Winter rally sparks holiday festivities
By Ashliana Rodriguez

Last Friday, the annual winter rally took place in the big gym with several performances from dance clubs, a skit from ASB and a segment recognizing sports captains. Spirit week—from Mon., Dec. 5 to last Friday—ignited the winter spirit among students.

ASB, with members like Ard Espinoza, was the first person to discover the fire. "When the fire alarm went off, I thought it was just a drill. So since my class was close to the bathroom, I just went," recalls Richard. "But when I opened the door and looked in, there was a fog. From the smell of it, I knew there was an actual fire." After the fire alarm sounded, students and teachers evacuated to their designated areas near the tennis courts and school parking lots. Staff members put out the flame with a fire extinguisher, while firefighters from the San Jose Fire Station No.19 came to ensure the safety the students and faculty.

Students expressed various reactions to the sudden alarm. The prevalent attitude among most people was unease. Concern at the same time, some students cheered while others groaned. The evacuation lasted for approximately half an hour. "After a while, our teacher tried teaching a lesson. She was helping us prep for our upcoming poetry test," recalls senior Jason Vu. "Although many find it inconvenient to follow through with fire drills as often, it was a good precaution that day."

"I'm glad that our fire alarms work. I know there are a lot of false alarms. This time, they protected us because there actually was a fire," says Assoc. Principal Jacqueline Ng.

After the smoke cleared and staff members handled the crisis, class resumed. Official details of the event are not disclosed because they are still under investigation.

Speech class to return next year
By Emily Zhao

A fter a year without Speech class in the school curriculum, English teacher Babak Shahrivar will once again teach the class throughout the 2017-2018 school year. The class will be available for upperclassmen and will count as an elective rather than as an English course. Thus, students interested must take Speech class concurrently with another English core class.

Contrary to popular belief, this class does not measure exceptional English skills nor speaking expertise. With no prerequisites, any upperclassman interested will be able to improve their skills.

"In the past, I've had students that just started learning English (take) the class, so it's really just a class for anyone who's really interested in improving their public speaking and confidence," emphasizes Mr. Shahrivar.

Students who take the course will have the chance to participate in out-of-school speech competitions, like the annual Rotary Club of San Jose and Lockheed Martin contests. In the past, Piedmont Hills students have been extremely successful in speech competitions, winning first, second and third place in the annual Rotary Club contest.

"Also, I'm asked for (the Lockheed Martin) contest as a speech teacher to pick a student that would participate in that one. So, the only way of getting into that contest would be to take the class. There was actually a student that I coached who won first place and was shown off for free to Washington State and compete at the higher level," acknowledges Mr. Shahrivar.

Because Speech will most likely account for only one period, both students and teacher have a lot of freedom in how they want to run the curriculum.

"Every single year that I've taught the class, I've had them pick and choose what kind of unit they want to do. I actually did a parody assignment, where they got to prepare videos. They did a comedy unit, and actually a lot of students ended up doing stand-up comedy which was really funny," laughs Mr. Shahrivar.

A few students loved stand up comedy so much that they continued their practice at a local club.

“(Speech) is one of my favorite classes to teach because the whole class is like a family, I know that several years ago, but everyone gets to know each other,” reminisces Mr. Shahrivar.

Not only is he eager to teach the course next year, students are enthusiastic as well.

"It was definitely a class worth taking, (and it helped) us develop valuable public speaking skills. We also made fun and wonderful memories together, and the class was really safe and supportive community," exclaims senior Jason Vu.

Drama winter showcase brings spirit
By Ashitana Rodriguez

Drama winter showcase brings spirit
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On Fri. Dec. 2, the Drama department presented “Merry Christmas Ya Filthy Animal,” a spinoff of Home Alone, the play revolved around Kelly McCalister, played by senior Tresia Rullamas. Just like in Home Alone, there is a power outage that restores the family alarm clocks and makes the family late for its trip to Paris. As a result, everyone leaves Kelly behind. Kelly fights off two burglars and keeps Old Man Marley, the creepy neighbor next door, away. “It follows the story of Home Alone but adds some quirky characters,” explains Drama teacher Ms. Woods. "We were able to give the people a small break from life and a quick laugh before finals and the holidays,” comments junior Rae La-Guna-Carona who plays Helga, Ms. Woods’ Advanced Drama class put together the show by producing, directing and creating the set. This show took a lot of work to put together since the students were only allowed to rehearse during class time. This plot was chosen because they enjoyed the way the last year’s show went when they performed Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

"We created a show that would give the audience a break from the real world and feeling warm for the holidays," states senior Tresia Rullamas, who plays the lead role in the play, Kelly McCalister. The cast was made up of students from Advanced Drama class. For some, this was their first show performing in front of an audience. “It was a really great experience,” said junior and Prop Master Alyssa Severance. “It was really great being apart of tech crew.” For cast, the production was stressful at times but they pulled it together to present an amazing show for the staff and students.

SLAM! Two criminals threaten Kelly with poetry.

AMAZING! Ms. Neethling nails high notes despite technical difficulties.

“We think (Indian club members) really pulled it off. We know we pushed them really hard, but I think they did such an amazing job today and we are so proud of them!” exclaims Indian Club Vice President Namrata Shetty. "I thought we did really good.”
PHS Choir Council members were invited to perform at the Golden State Warriors home game on Nov. 26 at the Oracle Arena in Oakland. They sang the “Star-Spangled Banner” in the middle of the stadium, where hundreds of people in the audience watched them.

“It was a really fun experience because I have never performed in front of such a homogenous audience before,” expresses senior Aleisha Lee.

When the performers arrived and settled in to prepare, they had the opportunity to watch the basketball players practice before the game started.

“I have been doing this for three years, and every year there are new players. It was cool being on the court with Kevin Durant for the first time,” claims senior Catherine Tran.

To kickstart the performance, people in the audience rose and placed their hands over their hearts as a customary salute. Shortly after, the audience placed their hands over their hearts as a customary salute. Shortly after, the audience heard the singers’ harmonized voices as they performed the “Star-Spangled Banner.” Singers in various sections—such as soprano, tenor, bass and alto—harmonized with each other. Pyrotechnics went off throughout the performance. In other words, during certain licks such as “rockets red glare” and “bombs bursting in the air,” there were bursts of fireworks as an added effect.

“I felt excited and scared (performing) because when we sang those parts, I could actually feel the heat (from the pyrotechnics),” recalls senior James Hoang.

Once the singers finished, they were able to watch the basketball game.

“We got to see Stephen Curry, which was really mind-blowing,” exclaims Aleisha.

Music teacher Myles Ellis organized this opportunity. Although the singers were able to perform at the arena, they still had to pay for their entrance. Mr. Ellis sold tickets to the game for $90. Compared to other sellers, such as StubHub which sold tickets for about $300, the tickets he sold were approximately three times cheaper.

Winter concerts warm audience

By Emilie Chau

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inals begin tomorrow and many of you are probably stressed out. Listed below are some tips you can remember when studying for or while taking your finals.

Study with Friends. Organize a study party with your friends to motivate you to study. Studying with friends who have the same classes as you also gives you the opportunity to ask your friends any questions you have on the material.

Practice problems. Especially in math and science, knowing how and when to use a formula is significantly more important than simply memorizing a formula. Make use of online problems, textbook questions or old test and homework problems you have from earlier in the year.

Don’t cram. Despite how tempting it is to stay up until 3 am studying for your math final, cramming may actually do more harm than good. Researchers at UCLA report that sacrificing sleep for studying is actually counterproductive and students are more likely to have academic problems the following day. Students also generally learn better on a regular studying schedule so don’t study more than you usually do the day before a test.

Relax. Every hour of study should be matched with an hour of relaxation. Make sure you eat early and don’t stress out too much. You probably know more than you think you do.

Go ahead and binge watch your favorite TV show on Netflix or go out to eat with friends. Remember to eat well in the morning so you don’t feel hungry during your final. But remember that you shouldn’t try to eat too much; especially material you have been struggling with throughout the semester.

Get to school early. Get to class a few minutes early so you can settle down and relax before taking your test. Don’t try to last minute study as it will make you more anxious.

Don’t take too long on a problem. If you’re stuck on a problem for the past couple of minutes, move on. Answer the problems you know first to ensure you get those correct. You don’t want to lose points on a question you know the answer to! After you answer the easier problems, go back to the harder ones and try to work your way through it. If you’re still stuck, try doing the problem again from the very beginning.

With these tips, I hope you are now feeling a lot more confident about taking your finals this week. Good luck!
**Winter holiday activities**

By Michelle Lin

With the holidays just around the corner, you might already be making plans to celebrate the festivities with friends and family. If you haven’t yet given a thought as to what you want to do, the following tips are listed to jump-start some of your ideas to ensure you have a wonderful holiday break.

Don’t want to go out? There are plenty of fun activities to do indoors.

**White Elephant**. An alternative to Secret Santa, White Elephant consists of players “stealing” gifts from others. Because each gift can only be stolen three times, the game results in fun, playful rivalries between players for sought-after items.

**Cozy movie night**. With hanging Christmas lights and mugs of tasty hot chocolate, a movie night is the perfect definition of cozy. Pick a fun Christmas movie to watch and huddle around the fireplace if you really want to get cozy!

Whether you stay in San Jose or go on vacation, there are lots of outdoor activities to do as well.

**Christmas in the Park**. This classic and fun event is a get-together for all friends and family. Visit the lights that downtown San Jose has to offer, and be sure to taste a sip of the wonderful hot chocolate!

**Celebrate the New Year**. Visit San Francisco on New Year’s Eve for its wonderful firework celebration atop Twin Peaks, where you’ll be able to see all the fireworks from one of the highest locations in the city. It’s a great chance to spend quality time with friends and family.

Most importantly, make sure to sleep in—a lot! We all deserve it. ♦

**Unique present ideas**

By Sean Tseng

“Secret Santa is so much work!”

“Why’s the point?”

These are the sentiments expressed by most students these days. More and more, gift-exchange activities like Secret Santa and White Elephant are falling out of popularity. The unspirited epidemic boils down to the struggle of shopping for quality presents. Every year, Christmas becomes a headache for millions of poor shoppers as they scurry the malls to find a new, original, out-of-the-box gift.

To all the lost souls looking for gift-giving guidance, here are a few pointers and ideas sure to make you the gift-giver of the town!

1. **Tip**: Be personal. The best givers are sure to know their targets’ favorite colors, animal, food, and so on. Find a way to incorporate at least one thing they’re sure to love into the present. If you can fit several gifts into one theme, even better!

   Idea: A panda-loving recipient will definitely appreciate a panda-themed basket with items such as stuffed animals or stationery.

2. **Tip**: These gifts can range from a nice brush set or a fountain pen to soccer cleats or biking equipment.

   Idea: Concert tickets, activities like ziplining, or even your own “ticket” to a night out or a day on the beach with friends can make the perfect present for someone in need of a break from life’s stresses.

3. **Tip**: Another surefire way into your recipient’s heart is something that speaks to their hobbies. Be it writing, photography, dance, sports, or any other passion under the sun, there’s no greater joy than receiving a gift related to someone’s personal love.

   Idea: These gifts can range from a nice brush set or a fountain pen to soccer cleats or biking equipment.

4. **Tip**: Help them with a problem. Life is full of inconveniences, but that’s not what Christmas should be about. Keep a sharp eye out for any issue that crops up often in your giftee’s life and swoop in on Christmas Day with a solution! Even gifts that solve the most minor inconveniences can make a tiny but useful present.

   Idea: An electronic tracker would help anyone prone to losing things, while a cookie-dunker can solve problems they never even knew they had. ♦

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**Classic Christmas movies**

By Tyler Vu

**Home Alone** (1990)

A movie so successful that it spawned a trilogy, *Home Alone* features the ever-witty Kevin McCallister and his defense against a misidentified elf attempting to reintegrate itself into human society and find his parents. Will Ferrell’s performance is a relic from an age where color did not exist. It’s an original film that speaks to all those who sacrifice for the sake of others. The movie follows George Bailey and his impact on the lives of those around him. Although it deviates from the comedic theme of the previous movies, Do not overlook this movie this Christmas season.

**The Nightmare Before Christmas** (1993)

It may not seem like a Christmas movie, but don’t let the characters fool you. *The Nightmare Before Christmas* shows that everyone can grow a heart, including skeletons. The story follows Jack Skellington as he tries to introduce a new holiday but ends up ruining everything. Whether or not he has a change of heart is the question that leaves us on the edge of our seats. ♦

**It’s a Wonderful Life** (1946)

A relic from an age where color did not exist, *It’s a Wonderful Life* speaks to all those who sacrifice for the sake of others. The movie follows George Bailey and his impact on the lives of those around him. Although it deviates from the comedic theme of the previous movies, Do not overlook this movie this Christmas season.
Boys' Basketball swishes into action
By Alyssa Gutierrez

“I feels pretty good coming off a win last year; just trying to repeat that this year. It was the first time in the school’s history, so we’ve been working hard try to reach that goal,” explained Senior Point Guard Goose Persin. “I’m most excited for the games just to play, be in front of everyone and try to do what we do.”

The players are hard at work going through vigorous training in season and during the offseason to try and improve their skills.

“We do a lot of conditioning like weight training and running. We scrimmage against other schools and go to different tournaments,” smiled Senior Center Albert Mendez.

Varsity is starting in a new league after moving up a division. “(I’m excited) to see how our new league plays out. I think it’s going to be really fun,” says Varsity Coach Peter Simos. “I’m hoping we have a lot more school participation, because it’s fun to come out and support your school team.”

“I am very excited about this team, so to lose to them just 1-0 is a victory in itself,” asserted Coach Joey, the PHHS Wrestling team gets into a new season after placing first in Breei at BVAL (Blossom Valley Athletic League).

Boys’ Soccer kicks into season
By Mae Castellano

The team, however, is supportive and happy; there’s no negativity within the team.

“I think we have good teamwork because we’re all friends,” stated JV Power Forward Tasha Nguyen. “The girls have a close relationship with each other, and there’s strong teamwork between them. I think that we have all around great players,” Nguyen commented.

“I’m expecting to grow, get better as a team, have fun, and win!” said JV Forward Alyssa Dias.

“Last year (was) a good season for us,” claimed Palamino. “My goal is to wrestle (at the weight class of) 115 by the end of the season and beat as many people ahead of me in the CCS rankings as I can.”

“I’m looking forward to (the) league finals and CCS because I’m hoping that I can outdo what I did last year,” said Giar.

The team’s first dual meet of this season will be on Jan. 4, 2017 against Pioneer High School.

Girls’ Soccer passes ball to new season
By Sophia Xiao

Girls’ Soccer has kicked off the preseason strong currently holding a record of 2-1 for Varsity, and 2-1 for the JV team during its own preseason. Coach Freddy Espinosa hopes that the team can keep pushing and rank highly in CCS.

“We’ve shown a lot of promise in terms of progressions,” explained Coach Freddy. After losing nine Varsity players to graduation, the team needed to re- recruit the best players it could find to Varsity. This need led to an unusual six tryouts for the Varsity team.

“Getting into Varsity wasn’t that hard,” said freshman Varsity Forward Emily Rasmussen. “I guess a lot of girls didn’t want to sign up.”

Despite that, the team performed quite well and improved rapidly with most of the improvement now needed on team chemistry according to Coach Stacie Esat. This year, we’ve got team cohesion seems to be building out just fine. According to Varsity player Saranjit Singh. “The coach really motivates the team, the team already feels like it has connected like a family. Hopefully, this cohesion truly comes together and complete the team chemistry during their next game against San Benito.”

Meanwhile, JV has also been doing well. With the same pressure against the same schools as Varsity, they look poised to also place highly in their league. JV Coach Joey Ramirez has been proud of their performance, “I am very excited about this team, so to lose to them just 1-0 is a victory in itself,” assured Coach Joey.

According to Coach Joey, the JV team has excellent discipline on the court and a good sense of tactics. He believes if they get better at touching the ball, they could place third or second in their league.

Varsity girls are eager to get swished into play this winter and improve their skills.

Boys’ Soccer swishes into a new season
By TREVOR GLASSEY

“It’s really important that they participate, because it’s fun to come out and support your school team.”

I think the main goal for us this year is to try and communicate to your team, you could just end up kicking the ball around and nothing with it. The teamwork aspect of the game was also what many players appreciated. “The coach really pushes you. (I like) just being out there on the field with my team.”

“Definitely, particularly in this sport. If you don’t talk a lot, you don’t communicate to your teammates, you could just end up kicking the ball around and nothing with it. The teamwork aspect of the game was also what many players appreciated. “The coach really pushes you. (I like) just being out there on the field with my team.”

“Playing with each other, and the girls are having a lot of fun.”

Girls’ Basketball dunks into a new season
By TREVOR GLASSEY

With an hour and a half prior to the practice, the Girls’ Basketball team is preparing for the upcoming season. The team is made up of diverse skills like balls, basic skills such as layups, and conditions regularly.

“Practice is done on a daily basis because we always run several lines throughout practice,” said Alyssa Dias. The team goes to the weight room every Saturday as well as additional day during the week.

“We went to CCS (Central Coast Section),” claimed Varsity Point Guard Katrina Yamashita. “We think we got out in the second round, but we’re still a really big accomplishment.”

For this upcoming season, some of the girls have hopes to be unde- feated. With the practices preparing the team for season, Yamashita thinks starting off with more wins than just getting through the defensive drills would improve their skills.

TAKEN DOWN: Wrestlers Andre Martins (12) and Caleb Espinosa (11) grapple with each other during practice.

Scoreboard

HOOPS Demarn Floyd (11) pre- serves for a free throw.

PASS IT! Sinahi Torres (10) passes the ball to a fellow player.

Girls’ Soccer passes ball to new season
By Trevor Glassay

Girls’ Soccer has kicked off the preseason strong currently holding a record of 2-1 for Varsity, and 2-1 for the JV team during its own preseason. Coach Freddy Espinosa hopes that the team can keep pushing and rank highly in CCS. "We’ve shown a lot of promise in terms of progressions," explained Coach Freddy. After losing nine Varsity players to graduation, the team needed to recruit the best players it could find to Varsity. This need led to an unusual six tryouts for the Varsity team. “Getting into Varsity wasn’t that hard,” said freshman Varsity Forward Emily Rasmussen. “I guess a lot of girls didn’t want to sign up.”

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