

Editors Column



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Festival Fever: A Recap of Annual Homecoming Game



As the evening grew closer to 7:30 PM, the varsity football team made their appearance to the crowd. [Source: Author, Isleen Lee]

Welcome to the seasonal coverage of Harvard-Westlake School's annual Homecoming festival! This article marks the second year of an ongoing tradition of mine to document my Homecoming festival experiences from grades 10-12 at the Upper campus. On September 28th, a whole nine days before last year's October 7th edition, the festival had new and unexpected additions to the scene.

This year, the standards were much higher, with the addition of Scat and Viking rides, usually only seen at amusement parks, and most of the varsity teams winning their games. My continuing role in the HW Athletics Social Media Team remained mandatory on this day. This year, I became captain of the varsity field hockey team's social media management through my continuing role in the HW Athletics Social Media Team. Consequently, my duties now entail ensuring proper communication with the team's coach and delegating tasks to newer crew members. Cooperating with my team members beforehand through our weekly Thursday meetings helped a lot, as the players were scoring goals very quickly and creating a fast-paced environment that necessitated more focus on precision when creating live-score graphics.

After the game was over, I walked over to where the parent affinity groups, boba stand, and

rides were. I had pre-paid meal tickets, which came in handy as the lines for on-site payment became lengthy very fast. As I explored the various food stands offered by the diverse racial and ethnic parent organizations, I decided to go with some tacos and boba from a nearby stand. In the gym, the girls' varsity volleyball team was playing, and I greatly enjoyed our student section's energy in cheering for our players whenever they scored a point.

At 7:30 PM, the long-awaited football game began, and the bleachers were filled with students with red, black, or white face paint and foam batons. Starting early on, the first few plays were exciting and gave the HW Wolverines a lead over their opponent. Making up for the loss last year, the football team emerged victorious, and as expected, the student section went wild. The day had not only been successful for the football team but also for the boys' water polo, girls' varsity tennis, and field hockey teams. In addition, the school's attempts at bringing new activities to Homecoming all worked out to be great accomplishments. The festive vibe, crowds of students passionately cheering for their teams, and the delicious foods at this Homecoming made for, undoubtedly, the best Homecoming I've experienced during my years here.

Student Reporter

Overcoming My Fears One Step at a Time



Emily Lee
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The low and rapid beating of the drums from behind signals my cue to step out. The sun beams down on my painted face. The streets are crowded with rows and rows of people. No matter what, I will dance until the very end.

Throughout my life, dance has plagued my mind causing feelings of shame and a lack of confidence. My stiff and unnatural movements, as well as my nonexistent stage presence, combined to produce truly awkward performances. Even my friends have noticed my stiffness whenever we film our latest TikTok dances. However, after weeks of contemplation, I joined the dance team for PAVA (Pacific American Volunteer Association). The team is composed of fan dancers and Sogo players, who beat on small drums with sticks.

The first few practices were intimidating because the lessons were fast-paced, and I struggled to keep up with the others. Understanding that these dances are not just physical expressions but also that they convey stories and emotions was an aspect that was difficult to execute, but fascinating to me. Practicing regularly with a teacher who provides constant



Author Emily Lee (middle) performs the traditional Sogo dance alongside her teammates in front of a live audience in Los Angeles, California.

[Source: PAVA World]

help and encouragement allowed me to eventually refine my technique and build confidence.

After months of practice, the team awaited the big parade on September 28th.

On the day of the parade, there was excitement mingled with nervousness as the PAVA team gathered to prepare. The atmos-

phere was hectic; mom volunteers were buzzing around to help the dancers put on their clothes, style their hair, and put on makeup before the performance.

When it was finally time to perform, stepping onto the street felt surreal. The cheers from the crowds filled me with energy; their enthusiasm was contagious.

As I began the routine, I focused on embodying the emotional message of each movement rather than worrying about perfection. Adapting this mindset allowed me to fully immerse myself in the experience rather than being consumed by self-doubt. Soon enough, each step became a celebration—not just of my triumph over my fears but of the smiles of the audience. After completing the routine, I felt an overwhelming sense of accomplishment wash over me. It did not matter how fatigued I was at that moment; I overcame my insecurity of dancing and contributed to a successful show.

Overall, performing at the PAVA traditional Korean parade was more than just showcasing dance; it was an avenue for personal growth. Although I am still an amateur at dancing, this experience taught me that overcoming insecurity is often about embracing challenges head-on rather than avoiding them out of fear. Participating in this parade not only allowed me to honor my culture but it also empowered me personally by transforming my self-doubt into self-expression.

Student Reporter

The Dangers of Sun Tanning



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Sun tanning is the process in which one's skin color is tanned or darkened through exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or artificial sources such as tanning beds. The practice has long been associated with ideas of beauty, health, and vitality. In the summertime especially, many people aim to get tans to achieve a certain aesthetic or beauty standard. However, that sought-after shade and glow has been proven to be damaging to the skin, and much of what people believe about tanning is based on myths rather than facts.

The most significant danger linked with sun tanning is the increased risk of skin cancer. UV radiation damages DNA in skin cells, which can lead to mutations and the development of cancerous cells. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), skin cancer is the most common form of cancer worldwide, with the chances of melanoma, the most dangerous, being doubled with intense sunburns or excessive exposure to the sun.

Sun tanning also accelerates the aging of the skin. UV breaks down collagen and elastin, two molecules that play an essential role in maintaining the skin's

firmness and elasticity. As they degrade, the skin matures at a faster rate and begins to sag and wrinkle. Other effects include age spots, deep lines and a rough or leathery texture, contributing to an aged appearance and unhealthy skin.

Repeated exposure to the sun without adequate protection and safety knowledge often leads to sunburn. While light sunburns cause only a limited amount of discomfort, more intense burns can be extremely painful and weaken the skin's immune defenses. If this happens repetitively, the skin can lose most of its ability to protect itself, which leads to more frequent sunburns, resulting in a cycle that brings about permanent or long-term skin damage.

"Sun tanning is okay if you have a base tan." The idea that a base tan can protect the skin from the dangers of sun damage is widespread, but false. A tan means that the skin has already been impacted by UV radiation. The darkened skin that comes with it is a sign that the body is trying to shield itself by producing more melanin. The protection guaranteed by a base tan can be compared to the protection guaranteed by an SPF 3 sun-



Beaches are popular places where many, who do not understand the risk, go to tan. [Source: Author, NaEun Hong]

screen—very minimal.

The pursuit of a tan, though it may seem ideal at the time, comes with numerous risks that must be considered alongside the perceived benefits. It's essential to prioritize long-term

skin health as well as beauty or another purpose, and remember basic procedures for safety, even something as simple as putting on sunscreen or taking a break in the shade after a designated time.

Student Reporter

My Experience at California Gold Coast FBLA's OAT Day



Jacob Won
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West Ranch High School



West Ranch High School's FBLA officers who attended the FBLA's OAT Day. [Source: Author, Tanja Brosche]

On August 28, West Ranch High School's officers buzzed with excitement as we attended the California Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) Officer and Training (OAT) Day. As the elected Vice President of Fundraisers for my chapter, I arrived with a mix of anticipation and nerves, eager

to absorb knowledge and connect with fellow FBLA members from across my region.

The day kicked off with a vibrant welcome session, with energy surrounding the theater. FBLA regional officers took the stage, and their enthusiasm was infectious as they outlined the day's

agenda and the opportunities that lay ahead.

One of the highlight workshops was the Chapter Growth session. Here, group members discussed strategies to expand our local chapters and increase member engagement. The presenters shared success stories from various schools, inspiring us with creative ideas for recruitment drives and retention programs. As the VP of Fundraisers, I found myself jotting down notes, envisioning how these concepts could be adapted to boost our chapter's membership and financial resources.

The leadership activities were both challenging and enlightening. We were divided into groups, tackling scenarios that tested our decision-making skills and ability to work as a team. One activity involved creating a mock business plan under time pressure, which not only honed our business knowledge but also taught us valuable lessons about teamwork and time management.

The most impactful session for me was the Networking 101 workshop. As someone who has often felt awkward in professional

settings, I found this workshop to be a game-changer. Participants learned the art of the elevator pitch, practiced active listening, and even role-played networking scenarios. The facilitators emphasized the importance of building genuine connections rather than just collecting business cards. This shift in perspective made networking feel less daunting and more exciting.

Throughout the day, we had ample opportunities to test our newfound networking skills. During breaks and lunch, the campus was filled with conversations as students from different chapters exchanged ideas and contact information. I engaged in discussions about fundraising strategies with peers who had innovative approaches I'd never considered before.

As the day drew to a close, I reflected on how much I had grown in just a few hours. The OAT Day had not only equipped me with practical skills for my role as VP of Fundraisers but also broadened my vision of what FBLA could be. I left feeling inspired, connected, and ready to make a significant impact in my chapter.

Student Reporter

Experiences Offered by the International Space Academy

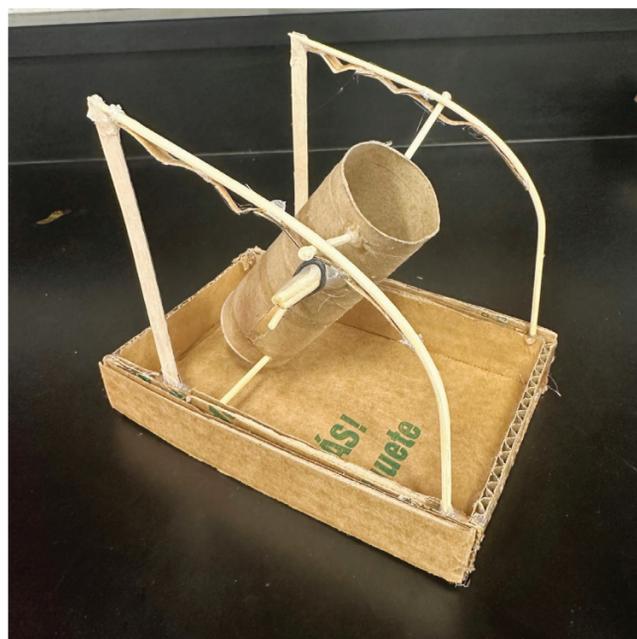


Joanne Kim
Grade 11
La Canada High School

The International Space Academy is an annual program held by La Canada Sister Cities in partnership with the Jet Propulsion Lab (JPL) of NASA. The program is available to all high school students enrolled in Flintridge Preparatory School, Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy, or La Canada High School. It is intended to provide students with experience working in the engineering and technological industry.

Four high school students have come together to make a company and work together to design, build, and test their very own launcher. The objective is essentially to build something that will launch a payload, an object created to prove the success of the launcher, into a hula hoop from 20 feet away. On top of the launcher, the companies must develop a payload for their launcher. The payload must hold a small LED light that should be visible. The awards at the end of the program would be given to the companies with the most accuracy and highest launch.

Each company must present its progress and share future plans at the weekly meeting to keep other teams updated. This is because each team has a stock value that rises and falls with the number of teams that "invest" in them. So far, the program is in



Many prototypes must be designed and built before settling on the final design to ensure the final launcher will ensure the best and most accurate results. [Source: Author, Joanne Kim]

its fourth week, and most groups have already finalized and created a prototype for their design. The construction process must be done with great care, as there is a fifty-dollar budget for the materi-

als for the launcher.

However, there is one more component to the International Space Academy program. Each company participates in a competition in which rovers must be

coded to complete a course from one code file. Once the code is submitted, it can not be modified. The companies are also unable to test or run the code without submitting it. What makes the challenge so difficult is the distance and the degrees of rotation that must be calculated.

This science program is extremely beneficial to those who wish to pursue a career in engineering, as it exposes students to obstacles no simulation can mimic. It also puts them in the shoes of both the consumer and manufacturer, as it provides opportunities to be critical of other companies while working on one's own project. The weekly presentations also force the participants of the program to practice public speaking and answering questions on the spot.

Lastly, real-life engineers at JPL are introduced each week and give a lecture on the difficulties of building and designing certain rovers that have made it to outer space. They take the students, step by step, through the functions of each part of the rovers and explain why the parts are attached in the ways they are. Overall, the program provides a memorable and informative experience for high school students interested in pursuing a career in STEM.

Student Reporter

Aespa is on the "Next Level" with Their Story!



Reanna Lee
Grade 10
North Hollywood High School

What is interesting about K-pop is that many groups have lore or a story behind them. One of the most intriguing, in my opinion, is the story of aespa. Aespa is a fourth-generation (groups/idols that debuted between 2018 and 2023 are referred to as "fourth-gen" in the K-Pop industry) girl group under SM Entertainment. They debuted in 2020, with their first release, "Black Mamba," being an immediate hit in the K-pop industry. Their genre of music includes themes of artificial intelligence and technology, with colorful and metallic concepts. They use electronic beats and unique instrumentals to create a sound that is entirely their own. Aespa's latest album features the title track "Supernova" (and "Armageddon"), a song that has a futuristic and space theme to it that effortlessly keeps up the group's creative genre.

However, it is not only their music that makes aespa such an interesting group. All of their lore is connected through hints in their music videos, lyrics, or even non-music content. For example, the group has released "short films" that have visually shown elements of their story. Many fans (called MYs) have interacted online to share their thoughts on these and have created theories as to how they progress throughout aespa's come-

backs (new releases). The user @TeamBeMYae on X has even created a website that guides MYs through all things aespa-related, like what music videos to watch that are lore-heavy. Upon viewing these music videos, I surprisingly noticed many interesting details! To provide some context, aespa is supposedly living in a "virtual world"—a type of fantasy related to the internet and technology through "avatars." Their debut song, Black Mamba, depicts this world as a safe haven until a virus starts to spread in the world of KWANGYA (the virtual world). That virus is the Black Mamba, and the girls must fight to protect their home. However, it seems the end of the music leaves us wondering as the video shows them all being affected by the virus before they get a chance to eliminate the source of the threat.

In the next MV, "Next Level," it looks as if aespa is back with a weapon called NAEVIS to travel to KWANGYA from the Real World and defeat the Black Mamba once and for all. She is an AI system that works as a guide for the transportation of aespa. There has been almost no other sight of her until recently, through "The Birth of naevis" released by SM. She has finally debuted on her own with the single "Done"! Fans, including myself, definitely want to see more of how she and aespa connect



The new theme that SM girl group aespa used in their latest album, "Armageddon". [Source: Author, Reanna Lee]

through the lore. How will the battle between aespa and the Black

Mamba conclude? Is their latest track, "Armageddon," a clue?