

Editors Column

Stacks of Joy: Torrance Teens Serve Up Talent



Alexis Choi
Grade 11
South High School



The 25th Annual Pancake Breakfast, held at the ATTIC Teen Center in Torrance, was a huge success!
[Source: Author, Alexis Choi]

On Saturday, April 13, Torrance residents gathered at the ATTIC Teen Center for a morning of pancakes and entertainment during the 25th Annual Pancake Breakfast. This cherished community event, held bright and early on a cool Saturday morning, brought together neighbors, families, and friends to support the ATTIC Teen Center while celebrating the immense talent of local middle and high school teens.

The ATTIC Teen Center is a city facility located near Torrance High School, meant for students looking to escape from their everyday lives and spend time—typically after school—in an environment committed to responding to their voices and needs. With the help of the AAC and other organizations, the ATTIC holds various events and programs throughout the year for the youth of Torrance to relieve stress, meet others within the community, and learn something new. Larger events like the Pancake Breakfast are held for the enjoyment of all Torrance citizens. They have proven to be highly effective in bringing together various members of the community within a warm, entertaining, and delicious experience.

Though the event officially began at 7 A.M., the ATTIC Teen Center staff and student-run commissions, like the ATTIC Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Torrance Youth Council (TYC), arrived much earlier to prepare for the busy morning ahead. The theme for the 2024 Pancake

Breakfast was a retro diner, and the large, empty room of the ATTIC Teen Center, typically used to hold meetings, was transformed into an '80s restaurant with dozens of large round tables with charming jukebox centerpieces, colorful balloons, and a vibrant backdrop. Smooth jazz flowed from the speakers, and the smell of pancakes and syrup, cooked in the teen center's cafe, permeated the room.

At 7 A.M., guests began arriving; exchanging a ticket in return for a set of utensils and their plate of pancakes, they migrated into the main decorated area where students were providing entertainment at the front stage. The acts, ranging from moving poetry recitals and energetic dance routines to rock band and high school jazz band performances, kept the room alive and engaged until the end of the event at around 11:30 A.M.

The Pancake Breakfast served as a dual-purpose event—raising funds vital for the ATTIC Teen Center's programs and services

while fostering a sense of community among Torrance residents. Throughout the morning and in between acts, there were several rounds of silent auctions sponsored by local businesses. The funds raised will go towards maintaining the facility and supporting the activities and services offered throughout the year.

This month's event was the second Pancake Breakfast held since COVID-19 and was even more successful than the one in 2023. The turnout was high, with a steady stream of guests throughout the entire event and no noticeable pockets of dwindling audiences. Every performer pulled off their routine without mistakes, and the community displayed intense support and enthusiasm for each act.

For those who happened to miss this year's festivities, make sure to mark your calendars for next year's event—you won't want to miss out on the pancakes, talent, and, most importantly, the sense of unity that defines this beloved community tradition.

Student Reporter

Step into Eternity: A Dance Journey Through Infinity



Summer Park
Grade 9
Harvard-Westlake School



Interdependence, Dance About the Infinite Human Connection.
[Source: Author, Summer Park]



Dance Production Brings Concepts of Infinity to Life.
[Source: Author, Summer Park]

Dancers quickly set up for various positions on stage. All are nervously waiting for their big musical performance. Hours of rehearsals, lots of sweat and sacrifice all culminate in a great show. From the moment when our teacher announced, "This year's theme for the showcase ... " the exhilaration of all the students filled up the room. Everyone's hearts were racing so fast, with no one able to focus on anything except for the theme: "... is infinity."

What does infinity mean to me? Why is it a worthwhile topic to pay attention to? Unlike traditional dance programs solely focused on techniques, the dance program at my school encourages young dancers to be deeply engrossed in

movements that incorporate intimate storytelling.

Throughout my life, I have been exposed to many different dance genres and styles. However, ballet is the type of dance I have done most throughout my dance journey. I have always loved ballet and have been infatuated with the different challenging aspects of the genre. What has captivated me most about it is the classical dance choreography aspect. I have always been fixated on making sure that every movement is exact and precise, just like that of professional ballet dancers.

Many people wonder about the important drivers of a great dance showcase. There is no simple answer,

but an important factor I've discovered is journaling. Believe it or not, journaling your inner thoughts or ideas in a notebook just focused on dance is very helpful. At the beginning of the year, when my dance teacher announced to the class that we would all need journals, I was skeptical of this idea. I mean, we are talking about dancing, not writing, right?! Never in my life have I fused journaling with dance. But, I decided not to push back on this concept, and boy, am I glad I didn't.

Throughout this 4 month journey in this class, journaling in my dance notebook became an integral component to the creative dance process. I was able to freely

express all of my experiences, both the highs and lows, into my writing. And I've channeled a lot of these emotions and experiences into my dancing. Not only have I discovered unique and different movements for my choreography, but I have correlated all my dance movements with the joys and hardships I face in my daily life. Furthermore, before creating new movements, I take a few minutes to have a writing session with my dance notebook. The dance notebook is like a friend who is all ears to my inner emotions and thoughts. Before I write, I ask myself, why I am creating this particular dance and what part of my story do I want to convey. I've choreographed dances that display the ups of my life as well as dances that speak to my lows. Compared to prior years, the creative process of dance choreography via journaling has left a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction as a budding dance choreographer. And the ultimate culmination of all this is the final show created through a collaborative creative effort: this year's Dance Production Infinity Showcase.

Student Reporter

Nothing to Do? Plant a Tree!



Ian Lee
Grade 10
Van Nuys High School

Fruits and vegetables are a major part of our diets, and we rely on them for our nutrition, vitamins, and health. However, have you ever thought about the process in order to get these delicious fruits? If you have some free time, consider planting a tree. It's quick and easy, and would have you efficiently spending your time. I recently got a peach tree, but I never thought taking care of it would be so intricate. There are so many things to do, such as pruning, watering, and weeding, just to name a few.

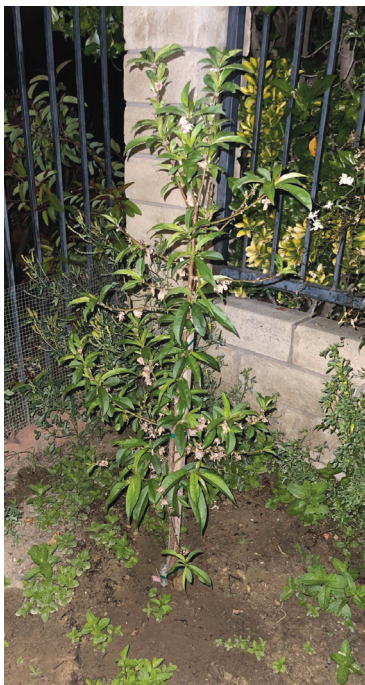
First off, you need to choose a tree that you want to grow, and there are a few places where you can get them. They are sold at tree nurseries or may be in the plant section of your local hardware store. When you want to plant your tree, which will probably

come in a plastic pot, be sure to dig a hole that is around two times the size of the pot. You will also want to make sure that the area your tree is going to be in doesn't have any utility lines in the area that your tree will be growing in. Be sure to firmly but gently place your tree into the dirt and pack the hole again. However, you don't want the soil to be too loose or too packed because the roots will not grow. A common misunderstanding is that you should use fertilizer in order to help the tree grow, but it is advised not to immediately fertilize the area for the first few years. Instead, mulch should be mixed in with the soil in order for it to fully help the tree's roots grow.

After planting the tree and making sure that proper growth is ensured, you need to constantly take

care of it. Stakes may limit trunk growth, but it is necessary if you are planting in a windy area. Water the soil at least once a week, and be sure not to completely flood the area. Also, pruning may be good once in a while, but it should be done sparingly. You should also wait until a full season to start pruning your tree. Be sure to keep the tree in good condition, and you will see results within two to three years.

Remember that planting a tree is an investment, and the benefits of that investment depend on how you take care of your tree. I have enjoyed the pleasure and hardness of my tree, and I hope you do too. With these steps and suggestions, you can start taking care of your new tree. Maybe you can even have your own fruit supply in your garden!



My growing peach tree that I planted; with work and love, hopefully we will see fruit soon!
[Source: Author, Ian Lee]

Student Reporter

“A Pastoral Celebration”—Music To Be Shared



Reanna Lee

Grade 9
North Hollywood High School



The Los Angeles Youth (Symphony) Orchestra, taking in the applause before a performance. [Source: Min Lee]



The Los Angeles Youth (Concert) Orchestra performing Bartok's Pieces for Children. [Source: Author, Reanna Lee]

What’s that sound? Is it the cool breeze carrying ripe leaves through the sky? What about over there, in the distance? Do you see the bustling town streets behind the hill? Imagine arriving in a grand country for the first time, with beautiful scenery and fresh air accompanied by music that’s never been heard before! An orchestra coming together, a peaceful scene by the brook becomes a joyful gathering of townsfolk, when suddenly, a great thunderstorm strikes! It seems that all will be lost until... hear that? The birds are chirping

again. Everyone is awakened from their hastily sought shelters, opening doors to a clear sky—turning to a happy ending.

This is the great work of Ludwig van Beethoven’s Symphony No. 6 “Pastoral.”. Beethoven wrote this resplendent piece around the same time as his widely famous Symphony No. 5, using a unique combination of five movements instead of the traditional four. Each movement presents a different scene, having melodies flowing through all sections of the orchestra. This spring, I, a cellist, had the pleasure

of performing this charming symphony with the Los Angeles Youth Orchestra (LAYO). Starting from January 14, we worked hard to bring this piece to life, with rehearsals every Sunday. Our long journey finally paid off, as the time for our seasonal concerts finally came with dates on April 14 and 15, and I must say that this was a truly wonderful experience.

The Los Angeles Youth Orchestra is divided into two groups: the Symphony Orchestra, led by Russell Steinberg, and the Ruth Borun Concert Orchestra, led by

Jorge Padrón. This was my first time performing with the Symphony after one year with Ruth Borun. Our conductor, Russell, had also produced his own piece called Cirrus Nimbus that would be performed as a world premiere. The Ruth Borun Concert Orchestra took the stage as well, with a variety of pieces, including movements from the Haydn London Symphony and Brahms’ Hungarian Dance No. 2. I think they did a great job, as always. So far, I have no regrets about joining LAYO; it has helped me connect with many others similar to my age through the one common passion we share in music.

Next year will be LAYO’s 25th anniversary. I hope that we will continue to grow and share with our community this wonderful art. I’m really looking forward to next semester in the fall, and hopefully, we will be able to put on yet another amazing show!

Student Reporter

Let’s Recognize Your Achievements and Academics



Kaylyn Wee

Grade 8
Canyon Hills Junior High

During one’s time in high school or middle school, some schools may host rallies for their fellow students. Rallies, or academic pep rallies, are where students are celebrated for their excellence. Usually, the leadership class or ASB handles these events with the intention of making students feel seen. To organize these rallies, a certain program is used to ensure certain tasks are completed.

The Renaissance program is a nationwide program that recognizes and rewards students for academic excellence and behavior. Schools involved with the Renaissance program put on events or do other activities for school communities to feel seen, not only for students but also for the staff! One of the ways the program fulfills its purpose is for schools to hold rallies. Although there may be discrepancies in junior high and high school, the events hosted usually



A Junior High assembly room all decked out for a Super Mario Bros-themed rally! [Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

follow the same pattern of preparation and traditions.

Rallies usually have themes and decor based on that theme. Themes can either be original ideas or be inspired by movies and TV shows from Disney or elsewhere. Many posters, banners, and other decorations are created to be as realistic and close to the story as possible. Students are also given Renaissance cards, which are determined

by their GPA. These cards can benefit students in special treats or grade-wise. Before the rally, students can participate in spirit days to make the environment more exciting. During the rally, games and special performances are showcased.

On the day of the rally, there is a lot of preparation. If there is a play, actors get mic’d up and review their scripts, while the tech crew looks

over lighting and sound effects. Performers like dancers or mascots get prepared for their spotlight. Although there is so much chaos and preparation going around, it makes it so much more thrilling. The leadership class all get each other ready and excited for the day while feeling pride as they watch their work come to life.

Overall, rallies are a way for schools to recognize their students positively and act as a community in a positive and thrilling way. It is a great way for the school to have fun and keep each other motivated for the rest of the year. The environment in the room is fired up and lively. Although a lot of work, the team of students and teachers who plan and execute the events are proud of their efforts and each other. Rallies truly are amazing events for schools to hold, as they not only reward students but also bring people together.

Student Reporter

The Decay of a Nation: Low Birth Rate in South Korea



Jiyong Kwak

Grade 9
Juniper Christian School

The low birth rate in South Korea is a social issue resulting from different factors, such as centralization in the metropolitan area and competitive society. Since the 1970s, the total fertility rate, calculated by the number of newborn babies over the total number of women, has been on a downward trend. The current total fertility rate is 0.78 children per woman, while 2.1 children per woman is considered to be the minimum for keeping the population stable. According to The Board of Audit and Inspection, if this trend continues, by the year 2047, all South Korean cities will be in danger of extinction.

The South Korean Government recognizes this issue, but efforts to increase or stop the decline of the birth rate are not effective. The government has spent 72 billion dollars, 5% of the GDP, to combat the low birth rate. An example of a strategy to combat the low birth rate is encouraging parents to have multiple children by giving them monthly relief funds. Another example is promoting parental leave for both parents, as parental

leave is not freely available because of pressures within workplaces. These efforts by the government, however, failed due to these policies not having a fundamental change in a couple’s perception of the increased labor and the cost of raising a child. The competitive society of South Korea creates fear over the parents with concern for their child, with more people coming to Seoul to find job opportunities that are not available in other regions of South Korea. This, combined with the constantly unstable economic situation of South Korea, has been fueling the repudiation of the idea of having a child in most parent’s minds.

The decline in birth rate is not limited to South Korea, as most of The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries are experiencing a decline in population. All of the OECD countries have a total fertility rate below 2.1, except for Israel with a rate of 3.0 children per woman. Until recently, China has taken the lead for the most populated country on earth, however, it



The playground is barren; missing are children on the slide and parents on the bench. Source: [Author, Jiyong Kwak]

was overtaken by India. This was the result of low fertility rates in China due to the competitive society and the one-child policy that took place for a long time.

Bryan Lee, a 9th grade student attending Juniper Christian School, shared his story of how “[his] mother told [him] that she had about 40-50 students in one class in her days, but (now) I [have] only around like 10 students in one class at my school.” Irene Lee, a 9th-grade student attending Juniper Christian School, also said, “I heard of a public primary school closing next to my house, which

shocked me. I realized that this (low birth rate) is not only a thing in the news, but is happening next door!”

South Koreans jokingly say that the country would be erased from the map not because of North Korea’s nuclear bombs, but because of its low birth rate. This social issue is a complication of many factors, such as a competitive society, unstable economy, and concentration of the population in the metropolitan area. Although this issue is gaining awareness, drastic changes by creative solutions are yet to come.