be a witch. This year, how about you try to spread more treats than tricks?

Libra

The stars saw your struggles last month and have taken pity, so embrace this little break! Good things are on the horizon—the stars deliver to you this message: Everything that is meant to be will be.

Scorpio

Everyone loves the fall season, with its pumpkin patches, crunchy leaves and that crisp in the air telling you winter is just around the corner. However, not all of us love the good ol’ manufactured scent of fall. Tone it down on that pumpkin spice!

Sagittarius

Last month was pretty chill, so this month try getting outside your comfort zone! Take some risks—the stars foresee that a new opportunity is going to present itself soon....

Capricorn

Capricorns... You will be amazed with how much your relationships can flourish if you actually listen to other people. The criticisms of your faults do not go away just because you decided that you don’t want to hear them!

Aquarius

The stars foretell a very eventful month for you, Aquarius. They suggest—or forewarn—to lie low and be very careful to not bite off more than you can chew!

Pisces

Don’t be a scaredy-cat! I suppose a distaste for horror is understandable, but there are so many other ways to get into fall! Go get a pumpkin chai latte or actually dress up this year—anything to get into the fall spirit!

OBJECTIONS

OBJECTION to Starbucks’ Pumpkin Spice Chai. It’s either too sweet or too bland—never a good in-between. Also, why does pumpkin spice take over every drink flavor the second fall starts? I love fall, but I don’t need pumpkin spice in everything!

OBJECTION to Spirit Halloween only being open for a limited time each year. As someone who loves Halloween, I wish that I could look at Halloween costumes or decorations in-person year-round.

OBJECTION to people who don’t dress up for Halloween. It’s the one day of the year where it’s normalized to wear costumes, so why are some people avoiding it? Everyone should have a little fun and dress up.

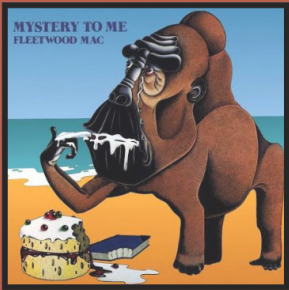


- Ruby Iranmanesh

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by Jade



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“Dearly Departed”
Shakey Graves



“Bad Moon Rising”
Creedence Clearwater Revival



“Angel of Small Death and The Codeine Scene”
Hozier



“Dealer”
Lana Del Rey



“Battle of Evermore”
Led Zeppelin

