The Next Generation?

By Alyssa Osborn

Every day, researchers are making astronomical breakthroughs in health, technology, ecology, and beyond. These breakthroughs range from discovering lakes under volcanoes, transplanting mini lungs into mice, and building an autonomous scooter. The world is ripe for excavating and researchers are wasting no time. Recently, scientists have turned to a questionable field of experimentation: human embryos.

British scientists have received the green light by regulators, as of February 1st, 2016, to genetically modify human embryos. Their goal is to study faulty genetic code and its effect in hindering development by deactivating genes. This study could potentially prevent miscarriages and aid fertility. In addition, researchers are hoping to find out what causes the cells in an embryo to differentiate, a process called lineage specification. Scientists will use a new method of gene editing, called CRISPR, to remove part of the DNA code and observe the effect of its removal. Crispr could “permanently remove harmful mutations which lead to inherited diseases like Huntington’s, cystic fibrosis and hemophilia.”

Swedish scientists have started similar research with the same goals in mind. British and Swedish research teams have yet to be met with strong enough opposition to halt their experimentation. However, when Chinese scientists carried out similar experiments last year, they incited public outrage. In the United States, it is not currently illegal to edit human embryos for research purposes. Therefore, this form of research can take place here, just not with the support of federal funds (

Genetically altered babies may be closer than we think. In New Jersey, thirty babies were born with genes from three people: their mother, their father, and a third person. The third person’s genes were added in the laboratory because something in the mother’s egg prevented her from conceiving naturally. The third person’s additional genes allowed the egg to become fertile. This is the first confirmed experiment where healthy children were born with genetic alterations (ABC News).

These recent discoveries are revolutionary because even with high opposition and ethical questioning, scientists have continued their research on human embryos with one goal in mind: the betterment of humanity through increased knowledge of the human body and life itself. However, we must ask ourselves where the line should be drawn. When will scientists take it too far? Will research such as this alter our morals and way of life? As of now, we will just have to wait and ask ourselves, what will the next generation look like? Paw
It’s Time to Sell the Idea of Stem Cells

By Makenzie Knighten

“Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love for humanity.” Stem cell research offers great promise for understanding basic mechanisms of human development and differentiation, as well as the hope for new treatments for diseases such as diabetes, spinal cord injury, Parkinson’s disease, and myocardial infarction. Human stem cell (hSC) research also raises sharp ideas for research, but also ethical controversies. The derivation of stem cell lines from oocytes and embryos is fraught with disputes. In any hSC research, difficult dilemmas arise regarding sensitive matters. Some of these difficult dilemmas involve the use of unborn fetuses for scientific research and the possible use of adult stem cells as opposed to embryonic stem cells for moral questioning.

If people have a problem using unborn fetuses for scientific research, it is mainly for the sake of the idea that fetuses are considered people and thus should be treated as such, without the cost of their lives for the sake of science. People do not take into consideration some of the benefits of using stem cells, these miniature super heroes, like saving the lives of individuals suffering from various diseases. Most people fail to see stem cell research in this positive light, continuing to think of the use of human stem cell research as just the opposite, inhumane. This failure needs to be converted to a success!

Some people even try to “save” the lives of unborn fetuses by considering the use of adult stem cells. The problem with adult stem cells is that they are the concrete to a building. They have aged, hardened, developed, and cannot be torn down and be reused easily. No matter how sturdy the concrete is, if it is broken, it can never fit perfectly in place. That goes the same way for adult stem cells. Adult stem cells have developed and specialized for certain functions, rendering their versatility to be at a very low rate. The whole idea is flawed!

Unlike the many controversial statements surrounding the research on stem cells, this research is designed to help the sick according to one’s ability and judgment; not to appease generalized assumptions based on a lack of knowledge in the field of medical research. The absolute goal is to educate the future minds of medicine because this is one of the most misunderstood topics in the field of medicine. We need to work toward educating society on the reality of this matter.

The research scientists have conducted has not only proven a tremendous success in the use of stem cells toward curing life threatening diseases throughout our nation, they are also used as a repair system in dysfunctional tissues. Stem cells divide limitless-ly as long as an organism’s heart is still beating. Embryonic stem cells have the capability to become any specialized cell within the human body; they can be utilized to repair any damaged system or faulty organ within a sick patient’s body.

Stem cells are the construction workers of the body; they perform the little odd jobs to keep us healthy. They can fill the cracks in damaged tissues, making them functional again. They can work in groups of many to complete a task effectively and quickly to ensure that waiting does no more harm. They can take on diverse tasks right from the start, but once they become exceptional at one specific duty, they will specialize to that area. They can make a broken organism whole again, and we do not give them the credit that they deserve.

We have not expanded on the potential capabilities of stem cell research because people are centered on the fact that it involves study on aborted fetuses. Abortion rates in all honesty would not be impacted by the research on embryonic stem cells; there has been no documented correlation between the two. However, it is a fact that embryonic stem cells are much more versatile in the ways they can be used compared to specialized adult stem cells. These little worker bees can go around and pollinate any flower they choose.

We need to start implementing the use of stem cells as a form of therapy for the life-threatening diseases that are parasites, thriving within the nation at the cost of innocent lives. We need to educate people on the endless benefits of implementation of stem cell therapy. We need to abolish the misconception that stem cell therapy is only destructive in its ways. We have a cornucopia of resources within every individual. We now have the potential to start taking this and putting those resources to good use. We are never going to make major breakthroughs without taking risks. The knowledge behind stem cell research is so extensively explored that this is but a minor, baby step in the direction of finding more uses of stem cells and a cure for some of the silent killers within our society. The gifted hands of this nation, united as one, together can save the innocent lives that are compelled to suffer from these diseases.
SCIENCE BOWL

By Anish Wadhwa

With the turn of the New Year, it is crunch-time for Shasta High’s Science Bowl team. For those of you who don’t know, Science Bowl is a competition between students of different schools on the basis of different sciences. These different subjects of science can range from general science, biology, astronomy, physics, earth science, chemistry, and math. Though it is a competition, Science Bowl serves other purposes. Firstly, it is an experience to better educate students by putting them in a hot seat and testing their knowledge. Obviously, those who fare well move forward and those who don’t… well, you get the idea. But more importantly, it serves as an opportunity. Now this opportunity doesn’t have a definite meaning. It could mean an opportunity to win prizes, an opportunity to socialize with other schools and other students of one’s caliber, or an opportunity to test one’s knowledge and learn something new in the process. The competition of Science Bowl is simply a formality. What Science Bowl really entails is opportunity.

As a learning experience, Science Bowl provides students the ability to learn many new things about subjects that may or may not interest them. However, this learning experience not only allows students to learn about academic subjects but allows students to learn more about which subject is best suited for them. A chemistry student going into Science Bowl may determine that they are better in physics or math as opposed to chemistry, as the student might have been interested in the first place. As a result, the student learns more about their abilities in academics while learning more of the subject that they would end up enjoying.

Throughout it all, one’s peers are there to support each student from deciding their specialty, to working together as a compatible team. The student knowing material may be important, but what truly separates good, bad, and mediocre teams is how well each member in a team can work together. If each member in a team is intelligent, but they won’t work well together, they will not succeed. If each member in a team is to some extent intelligent in their subject matter, and they all can work well together, then they will prosper and succeed. The team is what wins, not the member.

Everyone who has ever lived has their own, distinct agenda, but each agenda is based off a drive, a reason, so to speak. There is always something or some things that push someone to strive to better themselves and to accomplish great things. This push could be from a friend, a parent, a teacher, or even from oneself. In this competition, each agenda is based off of opportunity. The opportunity to be better, to meet new people, to learn, to have fun, and even to do all the above. This is what Science Bowl is: an opportunity. That being said, Shasta High’s Science Bowl team grows increasingly anxious to the day when all of these opportunities will be in arm’s reach.

Mobile Gaming: the Vicious Cycle

By Ravi Patel

Pokemon GO. Candy Crush. Clash Royale. Its inferior predecessor, Clash of Clans. What do all of these titles have in common? They all belong to the genre of games found on your phone. Many dub these guilty pleasures “freemium” games. This is because although they may be free to download, there are optional in-game purchases available, usually with the game’s fictitious currencies. Business Insider estimates that over 8 billion dollars are spent on these instruments of addiction annually.

Let’s delve into just how everybody and their mothers get hooked on these games. It all starts with an innocent downloading of the “next big game”. This summer, it was Pokemon GO. A few years back, the Clash series and Candy Crush games were doing the same thing. Usually, the game has a new feature rarely seen before, such as augmented reality in Pokemon GO. People usually rave about it, instilling the ever so powerful ‘bandwagon effect’. The most important mechanism of the game is installing pointless obstacles that must be paid in order to progress, or as I term them, “wallet drainers”. The game usually gives you some of their virtual currency in order to buy more rounds of a minigame, or decrease waiting time. After experiencing the short-term pleasure of clearing the obstacle, our poor player becomes insatiated with the feeling of getting rid of the obstacle. They begin to develop a dependence on the currency, and they keep draining their stipend. Then the most fateful day of somebody’s life comes. Not their wedding, funeral, birthday, or graduation. Something much more momentous. The day they run out of virtual currency. The conniving game companies somehow give you just enough to get you hooked on the game’s vicious cycle. It’s time to pay for your guilty pleasure. Most people begin to quit and delete the app at this point, but for those who can’t help themselves, the fun has just begun (or ended). As they further progress from this point, the player pays exponentially more, as the cost to keep playing rises higher than a stray balloon at your nephew’s birthday party.

They may end up like Jason Croghan and Mark Hill from Cracked.com, with 9,000 dollars spent on just the game alone. Mobile gaming is a slippery slope. Your best bet is to stay away from freemium games from the start and just play non-freemium games. If you’re looking for a fun game that you don’t need to pay for, try GamePigeon.
Twitter Politics

By Anagha Chandramouli

Young people have never been more involved with politics than we are today. You don’t have to look farther than any of your social media feeds to see it: I’ve seen more twitter fights about the election than I can count, been in more than I care to admit. Dubbed “Generation Z,” our generation is attempting to change the world. But are we really making a difference?

We blame past generations for royally screwing us over, pointing fingers and claiming that the world we are set to inherit is full of easily avoided problems. Whether it’s the state of our economy or the state of our ecosystem, these things are directly affecting us, and they’re a mess. As whole, Generation Z is far more socially liberal compared to people of the past. We are also the most educated generation in history. Consequently, we are more accepting of people from all walks of life regardless their race, religion, gender, sexual preference, or economic status. Most importantly, we demand equality for everyone.

To that end, we also have worries that no generation before us had problems. For average students wanting to pursue post-undergraduate or even post high school education, there are innumerable factors to be considered. Can I attend this four-year university? Will I be able to pay off my college loans? Should I pursue being a doctor or lawyer if I’ll just spend my career paying off student debt? We can all agree on one thing: this uncertainty needs to change.

Education must become less of a privilege and more of a right, a perspective which underscores why so many young democrats loved Bernie Sanders. Some supporters liked him for his political agenda and policies, but most of them liked who Bernie Sanders is and what he represented. He is this old Jewish guy protesting the unfairness and corruption of the system over the past few decades. He said what everyone was thinking, and more importantly what everyone was feeling. His campaign was built on integrity, and was a breath of fresh air compared to all the candidates we were used to seeing. He stood by what he said and he wasn’t afraid to tell it how it is.

Still, if we all wanted change, and Bernie seemed like our guy, what happened? Superdelegates and systemic issues aside, we happened. Voter turnout for the primary elections were less than 30% of eligible voters. And that was one of the higher percentages compared to other elections. How can we expect change if we don’t make the effort to make it happen? Gen Z only seems to vote in big ticket elections, choices that are a big deal and seem like they’ll make a big difference. But it ends there.

The policies that affect us directly - mayoral elections, state elections, and midterm elections - pass by us completely forgotten. Instead, we spend our time picking fights with strangers on Facebook over topics we feel passionate about, and think we’ve done our civic duty when we win those fights. But real change doesn’t happen on Facebook or Twitter. It happens by voting in elections. All of them. Our generation is notorious for being all talk and no action. But there’s still time to change that, and still time to change our future.

A Fantastic Movie and Where to Find it

By Ella Hebrard

As the movie began, and the first few notes of Hedwig’s Theme drifted through the audience, feelings of wonder and excitement crept over me, making me feel like I was a little girl again, watching Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone for the first time after tearing through the books. As the melody shifted and transformed into something else, something new and unpredictable, anticipation and exhilaration overtook me as it truly dawned on me: Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them is here, and it marks the beginning of a new age of the Harry Potter franchise.

Set in 1926, Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them follows the adventures of Newt Scamander, a creature-loving magizoologist who has landed in New York at a time of high tension. When some of his beasts escape into an already troubled city, he sets out to find them before they cause harm or have a chance to be harmed by fearful no-maj or wizards. Amongst the mischief caused by his rampaging creatures and his attempts to recapture them, a no-maj (or muggle, to use the more recognizable British term) he unwittingly introduced to the wizarding world, an ex-aurator who gains an interest in Scamander’s situation, the legilmens (mind reader) sister of the auror, as well as the notorious Gellert Grindelwald, become part of a more serious plot concerning the no-majs and wizarding community.

The film, first of a confirmed five to be produced, was based on a textbook that simply identifies and describes magical creatures. Because there is an absence of a definite story of Newt Scamander’s life, director David Yates and author J. K. Rowling were left with virtually limitless possibilities for the films to come, which will work to their advantage should they develop the story well. The movie certainly took on a large burden: aside from being a kind of prequel and tackling the story of Grindelwald, it needed to live up to the incredible legacy of the Harry Potter series. From the first film, it seems to me that it will do just that. From the amazing creatures Scamander cares for to the brand new and unknown storyline, the entirety of the series is likely to mirror the success of the first film.

One of the few critiques I have of the film is that the characters are not very dynamic, though they do have great personalities. Aside from Scamander, other significant characters featured include no-maj Jacob Kowalski, ex-aurator Porpentina ‘Tina’ Goldstein, legilmens Queenie Goldstein, auror Percival Graves, and Cedence, a troubled young man who desperately wishes to be part of the wizarding world. While they are introduced and we learn some of their backstory, most do not show significant growth or development as characters. This can be forgivable, however, when one considers that the film is the first of five and serves more an introductory purpose. Despite the characters’ lack of depth, they were still hilarious and lovable, intriguing and mysterious. Scamander, who is visibly much more comfortable interacting with his beasts than his fellow wizards, is quietly charming and endearing. Tina, who is determined to be reinstated as an auror, is compassionate and, at times, a bit awkward in such a way that makes her infinitely more lovable. Even Jacob, who is wonderstruck by the incredible new world he is experiencing, is earnest and likeable. His characteristics make him a great companion and friend of Newt. All things considered, each character is introduced with wonderful qualities; even though they are for the most part underdeveloped, their personas and the way they complement each other make them memorable nonetheless.

Slight pitfalls aside, the movie was excellent and there are numerous features that make it so. One such pinnacle is the groups of people and the setting: the wizarding and no-maj organizations within 1926 New York are endlessly fascinating. Of the characters, Tina, Queenie, and Percival work for the institution of MACUSA (the Magical Congress of the United States of America), parts of which are shown throughout the film. Along with its significance as the lawmaking and enforcement agency for witches and wizards of America, the captivating operations and portrayal of MACUSA make it a wondrous part of the movie. Also, the no-maj organization of Second Salem, which advocates witch hunting and has gained a small following in the city, hosts curious characters and is integral to a subplot of the movie. The organization and its leader, Credence’s adoptive mother, are a bit shrouded in mystery as far as motive, but this serves to add to the sinister and fearful atmosphere of the organization and the characters. This organization also helps foster Scamander as a hero, though he certainly doesn’t seem to be on the path to follow the classic hero arc as Rowling wrote Harry Potter to do. Thirdly, and perhaps the best aspect of the film, is, of course, the beasts. Featuring familiar creatures, such as nifflers and bowtruckles, alongside new ones including the swooping evil, each beast has a distinct and charming personality delightfully brought to life on screen. From the smallest billywig to the massive thunderbird, no detail is missed in rendering them accurately. One of the few critiques I have of the film is that the characters are not very dynamic, though they do have great personalities. Aside from Scamander, other significant characters featured include no-maj Jacob Kowalski, ex-aurator Porpentina ‘Tina’ Goldstein, legilmens Queenie Goldstein, auror Percival Graves, and Cedence, a troubled young man who desperately wishes to be part of the wizarding world. While they are introduced and we learn some of their backstory, most do not show significant growth or development as characters. This can be forgivable, however, when one considers that the film is the first of five and serves more an introductory purpose. Despite the characters’ lack of depth, they were still hilarious and lovable, intriguing and mysterious. Scamander, who is visibly much more comfortable interacting with his beasts than his fellow wizards, is quietly charming and endearing. Tina, who is determined to be reinstated as an auror, is compassionate and, at times, a bit awkward in such a way that makes her infinitely more lovable. Even Jacob, who is wonderstruck by the incredible new world he is experiencing, is earnest and likeable. His characteristics make him a great companion and friend of Newt. All things considered, each character is introduced with wonderful qualities; even though they are for the most part underdeveloped, their personas and the way they complement each other make them memorable nonetheless.

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By Amanda Hartt

If you haven’t heard, (which is surprising considering its recent overwhelming fame), there is a relatively new musical out on Broadway. This musical is called Hamilton, based on the founding father you read about in your U.S. History class. Now, why would Lin-Manuel Miranda, a genius and outstanding composer, responsible for the award-winning Broadway musical In the Heights, spend seven years writing a founding father’s biography in the form of a musical? That’s insane. Why would anyone want to see that? Why make it hip-hop? That sounds awful. Well, seven years, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, a Grammy, and eleven Tony’s later, here we are with one of the most successful Broadway musicals ever. Since opening in New York in 2015, Hamilton has sold out its whole run. Basically, in order to get tickets for it, you have to be a celebrity or friends with a celebrity, have thousands of dollars to spare, or resort to selling your soul. (I don’t recommend the last option).

Now, you may be asking yourself, why? Why is this so popular? Why does anyone want to see a musical about the American Revolution? Well, first of all, this musical makes history exciting and accessible. It tells a story of an orphan who wrote his way out of poverty, a self-starting immigrant who raised enough money to go from a small town in the Leeward Islands to the big city of New York. Hamilton used his incredible brains, charisma, and talent to rise in the ranks of the government, all the while fighting in the war alongside Washington, falling in love with Eliza, and doing everything he could to “rise up.” This compelling and emotional storyline of his balance between love and work, his constant struggles to be heard, and his grief over the loss of so many people he loved leaves you wanting more (all the while crying on the floor). Not only is this a great story, but the musical follows Hamilton’s story line faithfully with little-to-no historical inaccuracies. Every event in the play actually took place, and it tells the real story as opposed to some “creative interpretations” where writers change everything except the name of the main character.

Secondly, did I mention that Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote it? Yes? Well I’ll say it again then. Somehow, he was able to write forty-six full-length musical numbers with a mix of R&B, rap, and Broadway music, all compiled into one beautiful masterpiece. According to the New York Times, “‘Hamilton’ has the potential to be a Broadway game changer thanks to its seamless integration of rap and storytelling. Hip-hop aficionados have taken note... no less a theater luminary than Stephen Sondheim, who knows his way around a lyric, is a fan of the musical achievements of Mr. Miranda, who has a degree in theater studies from Wesleyan University. ‘Rhyme does something to the listener’s perception that is very important,’ said Mr. Sondheim, ‘and Lin-Manuel recognizes that, which gives the ‘Hamilton’ score a great deal more heft than it might otherwise have.’” Not only is every phrase packed with emotion and wit, it is also incredibly sarcastic and hilarious. Every song has something new to offer, leaving you laughing, crying, and wanting more.

Now what else could possibly add to this fantastic music and story? Easy, the cast that pulls it all together. Not only are these extremely dedicated and talented performers, they are also a diverse cast that serve to represent America today. That’s right; the story of Hamilton and his white brethren is told through mostly black and Latino actors. “Our cast looks like how America looks now, and that’s certainly intentional,” Miranda said earlier this year. “It’s a way of pulling you into the story and allowing you to leave whatever cultural baggage you have about the founding fathers at the door.” Also, the original cast stars Miranda himself as Hamilton, which is fantastic because of his overwhelming talent and passion. So, if you are looking for one of the most heartfelt and touching stories with an overwhelming talent and passion. So, if you have to wait a while to see it since almost all of the current shows are sold out, the soundtrack tells the entire story and makes you feel as if you are there, and it is most certainly worth the wait.
The Dangers of **DHMO** in Our Society

By Josie Giovanetti

DHMO: What is it, and should we be concerned about it? Let’s investigate. The effects of DHMO, or dihydrogen monoxide, on our society are shocking. Scientific tests have discovered the presence of DHMO in 100% of corpses deemed dead from cancer. However, research is inconclusive, as formal experimentation was never performed. Seems strange, right? How likely would it be that DHMO was found in 100% of these bodies, yet no one looked into it? But, that’s not all. Evidence shows that DHMO was used in Nazi concentration camps, the Romanov family ingested this substance many times prior to death, and significant amounts of DHMO are blasted into war captive’s mouths to torture them into revealing their information. Not bad enough? DHMO has been consumed by terrorists, rapists, murderers, and kidnappers. Worst of all? You come into contact with this substance daily. That’s right. DHMO is consumed by animals, it’s been found in plastic water bottles, and it may even be coming out of your tap. How is this possible? Let’s take a closer look at what makes DHMO DHMO. “Di” means two. That means we have two hydrogens. “Mono” means one. That adds one oxygen. So, two hydrogens, one oxygen? That makes H2O. So, if this article scared you, shake it off. DHMO is found in almost everything, because DHMO is water.

For more information on the “dangers” of DHMO, visit dhmo.org.

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**Presidents**

By Jacob Patel

With the past election, as well as Trump’s inauguration going on, test how much you know about the history of our Presidents, with this puzzle.

**Across**
1. The only President to that didn’t accept a salary.
2. California became a state during this man’s Presidency.
3. This President was a big gambler, and once lost the entire White House china collection on a bad hand. Also, this President officially ended World War I.
4. The only President to own a haberdashery business (men’s outfitters), which went bankrupt. Also, this President survived an assassination attempt.
5. The first President to serve a nation from coast to coast.
6. The first President to ever use a telephone.
7. The first President to ever serve two nonconsecutive terms.
8. The heaviest President at a weight of 332 pounds.

**Down**
1. Founded the University of Virginia.
2. The only President to have a country name its capital after him.
3. The first President to be targeted in an attempted Presidential assassination.
4. A great Illinoisan wrestler, as well as the tallest President to date.
5. The only President to win two Grammy’s.
6. The first President to live in the White House.

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The Benefits of Playing Sports in High School

By Jacob Patel

It’s that time of the year where Winter sports are dying down, and Spring sports are on the way. This might have you thinking, “Should I play a sport in the new season, rather than just waiting until next year?” As an athlete, as well as a student, I would answer that question with a yes, and here’s why:

Health Benefits:
The ancient Greeks and Romans began to use ancient Babylonian star catalogs as a form of divination by using the relative positions of stars and planets. These star charts and calculations are the grandfather of modern day astronomy and by extension, zodiac horoscopes (Though Cosmo doesn’t use astrolabes and star catalogs in determining how your zodiac sign affects your career or what your favorite ice cream flavor is).

Even though astronomers and scientific research institutes deny the validity of zodiac horoscopes, thanks to their whimsy and popularity they will live on as a fanciful form of fortune telling for years to come.

Social and Emotional Benefits:
Along the lines of health, athletic participants at a high-school age earn many social and emotional benefits. Based on the findings of The Foundation for Global Sports Development, studies were taken place to find a correlation between less risky behavior in high-school athletes (things such as fighting and drug-use). This correlation was based upon the lower levels of stress, and the higher levels of self-worth found in high-school athletes. By building endurance, stretching, and training with weights, athletes can also expect to enjoy boosted confidence and improved self-esteem.

Academic Benefits:
Yes, there are much larger benefits than some students and athletes realize for playing sports. Through the work of the United States Department of Health and Human Services it has been found that participation in sports has led to greater academic performance at school. Studies displayed that after the involvement in a sport, athletes boasted: higher grade point averages, better standardized testing scores, better attendance to school, minimized dropout rates, and most importantly, a better chance of post high-school education. The study marveled at how the physical and mental benefits are hand-in-hand with students, to ensure academic success.

So before you decide to wait until next year for the upcoming sports season, take the initiative and get out there now! Paw

Illustration by Kelly Peters

Aquarius

By Kelly Peters

Horoscopes! We see them everywhere, whether it be in the Farmers Almanac, Cosmopolitan, or scrolling through Instagram, these clever little tidbits have a whimsical appeal to everyone.

Sometimes we catch ourselves wondering why some Zodiac horoscopes seem to mirror our personalities, or maybe so unlike our personalities that we catch ourselves saying “well who even comes up with this stargazing nonsense?”

Zodiac astrology first appeared in ancient Egypt, along with the classic 12 constellation sign calendar we see so often today. Part of what makes the zodiac so interesting is that the symbols are based on actual constellations we can see on a clear night. The positions of the constellations change every day due to the earths orbit, so every season there is a different night sky to look up to.

The ancient Greeks created constellations to explain mythological stories and legends like Pegasus and Hydra. Later, the ancient Greeks and Romans began to use ancient Babylonian star catalogs as a form of divination. These star charts and calculations are the grandfather of modern day astronomy and by extension, zodiac horoscopes (Though Cosmo doesn’t use astrolabes and star catalogs in determining how your zodiac sign affects your career or what your favorite ice cream flavor is).

Even though astronomers and scientific research institutes deny the validity of zodiac horoscopes, thanks to their whimsy and popularity they will live on as a fanciful form of fortune telling for years to come.
By Miley Hu

Peel out of the Purple Lot, head down Pioneer Drive past the Blue Lot, then turn right onto Magnolia Avenue past U-Prep and the stop light. Many students remain unaware, but at the end of this street, there is an office that weighs in heavily on their futures.

SCOE, the Shasta County Office of Education, functions to enact and regulate the California State legislation as pertaining to the public school system. SCOE’s constituents include all public school students of Shasta County, from elementary, to middle, to high schoolers. As of the 2016-2017 school year, however, the Office of Education has come under fire over the park housed behind the main building.

Magnolia Park includes an expansive field, playground, and basketball hoop, and is a part of SCOE property. Essentially, this means that the park is maintained by SCOE and not the City of Redding, such as other parks like Caldwell. Conflict between SCOE and residents of neighboring streets when SCOE announced its intention to reduce the size of the park out of necessity to build a Medical Therapy Unit (MTU).

One of SCOE’s priorities is to serve the special-needs students of Shasta County. The MTU is the facility where these students receive services such as physical therapy, speech therapy, and career options training. The current location of the MTU is at Buckeye School of the Arts in the Gateway Unified School District near Oasis Road, which presents two issues: first, it is far out of the way of the students being served in Shasta County who commute between this site and the site at Sycamore School in the Redding School District; second, school superintendents at Buckeye can tell SCOE to relocate at any time. Thus, it was deemed necessary to find a more central, more permanent location.

Over the summer, SCOE approved to place the MTU in the Magnolia Park area, but after the initial backlash against SCOE’s movement in the fall, the SCOE Board, began to search for alternatives in location and planning. By February, the Board still decided that the park area behind the SCOE building was the most feasible fit for the extensive MTU building, which was most close for the extensive MTU building, which was most close for the extensive MTU requirements. At the board meeting which took place on February 15, 2017, the floor was opened to the organizations behind the MTU, those serviced by the MTU facilities, and the general public to voice their opinions.

During this meeting, Conde Kunzman, Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Director, explained that her job is to ensure that the Shasta County special ed. programs comply with both state and federal laws. She also explained that SELPA takes responsibility for the costs associated with the MTU, including transportation, which was had become very expensive over the past 30 years. She also commented that after going through multiple options for relocation such as places within the Redding School District, the park space is the only one that could pan out.

Families of children served by the MTU advocated its relocation, which would allow the disabled students to miss less school for therapy. They spoke emotionally on the positive impact that the MTU had on their lives, and how important it was to the development of their children.

By this time, SCOE’s Dan Ostrowski, Executive Director of Information Technology, Facilities, Maintenance and Operations, presented a building plan that would reduce the park space by 47%, but retain as much of it as possible alongside the new MTU. He also touched on the safety concerns of the park, which would be reduced should the MTU be built on site there. His crew is accustomed to taking care of knives, hypodermic needles, and vagrants in the park. Several SCOE employees spoke up about the fear for their safety when walking to their cars parked adjacent to Magnolia Park after dark. They commented on their need for security escorts to avoid threatening people leering in the park.

Once the board concluded these pieces, the Speaker Cards of the public were addressed on the topic of the park. Initially outraged by the two-minute limitation on their addresses to the board, the residents of nearby neighborhoods began to address the board with hostility. Many did not want to lose any of the park where their children regularly play, where they find a peaceful solace amidst the suburbia. A few also argued that they felt perfectly safe jogging, biking, and walking around the neighborhood at night, and those who had lived their for 30 plus years claimed that Magnolia had always felt that safe.

Parks, one man claimed, are crucial to the development of children – here they learn to make friends, to win and lose, to even train their fine motor skills. An entire class of children from Montessori School, located in a nearby church on Placer, waited patiently throughout the meeting to address the board. At their turn, the children read off their letters asking the board not to take away their park. Their teacher explained that Montessori has very limited outdoor space, and so every Thursday the kids walk over to Magnolia to play outside on “Park Day.” It was clear that the residents of this area feared the loss of picnics and birthday parties, of family activities and pee-wee sports practices. Others took a more pragmatic approach, lamenting the loss of value on their homes near the park.

Regardless of the reason, the charge against the reduction of Magnolia Park gained traction through public support over a few months. Media coverage from the Record Searchlight and KRCR, organized petitions, and door-to-door lobbying on the part of the citizens proved civil unrest. As a result, during the March 8th board meeting, SCOE moved to cancel the plans for the new MTU, under the guidance of SELPA. The residents, now content, even offered to try to help with the upkeep of the park. The last thing SCOE Superintendent Tom Armelino had to say on the matter was, “Who is advocating for those special needs kids now? I have no assurance that what is going to come next is going to be better.”

Sunset Over Magnolia Park, by Miley Hu

The Paw Print

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