

Editors Column

CYTT: California Youth Think Tank Summer Program



Erin Ryu
Grade 11
Harvard-Westlake School



The 2024 California Youth Think Tank (CYTT) participants line up for a group picture after a week of intense debate and fun. [Source: California Youth Think Tank]

This month, I was privileged to attend the CYTT, California Youth Think Tank, summer program, which was hosted on the University of Southern California (USC) campus. Through this week-long program, I gained a boost in self-confidence, met many talented young individuals, and forged friendships with people I wouldn't have otherwise met.

Though initially nervous at the beginning of the week, my nerves gradually dissipated as I got to know more people. On the first

day, all students were separated into six groups of 10-12 people. From there, we participated in team challenges, ate meals together, and became a family. My team called ourselves Chat GIA-PT, after our facilitator's name, Gia. In my group, I found a sense of camaraderie like no other because everyone came from different schools and backgrounds, creating a unique dynamic for our team.

Aside from team challenges, the week's major event was a debate. Every year, CYTT proposes

a resolution, or a specific question or statement up for debate, that students must research and subsequently debate on. This year, the resolution was, "The United States should provide a guaranteed basic income," also known as GBI. Equipped with an evidence packet for both the affirmative and negative side, students thoroughly researched and crafted an argument with their team of 5-6 students. Additionally, CYTT invited a program alum who happened to be the former mayor of Stockton, California, Mayor Michael Tubbs, for a Q-and-A session. Tubbs had been the first person in America to institute a GBI plan in Stockton in 2017, where bankruptcy and poverty were prevalent. After rigorously preparing speeches and rebuttals, my team (advocating for the affirmative) won the debate on Thursday as we totaled the most points out of all twelve groups.

Exhausted from the week's vigorous training in speaking

workshops and debate preparation, CYTT students were gifted a field trip to the California Science Center's IMAX theater on Friday. Admittedly, the program was not that interesting (as 90% of the students had taken a nap in the theater), but we were all energized for the rest of the day. We were allowed to shop at USC's bookstore, toured around the campus, and savored one last day with our peers. That night, we all participated in an open mic session where students could sing karaoke, dance, or perform with their instruments—the day ended with an energetic dance circle and lots of laughter.

Overall, my time at CYTT was memorable and will always be treasured. I had to step outside my comfort zone and watched many others do the same. It's safe to say that the unique opportunities provided could be found at no other place than the California Youth Think Tank.

Student Reporter

Koding Kweens in Los Angeles!



Reanna Lee
Grade 10
North Hollywood High School

A technology wave is washing over Los Angeles this summer! Kode With Klossy (KWK for short), a female-empowered coding and computer science organization, hosts multiple camp sessions throughout the summer every year. Over two weeks, each of these camps has a topic for students to learn and create a final project on: website development, artificial intelligence/machine learning, app development, and data science. There are both in-person and virtual options to apply for, so no matter where someone is, they can still participate! Last year was my first experience with KWK, and I was in the website development program virtually. As a KWK alumni, I am very excited to be returning to the program as a scholar. This year, artificial intelligence is what I will be learning.

There are camps located everywhere around the U.S., in cities such as Seattle, Pittsburgh, and



A Google employee came in as a guest on one of our breaks to perform magic tricks for the group. [Source: Author, Reanna Lee]

New York. I am attending the Los Angeles location, and the first day seems like yesterday. This is my first time participating in an in-person camp, and I can say that it is completely different from the online version. Everything and everyone is more involved, and I can connect with more people easily. Although the virtual camp was enjoyable, I feel more comfortable attending in person. The lessons are face-to-face, and asking ques-

tions are met with instructors who are willing to help.

The set-up of everything is also made so that people can fully interact with each other. Tables are arranged in groups of three, and everyone has a laptop provided for them. Yes! There are many perks to Kode With Klossy. Not only will this program allow someone to hone their coding skills or maybe even develop a new interest in computer science, but

everything is also free! Lunch is provided with different menus every day, and snacks are easily accessible throughout the sessions. Each scholar receives a high-quality laptop of their own to use throughout camp, complete with a charger. I really like this aspect of KWK because it allows people to learn while not having to worry about costs or financial issues.

So far, I have learned many new complex concepts that will help me in my final project. Python is the coding language we will be using in this camp, and everyone is divided into groups of three for their final projects. Our goal is to create a functional AI chatbot for a topic of our own. These groups were decided by our interests so that we can ensure that we have a collective topic to work with when creating our bots. I can definitely say that this program is such a great thing in my life, and hopefully, I will be able to continue attending!

Student Reporter

The Maui Fire: The Death and Destruction



Jeremy Cho
Grade 8
Richardson Middle School

On Aug. 8th, 2023, a fire caused the island of Maui to burst into flames. This tragic event was known as the Lahaina Fire, in which around 96-115 people had their lives taken away and 2,200 structures were destroyed, totaling 5.5 billion dollars in damage. Experts speculate that heavy winds had caused utility poles to fall, and sparks from these power lines most likely caused the fire. The fire took many lives with it and destroyed an essential aspect of Maui: Lahaina, the former capital of the Hawaiian islands from 1820 to 1845.

Because the Lahaina Fire killed many citizens and destroyed many of Maui's structures, there are now protocols in case of another event like this. The preliminary report issued by the Fire Administration gave the Maui Police Department (MPD) thirty-two recommendations to improve its response to natural disasters. Among the sug-

gestions was improving the MPD's technology, such as providing better earpieces when winds make it difficult to listen to police radios.

Currently, there is a memorial for remembering the lives that were taken by the Fire at Lahaina. I met an elderly couple, Peggy and Rob Russel, at the Lahaina Memorial for an interview. Although both were in California when the Lahaina Fire occurred, the couple had close friends in Maui who had suffered. They described the fire as devastating and unexpected. When asked about the positive aspects of the event, they responded that the fire had brought people together, as everybody was motivated to help out in any way they could. It reminded people of how precious life is. Then, when I asked them about the negative aspects, they responded by saying there was much death, and the situation was quite unfortunate as the fire



The Lahaina Memorial consecrates the individuals who passed during the fire. [Source: Author, Jeremy Cho]



The names of the people who had passed during the fire are forever memorialized. [Source: Author, Jeremy Cho]

could have been prevented if they had looked out for the early warning signs. The couple was deeply affected by the fire, as it caused them to mourn the many deaths lost, which in turn led them to donate to organizations dedicated to helping Maui recuperate. Finally, when I asked how Maui had been coping since the fire, they said that the community was doing so through widespread support and donations.

The Maui Fire was a terrible

event that caused people to lose their lives and was a disruption to the people of Maui's everyday lives. When ABC news anchor Diane Ako was asked about Maui's recovery efforts, she said Maui is trying to look for normality. In a time of uncertainty, it is crucial to recognize the unwavering spirit of Maui. Though the Lahaina Fire took the lives of countless people and homes, we should all hope those affected are recovering and finding comfort after this tragic event.

Student Reporter

Tips and Advice for Visiting Korea in the Summer



NaEun Hong
Grade 9
Chadwick International



Temple in Danyang, South Korea, is a great place to go when visiting South Korea. [Source: Author, NaEun Hong]

Like a trip to any other destination during vacation, visiting South Korea in the summer can be an unforgettable experience. However, the summer season in Korea comes with difficulties that could potentially limit the fun one has on the trip. This article discusses some helpful tips to make the most of a summer trip to South Korea.

Stay Hydrated and Cool

South Korean summers are

usually hot, with temperatures often reaching above 30°C (86°F). The humidity adds to the weather, so staying hydrated is crucial. Carry a refillable water bottle with you and fill it up at water fountains, which are frequently stationed in public areas like parks. If that is too much of a hassle, don't worry, convenience stores are everywhere in Korea and sell a variety of cold drinks, including iced coffee, self-served ades, juices, and bottled water. Additionally, wearing lightweight, breathable clothing and hats can help you stand against the heat.

Prepare for the Monsoon Season

The rainy season falls during the summer months in Korea, primarily in July. It is advisable to check the weather forecast before making solid plans for the day. Pack an umbrella or a raincoat in case it rains, and bring along water-resistant shoes or footwear made of material that dries quickly. However, do not be discouraged by the gloomy weather. Rain

or shine, many attractions stay open, and the wet weather may offer a nice break from the heat and stickiness.

Look Out for Summer Festivals

South Korea has its share of diverse summer events and festivals that foreigners and residents alike can enjoy. Taking part in these experiences is a great way to immerse yourself in the local culture. The Pohang International Fireworks Festival, held annually in July in the coastal city of Pohang, is known for its spectacular fireworks displays, cultural performances, and festive atmosphere. Also occurring in July, the Boryeong Mud Festival attracts visitors from all over, allowing them to experience mud baths, mudslides, mud prisons, mud wrestling, and much more. Another popular choice is the Water Bomb Music Festival, where visitors, armed with water guns and hoses, can appreciate the performances of top-tier artists amid a water battle.

Try Seasonal Foods

The traditional foods of a country are an integral part of any visit, and the Korean summer has its own seasonal cuisine and desserts. Sit down for naengmyeon, a cold and refreshing noodle dish. Bingsu, a shaved ice dessert with various topping options such as red beans, fruit, condensed milk, and rice cake, is a must-try too.

Use Public Transportation

South Korea's public transportation system is efficient, well-developed, and air-conditioned, making it comfortable to travel to and from different destinations. Subways and buses are generally reliable and affordable. Consider purchasing a T-money card, which can be used for public transportation, some taxis, and bike rentals.

By considering these tips and advice, you can make the most of the diverse experiences Korea offers despite the challenges of summer, and an enjoyable summer visit to South Korea is already on the horizon.

Student Reporter

The USC Viterbi Summer Networking Lunch Series



Joanne Kim
Grade 11
La Canada High School

The University of Southern California (USC) hosts many summer programs for students of all ages. Each prestigious program has numerous benefits that allow participants to build experience in many fields and help establish connections and relationships with those who have jobs in the given fields. There are also specific events meant to help students connect and network with professionals in certain lines of work.

Previously, during the second week of July, USC held the USC Viterbi Summer Networking Lunch Series. Viterbi is the School of Engineering at USC, so each day of the event was full of engineers eager to make new connections and learn more about the community. The event lasted from 12 pm to 1:30 pm and hosted students of ages ranging from high schoolers to those working on their master's degrees or PhDs in different engineering departments each day. Tuesday hosted those interested in specializing in Biomedical En-



Networking events allow people to get together and share their experiences with others, offering attendees many benefits. [Source: Author, Joanne Kim]

gineering, Chemical Engineering, and Materials Science, while Wednesday welcomed Computer Science and Robotics majors. Electrical and Computer Engineers were able to network and share a meal on Thursday, and the series concluded with Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering, and Industrial and Systems Engineering on Friday.

This specific event was for a select few students in the following programs: Apple NACME AIML Program, USC SHINE Program,

USC-Tsinghua Program for Visiting Scholars, Viterbi-IUSSTF Program, Viterbi Summer Institute (VSI), and Viterbi SURE. Ranging from high school students to those working on their PhD, everyone was able to share their experiences, journeys, and goals to establish connections and relationships with others in the field.

I attended the series on the day correlating to Electrical and Computer Engineering because of its relation with my research topic with USC's Summer high School Intensive in Next-Generation En-

gineering Program. I entered the event unsure of what to expect and wanted advice on how to select my college major. Upon entering, I was met with many welcoming faces and was able to comfortably discuss the field of electrical engineering with both the undergraduate and PhD students. I personally got a lot of helpful insight and made many helpful connections during the event and benefited greatly from it. One of the people I met claimed that he wished he had access to such networking events when he was younger, as it would have helped him get a clearer career path.

These types of networking events, such as the USC Viterbi Summer Networking Lunch Series, are extremely helpful in obtaining guidance through research and academic journeys, along with career paths. If given the opportunity, I would strongly encourage those available to attend those events as they offer great benefits.

Student Reporter

Incredible Experience at SDSU with Prof. George Youseff



Christina Park
Grade 11
Crescenta Valley High School

In a society that pressures high school students to figure out their careers at such young ages, it is valuable for them to be exposed to college experiences and internships. However, many of these exposures to one's future are frequently out of reach due to the difficulty and expense. Recognizing this barrier, an engineering professor at SDSU (San Diego State University) created a unique program tailored for students who are up for a deep dive into the engineering profession, with no costs!

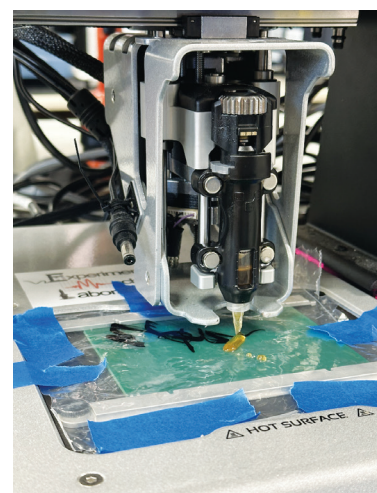
Professor George Youseff is currently leading the Experimental Mechanics Laboratory at SDSU. He founded the YEE (Young Engineer Experience), which gives 3-4 high school students a chance to work in his lab for five weeks. They are given a mini-research project to delve into, which, at the end of the program, is presented to Youseff,

undergraduates, and graduates who work in the lab.

This year, the project given to the YEE scholars was to find a compatible co-polymer for the electroactive polymer PVDF (Polyvinylidene fluoride). Using a 3D printer, the scholars were challenged to create parametric and nonparametric films to test the co-polymers on. Since this was their first college-level project, Youseff prepped them by making them read a 40-page research paper on this exact procedure. Though it was daunting, they were able to successfully present their understanding. Then, they started working on creating the PVDF films. With the help of their mentors, they were able to quickly learn how to create the material. Their next step was to extrude this onto the 3D printer using a slicing software, "Cura." This showed the students how the material would be

printed onto the screen. However, the scholars encountered a practical issue: creating the PVDF material every morning would take too much time. Therefore, their next mission was to find something with a similar viscosity as PVDF. Thankfully, honey was a viable option, and they started to extrude different shapes, such as circles, triangles, and even letters. Finally, their last task was to be able to print non-parametric shapes ranging from a book to an octopus!

As the project continued, one of the scholars, Jesus Hernandez, explained, "This was a huge step for me to learn more about engineering, which is a potential field I want to study later in my life. I am grateful for this opportunity and am learning a lot from my teammates and Professor Youseff." Even though this was an overwhelming project, Hernandez has learned



Using Honey to Simulate PVDF on a 3D Printer.

[Source: Author, Christina Park]

much more than he would have without it.

Because of amazing adults like Professor George Youseff, many students will most definitely be confident about the choices that they make for themselves and the careers they decide to pursue.

Online Submission

Summer Fun at Summer Camp



Angel Song
Grade 10
Harvard-Westlake School



The Harvard-Westlake Upper School campus is where the majority of the summer camp activities take place.
[Source: Author, Angel Song]

Once summer break begins, not only do students rejoice at their liberation, but they also become dejected at the thought of summer classes or even summer school. However, summer opportunities at Harvard-Westlake School in Studio City, CA, are working hard to make summer fun and enriching for all students.

2024 Summer opportunities at Harvard-Westlake School are mainly sports camps, while other programs teach debate, math, and foreign languages. Out of all these

opportunities, many students flock to the debate camp to get a taste of the variety of debate events before trying them out in the school year. Harvard-Westlake offers three debate events, which are the Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP), Lincoln-Douglas Debate (LD), and World Schools Debate (WSD).

Students participating in MSPDP are relatively younger campers looking to prepare for next year. Three students form a team and debate motions together, with oc-

casional heckling or three-word interruptions during speeches from the other team.

On the other hand, LD debate operates with the same topic throughout camp to simulate real season topics, which get changed every two months. LDers debate quite serious topics, such as the right to housing, universal basic incomes, and military presence in West Asia and North Africa. To accommodate the majority of aspiring debaters interested in LD, this camp is separated into three groups: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. Those who are beginners are able to receive step-by-step coaching from experienced LD coaches, while students seeking to excel in debate attend advanced classes to prepare for their varsity year of debate.

The last class Harvard-Westlake offers is World Schools Debate, which is a relatively new addition to this camp. Students make teams of three to five people, but only three of them debate in a round. Motions involving logical think-

ing are the most popular motions, and students are encouraged to think quickly by participating in “impromptu” rounds, where they get their topic and sides just an hour before the commencement of the debate. Students can easily learn about cooperation, communication, and logical thinking by competing in this debate format.

Classes at the Harvard-Westlake debate camp are taught by skilled coaches experienced in specific formats of debate and teachers’ assistants who are former or current debaters. Every day, students are exposed to a lot of different kinds of practice, including speaking drills and actual debates.

While summer classes may be dreaded by some, Harvard-Westlake summer camps strive to make the summer experience the best for all attendees. With a variety of camp opportunities for aspiring debaters, anyone can come to camp and learn new things about a variety of debate events, preparing them for the next season of debate.

Online Submission

My Experience with Working on a State Senate Campaign



Jacob Won
Grade 11
West Ranch High School

As the United States approaches its November electoral cycle, attention turns to the pivotal political contests nationwide, including California’s biannual Senate elections. Among the notable candidates for office is Suzette Valladares, who has emerged as a frontrunner for the Republican Party’s State Senate nomination.

Valladares brings a diverse background to her candidacy, currently serving as the Executive Director of a non-profit organization, LAPD Devonshire Police Activity League Supporters. This organization is distinguished by its collaborative efforts with law enforcement agencies, focusing on youth investment programs. This initiative aims to foster positive relationships between communities and law enforcement while providing developmental opportunities for young individuals.

Prior to her current role, Valladares entered the political arena



Door canvassing flyers are used when doing in-person campaigning.
[Source: Author, Jacob Won]

in 2020 when she secured a seat in the California State Assembly. During her two-year tenure, she created a reputation for success and realism. In her brief yet impactful term in office, she delivered many results, seemingly resonating with her voter base.

When I learned about the opportunity to work on her campaign, I took a chance immediately. Despite my limited knowledge of campaigning, I viewed it as a chance to gain insight into politics and government operations.

As an intern, I’ve been deeply involved in the campaign’s voter outreach efforts, a foundation of modern political campaigns. This encompasses various engagement methods, including phone banking, door-to-door canvassing, and community outreach.

Phone banking has been particularly demanding. It has challenged me to navigate complex conversations, addressing voters’ concerns while effectively communicating Valladares’ policy ideas. This experience has sharpened my listening skills and ability to think on the spot. I’ve encountered a wide spectrum of perspectives, from enthusiastic supporters to skeptical voters, each interaction offering valuable insights into the electorate’s priorities and concerns.

While more limited due to time restrictions, door-to-door canvassing has provided a unique perspective on grassroots campaigning. These face-to-face

interactions have undermined the importance of personal connection in politics. I’ve learned to quickly establish empathy, concisely present our candidate’s platform, and gather crucial feedback from residents. This direct engagement has offered an unfiltered view of constituent concerns and helped our campaign messaging to address local issues more effectively.

Through these experiences, I’ve gained a great understanding of the intricate relationship between candidates and voters. I’ve witnessed firsthand how effective communication and genuine engagement can connect ideological divides and build support for Suzette. This internship has not only expanded my knowledge of political processes but also enhanced my practical skills in communication, adaptability, and strategic thinking, which will prove invaluable in my future academic and professional endeavors.

Online Submission

A Despicable Way to Cheer Up



Emily Lee
Grade 10
Sunny Hills High School

Ring, ring, ring!

As school bells marked the beginning of summer break across schools in America, two months of complete freedom from learning excited students. However, in reality, many find themselves overwhelmed with tutors or bored at home. Fortunately, there seems to be a temporary escape from summer break: watching the new “Despicable Me 4” movie.

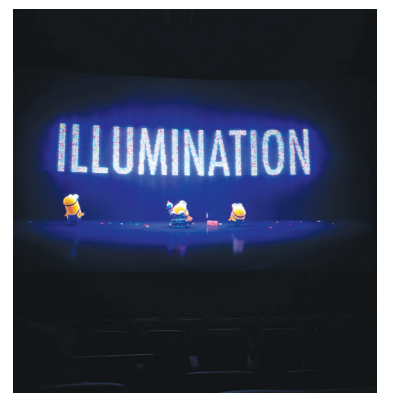
Directed by Chris Renaud and Patrick Delage, the newest addition to the Minions franchise does not disappoint. In the film, Gru and his wife Lucy welcome Gru Jr. to the family and are ready for parenthood’s difficult but rewarding life. Their peace soon ends, though, when Gru’s high school rival, Maxime Le Mal, escapes from prison and seeks revenge against Gru. The whole family, including the Minions, are subsequently forced

to change locations, where they then encounter new individuals, adventures, and strengths. Despite their many precautions, the preparations prove not to be enough, so the family has no choice but to take matters into their own hands.

“Despicable Me 4” serves to be a fun and lighthearted movie filled with family-friendly humor and signature Minion antics. Adding a baby to the storyline introduces a new dynamic that plays a major role in the development of the plot. Although this sequel does not reach the emotional depth that other animations like this year’s “Inside Out 2” does, it undeniably delivers on the series’s promise of thrilling entertainment. Additionally, though the movie is not groundbreaking, it still manages to elicit laughter and enjoyment from viewers familiar with the well-loved characters and their

personalities. It has been available in theaters since July 3rd and has already amassed a box office of \$270 million internationally, helping the franchise to become the first animated series to reach \$5 billion at the global box office.

A few days after the release, I visited the CGV Cinemas in Buena Park, California, and watched the film twice. With a bucket of popcorn on my lap and the sound of the Minions laughing, the movie was all I needed after a long day of writing down chemical formulas for chemistry prep. Watching this sequel was exciting as I got to observe the development of all the characters I grew up with. Knowing that Gru was in a happy family with a new baby and that the Minions were sillier than ever made me realize that I was growing up, too. This bittersweet moment of revisiting my childhood was definitely



The iconic “Illumination” title page on the big screen at CGV Cinemas Buena Park, California, starts the new movie, “Despicable Me 4.”
[Source: Author, Emily Lee]

the highlight of the experience.

Overall, “Despicable Me 4” is a recommended watch for those who are looking for ways to pass the time during this long break from school. With its blend of humor, adventure, and Minion mischief, it will surely turn that frown into a smile!