

Student Reporter

Junior Athletes for Community Care Box Project



Andrew Jun

Grade 11
Valley Christian High School

JAC members at San Jose City Center proudly showcase one of the Care Boxes that were given out during their latest project. [Source: Author, Andrew Jun]

What started as a response to the isolation of the pandemic has led to a powerful youth-led movement for environmental and social good in the Bay Area. Junior Athletes for Community (JAC), an organization founded by local high school students, was born from a desire to foster connection during a time of solitude while simultaneously tackling the pervasive issue of ecologi-

cal pollution in our region. As a co-founder and leader of JAC, I've had the privilege of witnessing our dedication transform into tangible impact.

When the movement was created, JAC regularly organized biweekly cleanup events at local parks and rivers, mobilizing over thirty volunteers who collectively removed pounds of garbage. These cleanups were not just

about picking up trash; they were about creating a sense of shared responsibility and community among our participants.

In addition to the environmental efforts made by the group, JAC also ran sports clinics. These clinics went beyond athletic training, specifically focusing on teaching invaluable lessons in teamwork and discipline, recognizing that these qualities are crucial for effective environmental stewardship.

What began as a small, localized effort has now expanded. Today, JAC is located with its headquarters in Silicon Valley and has established two new chapters in Seattle and Contra Costa County, with plans to grow even further. Although JAC was making an impact, the group was determined to do more. This commitment led to the launch of our newest initiative this year: the "Care Box" Project. This project is specifically designed to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness or facing financial hardship by providing essential hygienic materials. We understood that access to basic hygiene products, such as soap, toothbrushes, sanitary products, and hand wipes, is essen-

tial to human dignity. Our team thoughtfully assembled 12 care boxes, each designated for delivery to a different community center or shelter in urgent need of resources. Indeed, we have already seen the impact these boxes have made. On May 16, 2025, we proudly delivered Care Box #3 to the City Team San Jose Shelter, where it now serves as a vital source of hygiene and dignity for those seeking shelter and support. On the following day, May 17, Care Box #6 was placed at the Oakland Senior Center, offering both hygienic materials and donuts to vulnerable elderly residents. Each delivery represents a small but meaningful step toward restoring hope and humanity within our community.

As we look to the future, the JAC team remains fully dedicated to expanding the Care Box Project, ensuring that it continues to reach more people, in more places, with each passing year. We are committed to building on our momentum and continuing to make a difference in the lives of those who need it most. If you are interested in joining or learning more about our community events, you can find more info on jrathletes4community.org.

Student Reporter

How to Spend the Best Summer Break



Harin Lee

Grade 8
Vista Verde K-8

When school lets out and the final bell rings, summer break officially begins, but not every teen has a plane ticket or a big budget. That is not to say that summer cannot still be wonderful. With a little creativity, anyone can have the ideal summer without traveling far or spending a fortune.

One thing to do is to start by checking local attractions. Public places, such as libraries and community centers, have free or low-priced activities and meetings for teenagers. These activities can include art lessons, movie nights, small concerts, and athletic competitions. The activities welcome everyone regardless of their skill level and are an effective way to meet new people, learn something new, and have fun.

Local teens are already making plans to enjoy the summer without having to leave the town. Chloe Lee, an incoming 9th grader, said, "I'm planning to take a local writing class to be better prepared for high school. Honestly, hanging out with friends at the beach or having sleepovers are some of my favorite summer memories." These simple activities demonstrate how summer can be both enjoyable and mean-



Spending a summer evening by the lake is perfect for a sunset picnic with friends and nature, and is affordable on a budget. [Source: Author, Harin Lee]

ingful without incurring significant expenses or requiring travel.

Summer is also an excellent time to explore hobbies and earn money through small jobs. Such activities could be babysitting,

peer tutoring, mowing lawns, pet-sitting, or selling crafts made online. All these are some great ways to keep oneself occupied while earning some money. The activities can also serve as life les-

sons, such as time management and responsibility.

The summer is also a great time for personal growth and enrichment. You can volunteer at a local shelter or food bank, get involved in a neighborhood cleanup event, or try a free online class. These events can enhance resumes and allow for new experiences, and help you feel more connected with your community.

Free fun is attainable! You can participate in activities such as bike riding on local trails, picnicking in a park, having a game night with friends, sunset hiking, or starting a new summer photo challenge. These methods are just simple ways to enjoy yourself and create memories that will last a lifetime.

The best summer isn't just about going on a big trip, but it is about making the most of what you have. Whether you try something new, hang out with your friends, or work towards a goal, you can have your dream summer wherever you are. So, this summer, put the focus on what really matters: fun, friendship, and appreciating the little things surrounding you; no big budgets required.

Student Reporter

Discovering the Murals of Koreatown



Dana Rhee

Grade 11
La Canada High School

Mural paintings are a striking way of preserving cultural and historical identity. They can transform the cityscape with vibrant strokes of color that span across blank stretches of concrete, and in doing so, they give life to the static surface, which is the city. These larger-than-life artworks create a sense of security by attracting visitors and uniting the community, inviting people to participate in the feelings of pride and belonging. In historical examples, murals have long stood as an enduring symbol of artistic resistance, such as with the Berlin Wall, and also as a way to reclaim cultural identity, as shown in "The Great Wall of Los Angeles" during the Chicano Movement. Especially with the cultural richness that makes up Koreatown, murals are a crossroad that reflects a layered community consisting of diverse groups and intersecting identities.

When passing by Intercrow, an event venue on Wilshire Blvd, I saw a mural on the side of the building, featuring two women in hanbok—one with fair skin and the other with a deeper complexion—a striking image to view, as it was uncommon to see traditional Korean attire depicted in this way. The name of the man who painted the mural is Chris Changyang Shim, who goes by his artist's han-



Chris Chanyang Shim, also known as "Royal Dog," is an artist who is known for his depictions of African-American women in traditional Korean hanboks. [Source: Author, Dana Rhee]

dle, "Royal Dog." Although he has received attention for painting notable African American figures such as Tupac Shakur, Kobe Bryant, and Kendrick Lamar, he has also gained praise for connecting the Korean and African-American communities by using urban street art to feature black women in hanboks. I interpreted his art as showing how marginalized communities can find common ground through the power of resilience and shared experiences.

Though Shim tends to focus on realism and detailed, lifelike portrayals, Andrew Hem is another artist who focuses on ethereal



Andrew Hem's "This is Home" mural was commissioned to prevent hate against Asian communities during the pandemic. [Source: Author, Dana Rhee]

works that walk the line between reality and dreamlike fantasy. He plays with perspective and scenery, and there is a vivid vibrancy that exudes from his work. On the Korean American Federation of Los Angeles (KAFLA) building wall, Hem painted the anti-hate mural called "This is Home," depicting a Korean woman in a hanbok with storm clouds that dissipate in the background. With the rise of Anti-Asian hate during the pandemic, the mural was a symbol of awareness and solidarity in the face of adversity.

When I look at the canvas of Koreatown, I see not just visually

captivating works of art but also a reflection of a shared community and identity. Murals serve as a space for people to find common ground through themes depicted in the artwork, whether that be through heritage and cultural identity, such as Shim's works, which blend aspects of Korean and Black culture, or collective aspirations, shown in Hem's works, which hopes to prevent future discrimination and divisions. In a multicultural neighborhood like Koreatown, murals are a keen reminder of how communities with distinct identities can coexist and overcome their differences.

Student Reporter

Keeping a Healthy Diet in a Processed World



Christine Baek
Grade 11
Western Reserve Academy



After realizing how unhealthy my diet had become, I started making meals that had a balance of proteins, vegetables, carbohydrates, and healthy fats to get back on track. [Source: Author, Christine Baek]

McDonald's, Cane's, Starbucks, Dairy Queen, and back to McDonald's – these were my past DoorDash orders leading up to finals week. What came with finals was not just academic stress and headaches, but also a huge craving for junk food. Not only that, the dining

hall's attempt to empty its food storage before the end of the year has not helped my effort to keep from buying food. As a result, by the start of the summer, I had gained three pounds, and my diet was out of control.

According to the Oxford Dic-

tionary, a diet is defined as such: the kinds of food that a person, animal, or community habitually eats. In the modern world we live in, the dietary scheme has drifted away from ideal healthiness. With more emphasis on convenience and cheaper prices, meals today are often overloaded with processed carbohydrates and sugar. A typical American meal consists of more than 250g of carbohydrates, which is twice as much as the recommended amount of carbohydrate intake. Over half of the total dietary energy consumed in the US is made up of junk food, or ultra-processed food in particular; and is associated with increased risks of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Likewise, there is a need to raise awareness of the dangers that come with these destructive dietary patterns.

To address this issue of dietary concern, one that I had been personally struggling with, I decided to spend the first week of my summer fixing my diet and cooking my own healthy and tasty meals. Before I began, I first reflected on my unhealthy dietary habits during the concluding weeks of school. I had very inconsistent meal times, often skipping meals and ordering delivery food late in the evening, and barely had

any greens on my plate. One of the first changes I made was to make sure every meal had a balance. I filled my plates with a mix of protein, carbohydrates, and vegetables. I also kept myself from ordering delivery food or eating outside; instead, I cooked at home. Since I was not a very experienced cook, I stuck to simple recipes like salad and frying vegetables. I also started eating at consistent times instead of skipping meals and relying on snacks late at night. What I've noticed about myself over the course of the week is exciting. I felt more refreshed in the mornings when I woke up, and I didn't feel drowsy anymore after my meals, since I reduced the amount of carbohydrates in my diet. I also no longer strongly craved snacks in between my meals since I wasn't too hungry. At the end of the week, I had lost the three pounds I gained during finals week and felt much better overall. One thing I learned is that healthy eating isn't just about dieting but also about building habits. There is no need to completely cut down on the food you like, but be aware of what you are eating and if that meal is balanced. It's not too late to start again: your next meal is a good place to begin.

Student Reporter

Summer Break... or Summer School?

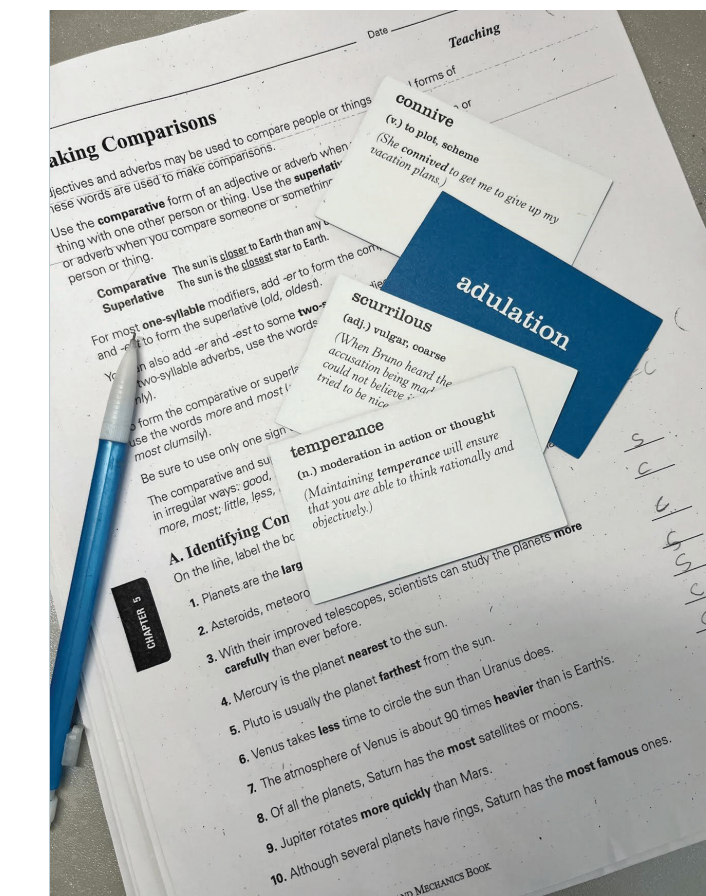


Grace Song
Grade 7
Lexington Junior High School

When the final bell rings in June to signal the end of school, most students throw down their backpacks in a corner and prepare for late mornings, sunny pool days, and freedom from school. No more homework, no more tests, no more waking up early. It's a break many students look forward to all year. However, for other students, summer break means more tutoring sessions, test prep, and self-studying.

As the pressure to succeed in school increases, more students are trading in pool days for tutoring. From SAT prep to Math and English classes, the line between school and vacation is starting to blur. Some students even have more rigorous study schedules than they did in school, filled with more homework, tests, and classes.

"I have classes from 3-6 every day," said 7th grader Megan Min. "We do SAT prep, writing, book club, and packets." Many other students, such as Megan, find themselves at an academy every day, studying and preparing for future tests. "My parents think it's important for me to stay ahead," Megan acknowledged. This mindset is becoming quite common. For some parents, summer is seen as a valuable time to gain an academic edge before the next school year begins. They worry that a full



Stacks of summer work and test prep are becoming a common part of summer break for many students. [Source: Author, Grace Song]

summer break will lead their children to lose valuable academic skills and knowledge. To prevent this, they sign their kids up for

tutoring sessions or online courses to keep their brains active. "I want my child to be prepared for the next grade and feel confident

in their skills," says parent Dong Hee Kim. But does everyone agree with this approach? "Summer should be a time to relax and have fun after all the stress school brought," said 7th grader Erin Park. Many students often feel burnt out or overwhelmed after a full school year of tests, projects, and homework. Summer, for them, is a time to recharge and have fun, whether that is by hanging out with friends, going to the beach, reading books, or doing many other things they consider fun. However, it doesn't always have to be one or the other: Rigorous studying or no studying. Summer is about maintaining a balance and doing what feels right for you. "I'm taking a two-week camp on biology," says Eleanor Cho. "But for the rest of the summer, I get to relax. I think it's nice I get to improve on what I enjoy while also having free time." Experts say this is a healthy schedule. Challenging the brain, along with recharging and relaxing. In the end, whether you're solving algebra problems or learning to surf, the most important thing is to listen to yourself. A healthy summer doesn't mean doing nothing, or everything, it means finding balance and doing what's best for you.

Student Reporter

Experiencing the Biggest Baseball Stadium in the World



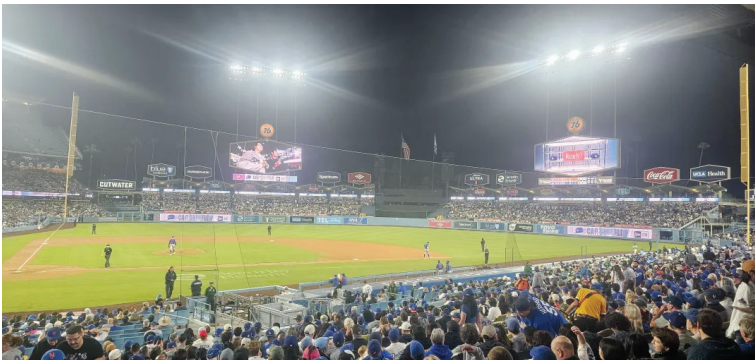
Justin Kim
Grade 10
Science Academy STEM Magnet



My seat at the Dodger game, along with my Korean Fried Chicken Bowl that I bought from one of the concession stands at the center field of Dodger Stadium, has a great view of the stadium. [Source: Author, Justin Kim]

Dodger Stadium is the third-oldest and largest baseball stadium in the world, and can hold up to 56,000 fans. Located in Elysian Park, a neighborhood in Los Angeles, California, the stadium took approximately three years to build, from 1959 to 1962. Dodger Stadium went through a huge renovation in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. A plaza was built at center field, featuring a playground for children, a sports bar, and additional concession stands, including "Shake Shack." The stadium boasts some of the best attractions in

all of the Sports Stadiums, and I believe that everyone should visit it at least once in their lifetime. One thing I noticed on my recent visit to Dodger Stadium was the dedication of the fans, many showing up 2 hours before game time. I recommend visitors come ahead of time and take a walk to see the various types of food the stadium has to offer. There is also the Dodgers Team Store where they sell Dodgers merchandise, such as baseball caps, mugs, shirts, jerseys of all the players, and many other fan-loved items.



Dodger Stadium at night, with all the seats filled with fans, is an experience I encourage all to have one day. [Source: Author - Justin Kim]

As I mentioned, Dodger Stadium has the highest seat capacity of any baseball stadium in the world and has averaged 50,275 fans visiting per game in the current 2025 season. To put this into perspective, the New York Yankees have the second-highest fans visiting per game, with an attendance of 42,406 fans. During the game, visitors will be chanting and cheering along with the 50,000 fans. People from all over the country come to Los Angeles to watch the Dodgers play. I asked one of the guest services employees

about his experience working at Dodger Stadium, and he stated, "It's fun as there are tons of staff members I can meet and all the fans I help to guide." His favorite moments while working at Dodger Stadium were when the team was doing well, and he could enjoy the good vibes with the fans and give them a high five. Dodger Stadium is one of the major landmarks here in Los Angeles. It is very entertaining regardless of whether you know baseball or not, and I highly recommend visiting with your friends to have a great time!