

## Editors Column

## Sally Ride Comes to School



Erin Ryu

Grade 11  
Harvard-Westlake School

A student panel was held at the screening of SALLY, made up of girls representing different STEM and affinity clubs. [Source: Author, Erin Ryu]

The documentary “SALLY” delves deeply into the life of Sally Ride, the first American woman in space, while also shedding light on her personal journey, particularly her relationship with fellow scientist Tam O’Shaughnessy. This exploration goes beyond Ride’s groundbreaking achievements in space exploration and reveals the emotional dimensions of her life, including her struggles and triumphs as a woman in a male-dominated field. The film weaves together themes of resilience, love, and the pursuit of knowledge, making it not just a biography but a celebration of

representation and mentorship.

As a leader of the Women in STEM club at school, I, along with other club leaders from the Astrophysics Club, Robotics, and GSA, was able to watch “SALLY,” prompting us to reflect on the challenges faced by women in fields often dominated by men. Sally Ride’s remarkable career began at a time when societal expectations often limited women’s roles in science and technology. As an alumna of Westlake School, the all-girls school before it merged with Harvard School to create Harvard-Westlake, Sally was able to find her passion



Harvard-Westlake School screened the film “SALLY,” a documentary about the first female American astronaut, Sally Ride, and her relationship with Tam O’Shaughnessy. [Source: Harvard-Westlake School]

in science alongside a supportive group of sisters.

Participating in a panel discussion, where we interviewed the director and producer of the documentary, along with Sally’s sister, Bear Ride, was an enlightening experience. Hearing firsthand accounts of Sally’s journey embellished the film’s narrative. The director and producer spoke passionately about their commitment to portraying not just Ride’s scientific accomplishments, but also her personal relationships. They emphasized how critical it was

to represent Ride as a whole person—an accomplished astronaut, a loving partner, and a devoted advocate for education in STEM.

Bear Ride’s insights added a rich layer to the discussion. She highlighted Sally’s dedication to inspiring future generations, particularly girls and young women. As someone who is also part of the LGBTQ+ community, Bear was able to give first-hand accounts of the discrimination she and Sally faced during the late 1980s.

Reflecting on this documentary and our discussion, I felt a renewed sense of motivation as someone who aspires to work in the aerospace field and become an astronaut one day. Sally Ride represents more than an iconic figure in aviation; her story is a reminder of the value of passion, perseverance, and compassion. It’s crucial to carry forward her legacy by advocating for diversity and inclusion in science and technology fields. For many of us in the audience that day, Sally’s story was not merely historical; it was a call to action. With a legacy that encourages women to pursue their interests in STEM, “SALLY” solidifies Sally Ride’s status as a trailblazer for future generations, reminding us that one’s personal journey can intertwine with professional achievements, paving the way for others in profound ways.

## Student Reporter

## USC’s Ice Bucket Challenge: Awareness or Performance?

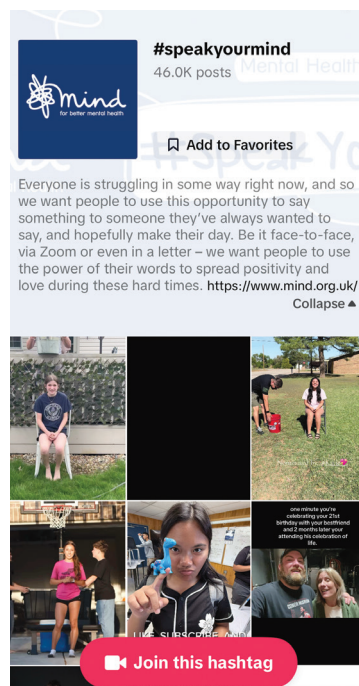


Dana Rhee

Grade 11  
La Canada High School

Lately, my social media feed has been flooded with people taking part in the Ice Bucket Challenge, tagging others to join in the thrill of an icy plunge. Without context, it may appear to be some kind of social media gimmick designed to grab attention—dramatic splashes make for entertaining reactions after all. For those who are unfamiliar, here is how it works: Once nominated, the participant must post a video within 24 hours of themselves, dumping ice water over their head or make a donation for research purposes. In the video, the person has the opportunity to pass the challenge on, encouraging others to do the same. Yet, despite its ubiquitous reach, at the end of the day, the challenge raises the question of whether it is effectively raising awareness and fostering change or just a performative trend. Oftentimes, the cause can be diluted and swept up in the tide of virality that comes with it.

Some may remember a similar challenge that took place in



People who are nominated for the USC Speak Your Mind Ice Bucket Challenge can partake in the trend on popular social media platforms using the hashtag to bring awareness. [Source: Author, Dana Rhee]

the summer of 2014. The original Ice Bucket Challenge was a fundraising campaign to support research for ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), a progressive neurological disorder with no known cure at the time. The viral challenge managed to raise \$115 million to invest in ALS research and care due to its wide-reaching impact—participants ran the gamut from everyday people to well-known figures and celebrities. The Speak Your Mind Ice Bucket Challenge started similarly, with the intent to raise awareness for mental health by students from the University of South Carolina’s Mental Illness Needs Discussion (MIND) Club. By tagging @uscmind and using the #SpeakYourMIND, it brings people to the club’s page, where they can donate to a nonprofit organization called Active Minds, which organizes campaigns intending to normalize conversations about mental health. So far, it has been successful in raising nearly \$200,000 towards its mis-

sion.

While the Speak Your Mind Challenge is an important step in initiating conversations surrounding mental health, it is essential not to lose sight of the cause, which can lead to performative activism. Actions can be an integral way of showing symbolic support and creating a sense of solidarity within a community, like people wearing pink ribbons during Breast Cancer Awareness Month or students wearing red bracelets during Red Ribbon Week to pledge a drug-free lifestyle. I am not arguing to cancel popular trends but to bring intentionality back. While some may feel compelled to join in on the trend for attention or fear they will be seen as unsupportive if they do not participate, a simple line mentioning the cause before drenching yourself can certainly make an impact. While increased visibility leads to awareness, that’s just the beginning. It’s the ability to drive tangible action that leads to lasting change.

## Student Reporter

## Planning the 2025 PROM at Oxford Academy



Nicole Lee

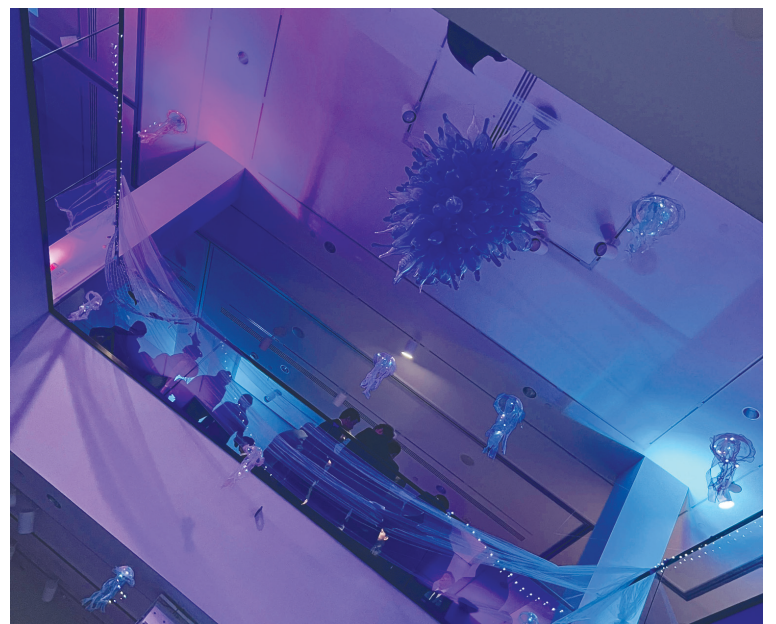
Grade 11  
Oxford Academy

“Which bouquet here matches my dress the most?” “Who’s driving us to the venue?” April 12, 2025: The day when all juniors and seniors are bustling and chattering. The endless, exciting worries and curiosity are heard from left and right as Oxford Academy prepares for the 2025 Prom! With prom dances contributing as one of the largest and most memorable events of every school year, there are often high expectations placed on them. And one may wonder, “To whom exactly?” It is towards the Junior Class Committee, who take the role of coordinating and planning the OA Prom every year. There is no time for this 15-member committee to worry about their dresses, bouquets, and photoshoots. This was their day of action in which they proved their finest capabilities.

Since Prom was not just a one-day process, the Junior Class Committee had been working on every single detail for nearly five months. Whether it was logistics, decorations, or budgeting, the Junior Class Committee had the responsibility of sorting out all aspects of the event. Through weekly meetings and discussions with advisors and DJ companies, this process required a great amount of communication. The next step was publicity—of course, a Prom dance is large, but it does not start

that way. The Junior Class Committee collaborated and asked themselves: “In what unique ways can we attract more students to come?” Through observations and feedback on the target audience, publicizing on social media and school grounds soon became a busy task. However, in the end, through the hard work of the committee’s publicists, the event soon reached a count of nearly 300 students, which greatly exceeded the beginning goal.

Having the experience of planning such a grand event came with lots of learning, obstacles, and successes. To start off with challenges, many revolved around the management of time and small details. Of course, this committee consisted of juniors, who were still occupied with their own academic lives. As the students fell deep into great amounts of homework and exams, time flew, and the time for planning got shorter and shorter, arousing fear and nervousness. Additionally, small details were extremely essential. With such a great number of participants, it was a necessity to have a plan for every minute of the event. Whether it was the dance, the food, or the photo taking areas, it was the committee that had to plan the facility layouts, the specific costs of every piece of decor, how to craft



By working around the theme “An Evening in Atlantis,” the Junior Class Committee made it their top priority to create a very oceanic aesthetic. By working their ways through lots of planning, crafting, and collaborating, they were successfully able to reach this goal! [Source: Author, Nicole Lee]

the decor, and many other things. Needless to say, this process had its moments of overwhelmingness. However, what comes with struggles comes with its successes. These feelings were nearly forgettable, as the feelings of triumph and relief flooded in. Cheers were cheered, compliments were given, and appreciative feelings were spread between the attendants and committee members as they

expressed their gratitude for the hard work produced.

The planning of a large event becomes a one-in-a-lifetime experience full of hard work, learning, and triumph. Being given this opportunity has brought true great impacts, and in the end, with the combinations of collaboration, communication, and dedication, an amazing 2025 Prom was formed and remembered.



Student Reporter

My Trip to Camp Rotary Youth Leadership Awards



Justitn Kim  
Grade 10  
Science Academy  
STEM Magnet



Everyone who participated in RYLA had an amazing experience, and I, personally, cannot wait for the next.  
[Source: Author, Justin Kim]

The Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, also known as RYLA, is a leadership camp hosted by Rotary District 5280. This was a two-night, three-day camp consisting of campers from 6th to 12th grade. The campers and leaders were from Rotary clubs all over the district. This camp helps to provide campers with building communication skills, as well as working together as a team to come up with a plan and solve problems.

On the first day of camp, my friends who were in the same Rotary club as I was arrived at the

campsite around 10 am and met up with other campers, where we then had an icebreaker activity. I was able to introduce myself and learn the names of a few other campers. Then we were introduced to the rules at the Hall, and then we ate lunch. During lunch, we were assigned to different tables for all our meals, and we always ate with new people; we were not able to eat with our friends we knew, which was unfortunate.

After lunch, we were assigned to groups of completely new people

I had never met and had to work together on team-building activities. My group consisted of 6 people, including me, and we were very interactive. We were assigned to the trust fall station first, where one person had to fall off a haystack, and the rest of the people had to catch the person falling off with a tarp. It seemed a bit scary, but it was fun. Second, as a group, we had to bring a stick to the ground with all of our fingers touching the stick at all times. This was very hard, as one person let their fin-

gers slip off the stick. Lastly, we had to transport balls from one bin to another bin, acting as the dumpster. We were not able to touch the basket and only used sticks attached to it. It was hard, but we were able to transport all the balls very quickly. After we parted ways and ate dinner, then played mafia in our cabin till we slept.

On the next day, we had an optional morning yoga session, ate breakfast, and learned about digital healthcare from Lindsey Glass. We learned how the internet can affect our behavior in various ways and that it is important not to be influenced by too much of the world that you do not know in real life. Then, after our lunch, we were assigned to different groups from the previous day for the RYLA Olympics. With the team, we played many games such as ultimate frisbee, bean bag throw + jenga relay, basketball tic-tac-toe, and much more.

On our last day, we had an egg dropping competition to see which team could have their egg survive the fall. My group from yesterday managed to keep our egg alive by building a triangular shield. We ate our last meal and headed back home. It was a great experience, and I wish too have another like this in the future.

Student Reporter

OUR HOUSE 5K Uplifts Grieving Families in LA



Summer Park  
Grade 10  
Harvard-Westlake School



The OUR HOUSE 5K Walk and Remember was an amazing experience where money was able to be raised, and people could come together and not be alone in their grief.  
[Source: Author, Summer Park]

On Sunday, April 27th, hundreds of people participated in the OUR HOUSE 5K Walk & Remember event in Woodley Park and Lake Balboa. What better way to serve the community than with a nice, relaxing 5K Sunday morning walk on a beautiful day with friends and family?

OUR HOUSE, a non-profit organization, has provided grief support to individuals, schools, and businesses in the Los Angeles area since 1993. Their vision of OUR HOUSE is “To create a world where grief is embraced, understood, and respected.” Over 250 trained and supervised volunteers serve for more than 17,000 hours of their time every year. The education program is part of the curricula for students at USC’s Keck and UCLA’s David Geffen Schools of Medicine and the American Jewish University.

The motivation behind hosting this annual walk is the belief that “no one should walk the path of grief alone,” and the message really inspired me. Tyler Park, one of the participants, said that “My friend invited me to join him in this 5K walk to remember relatives of people who have

fallen. I came with my mom and walked with her; talked to people, got some cookies, and enjoyed the company of my friends.” All families have encountered grief, whether it was in the past or recently, and it must be reassuring to know that there are others who share in their pain and are there for them during these trying times. This event also raises funds to support OUR HOUSE’s grief support programs to make sure no one grieves alone.

Aside from the cause and mission, doing something rewarding can be even more enjoyable in the company of friends and family members. Tyler Park reported, “I learned that beyond the current volunteer opportunities I have, which I’ve mostly been doing by myself. It’s incredibly rewarding and fun to engage in volunteer work alongside my best friends and family.”

I look forward to participating in future annual walks, not just for the Girl Scout’s Cookies but also for the camaraderie with close friends and family members enjoying a nice 5K stroll or jog united in a great cause, to make sure no one ever grieves alone.

Student Reporter

KAC MUN Redefines Leadership for AAPI Youth



Rachel Choi  
Grade 9  
Orange County School  
of the Arts



At USC, the KAC MUN family comes together to compete and grow, honing skills that will last a lifetime.  
[Source: Jeany Choi]

Model UN (MUN) often feels like a race for prestige with the crisp suits, rehearsed speeches, and a fixation on awards. But at the Korean American Coalition (KAC), it’s something far more meaningful. At KAC MUN, diplomacy is not just about representing a nation, but also about representing yourself. This is where policy meets identity, and Korean American and Asian American students are taught to lead with their stories instead of putting them aside. This is the only year-round Model UN program in Los Angeles County designed to highlight and uplift the unique backgrounds, making KAC MUN not only rare but necessary.

Established in 2006, KAC MUN is a program grounded in the legacy of the Korean American Coalition, a nonprofit organization that has championed civic participation, leadership, and cross-cultural solidarity since 1983. Its roots run deep, born from a community with both resilience and resistance. The spirit lives on through every delegate who enters a room not to perform, but to participate fully — with history, heart, and purpose.

Under the leadership of

Mindy Yi and Jeany Choi, students engage in weekly virtual classes and monthly in-person workshops. Members attend conferences, draft original resolutions, and execute an annual community advocacy project. They also organize their own student-run internal MUN conference, where members step into the roles of not just delegates, but educators, organizers, and innovators. However, what truly sets KAC MUN

apart isn’t the structure. It is the culture.

Students aren’t expected to compete with one another, but are rather asked to challenge themselves, think critically, speak courageously, and connect the global to the personal. Delegates do not simply discuss policy; they carry generational narratives into their arguments, often drawing from immigrant experiences that shape how they see the world. A

resolution, to them, is not a task. It is a chance to rewrite stories of exclusion. This program both sharpens the skills of the youth they serve while instilling lifelong values. It builds a generation that sees leadership not as a spotlight, but as service. KAC MUN is more than just a program. It is a declaration that our voices matter, our stories belong, and our presence in global conversations is not optional; It is overdue.