

EDITORS COLUMN

Resembling Our Nation



Jeremiah Chun
Grade 11
West Ranch High School



Jeremiah Chun from CA25 explaining his app College Major Recommender in the Capitol Building [Source: congressionalappchallenge.us]

It's common knowledge that America's capital is Washington, DC, but most people have no idea what to really expect from the nation's capital. For example, many assume that the White House and the Capitol Building are the same building. I personally fell victim to this misconception, as I did not have the greatest understanding of DC. But after my trip to visit the city, I was enlightened by all of the beautiful landmarks and how it is amazing in terms of tourism and reflects the entirety of the United States through its various attractions.

I was able to travel to Washington, DC, because of the Congressional App Challenge, a regional award I won in the Fall of 2022. I was selected as the winner for District CA-25, represented by Congressman Mike Garcia, for creating a website that recommends college majors based on a user's academic strengths and interests. As a result, I was flown to the Capitol to present my app more extensively to a diverse audience of parents, educators, and professional workers in the STEM field, as well as Members of Congress. During my time there, I was able to view the Capitol comprehensively, particularly

where meetings are hosted by the Senate and House of Representatives. The Capitol was truly magnificent, embellished with all kinds of sculptures of famous political figures, paintings, and other pieces of art. The overall architecture of the building was beautiful as well, featuring tall columns and domed roofs based on ancient Greek and Roman designs.

After the events of the Congressional App Challenge, I toured other parts of metropolitan DC, first visiting the memorials that line the area, known as the National Mall. Most famous among these monuments is the tallest stone structure in the world, the Washington Monument, dedicated to President George Washington. There is also the famous Lincoln Memorial, Thomas Jefferson Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was built out of shiny black granite and engraved with the names of approximately 58,000 soldiers who were declared missing or dead over the two decades of that Cold War conflict.

Perhaps the most notable portion of the trip included the vari-

ous museums located all around Washington, DC. Among the most famous was the Smithsonian Natural History Museum, which features and preserves some of the world's most extensive collections of artifacts and organisms, dating back to prehistory. This can range from fossils of ancient dinosaurs to glistening and beautiful jewelry, even featuring the well-known Hope Diamond. My personal favorite museums were the National Portrait Gallery and Smithsonian American Art Museum. These collections are connected to each other in one building, and they featured, possibly, the most creative and innovative art I have ever seen in my life. There are American pieces of artwork that cover all kinds of topics, and it was truly captivating to see how magnificent and elegant pieces of art can really be.

Washington, DC, was a truly new experience compared to other places that I've traveled to before. This trip made me realize the true purpose of our nation's capital, which is to appreciate the revolutionary accomplishments that our country has achieved since its relatively new foundation.

Student Reporter

The HEMA Foundations Visits The Children's Hospital in Vietnam



Sungeun Yoon
Grade 9
Saigon South
International School

HEMA Future Foundation is a group of people who prioritize helping leukemic children and their families in Vietnam. They are committed to providing financial support, follow-up educational support, and informational resources for those in need.

Childhood leukemia, the most common type of cancer in children and teens, is a cancer of the white blood cells. In leukemia patients, abnormal white blood cells form in the bone marrow. They quickly travel through the bloodstream and crowd out healthy cells. This raises the body's chances of infection and other problems. Common signs of childhood leukemia include exhaustion and weakness, easy bruising or bleeding, and frequent or long-term infections.

On April 9th, The HEMA Fu-



Leukemic children at the Children's Hospital 2 located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, coloring and learning origami from the HEMA Future Foundation.

ture Foundation had the opportunity to visit the children's hospital, Children's Hospital 2 (Bệnh viện nhi đồng 2). Children's Hospital 2 is one of Ho Chi Minh City's old-

est hospitals, dating back over 150 years. Children's Hospital 2 was a French military hospital during the colonial period. Following Vietnam's reunion in 1978, the hospital was designated as a pediatric hospital.

From 4 to 6 pm, the HEMA Future Foundation socialized with the leukemic children by teaching them origami, drawing, and matching jigsaw puzzles.

When the HEMA Foundation arrived at the children's hospital, they were able to look around and say hello to the children staying at the hospital. When they arrived in the children's classrooms, they set up origami paper, drawing kits, and jigsaw puzzles; the classroom was extremely small. The group first swiped off all the dust, mopped the floor, and set up all the tables and chairs for the children to sit on. There were six people

from the foundations that attended, 2 of which were not Vietnamese, which led to difficulties communicating with the children at the hospital. However, all six visitors had fun getting to know more about the children and hanging out with them.

The HEMA Future Foundation is planning to visit the children's hospital frequently, helping them explore more activities. Additionally, YOU have the power to support the HEMA Future Foundations and cheer up the patients with leukemia as well as the dedicated staff. The HEMA Future Foundations urge you to lend a hand, even if it is just a small gesture of kindness. Therefore, you can show your gratitude and goodwill by buying or donating books at @inkdrinker.book (for English books) and @inkdrinker.viet (for Vietnamese books).

Student Reporter

Journey at Student Television Network



Minseo Kwon
Grade 10
Portola High School

From March 16-19, the Student Television Network, STN, hosted its annual film and broadcast convention. Hundreds of schools from all over the nation were invited to this event. Held at the Long Beach Convention Center, in California, thousands of students participated in the numerous competitions that STN had prepared. From music videos to human interest features, students had the chance to become creative storytellers and produce their best work, all while in a learning and supportive environment.

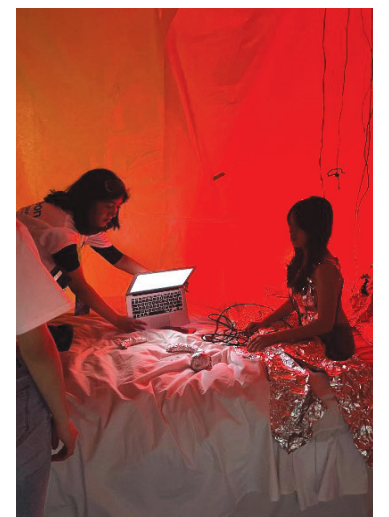
The first day of the convention consisted of the Crazy 8's competition, where schools had just 8 hours to produce, film, and edit a show or film. Based on a given prompt, students had to quickly decide the overall flow of their segment, as well as the visual aspects. Later in

the evening, everyone participating at STN gathered together in the convention center for the opening ceremonies. The executive directors, who planned the entire convention, welcomed all students and advisors and got everyone excited for the rest of the weekend.

Over the next two days, students grouped together to compete in various categories. Pro sessions and workshops were also held by instructors to help students learn by immersively engaging themselves. Personally, it was my first time attending the STN Convention, and I decided to compete in the public service announcement category. As we only had six hours to record and edit our video, we worked efficiently upon receiving our prompt. There was no time to spare, and after quickly deciding

on a story, our group raced to create the set design. Everyone had a crucial role in completing the piece on time. While one person worked on graphics, another person acted as the director to plan out shots with the cinematographer. Although hectic at times, it was overall full of fun and learning.

On the final day of the convention, all schools gathered once again at the Long Beach Convention Center for the closing ceremony. Chosen speakers presented awards to the top 5 teams in each category. Everyone cheered for their friends and classmates who won an award and celebrated their successes. My team was really excited to find out that we had won second place for PSA. Overall, the trip to STN was a memorable one that I will never forget. Through



Students of Portola High School create their set in the hotel room using wires and tin foil to compete in the PSA category. [Source: Author, Minseo Kwon]

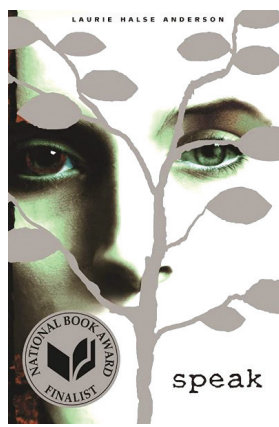
this experience, I have grown as a producer and writer, and made meaningful unforgettable connections with others.

Student Reporter



Joy Park
Grade 8
Thomas Starr King
Middle School

Banning Books, Good or Bad?



Speak is an amazing book, although some feel it should be banned due to its controversial language and topics. [Source: Author, Joy Park]

It is definitely the job of school committee members, teachers, the student board, librarians, and even parents to filter out inappropriate materials from being exposed to underage students and young children. One specific way this is possible is by banning books.

There is a long history of book banning, with the first book ever to be banned in the United States being written by Thomas Morton. It was banned by the Puritan government because the book was supposedly harsh against the Puritan customs and structure of government. Al-

though some may disagree with many banning of books, it is important to take into consideration the reasons for it. The book may be unsuitable for any age group, including explicit and/or offensive language, sexually explicit, racist, violent, critiquing against the government, LG-BTQ+, and/or it might have a certain religious viewpoint. The main reason for censoring books, especially in schools, is to protect the students from being exposed to such harsh material. However, there are times when there are some ridiculous reasons for banning books.

An example of this is *Speak*, by Laurie Halse Anderson. I have personal experience with reading this book; in fact, I read this very book in my English classroom. My teacher didn't focus on the things that might've triggered some, but instead on the important lesson within the book. This might come across as good or bad, considerate or inconsiderate; it depends on who you ask. If you ask a librarian, they might say that despite the subtle sexual scenes and strong language, the book teaches a vital lesson for teens, especially at this age, because the story circles around a young teenage girl

in middle school. However, if you look through the eyes of a parent, you might hear a different story. A parent might say that they don't want their child to be exposed to such a harsh world and that they want to protect their child from reading such vulgar language. Depending on who you ask, *Speak* is either appropriate or inappropriate.

When *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson was challenged, it was done by an associate professor of management at Missouri State University, Wesley Scroggins. It was banned in 2012 because the Scroggins claimed that the rape scenes in the book were considered "soft pornography" and shouldn't be used to teach in a classroom. Once again, in 2013, in Sarasota, Florida, a group of parents decided to challenge the book after becoming aware of this scene. They claimed that it was "pornographic" and included obscene language, glorified drinking, "encouraged" premarital sex, and taught principles against the Bible.

In the book *Speak*, the main character is a 13 - 14-year-old girl who was raped by a boy at her school. She doesn't tell anyone and suffers at

school and at home; she has suicidal thoughts, attempts suicide, swears, has flashbacks of the day, and acts out. However, this isn't what the book is about. The book is about a broken girl learning how to live and heal. She's been through so much and is broken, yet with the help of friends, art, and someone who listens, she can bloom back into life. I know that my teacher chose this specific book because she wanted to teach us that what was important wasn't the fact that the book said bad words and had sex scenes, but that we were learning about the author's voice, how Anderson used motifs and similes to express that sarcastic teenage dialogue.

Banning books can be done for many different reasons. It isn't wrong, and it isn't right, because there are times when there are books that don't fit any age group and may actually encourage bad things, but there are also books that carry deep, moving messages. Teachers, librarians, parents, the school, the government, the public... we all want to protect and be protected from harsh things. Look a little deeper to see what you have subconsciously "banned" in your life and look at it from a different perspective.

Student Reporter



Seoyoon Kim
Grade 7
South Lake Middle School

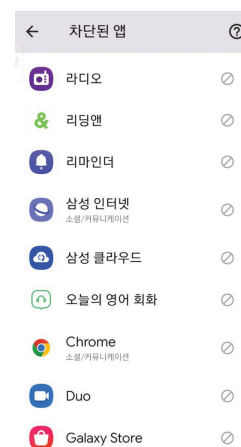
Family Link Is Watching Your Phone 24/7

How many hours do you use your phone each day? If you actually see your screen time, you might stop overusing your phone or SNS. Some parents use apps to control their children's phones. One famous app is Google Family Link, a parental controls service by Google that allows parents to adjust parameters for their children's devices. However, some voices believe the program is invasive.

One of the main reasons why Family Link can be seen this way is that it gives parents access to a wealth of personal information about their children. The app allows parents to see their child's internet search history, search queries, location data, and app usage. This level of monitoring can be alarming for

children, making them feel like they have no privacy, especially as they age and start to develop a sense of independence. Imagine your parents knowing everything about you, what kind of webtoons you watch, what you talk about with your friends, or even some things you don't want to share with anyone else. I'm sure not many people would be happy or feel okay with this.

Another concern is that Family Link can be used to restrict and control the apps and services that children can access on their devices. While this can help ensure that children are not accessing inappropriate content, it can also be seen as excessively restrictive and can limit communication with their peers. As children grow, it is obvious that



Family Link can allow parents to control and restrict the apps their children can or cannot use. [Source: Author, Seoyoon Kim]

they want more access to the internet and SNS, because they want to follow the trend of the world going digital. In my experience, I used

to be a part of the Student Guidance Club, and I could not participate well because the club sent out schedules by KakaoTalk. My parents wouldn't let me download the app at that time, and consequently, it was inevitable that I would miss some of the critical meetings and schedules of the club.

While Family Link may help ensure children's safety online, it is important to notice that these kinds of control apps can invade the privacy of children. Additionally, it is important for companies like Google to be transparent about how they are using the data collected through Family Link and to ensure that it is being used responsibly and ethically, without any personal information extrusion.

Student Reporter



Angel Song
Grade 8
Walter Reed Middle School

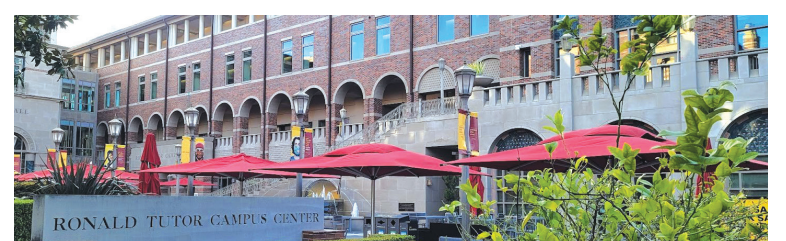
Honorable Chair and Fellow Delegates...

A large group of middle school students in smart business suits enter a spacious lecture room at USC. Everyone sits and sets out their neatly folded placards in front of them. The Chair then bangs the gavel on the desk, and the committee session successfully begins. Model United Nations (MUN) is a popular extracurricular activity for high school students, but is less known for middle school students. Unlike what many think, this competition of persuasion and intellectual ability is difficult.

MUN is quite simple once you get the hang of it. First, students are each assigned a certain country. Sometimes, you can be given a character instead of a country if you are in a crisis committee. During the conference, students are to adopt their character's persona, or "role play," as the delegate of the country they are given. Participating students are expected to dress formally and be ready to debate on two topics. However, novice committees, usually for middle schoolers or beginners, may sometimes have only one. Topics depend heavily on the committee you are in. Committees are usually related to the United Nations or a global organization that

strives to provide better resources for people. These committees, including UNEP, ILO, and WMO, are called General Assemblies. Topics vary by conference, especially crisis committees, where each conference provides various scenarios for one group of students. For most committees, the issues they debate on can range from analyzing the possible solutions, to global warming, to discussing individual survival as a YouTube board of directors member.

As someone who has tried out both MUN as well as speech and debate, MUN conferences can be similar to some aspects of the latter, such as decking out in formal attire and researching beforehand on given topics to give effective speeches. Its moderated caucuses, which are sessions dedicated to speeches about a certain subtopic related to the general topic, are very similar to individual speeches in speech events such as Congress. However, MUN may require more effort than speech and debate events before the conference, such as position papers for most committees. Although most crisis committees do not require them, those that debate on actual global problems require one. A



The Ronald Tutor Campus Center, where the closing ceremony for SCMUN was held [Source: Author, Angel Song]

position paper details the "position" of the delegate regarding the topic. As a delegate who was part of the United Nations Environmental Programme, my mission was to write a striking position paper on the viability of renewable energy. With enough research, I could write one and bring it to the conference for reference during the committee sessions.

During the pandemic, MUN conferences were forced to take place on Zoom. However, as the pandemic slowly started to improve, more conferences began to take place in person, including the recent SCMUN held at USC. In-person conferences are far more effective than Zoom conferences, where a delegate's valuable opinion can easily be buried under others with better audio systems or better internet connectivity. One crucial part of con-

ferences includes passing notes during sessions. At first sight, these notes may seem rude, but they help form alliances with other delegates with similar ideas. These alliances come in handy when writing resolutions to the problem, where multiple delegates must gather and reach a consensus. It's really different from sending private messages in Zoom chat to handwritten notes on Post-Its.

Although the MUN community was subdued for a few years because of the pandemic, it is slowly coming to the surface with some in-person conferences this year. MUN is a fun, interesting extracurricular activity that enables students to widen their perspectives on global issues while enjoying fun debates with their peers about a particular matter.