

The Mandolin

St. Francis Catholic High School

December 17, 2020

“Spread the Word.”

Issue 107

Mental Health During COVID-19

BY BROOKE KIRCHNER '23

For a lot of us, these last few months have been hard. COVID-19 has shut down a lot of our plans, put physical distance between us and our loved ones, and made it hard to stay motivated for school. Everyone has been affected by COVID-19 in their own way, but a lot of people have found themselves becoming more aware of their mental health. Whether it's a result of spending more time alone, missing out on certain events, not being able to see friends or family, or a variety of other reasons, this pandemic has caused a decline in mental health for many teens. Dealing with mental health can be a difficult topic. It may be challenging to bring up, uncomfortable to talk about, or it may seem impossible to fix. These feelings are valid, and it's essential to acknowledge them.

In regards to dealing with mental health struggles, there's a lot of information out there. Information on self-care is readily available, and many students have seen the typical reminders: drink water, exercise, do a face mask, et cetera. All of these things can be very helpful, and it's absolutely valuable to practice them; however, some mental health struggles are not so easy to cope with. Depression and anxiety are medical conditions and simple acts of self-care are not always the solution, although they can be very beneficial to some. Whatever you're feeling, it's highly likely that someone you know is feeling the same way. Reaching out to your peers is

an excellent way to open up about what you've been feeling, realize that you're not as alone as you might have thought, and build stronger relationships. Additionally, traditional talk therapy is a good way to put your problems into words, and get help. Even if your situation isn't horrible, it can't hurt to seek guidance. Approximately one in five teens suffers from at least one mental health disorder, and 75% of boys and 65% of girls with a mental health disorder are in therapy. If therapy is not for you, there are plenty of other alternatives.

Journaling can be an effective way to get your thoughts out and look back on what made you happy, what made you sad, and more. In addition, you can look back on your old journals and see your progress!

Exercising is easier said than done, but especially now when gyms are closed, it's important to rely on the resources available to us and find a productive and accessible way to work out. The internet has a wealth of exercise programs, and many of them are free on YouTube. [Adriene Mishler](#) offers free yoga programs to destress, stretch, and exercise, and [Caleb Marshall](#) offers fun, quick dance tutorials to help anyone get moving.

Food insecurity can be a big stressor for a lot of people during these troubling times, and there are many resources that can help alleviate this stress. [Wind Youth Services](#) and the Sacramento Food Bank (www.sacramentofoodbank.org) are two local food providers that help underserved families. [Sac-](#)

[ramento Youth Mental Health](#) provides a variety of mental health resources tailored to teens, including pop-up events, webinars, and so much more.

In addition to online resources, St. Francis offers a wide variety of mental health services. Each class has a counselor, and the school also offers tailored wellness services, including access to two licensed specialists, Kymberly Weinandy and Chyrissee Lee. The Wellness department gives students the opportunity to discuss their problems in a constructive manner. The StopIt app, which is installed on every student's chromebook, allows students to report themselves or other students in crisis or danger. If you or someone you know is severely struggling or participating in unsafe behavior, you can use the StopIt app to place a report.

Clearly, it's a hard time to be a teen; however, there's a wealth of information out there, and plenty of people who are willing to support you.

Kerri Pomarolli Takes the Stage at SFHS' 3rd Annual SELFe Event

BY HAILEY KOPP '21

Live from St. Francis High School's campus, the third annual SELFe event took place on Sunday, October 25th. The event was live-streamed on YouTube, allowing viewers from around the country to listen in. The event was aimed to empower women to embrace the SELFe mission of Service, Excellence, Leadership, and Faith.

Amanda Carrol, the morning host of the radio talk show of 103.9 The Fish, opened the show. She bravely recounted the story of how she became a single mother, allowing herself to be vulnerable and to connect with the audience. Her vulnerability embodied the SELFe mission, providing a powerful opening to the show. After she recounted her journey, she encouraged the audience to become one percent braver than they were that day. She empowered

the audience with her message: “You can't break a woman who's built on the right strong foundation.”

President Theresa Rodgers joined the stage as she described the SELFe mission. She explained how the “e” of the SELFe mission represents what the audience is encouraged to do after the event: embrace themselves, empower others, and evolve together as sisters. President Rodgers also gave thanks to the SELFe's all-female volunteer team, noting Mary Anne Kelly—St. Francis' Director of Advancement's—time, talent, and efforts in putting together the event. President Rodgers then introduced the event's guest speaker, Kerri Pomarolli, saying, “Today is a day all about finding ways to laugh and lift ourselves up with humor.”

Continued on page 3

What's Inside...

Presidential Election.....	2
SELFe Event.....	3
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	3
Transition to Hybrid Learning.....	4
Troubies Volunteering in DL.....	4
Christmas Traditions.....	5
Christmas Trends.....	5
Historical Context of Holidays.....	6
Holiday Activities.....	6
Troubies' New Year's Resolutions.....	7
Home Alone Movie Review.....	7
Holiday Recipe.....	8

2020 Presidential Election

BY THE MANDOLIN STAFF

2020 has been an interesting year for everyone, especially with the hardships of COVID-19, and for the United States of America it was also a voting year to either re-elect the current president or elect a new president. Much was at stake with this election, prompting many American citizens to exercise their right to vote and to make their voices be heard.

This election's voter turnout has shattered previous records with two-thirds of the voter eligible population's participation. According to *The Washington Post*, in 2016 about 60% of the population, or 139 million people, voted. This year about 66.6% of the population, or approximately 160 million people, voted. This increased voter participation can help explain how two traditionally Republican states--Arizona and Georgia--turned "blue" and landed in favor of Biden.

In particular, the surge in young voters greatly benefited Biden, who won this demographic by 24 points. Over half of all voters ages 18-29 voted in the presidential election, according to data



Young voters advocating for the democratic right to vote.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES

from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University. In key swing states such as Arizona, Michigan and Pennsylvania, preliminary data shows young people's support helped push Biden over the margin of victory.

African-Americans in the swing states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Ohio, and Wisconsin now make up around 12.5% of voters. In the 2000s they only made up 0.5%. For many years, African-American voters were the largest non-white racial or ethnic segment of the country's electorate, but for the first time in a presidential election they will be outnumbered by eligible Hispanic voters, at thirty-two million. Hispanic voters will account for 13.3% of all eligible voters; however, the number of eligible Latino voters is still far below the 60 million Latinos who live in the country. Moving forward, eligible Latino voters – U.S. citizens ages 18 and older – could play a larger role in the electoral process.



Socially distanced polling booths to accommodate voters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES

Native American voters also played a pivotal role in Biden's victory. Although this group of voters is often overlooked during the presidential campaign, Native voters significantly impacted the results in key battleground states--Wisconsin, Michigan, and Arizona. For example, the Navajo Nation, the largest Native American reservation in the U.S., had a 97% voter turnout. Biden won the three counties--Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah--that overlap the Navajo Nation with about 74,000 votes.

Asian American voters contributed to Biden's success, as 63% of the voter group voted for the President-elect. With a quarter of Asian American voters identifying as independent, according to a 2020 AAPI Data survey, these new voters are a prime opportunity for both parties, which will have to commit to substantive outreach in order to gain and expand their support.

Another significant factor leading to Biden's success was the changing voting patterns of college educated and non-college educated peoples. In 2016, a large portion of President Trump's coalition was based around non-college educated voters. Among men in this classification, Trump garnered a 48% lead over his Democratic counterpart, Hillary Clinton, according to the Brookings Institution. This past election, this lead shrunk to 42%. However, even more notably was the huge change in how college educated people voted. Trump held a 14 point lead over male graduates in 2016, but this year, this lead became only 3 points. Furthermore, Clinton had a seven point lead with female graduates, but Biden ended up nine points ahead with this same demographic.

The LGBTQ+IA community voting percentage increased, aiding in the switch of historically red states. For the LGBTQ+IA the percentage of voters went up about 80% this year. In an interview held by GLAAD, over 74% of LGBTQ+IA voters were leaning towards Joe Biden whereas 17% of the registered voters said they were voting for President Donald Trump. GLAAD CEO, Sarah Kate Ellis, comments on the surge in voter registration this year: "LGBTQ voters are poised to make a deciding difference this election year. Our community understands how much is at stake in this elec-

tion. We cannot sit this one out — our very lives are on the line."

On Monday, December 14th, the Electoral College affirmed Biden's presidential win. The electoral process was smooth, as members of the Electoral College pushed the President-elect past the 270 threshold when California cast its 55 votes. On January 6th, 2021, the next phase of officially deciding the election results is the joint session in the House chambers where Congress counts the votes. The only remaining task following the public declaration of the President-elect is the inauguration on January 20th.

Sources:

The New York Times
The Brookings Institution
The Washington Post
 GLAAD



A long line of voters outside of a polling place in Virginia.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES



President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris after giving their acceptance speeches.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES

SFHS' 3rd Annual SELFe Event (cont'd)

Continued from page 1

Laughter and high spirits are exactly what comedian, actress, author, and “super model wannabe,” Kerri Pomarolli brought to the event. Pomarolli filled up the SFHS stage with her charm, energy, and comic wit. Through humorous anecdotes, she shared a compelling story of her journey to success. She recounted how her dream was to move to Hollywood, marry Matt Damon, and win an Academy Award; however, she soon discovered that God had different plans. At an audition, she encountered a group of actors who were open about their Christian faith, which prompted her to reflect on how she was not public about her faith. Pomarolli advised, “If you really want God to use you, you’ve got to be all in” and that, “Sometimes you’ve just got to show up. Sometimes you don’t feel equipped, you don’t feel worthy, you don’t feel like you belong there, but God is like ‘I saved a seat for you.’”

Once she involved God in her professional life, doors that would lead her to a successful career began to open. She was pegged as Hollywood’s favorite “good girl,” who provides refreshingly clean comedy for all audiences. Since she invited God in her work, she has performed with celebrities such as Jay Leno, Jim Carrey, and Carol Channing. She has also written several books, the recent being *Confessions of a Proverbs 32 Woman*, and she is currently writing for the Hallmark channel.

Kerri Pomarolli’s journey of bravery and faith inspired the audience to chase after their dreams as she shared this powerful message: “When you have a path of God and when God is involved in your path, you take one step forward, He’s going to open another door because God is involved in your journey.”



President Rodgers, Kerri Pomarolli, and Amanda Carrol answers questions from the audience.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SFHS YOUTUBE

The Show Must Go On

BY EMMA HALLORAN '21

One activity that I’ve missed over the past eight months is live theatre. Going into my senior year, I convinced myself that a cure for coronavirus would miraculously show up, everyone would get better, and St. Francis theatre productions would go on as planned in the fall. Clearly, this was wishful thinking. As the first day of school approached, I wondered if we would even produce a fall show. Live theatre is impossible to do if no one is in-person... or so I thought.

Amidst all the chaos at the beginning of the school year, the SF Theatre Department announced that they would be filming, producing, and live streaming the play *Sense and Sensibility* by Kate Hamill, adapted from the Jane Austen novel of the same title. It tells the story of two sisters named Marianne and Elinor who have differing viewpoints about love, marriage, and social status. Through trials and tribulations, Marianne and Elinor grow closer to one another and discover that they’re more alike than they may think. The entire show was casted, rehearsed, and recorded virtually. Casting took place through video auditions and live callbacks, and all rehearsals took place on Zoom. I was a part of the cast of *Sense and Sensibility*, playing the mother of Elinor and Marianne as well as a talkative socialite named Anne Steele. *Sense and Sensibility* was recorded over the course of three days via Zoom and was broadcasted on November 13 and 14, 2020.

As one might expect, putting together a virtual play posed quite a few challenges. Technical issues were never something we had to worry about at in-person rehearsals; now, if someone’s Wifi stopped working, the whole scene would have to stop as well. Connecting with one another through a screen is also very challenging. I was fortunate enough to know a lot of my scene partners from previous shows, but doing scene work with someone you barely know on Zoom takes a lot of focus and effort. Talking to someone directly in front of you has an energy that a conversation on Zoom doesn’t naturally carry, so we had to create that energy on our own. Another barrier to cross was the new medium in which we were performing. We couldn’t just perform *Sense and Sensibility* as if we were in a theater. Screen acting and stage acting, while they are related, are very different art forms. Stage acting consists of bigger gestures and facial expressions, while film acting is more subtle. Learning how to blend these two acting styles in order to create a perfect mix took lots of skill and practice throughout the rehearsal process, and I think our cast pulled it off beautifully.

Performing a virtual play also had its advantages. Cast member Brooke Abildgaard '22 notes that she “enjoyed watching [her] cast members’ pets crash rehearsal.” Through these silly and unexpected interruptions, we were able to learn more about each other. Because of the virtual setting, new and fun artistic choices came to light. Throughout the show, there are short commercial breaks. These commercials were not in the script; our director, Kiera Anderson, decided to add them in to take advantage of this film medium. These cast members,

known as the Players, researched products popular in the play’s 1790s time period, wrote commercials promoting these products, and filmed them, adding a special and humorous touch to our show. “It felt so amazing to be able to work with a team and create our own piece of material, even in the confining circumstances of our pandemic life,” says Reese Murray '22. Presenting this show through a livestream also made it more accessible to the general public. More tickets could be sold because there aren’t a limited number of seats, and people can watch it from anywhere! My aunt who lives in St. Louis, MO, was able to livestream the show and watch the performance, something she wouldn’t be able to do if the show was in-person.

Another unique component of *Sense and Sensibility* was the technical proficiency needed to make the show come to life. Instead of needing light and sound designers, this play called for video editors and cinematographers to help put the final product together. This show was a great opportunity for students interested in this line of work to get some hands-on experience. Assistant Cinematographer Mia Garcia-Cobarruvias '24 remarks, “In my future, I want to be an editor for film and television, and being able to experience editing in a more professional manner... helped me understand the discipline and effort that you have to put into your projects.” It is awesome that professional development still occurs, even in these different circumstances. This show wouldn’t have been possible without the help of our technical director, Jeremy Toy. Mr. Toy built makeshift green screens out of PVC pipes and green tablecloths, gave recommendations for how best to set up filming spaces, and helped edit our final video captures. Along with an amazing tech crew led by stage managers Juliana Marcenik '21 and Marie-Clare Erable-Rodriguez '21, this tech team helped bring the show to life onscreen. Producer Elizabeth Danielson also greatly contributed to *Sense and Sensibility* by getting the word out to the greater Sacramento community, amassing around 1,000 viewers of the show.

Of course, I can’t keep talking about *Sense and Sensibility* without recognizing the immense amount of contributions made by director Kiera Anderson. She is so dedicated to making the rehearsal process a fun learning experience, never hesitating to give cast members the confidence to make big acting choices. From the very beginning of the show, she was extremely organized and informed the cast and crew whenever a change needed to be made to the rehearsal schedule. Smaran Sreenivasan, a freshman at Rio Americano High School and part of the Players cast, notes how he enjoyed Mrs. Anderson’s attitude throughout the process: “She is always smiling and staying positive even when things don’t go as planned.” Without her energy and passion for theatre, *Sense and Sensibility* wouldn’t have been as successful as it was.

I am so grateful to have been a part of this show, and I appreciate the efforts that SF Arts has made to allow me and many others to continue performing in this tough time. I am so grateful for Mrs. Anderson and all the time she’s dedicated to helping me grow as a person and a performer, and I know that without her I wouldn’t be where I am today. *Sense and Sensibility* has shaped my perspective on what theatre can be, and I hope to create innovative theatre in the future with the knowledge that I’ve gained from this experience.

Transition to Hybrid Learning

BY CLAIRE WESTBERG '22

After seven long months of distance learning, the long awaited return to campus finally arrived. Students first heard this news about a month ago and were given the choice to go back to school or remain exclusively in distance learning. Both situations come with their own pros and cons. The extra hours of sleep, pajama pants, home-cooked lunches, and the comfort of one's own home all seem delightful; however, the opportunity to learn in person, see old friends, and meet new teachers face-to-face is hard to beat.

Concern regarding COVID-19 was aroused at the thought of returning to school. Saint Francis' administration has made it abundantly clear that the safety of their students is their top priority. The beginning of our return was kicked off with an orientation week to familiarize new safety measures. Each student that planned on coming to orientation was required to get tested for COVID-19 and download the Immunify app, which conducts a daily self-check for symptoms. This assuaged some fear that was instilled in the parents and students regarding the pandemic.

The orientation day created an interesting atmosphere. It was strange to be surrounded by the brick buildings and sounds of the Saint Clare fountain once again. The campus had been transformed: arrows were painted, dots to maintain social distancing were drawn on the ground, lockers were closed, desks were spaced out, and doors were to remain open. It was definitely a day for adjustment to new protocols--all of which were created to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff. Being back in a classroom was peculiar, especially considering the fact that students were participating in distance learning on campus. The day went smoothly and it was comforting to be surrounded by my fellow Winnies.

The following week consisted of the return to school. The red cohort's first real day back was Monday, November 2nd. This year's "first day of school" was definitely one to remember due to its curious nature. The return to campus was accompanied by a sense of nostalgia; it was bittersweet, to say the least. It was nice to have some sense of normalcy during these unprecedented times although it was nothing compared to life before March 12th--our last normal day of school, and life for that matter, before this devastating pandemic hit us like a truck.

Transitioning from fully distance learning to two days on campus has been more challenging for some than others: "I find myself feeling a lot more drained," professed Chloe Swanson. It has been proven difficult to adjust smoothly.

Although this whole transition was like entering a new dimension, the first day back was pleasant. I walked into my A Block, AP Chemistry, eager to learn. It began with a lecture, which was so satisfying to see projected on the whiteboard instead of

displayed on a dim screen surrounded by scattered school supplies in front of me.

Following Chemistry was Precalculus, which was thus followed by lunch. This was the first time students were allowed to remove their masks in order to eat. Students sat on dots, which were placed six feet apart. Smiling faces and laughter diffused across Serra Court once again but in a quieter manner considering less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the school was eating lunch together.

The day progressed and was finally completed after D Block. Despite visiting only four classes, it felt like travelling across town. It was much different to troop from Serra Court to the portables than it was to amble from my bedroom to the kitchen.

The week of November 16th is the final week of hybrid learning before returning to solely remote learning in preparation for the holidays and finals. Although hybrid learning was short-lived for the fall semester, I am grateful for having had the occasion to return to school for a few weeks. Between the weekly COVID-19 testing, enforced social distancing, mask wearing, and hand sanitizer distribution, the return to school was an admirable and safe experience. I, along with my fellow peers, appreciate all the hard work combined with the hours of preparation that went into this. We are all hopeful that in the near future we will be able to have a normal high school experience again, or at least something closer to it. For now, the planned return to campus is in January with the resumption of the hybrid learning model. Stay safe, wear a mask, and social distance. Remember, the best way to prevent the spread is you!

Volunteer Service During Distance Learning

BY MIA SULLIVAN '23

This year, gathering volunteer service hours in distance learning has been quite different compared to the past. Due to the global pandemic, modifications have been made, and Troubies are having to find new ways to meaningfully contribute to the community. For example, many students are accumulating service hours through at-home service opportunities, which greatly differs from the hands-on service with which most are familiar. Despite these changes, the same principle has been upheld: through these acts of service, Troubies stand in solidarity with those marginalized in society by offering their time, natural gifts, and experiences.

Students who decide to engage in service that is in-person have to implement certain protocols in light of COVID-19. These protocols consist of being socially distant and wearing a mask at all times. While requirements like these are essential in order to maintain a safe environment, it is still slightly disconcerting for those involved. Not being able to take a hands-on, interactive approach is something to which students are learning to adjust.

While Troubies are still able to collaborate with their peers to a certain extent, it is ultimately not the same as it was pre-pandemic; however, these adjustments do not impede the opportunities for growth of which students can take advantage. These giving moments allow Troubies to not only develop an understanding of the circumstances of those in need but also form connections with the communities and people being served.

On the other hand, there have been many at-home service options provided by the Campus Ministry department. Troubies who wish to pursue these volunteer opportunities are given simple yet heartfelt projects that they can complete from the comfort of their own homes. For instance, students were able to make Halloween notes for St. John's Program for Real Change. Troubies were able to gain service hours depending on the amount of notes made, which were then distributed to women and children in need. Similarly, many students participated in writing cards for Bags for the Brave; these cards offered solace to patients undergoing chemotherapy. In addition, there is an opportunity to produce homemade face masks for Mercy Pedalers. This program specifically caters to our brothers and sisters in Sacramento who are experiencing homelessness. Nonetheless, students can offer their service to any non-profit organization as long as it is approved by the Campus Ministry department and carried out in a direct fashion. Sophomore Kyla Escalante spoke on her experience of completing remote service hours, saying, "During Distance Learning, I'm mostly providing little gifts or pick me ups, especially for patients that are in nursing homes. I think it's important, especially as some may have no family or just a few family members. It's so uplifting to give them some love during this time." Even through remote acts of service, the compassion, warmth, and devotion Troubies have to serving their community is palpable.

Through the challenges that this year has presented, as well as the ones of the future, we must not fail to remember those who are in desperate need of our help. By offering our aid, we develop a greater understanding of the disparities that exist universally and we can take our knowledge of marginalization to form meaningful connections with others. Outside of the requirements set by the Christian Service Program, may we recognize our call to serve and actively seek to respond to the needs of creation.



An uplifting note and rosary bracelet that was offered as an at-home service opportunity. These rosaries and notes were distributed to members of the SFHS community on SF Day.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MIA SULLIVAN '23

Christmas Family Traditions

BY SOPHIA VANNUCCI '24

"The most wonderful time of the year." Truer words could not have been spoken. The Christmas season is full of joy, nostalgia, and generosity. "Christmas is the time of year for cuddling by the fire with friends and family and partaking in fun Christmas traditions" states Jacqueline Ingenito. Giving and donating have become trademarks of the days surrounding the holiday, along with street-corners full of Santas ringing bells. The coldness enhances the day, giving everything a warmer feel, and allowing you to warm up at the fireplace with a delicious cup of hot chocolate by your side. As we head toward the most magical time of the year, every family is preparing to celebrate this merry season.

"I love this holiday season because I love to make fun memories with my friends and family. Just everything about this season makes me feel bubbly inside. The lights, the smells, and not to mention, the Starbucks drinks." explains Kylee Leete.

When speaking of the culture of Christmas, food is an essential part of the celebration "Food is definitely one of the highlights of Christmas" says

BY LANA EZEANI '24

I think we can all agree that Christmas is going to be quite different this year. With COVID-19's huge impact on 2020, we could be looking at the possibility of Christmas over a computer screen and social-distanced Santa pictures. Though some of our typical Christmas traditions might have to wait until next year, there's always one thing we can count on to keep our holiday spirits high--decorations! During the holiday season, there are two types of people. Those who start decking their halls with bells and holly the day after Halloween, and those who start sporadically tossing tinsel around their house on Christmas Eve. Despite where you fall between the two, if you're celebrating Christmas, odds are you're putting up a Christmas tree. If you haven't already started scanning Pinterest for holiday decor inspiration, no need to worry! Let's check out some hot holiday decor trends for 2020.

One trend that has been going steady for a while now are frosted/white Christmas trees. A frosted Christmas tree is a great option because it brings a special something about winter to warm places. Snow! According to the National Weather Service, the last time it snowed in Sacramento was in 2009. With that being said, you probably can't expect to see any natural frost on this year's Christmas tree; however, you can settle for a beautiful, artificially snow-sprinkled tree. These trees, as mentioned earlier, can bring a winter wonderland effect to your Christmas tree and decorations. You can decorate them as you would a classic evergreen tree just with the added decoration of fresh frost over each branch and needle. Another cute Christmas tree decor option is a white tree. White trees are seemingly getting more and more popular each year. They're a versatile choice, as you don't have to worry about the colors of your ornaments clashing with your emerald tree. You can pair a variety of ornaments with a white tree. One adorable way to adorn a snow-white tree is with silver ornaments. You can use a mix of silver ornaments and deco-

Yasmin Azar "because it brings friends and family together to share funny stories and create new memories." Food is tied to tradition and memories, and many people don't realize the importance of food as a way to bring people together. "On Christmas Eve, my parents, grandmother, brother, and I have a special dinner together" Jaylyn Solano continues, "We eat our cultural Filipino food and traditional ham." Traditional cuisine is passed down from one generation to the next. It operates as an expression of cultural identity. It is no surprise then that Jacqueline and her Italian family eat their famous homemade lasagne. "My family's tradition is making a Christmas lasagna with my mom and sister. This tradition is fun but rather stressful because we are making everything from scratch."

"Christmas is special because it is celebrated differently in every family" says Kylee Leete. There's no right or wrong way to celebrate this holiday season and that is the beauty of it. From decorating your Christmas tree to making a gingerbread house, everything is special. "A fun way that my family celebrates Christmas is having a karaoke

Holiday Trends

rations which will pair well with your white tree. This will create a cool, elegant, wintery look. You could also do the same with other metallic hues. For example, gold ornament themes are very classy along with the recently raging color--rose gold. An emerging trend is vibrant, colorful ornaments and lights against the pale tree. This option makes your ornaments the star of the show. You can really treat a white tree as a blank canvas and just go crazy!

We've been spending a lot of time at home because of the pandemic and Christmas is another one of those things that will have to change because of the coronavirus outbreak. Luckily, there have been many advances in the development of a vaccine. Hooray! Hopefully, that'll put some pep in your step this quarantined-Christmas. If that doesn't do the trick, you can turn quarantined-Christmas into crafty-Christmas to ring in that seasonal spirit, especially since we'll be spending quite a bit of time in the comfort of our homes. One fun craft you can do is make a truly ugly Christmas sweater. Ugly Christmas sweaters have been "in-style" for a very long time and they're not too hard to make. I mean it is an ugly sweater after all. Just gather some Christmasy items, fabric glue, and a cozy sweater, blast your favorite Christmas music playlist, and go nuts! If you want to be exceptionally extra, you can take some festive lights or even small ornaments and add them to your ugly sweater. You don't have to worry about people staring at your hideous sweater when you take a trip to the store because this year we'll be spending lots of time at home. You can still flaunt your ugly Christmas sweater on Zoom though!

One accessory that has become quite trendy (and necessary) over 2020 is a mask. Though they might not be the most comfortable article to wear, they are helping us get closer and closer to what you might refer to as the "pre-COVID lifestyle." After getting crazily crafty with an ugly sweater, why stop there? Keep that artistic energy flowing and maybe spice up a mask. You can experiment with differ-

ent types of images and scenes on your masks like snowflakes or maybe little Christmas trees. Just take one of your reusable masks and some paint or fabric or whatever you need and make it festive! You could also purchase a wintery mask if you might be bothered by the smell of the used craft supplies.

Another Christmas craft is a DIY no-sew fleece blanket. The materials you will need are really only one or two large blanket-sized pieces of patterned fabric (fleece or any other preferred fabric type) and scissors. Just make a quick trip to your local craft store and pick out your favorite fabric patterns. (Christmas themed is 100% recommended). Get about 2 yards of each fabric pattern. Then, cut about 4-6 inch slits around the edges of both pieces of fabric, about 1 1/2 inch apart from one another. It's easiest if you cut the pieces of fabric while they are on top of each other for accuracy. While the pieces of fabric are overlapped, take one of the "fringe-segments" from each fabric sheet and tie them together using two basic knots. Repeat this with each fringe-segment and eventually, you will have a nice blanket to cozy up with this holiday season. So light up that Christmas tree, heat up some hot cocoa, grab your new comfy blanket, and turn on the 10-hour long yule log video. Happy Holidays!



DIY no-sew fleece blanket

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES

Holiday Traditions in Different Countries

BY LAUREN WITT '24

There are many widely celebrated holidays during the month of December. Each holiday has its own traditions and celebrations. Even the same holiday is celebrated differently in different countries. These holidays are based on religion, culture, and where you live.

The most celebrated, Christmas, is the one we all know best. Christmas--called "Family Day" in some places--is celebrated in over 160 countries. While Americans celebrate with Christmas trees, Santa Claus, presents, and hot cocoa, Christmas falls during Australia's summer, where it's popular to go camping or to the beach. Some Australians decorate a Christmas Bush, which is an Australian tree with small green leaves and flowers that turn red during the summer. England and the United States have similar Christmas traditions, but instead of leaving Santa cookies and milk, they leave mince pies and brandy for "Father Christmas." In Iceland, there isn't one but 13 Santas, known as the "Yule Lads." One of them comes each night of the thirteen days before Christmas, leaving small gifts in shoes and window sills.

Another well known December holiday is Hanukkah. Hanukkah, or Chanukah, is an eight-day Jewish celebration that commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, following

the Maccabean Revolt. Those that took part in the re-dedication witnessed what they believed to be a miracle. While there was just enough oil to keep the menorah's candles burning for one day, the flames continued to burn for eight nights. Hanukkah begins on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar but occurs sometime between late November and December. Celebrations revolve around lighting the menorah, and on each of the holiday's eight nights, another candle is lit on the menorah after sundown. Normally during Hanukkah blessings are recited and traditional Hanukkah foods such as potato pancakes and jam-filled donuts are made. Other Hanukkah customs include playing with dreidels and exchanging gifts.

Another popular December holiday is Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966 after the Watts riots in Los Angeles. He combined aspects of several different African harvest celebrations to form the basis of Kwanzaa. The name Kwanzaa comes from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in Swahili. Celebrations often include songs and dances, African drums, storytelling, poetry reading, and a large traditional meal.

One December holiday that is not as well known is Boxing day. Boxing Day takes place on December 26 and is only celebrated in a few countries. The holiday originated in the United Kingdom

during the Middle Ages. It was the day when the collection boxes for the poor were opened and their content distributed. It was also the day servants were traditionally given the day off to celebrate Christmas with their families. Boxing day is now a public holiday in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. In England, soccer matches and horse races often take place on Boxing Day, and the Bahamas celebrate Boxing Day with a street parade and festival called Junkanoo. The Irish call the holiday St. Stephen's Day, and they have their own tradition where boys fasten a fake wren to a pole and parade it through town.

The last December holiday is New Years Eve. New Years Eve takes place on December 31, the last day of the year. Many countries celebrate New Years Eve, but it is different in different countries. In Japan it is called Ōmisoka, and is considered the second-most important day in Japanese tradition. Families gather on Ōmisoka for one last time in the old year to have a bowl of toshikoshi-soba or toshikoshi-udon, and at midnight many visit shrines or temples for Hatsumōde. In Ecuador it is called Años Viejos, and the people burn scarecrows at midnight that are filled with paper or sawdust and modeled after a public figure who somehow wronged the world in the previous year. Canada and the United States have similar traditions, which include drinks, fireworks, live music, and overall having a great time!

Holiday Activities in Sacramento

BY BELLA SHARP '22

'Tis the season in Sacramento! There may not be snow, but there will be plenty of cheer thanks to the wide variety of activities offered. Even in this atypical year, there's still plenty to do to make it feel like a normal holiday season, no matter what holiday you'll be celebrating or whom with. The City of Trees is known for its activities that bring people together--this won't be any less true this year. We all need a bit more cheer in our lives, so this is your guide to all things festive in Sacramento!

While we may not be able to gather at the Capital to see it, Sacramento's Annual Tree Lighting is still happening! On November 25th at 6:00 PM, the Dignity Health Holiday Tree Lighting at the Old Sacramento Waterfront will be streamed live on Facebook for all to see. You can enjoy the event from the comfort of your home with your family and friends! Just throw on a fun pair of PJs, grab a cup of hot cocoa (with marshmallows), and settle in to watch the tree light up. Even if you can't make it to the streamed lighting, you can still view the tree while you're in the downtown area. Also, there will be tons of beautiful decorations set up in Old Sacramento, so a drive through town is sure to be merry!

That isn't the only place you can drive through to see Sacramento's famed holiday lights. Many neighborhoods decorate for the season, and welcome visitors who want to come by and look at the lights. You may have heard of the Fab Forties in East Sacramento, by far the most well-known of

Sacramento's festive neighborhoods. It is renowned for its impressive light displays and heartwarming decorations. Twinwood Loop in Roseville also puts up a dazzling display of lights that people from far and wide travel to see. Hop in the car with your family and take a drive, or go for a walk, socially distanced, and take in all the decorations! Be sure to put on a Christmas album, too (I'd recommend Justin Bieber or Mariah Carey)!

A great way to get out of the house in a safe and fun way would be to head to Midtown during one of the 12 Days of Christmas for a wide array of locally-hosted events! From December 1st to December 12th, Midtown Sacramento will be hosting a co-op of small businesses and organizations that will let people explore the city and take part in the small events being hosted. Enjoy holiday treats at Temple Coffee or Ginger Elizabeth Chocolates; stop by The Sofia at the B Street Theatre for a classic holiday show; or attend the Holiday Nights at Winn Night Market. This will be an exciting opportunity to kick off the holiday season with many special offers and promotions. Check out the [Midtown Association Website](#) to see the full list of events!

Midtown will also be hosting several holiday-themed farmers markets throughout November and December! These Winter Wonderland events, happening every Saturday starting on November 28th and ending on December 19th, will feature many different businesses. Stroll from booth to booth as you listen to the holiday carolers and shop for holiday gifts and essentials like hot chocolate,

ornament kits, and seasonal treats. There will be a shoe donation drive, too--the perfect opportunity to practice both giving and getting during this season of love and joy. There will even be an opportunity to take pictures with Matty the Giant Elf! Attending this cheery market is a great way to get some shopping done while at the same time experiencing the feeling of togetherness that is so essential during the holiday season.

Downtown Sacramento will surely be the center of the festivities this year. In addition to the tree lighting, there will be a variety of special events and season-long attractions that will be able to bring the community together even while we have to stay apart. Already arrived is the Waterfront Ferris Wheel in front of Rio City Cafe in Old Sacramento. This giant ferris wheel is not only an eye-catching addition to the skyline, but also it is a fun ride that provides great views of the city and fun for all those wanting to ride through the sky. With all the events that have been cancelled this year, this ride gives a sense of normalcy and can be ridden by groups in the same household. Another ongoing attraction is the Downtown Together Holiday Window Contest going on between shops in the downtown area. Put on a festive mask and grab a friend to stroll through the city and admire all the beautiful window displays that small businesses will be putting out to get people in the merry mood. A great chance to support small businesses and a wonderful way to fa-la-la your way through the city, guided by the trail of shops with festive exhibits out front.

New Year's Resolutions

BY LYDIA VLAHOS '24

As 2020 comes to an end, the hopes for the new year are beginning to enter our minds. As we all know, this last year has not been a favorite, and many once-in-a-lifetime things have happened to the world; however, where there is darkness, one can always find light. In a survey sent out to the school population about the challenges and surprising joys students have experienced this year, I noticed that many people, including myself, were able to find unexpected kindness and gratitude. We are all looking forward but remembering the past.

The survey began with the question, "What was the single best thing that happened this past year?" Some people said that they got driver's licenses or pets. A very common occurrence was making new friends, which I feel is very heartwarming. Because of the pandemic, communication has changed for everyone, but I am glad that many people have gotten closer to the people who truly care about them. Reading these responses made me so happy for these students.

The second question was, "What was the most challenging thing that happened this past year?" Of course, many of the answers were the same: they all had something to do with the COVID-19 pan-

dem. Some answers were very broad and just stated the pandemic, but others went into more detail about how it personally affected their lives. Many students had to be isolated from friends and family. Many more lost something they cared about like a sport or a school play. Others struggled with their mental health or relationships. We all found it hard to adapt our lives to a new normal.

The last question that reflected on 2020 was, "What was an unexpected joy this past year?" Because of the way the world shut down, we started being grateful for things we once took for granted. Many people took up new hobbies like painting and reading. Rachel Madden replied to the question with: "A birthday video that my brother made and gifted to me of all my friends and family saying something. I couldn't see anyone on my birthday because it was in May, so this was really nice of him to do." It is very uplifting to hear that friends and family got and are still getting closer together because of this challenging time. The kindness of Rachel's brother is inspiring.

When looking to the future the survey asked, "Do you have any short-term goals for 2021?" In a hurry to make the new year count, many people are setting themselves up for success and charting out goals so they can make the most

of the new year. Many students want to get out of the house more by doing activities, such as horseback riding and working out. Another very common theme was good grades. One response that stood out to me was about tackling poor mental health. I appreciate this acknowledgment of how many people are struggling with their mental health because of the pandemic and distance learning. When making goals for the future, you also need to look at the past, acknowledge what was hard, and observe what places need improvement.

The responses to the last question, "Any dreams for the future aka 2021?," were hopeful and heartwarming. Many answered with the wish for the pandemic to end and to be reunited with friends and family. "To keep looking on the bright side," said Samantha Rickards, and I completely agree with her. Looking forward and being hopeful for the future is the best way we can go into the new year.

To conclude, 2020 will be over soon, but focusing on the negatives won't change the fact that it happened. When reflecting positively and remembering those little moments of joy, we really start to appreciate our friends and family around us and ourselves. Whatever 2021 may bring, let the unexpected kindness and gratitude in our hearts brought to us by 2020 stay with us into the new year!

Christmas Movie Review: *Home Alone*

BY PHIFEY BOYERS '24

The movie *Home Alone* by Chris Columbus is about eight-year-old Kevin McCallister, who was accidentally left at home the morning of their family vacation. His family didn't notice he was missing until they had already boarded their flight. His mother insisted that the pilot turn the plane around, but was unsuccessful. Since it was Christmas Eve, his mother was unable to get a flight back to Chicago. While trying to find a way back, she ran into a band, who was willing to give her a ride. It took his mother three days to arrive home. This article details what Kevin did while he was home alone. *Home Alone* is a family comedy set at a house in Chicago; it came out on November 16, 1990. The lead actors in the film are Macaulay Culkin playing Kevin McCallister, Joe Pesci playing the bandit Harry Lime, and Daniel Stern playing Marv Merchants. The main themes are family, abandonment, courage, violence, and criminality.

When Kevin first realized he was home alone, he was happy to have the house to himself. He was able to gorge himself on ice cream and watch scary movies, but that didn't last long. A pair of robbers that went by the name "wet bandits" had scouted out the neighborhood looking for houses to rob. They noticed the McCallister family had gone on vacation, and intended to rob their house while they were gone. Kevin thought of an idea to stop the "wet bandits." He was going to convince them that his family was having a party. Kevin got cutouts of people and put them in various places attached to strings. He played loud music and moved the cutouts to the Christmas jingle. The wet bandits sat in their car and watched in awe. They were certain the McCal-

listers had left that morning, but since there was now doubt they went home and waited till the next day.

The next night arrived. The wet bandits were ready to rob their house. This time Kevin had a new plan. He remembered the movie he had watched earlier and decided to use the audio to scare the robbers away. As the robbers approached the house they noticed a pizza guy coming to the door, as he dropped the pizza they heard: "Keep the change, ya filthy animal!" followed by loud gunshots. The wet bandits and pizza guy ran to their cars in fear and drove off.



A scene from *Home Alone*
PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES

The wet bandits decided to try and break in one more time because they had a feeling the McCallisters had left. As the wet bandits sat in their car contemplating what happened the night before, they saw Kevin walking home from the store. Once they saw him, they put together that he was home alone. After having a good laugh, the wet bandits sneakily plotted a way in. Kevin was frightened at first, but then came up with a plan. He put broken ornaments, jacks, and grease all over the floor. He poured water down the outside steps for it to freeze and become slippery ice, and even hung a hot iron to the ceiling. Kevin put nails on the steps and a big heavy bucket from the ceiling on the second floor. Kevin also heated up the door handle so the wet ban-

dit would get burned when they opened the doors.

First, one of the wet bandits got in through the basement door, but when he went to turn on the light he was greeted with a falling iron right on his face. The second one slipped and slid on the icy steps. As he reached for his balance, he got burned with a red hot door handle. Once he got in, the door led to a trap activating the blow torch, burning his hair and head. Meanwhile, the other bandit in the basement had about enough and climbed up the stairs, not releasing there was a nail. He stepped right on it, falling back down the stairs. One of the wet bandits tried to get in from the window but stepped on shards of glass from the ornaments Kevin broke. After recovering, they finally got to the inside stairs leading to where Kevin was. As they tried to climb their way up, Kevin dropped a heavy can, whacking one of the wet bandits right in the head. They recovered once more and noticed Kevin fleeing to his treehouse on a zipline. The wet bandits tried to follow so they could get their revenge, but Kevin had a different plan. He cut the line the wet bandits were holding on to, sending them into a brick wall. Kevin called the cops to come to collect them. About three days after the robbery, Kevin's mother arrived home with a big hug and lots of apologies. The movie ended with a good Christmas for all.

I thought this movie was very interesting. I liked seeing the booby traps Kevin set up for the wet bandits. Although this movie is a PG family movie, it does show lots of violence, so you may have to be careful when watching it with children under the age of 10. Overall, I would give the movie a 5/5 because of its unique storyline and interest level. *Home Alone* got a 68% rating on Rotten Tomatoes and the audience rating summary is a 4.7/5. This movie is a Christmas MUST WATCH!

Holiday Recipe

BY AUBREY SPOWART '23

Nothing says the holidays are here like Christmas cookies, so here is one of my favorite recipes. Over the past couple of years, these hot cocoa Christmas cookies have climbed to the top of my most-loved Christmas recipe list. They're super festive and perfect for the holiday season. These are lots of fun to make and I'm certain you'll love them. Without further ado, here is my favorite Christmas cookie recipe!

Hot Cocoa Christmas Cookies:

For the cookies:

1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick)
12 oz semi-sweet chocolate
1 1/2 cups flour
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 1/4 cups brown sugar
3 eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
25 large marshmallows (approximately)

For the icing:

2 cups powdered sugar
4 tablespoons unsalted butter 1/2 stick, melted
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/4 cup hot water
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
green and red assorted sprinkles

Make the cookies:

1. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter and chocolate, stirring frequently. Once melted, set aside to cool slightly.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt.
3. In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the sugar, eggs and vanilla on low speed until well combined.
4. Add the cooled chocolate mixture and blend until just combined.
5. While mixing, add the flour mixture slowly and blend until just combined.
6. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, then cover the dough and refrigerate at least 1 hour. The dough should be firm. If making the dough a day ahead, let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before shaping.
7. Preheat oven to 325°F. and line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper or a silpat type liner. Use a tablespoon (or a tablespoon sized cookie scoop) to scoop the dough, then roll the dough in your hands to create balls. Arrange the balls about 2 inches apart on your baking sheets, then flatten slightly.
8. Bake the cookies for about 12 minutes.
9. While the cookies bake, cut the large marshmallows in half (crosswise). When the cookies have baked, remove from the oven and press one marshmallow half (cut side down) into the center of each cookie.
10. Return the cookies to the oven and bake another 2-3 minutes. Allow the pan of cookies to cool a few minutes, then transfer cookies to the cooling rack.

Prepare cookie icing:

1. Prepare cookie icing by combining all ingredients in a medium bowl and mixing together with a whisk.
2. Put the icing in the microwave for about 30 seconds.
3. Place a wire cooling rack (with cookies on it) over a baking sheet (to catch any excess icing). Spoon a small amount of icing onto the top of each marshmallow, and use the back of the spoon to spread it a bit. After icing just a couple cookies, top with sprinkles before the icing dries.
4. Allow icing to set up about 30 minutes before serving.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GLORIOUS TREATS



PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES

On behalf of the entire Mandolin staff, we wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season!