

Student Reporter



Eun Soo Esther Shin
Grade 11
New Covenant Academy

Crafting for a Cause; Something to Feel Good About



Before and after of a paracord lanyard for our service members and first responders crafted by a student. [Source: Author, Eun Soo Esther Shin]

If you love crafting and want to make a real difference in your community, why not put your talents to good use? I am currently working on two crafting projects: crocheting blankets for babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and making paracord lan-

yards for service members and first responders. Let me tell you how you can start helping your community through crafting.

Crocheting blankets does not require many materials. All you'll need is one crochet hook and some yarn. Most people use

a crochet hook size of 4.5 mm to 5.5 mm, and you should try to get 100% cotton yarn, as it's the best type of yarn for babies, but acrylic yarn is also accepted in hospitals. (Just be sure to check the specific requirements of the place you're donating to.) You can send your donations to local hospitals or non-profit organizations, such as Knots of Love. The soft, handmade blankets that you make for the newborns in the NICU will be used to keep the babies warm since they aren't able to regulate their own temperature. Parents often sleep with the blanket to transfer their scent so that when the babies use them, it helps the baby feel more connected to the parent. It's a way to send warmth—both physical and emotional—to families in need.

For a paracord lanyard, you would need a few simple materials: the paracord, a scissor, a lighter, and a measuring device, such as a metric ruler. Cut five feet of the lanyard, braid it, and seal the ends off with a lighter to prevent fraying. These small but mighty paracord lanyards are used by service members and first re-

sponders in all sorts of emergency situations—whether it's to secure camouflage nets to trees or hang an IV bag from a tree. If you cut open the paracord lanyard to the thinner strings on the inside, they can be used as a suture to close wounds in emergency situations or as a sewing thread to repair gear. And there's a bonus. For every five paracord lanyards you make, you can get one hour of community service through a non-profit called Operation Gratitude. You can view the tutorial on Operation Gratitude's website to learn how to make the lanyards. Once you've made a few, you can mail them to Operation Gratitude's address in Chatsworth, California. Your lanyards will be put to good use by service members and first responders on the field.

Whether you're experienced with crafting or just starting out, both of these projects are a great way to give back to your community. They don't just create something beautiful—they create a meaningful connection to those in need. So grab your crochet hook and some paracord, and let's start crafting for a cause!

Student Reporter



Ian Lee
Grade 11
Van Nuys High School

Lee Canyon: A Travel Destination for the Seasons

As I look up at the sky, I notice gray clouds covering the sun from high in the mountains. Will it snow today? This question, although uncommon where I live, flashed across my mind as I trudged my way up the mountain. It was January, and I was in Lee Canyon, Las Vegas. I was in the snow, seven hours away from home, wondering how I was going to climb up the mountain without getting in the way of anyone.

Lee Canyon is a mountain ski resort approximately an hour away from the Las Vegas strip where both residents and vacationers are able to enjoy skiing or snowboarding. This year, I went at the beginning of January to go snowboarding with my family—I also enjoyed the different amenities that this location had available for guests. The main attraction, however, was the slopes. There are twenty-seven different trails in all, available to riders, starting with the beginner-friendly Rabbit Peak trail all the way to the winding Slot Alley trail that experienced riders love. Some of these trails even have ramps, poles, and bumps so that



Lee Canyon's entrance, no matter how bare it may seem, is a welcome mat for skiers, snowboarders, and campers alike. [Source: Author, Ian Lee]

you can do tricks while riding downhill! However, some trails may be closed depending on the snowpack levels, so it would be wise to check trail availability before heading for the slopes. The ski resort also offers lessons to riders of all experience levels,

so regardless of circumstances, you will be taken care of when visiting.

If carving your way down a mountain isn't appealing to you, don't worry, there are snow areas where you can play in the snow while also enjoying the amazing

views of Nevada. You can also go camping in the winter, and spend the night out in the wilderness at the camping grounds on site. You may also want to consider visiting the different restaurants that offer hot food, like hot dogs, hamburgers, chicken wings, and other delicious food items that will satisfy your hunger after you have gotten your fair share of exercise on the mountain.

For those wanting an outdoor adventure, Lee Canyon is an ideal mountain escape. Whether you are going to snowboard or just tagging along to enjoy the snow, it is a travel destination that you will want to visit again and again. Whether you go with your friends, family, or by yourself to escape the chaos of Las Vegas, there is definitely something for everyone there. However, if a winter wonderland is not your ideal vacation destination, Lee Canyon is also open in the summer! Fun activities like hiking, scenic chair rides, disc golfing along the mountainside, and yoga are available for everyone. So when you are planning your next vacation, consider Lee Canyon as your destination.

Student Reporter



Ryan Park
Grade 10
Science Academy
STEM Magnet

The Dangers of Fentanyl for Students

On September 13th, tragedy struck Bernstein High School. A student was found on campus, unresponsive, due to a fentanyl-induced overdose. This is an all too familiar situation that has been a rising problem since the start of the pandemic, with cities recording higher rates of drug overdoses each year. Despite these increased rates, the rates of opioid misuse have decreased. But how?

While discussing this with a teacher at my school, we recognized that fentanyl is extremely potent, being about a hundred times stronger than morphine. The main reason this FDA drug has become more dangerous is because it is used to lace counterfeit medicine. Individuals hoping for cheaper sources of medication are often unaware of the lethality of these pills. Most users can access these pills online easily, unbeknownst to how deadly they could be. These pills have a two in five chance of carrying a deadly dosage that could potentially kill the user. The reason why this opioid has been considered so dangerous is because such a small dosage can rapidly end someone's life.

Circling back to the devastating incident at Bernstein High School, we concluded that many

teens utilize fentanyl as a "quick fix," a way to get high and escape reality. This is most likely rooted in the growing depression and mental health issues among the youth of our country. Many of these drugs originate in China, where they then ship the ingredients to Mexico for production. Once the pills have been mass-produced, they make a trip across the border to dealers across the United States. Just like that, these pills are now easily accessible online and on social media apps. This raised a question regarding the policies my school and district have started to enforce to prevent future incidents like these.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has served as a role model for districts across the nation when dealing with fentanyl. Led by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Malhotra, Superintendent Carvalho and board members of LAUSD have ensured that each school across the district has feasible access to Narcan, an antidote used in opioid overdoses. This was proven to be a life-saving initiative that saved 31 lives this past year.

To find out the type of safety measures my school had made, I decided to ask my school's vice-principal, Mr. Rosenthal. He informed me that our campus



The medication Narcan at my school, The Science Academy STEM Magnet, is there in case of an overdose. [Source: Author, Ryan Park]

has 7 boxes of Narcan across our campus, accompanied by an automated external defibrillator (AED). I was also surprised to find out that a mobile kit of Narcan and AED was also created for

athletic activities on the field. All staff and students were provided with training on "Substance Use Awareness/Fentanyl", where they trained on the procedure to administer Narcan.

Student Reporter

Facing the Fear of Public Speaking



Nicole Lee
Grade 11
Oxford Academy



Oxford Academy holds bi-weekly Speech & Debate Club meetings where students can engage in various public speaking activities and compete in specific speech/debate events.
[Source: Oxford Academy's Speech & Debate Club Publicist]

As studied in 2021 by NCBI, more than 61% of university students in the U.S. note a fear of speaking in public. Since public speaking has become prevalent in a variety of careers in society, it is essential to address this self-conflict that many encounter.

At a young age, children de-

velop and overcome many different fears and cautions. An example would include a fear of the dark or a fear of monsters, which typically alleviate as the child matures. However, it is difficult for a child to overcome the social anxiety of public speaking until it is directly confronted and

addressed. Avoidance of this fear is futile, as public speaking is a necessary source of communication in both formal and informal atmospheres. In fact, the fear of public speaking, often referred to as glossophobia, can become extremely severe, to the point where it negatively impacts career opportunities and advancement once the child grows up. It can be accompanied by negative self-talk and irrational thoughts, which can harm children's self-esteem and overall performance. Therefore, public speaking classes are essential to assist children in understanding the importance and ease that comes with speaking in front of an audience.

The real question then is, where can students get access to such classes? The answer can be very vague, as public speaking is not as prevalent of a learning concept when compared to other subjects. Personally, starting speech classes in the 3rd grade, I attended separate classes from an academy in Los Angeles. However, I recall classes getting costly, and in the present moment, I ask myself: What about those who cannot afford these classes?

Fortunately, progressive efforts are developing to address such fears during adolescence. Some high schools and colleges provide courses and clubs on public speaking, as they are aware of the inaccessibility of outside classes. Specifically, my school, Oxford Academy, offers a Speech & Debate club that is open to grades 7th to 12th. Over the years, the club's recognition and participation by members has been increasing. The club offers not just speech guidance but also competitive debate, such as Public Forum and Lincoln Douglas, for students who want to take a step further in confronting a fear or developing a passion for public speaking. The club allows students to take part in annual competitions, where numerous schools from various districts come together to show the skills they learn. Furthermore, not only are such clubs/courses extremely educational, but they also allow students to see excitement and determination for public speaking. This becomes a wonderful opportunity for students to address any social fears they may have and even seek a good out of it.

Student Reporter

Crumbl Cookie Craze? Is it Worth It?



Kevin Lee
Grade 11
Sunny Hills High School

From the moment you walk into a Crumbl Cookies store, the aroma of baked treats hits you, transporting your mind into a snug and cozy bakery. With its signature pink boxes and oversized, gourmet cookies, Crumbl is the number one dessert destination for people nationwide.

What started as a small family business has exploded into a nationwide phenomenon. But with all the hype surrounding the sweet sensation, the question remains: Is Crumbl really worth the price?

Started in 2017 in Utah, Crumbl Cookies, the rapidly growing cookie franchise, features new flavors of cookies every week. Known for its oversized cookies and ever-changing flavor lineup, this bakery sensation is prevalent in different social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, each featuring posts showing the rotating flavors.

The company has cultivated a dedicated fanbase across the United States. With locations popping up in cities nationwide and its Instagram account having millions of followers, the seven-year-old cookie company has taken the desert world by storm with its striking packaging and revolving flavors.

Advocates of the sweet delight at Sunny Hills High School cite the company's innovative



Although some may say that the cookies from Crumbl are overpriced, the size and flavor of them may be considered worth the price.
[Source: Author, Kevin Lee]

approach to its menu as the factor to its success. However, each oversized cookie, spanning 4.25 inches in diameter and ranging

in many different flavors, costs \$4.99.

Despite the price, once people take a bite, they usually keep

going back to get more. "The mildly expensive price started to make a little more sense when I saw how much bang you were getting for your buck," blogger Athena Scalizi said. However, there are those who think the price is too much. "I tried all 6 cookies this week and none of them make me want to go back again," Reddit user Plus Lemon 7424 said. "They are all way too sweet [and] I was just not impressed."

Despite the mixed opinions on the price, Crumbl's appeal continues to grow. The brand's social media presence keeps getting stronger, and the company is constantly expanding into new markets all over the nation.

As customers eagerly wait for the release of the newest cookie flavors every week, Crumbl's innovative marketing strategies, such as its limited-time promotions and collaborations, keep fans coming back for more.

"I'd constantly see Crumbl videos online, and they looked so appealing, so I suggested we eat it at our weekly Science Olympiad practices — now, it's a go-to snack," high school student Rhea Ji said, who estimates that she has spent \$210 on the company since October.

So, to answer the question: Is Crumbl really worth the price? For those with a sweet tooth, the small treat is worth every penny.

Student Reporter

LAUSD Bans Phones During Class Hours



Justin Kim
Grade 10
Science Academy
STEM Magnet

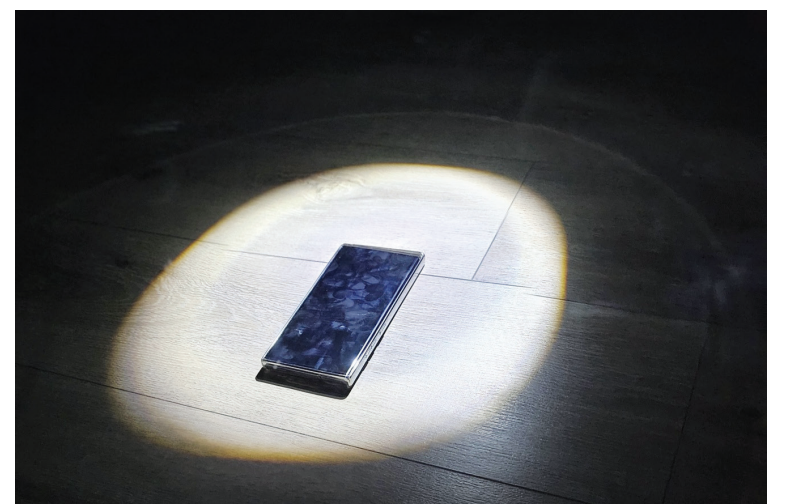
Are you allowed to use your phone during your school hours? Do any of your teachers take your phone away if you're using them within the school building whether it is break time or not? On the 18th of February, LAUSD will begin enforcing a policy that requires students to turn off their phones and other electronic devices and store them in their backpacks. This is aimed at refraining students from being active on their phones all the time and getting students to stay focused on tasks instead of having to worry about what's on their devices.

At my school, phones must always stay in our backpacks except for at lunchtime. We can't have our phones in our pockets. One student had his phone confiscated in the hallway even though only the outline of his phone from his pocket was showing. According to the Student Vice President of our school, he said, "The school ban for LAUSD should be lifted as it only worsens students' experiences. LAUSD should reinstate the

usage of phones district-wide." As a fellow student, I agree and oppose the policy, but I acknowledge the benefits of the new policy LAUSD is implementing.

One benefit the new policy brings to the students is that our focus on schoolwork may improve significantly. I still see many of my classmates during class hours texting their friends and hiding their phones right before the teacher comes. Since the new policy will be enforced across the entirety of LAUSD, I believe that fewer students will continue using their phones and will be extra engaged in class. This will help students improve their concentration levels, reduce their anxiety levels, and potentially earn better grades.

However, some negative aspects of this new phone policy may include the anxiety experienced by students not being able to use their phones during breaks. Also, many parts of schools do not have surveillance cameras which allows bullies to harass other students without any evidence. The victim will not



The spotlight within the darkness of the students being disappointed that phones will no longer be permitted within school hours.
[Source: Author, Justin Kim]

have any proof of being bullied and the bullies will not be served justice for what they have done to the poor student. In case of emergencies such as an earthquake or a fire, our parents may be worried as they won't be able to contact us until the end of the school day, or even later when our school can send out voice-

mails to the family members of all the students.

Many students district-wide, including myself, who are against our school district banning phones within our campuses will be disappointed that phones will no longer be allowed during school hours, but this policy may be for the greater good.