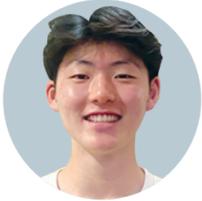


Editors Column

Taiko Drumming at Los Alamitos High School!



Sean Kim
Grade 12
Los Alamitos High School

This January, Taiko drumming returned to Los Alamitos High School in partnership with Asian Culture. After a fantastic display in 2023, performers from Seishun Taiko, Orange County's Intercollegiate Taiko Group, had high expectations to meet. Further adding to the pressure, they would need to perform in front of a much larger audience composed of students and school administrators!

However, the group did not disappoint in the slightest. As the drummers hit large taiko with wooden mallets, booms reverberated through the campus, the sound drowning out the usual low buzz of lunch conversation. The performance became the center of attention in the bustling lunch atmosphere. Sitting atop the main stairs, directly facing the drums, I watched in awe as the performers twisted and leaped with the rhythm. Launching their wooden sticks into the air, the



An incredible Taiko drumming performance during lunch at Los Alamitos High School!
[Source: Author, Sean Kim]

drummers swiftly exchanged places, just fast enough to expertly catch the falling drumsticks. With each throw allowing for less margin for error, I was fully entranced into the act before me, wrapped in suspense as the performers' movements grew increasingly rapid. It was absolutely amazing.

As the act continued, I found myself wondering how long it must have taken to present such an incredible performance. Such

complex choreography must have taken months to perfect fully. I was reminded of my days competing for the track team. Every day I tried my absolute best to get faster. I studied my form, trained at home after practice, and even double-knotted my shoes before each race! In the end, I achieved my goal of running varsity track. Watching the taiko performance, it was clear the countless hours spent in the practice room had most definitely paid off. The end result was truly worth it.

After the performance, I learned the origins of taiko drumming in Japanese history. Originally intended to ward off crop pests and drive away evil spirits, the drums' loud vibrations would symbolize the booming claps of the thunder, the ensuing rainfall cleansing the earth. During the harvest season, drummers would celebrate with these, performing their gratitude for the crop yield.

Thanks to Seishun Taiko, Los Alamitos students spent their lunch enjoying a wonderful, free-of-charge performance from a group of expertly trained, disciplined drummers. I think everyone would agree the event was well worth the time---watching the drummers perform proved to be an invaluable way to learn more about a popular Japanese art form. Hopefully, the drum booms will return next year to bring more excitement to Los Alamitos High School!

Student Reporter

A Light of Hope on a Pathway of Hardships



Summer Park
Grade 9
Harvard-Westlake School

According to the World Bank's Business and Law report in 2022, women continue to face discrimination and legal barriers that prevent them from achieving their full economic potential. Furthermore, women face some form of job restriction in 86 countries, and 95 countries do not guarantee equal pay for the same quality and amount of labor. Women across the world have continued to fight for their rights, and although there has been much progress here in the U.S., many other countries continue to face challenges. Afghanistan, located in Southern Asia, has extreme laws, providing limited freedom to participate in society. In particular, women in Afghanistan have very limited educational opportunities, and one influential woman, Shabana Basik-Rasikh, is fighting for justice and hope for future girls.

There are many prominent female Afghan activists and speakers who fight for their lives as well



Shabana Basik-Rasikh dedicates her life to Afghan girls' access to education.
[Source: Harvard-Westlake Instagram]

as for the lives of other women. Fortunately for me and my classmates, we had the privilege of having one of these prominent activists, Shabana Basik-Rasikh, speak at our school assembly. Basik-Rasikh has been and continues to be on a long journey to help Afghan girls receive an education. Additionally, Shabana is an accomplished woman who has won various awards for her actions and speeches.

During her presentation to students and faculty members at Harvard-Westlake, she shared a few of her personal experiences. When Shabana was six years old, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. The Taliban haphazardly instituted many unjust laws, including one banning girls' education. Growing up under the Taliban Regime, Shabana and her family were exposed to many dangers. Despite the potential risk of verbal or physical abuse for females leaving their homes to go to school, Shabana secretly disguised herself as a male student, as she was desperate for an education.

Driven by the thought of not wanting girls to have to attend school in disguise every day, Basik-Rasikh, with some support, founded a boarding school for Afghan girls in Kabul called the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA) in 2016. For Afghan families, the founding of the school generated hope that their

daughters would be allowed to receive an education. Unfortunately, a few years after its establishment, the school ended during the summer of 2021 because the Taliban returned to power.

Currently, Afghanistan is the only country where the education of girls is prohibited after sixth grade. This motivated Shabana to get this information out to the rest of the world. Shabana informed people through her Ted Talks, her writings on The Washington Post's Global Opinions page, and other channels. In addition to all of these great accomplishments over the past few years, Shabana was awarded the Rolex National Geographic Explorer of the Year by the National Geographic Society in 2023. Today, Shabana continues her talks around the world. Although SOLA has relocated to Rwanda as a boarding school with the same mission of educating future Afghan female leaders, Shabana hopes to return SOLA to Afghanistan in the future.

Student Reporter

Suits and Trophies: The Realm of Speech



Erin Ryu
Grade 10
Harvard-Westlake School

Imagine seeing a student in a neon pink suit excitedly talking to a wall. Despite what may seem strange and slightly concerning to many people, numerous speech students find themselves in this situation on a regular basis. The world of speech: a realm of sharply dressed students constantly rehearsing and perfecting their delivery and arguments. Recently, I attended a league tournament, the January WBFL tournament, with my school's speech team at the Windward School, which resulted in a successful turnout, with every student receiving an award.

League tournaments consist of students competing from schools located in specific areas. For example, my school is part of the WBFL, or Western Bay Forensics League, which includes the schools in the west county of Los Angeles. Speech events are typically sorted into two categories: platform events and interpretive

events. Platform events, which are original and student-written, can be advocating for policies, utilizing visual aids, or consisting of limited preparation. On the other hand, interpretive events are theatrical and may be humorous, dramatic, or performed as a duo. This year, I am in the Informative Speaking (Info) category, consisting of a speech about one topic, several visual aids, and optional props. An informative speech generally starts with the history or origin of the topic of choice, its importance in the world, and its societal implications.

A typical speech tournament will split events into different time schedules: Pattern A and Pattern B. Every league tournament has three rounds, with four to seven students in each classroom. Because Info competes in Pattern A, I arrived at Windward School at around eight in the morning.



Speakers at the January WBFL Speech and Debate tournament were awarded after three rounds of competition.
[Source: Author, Erin Ryu]

As my first round started at nine, I had plenty of time to release my nerves and rehearse in front of a brick wall. The rest of the day went smoothly, with my teammates completing homework or having fun chatting and eating with each other. During rounds, I gave my speech about the concept of memory and watched various of my competitors' speeches, including those on the ideas of propaganda, motivation, and superstitions. At the end of the day, we received commendations and awards for all of our hard work.

Although it has only been a year since I began speech, I have grown so much as a person through the variety of people I have met. The chance for youth to express their views on current topics, and even just their opinions, is essential. The opportunity to speak in public gives students a sense of freedom they might not otherwise have access to. Although this ordinary tournament only took up a tiny part of my speech career, I believe the bonds and memories I strengthened will remain with me for a lifetime.

Student Reporter

A+ Habits for a Thriving School Experience



Erin Lee
Grade 9
Granada Hills Charter High School



Creating a to-do list is the key to organization in school!
[Source: Author, Erin Lee]

For many students, a month has passed since the Spring semester began, aligning with the start of the New Year. Success in school is not solely about homework and studying; it's also about developing new skills and habits along the way. It is a time for a

shift in both mindset and daily actions. In order to have a great and productive year and finish the school year off strong, encouraging healthy school habits is the key to guiding students toward academic and personal success.

A good night's sleep is like a secret weapon that will unlock a student's full potential for the rest of the day. The amount of sleep one gets determines how much motivation and effort he or she will have for schoolwork. Going to school fully rested enhances concentration and improves memory, making it easier for the brain to understand and learn new information. It is crucial to establish a regular sleep schedule and stick to it to make this happen. Aim to go to sleep no later than 11 PM.

Instead of cramming information before tests and pulling all-nighters, a habit of regularly reviewing material learned each day can be extremely beneficial in the long run. Constant reviewing of material not only strengthens one's understanding but also makes it easier to study for an upcoming test on that subject. This could be reviewing notes or writing a summary of what was learned that day. Speaking of notes, having notes for each class is important to understand the material better. Developing a system of note-taking that works best for you is important to practice that habit consistently. Whether it's digital or handwritten, the act of putting pen to paper can make a big difference.

Balancing school and personal

life may be challenging, as time is a precious resource. Therefore, creating a schedule that includes specific times for studying, assignments, sports, extracurricular activities, and recharging can help students tackle their chaotic school life while keeping calm in their personal lives as well. Additionally, keeping a separate planner to prioritize tasks and set realistic goals during the school week can keep everything organized.

Incorporating these simple A+ habits into daily life will not only enhance students' academic success but also help create a foundation for a productive and peaceful school experience. Despite the challenges that school may bring, maintaining these healthy, consistent habits can lessen the stress and contribute to a better version of life!

Student Reporter

Wrapped in Controversy: Trader Joe's Korean Kimbap



Chloe Kim
Grade 9
La Canada High School

The Trader Joe's Korean Kimbap is a new sensation that has been taking the internet by storm, with thousands of reviews being posted on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and more. As Trader Joe's continues to create foods representing international cuisines from various cultures, it raises the question regarding the items' supposed authenticity.

Kimbap is an extremely popular traditional dish loved by Koreans for its unique combinations of flavors as well as its convenience; essentially a roll wrapped with seaweed (kim) and rice (bap), they can contain various fillings including meat (tuna, bulgogi, ham), spinach, eggs, carrots, pickled radish, and others. Many families tend to buy kimbap from various Korean markets and also Korean restaurants.

After seeing highly rated reviews of the kimbap all over social media, I knew I had to try it. Therefore, my family and I tried our best to search for it, going through all



The kimbap at Trader Joe's has tons of social media hype, but is it really all they make it out to be?
[Source: Author, Chloe Kim]

of the Trader Joe's in the area. To our dismay, the kimbap was sold out everywhere and took months to restock. However, after waiting several months, we finally found it at a local store.

The kimbap is frozen and microwavable, making it a convenient snack to take on the go. In order to prepare the kimbap, you simply have to microwave it for just around two minutes. For \$3.99, there are 12 cut rolls of the

kimbap, each with "Korean tofu and vegetable seaweed" inside for the filling.

However, upon trying the dish, I felt as though something was off – it didn't taste like the authentic kimbap I always enjoyed from our typical Korean markets. Although it was impossible to expect a restaurant-quality kimbap from a frozen dish that only had to be reheated, the Trader Joe's version simply tasted like a failed attempt

at recreating a staple food. On the other hand, many of the reviews from Koreans I read and watched on the internet seemed to be ambivalent about the dish. While many non-Koreans couldn't believe the delicious food they were tasting, on the contrary, a majority of Koreans thought social media simply overhyped the kimbap.

I found the extensive impacts of social media to be remarkable since what used to be a food many Koreans formerly were bullied for bringing for lunch at school due to cultural discrimination suddenly became viral and sold out at Trader Joe's stores nationwide. Our current society has shifted so much from a world of judgment to a place where people can now share cuisine from their own cultures internationally. As a result, although I think the Trader Joe's kimbap, in itself, is simply overhyped and not as authentic as it is said to be, I do value the effects that these foods have on us, as people, slowly working towards unifying our ever so disconnected world.

Student Reporter

The Effects Of Online Food Ordering And Delivery Platforms



James Lim
Grade 11
Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet High School

Convenient, time-saving, and multifarious—ordering food online is the new gold standard. Third-party delivery has been around since 1995. However, it wasn't until 2018 that such services began to gain real traction, with 2021 being the year where it experienced the sharpest growth. Modern third-party delivery companies such as Postmates and Uber Eats have made it evermore accessible to bring our favorite restaurants into the comfort of our living rooms. But what are the results of these recent dining tendencies?

Carie Jung, an employee at Seoul Pho, states, "On average, 10% of our orders are placed online, and 90% are mostly in-person orders." Mad Mobile also states, "Online food ordering has grown 300% faster than dine-in since 2014 and now accounts for roughly 40% of total

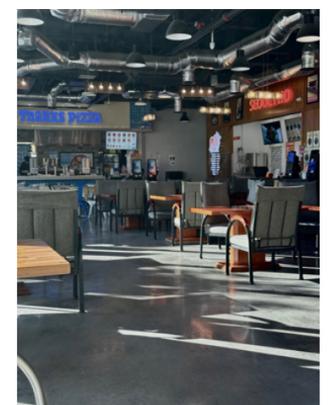
restaurant sales." This suggests that a significant number of orders are directed online, and this trend will only increase with time.

The influx of online delivery customers means additional profits for local businesses and fewer people dining in. When asking Hannah Lim, a Korea Town resident and frequent user of Uber Eats, why she prefers ordering through an online platform, she explained, "I have a dog with separation anxiety and a family member who uses a wheelchair, which dwindles my options when it comes to eating out. Ordering online also mitigates the need to prepare a meal when I have little time. Their site is also super user-friendly, and customer service is efficient."

For the same reason, the num-

ber of in-person customers at restaurants is receding. As a result of the ease of delivering food, customers who once dined in are turning to online ordering. When visiting California Market's food court on Friday, January 5, 2024, around noon, it was nearly free of customers. However, this was far from five years prior when finding a seat inside and out on the patio was hard to do. Coincidentally, a majority of the businesses situated in the food court now offer extra-neous delivery services through companies like Grubhub, Postmates, and Uber Eats.

In essence, third-party delivery services are beneficial to local businesses but even more so for the consumer. These platforms facilitate a space that offers customers ease of use and great comfort when searching for easy yet enjoyable



The California Market food court used to be packed with people, but now, due to food delivery, these dishes can be brought to the comfort of one's home.
[Source: Author, James Lim]

meals. It also serves as a means of extra profits for participating local businesses, as these services allow additional orders to be placed. It offers a seamless process that satisfies both ends of its users—customers and local businesses.