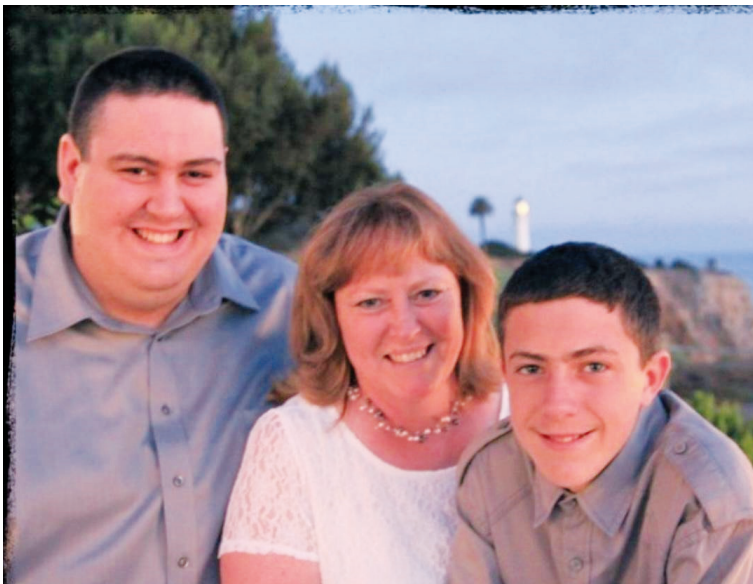


Student Reporter

Joseph Torres: Rising Through Loss



Olivia Lee
Grade 9
South High School



Joseph Torres [right] with his mother[middle] and brother at his cousin's wedding when he was young. [Source: Joseph Torres]

At just 28 years old, Joseph Torres has faced a lot of adversity. From losing his father and brother before he was 20 years old to taking on significant responsibilities as his grandmother's primary caregiver, Torres's life was anything but easy. Yet, what stands out isn't just the weight of his hardships, but his strength, resilience, and

willingness to help others. Torres never had the chance to meet his father. Two months before he was born, his dad passed away from electrocution on a job site, leaving his mom with the responsibility of raising two children on her own. Shortly after his 20th birthday, his older brother passed away from a pul-

monary embolism at 27 years old. Throughout his mid-20s, he took care of his grandmother in her final years of life. It wasn't until 27 years of age that he gained the freedom to work toward his own future.

One may wonder what types of challenges come with this much loss in life. Torres emphasized that his mom experienced pressure and handled it without much credit. "Mom did everything in her power to give us normal childhoods and a good education," Torres said. "But there is only so much you can do by yourself. She was given an impossible job and still did it well. But it certainly taught me the value of creating strong and reliable bonds built on trust later in life."

When asked if losing his brother was unexpected, Torres said, "The rest of my family—besides my uncle—had made me a cynical person over the years. There were a lot of false promises and times when it felt like I could only rely on a few people. Worst-case scenarios felt inevitable. I grew up having nightmares several times a week. Several of them had something with losing

a close relative. For whatever reason, those nightmares combined with my growing cynicism prepared me for my brother's death. My immediate response was not akin to a normal cycle. I had already internally accepted a lot of things that nobody should have to prepare for."

Despite growing up with a sense of cynicism and dread, Torres's life has been newly dedicated to helping others, especially those who have maintained support for him. "I had garnered a strong support group," Torres said. "My closest allies and I fostered healthy connections and ensured that we were always emotionally taken care of."

When asked who his key contributors were, he cited his mom and uncle, but Torres also wanted to acknowledge that, "There are two people who are like sisters to me and others who comprise my second family. They make life incredibly worthwhile even during the darkest times. We have developed so much as people because we have each other. And I don't want to waste the time that I have when my dad's and my brother's were cut short."

Student Reporter

Teens in Action: Project Joy at the Anaheim Health Fair



Grace Kim
Grade 11
Ruben S Ayala High School

On a sunny day at the Anaheim Health Fair, Ayala High School's Project Joy Club took center stage in promoting health awareness and wellness within the community. From 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, the students collaborated with healthcare professionals to share essential health education with attendees, building both medical literacy and hands-on experience in public health.

One of the key highlights of Project Joy's involvement was their work at the Girls' Health Kit booth. The booth quickly became a popular stop for visitors seeking educational materials and discussions on topics like menstruation, sexual health, and general well-being. Rather than simply handing out pamphlets, the students actively engaged with participants, leading interactive quizzes to raise awareness about menstruation and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). These activities sparked meaningful conversations and helped normalize dialogue around subjects that are often considered uncomfortable or taboo.

Throughout the day, the students noticed that many people lacked awareness about menstrual hygiene and STD prevention. I was surprised by how many individuals were uninformed about 'the basics,' such as how to properly manage menstrual health or protect themselves from STDs.



Project Joy members who attended the Anaheim Health Care Fair to help spread information about Girls' Health. [Source: Author, Grace Kim]

This experience showed the importance of extending health education and how events like the health fair play a key role in closing these knowledge gaps.

Beyond distributing information, the Project Joy members spent time connecting with healthcare professionals—nurses, doctors, public health experts, and counselors—who offered insights into the "behind-the-scenes" side of health care. Students learned how professionals work together to run outreach

programs, manage patient education, and adapt medical information to different audiences. Seeing the coordination and compassion that go into these roles gave them a deeper appreciation for the field's complexity and impact.

"I was able to ask questions and hear from people working in health every day. It was exciting to realize that this could be something I want to do in the future," said Sean Law, a Project Joy member. "It made me see how important it is to help people un-

derstand their health better."

For Ayala's Project Joy Club, the day was about more than volunteering—it was about stepping into the role of community advocates. Their participation at the Anaheim Health Fair demonstrated how teens can make a genuine difference in promoting wellness and awareness. Through education, curiosity, and collaboration, these students showed that meaningful public health change can start with the next generation.

Student Reporter

My First Solo 5k at the Cypress Run



Grace Song
Grade 8
Lexington Junior High School

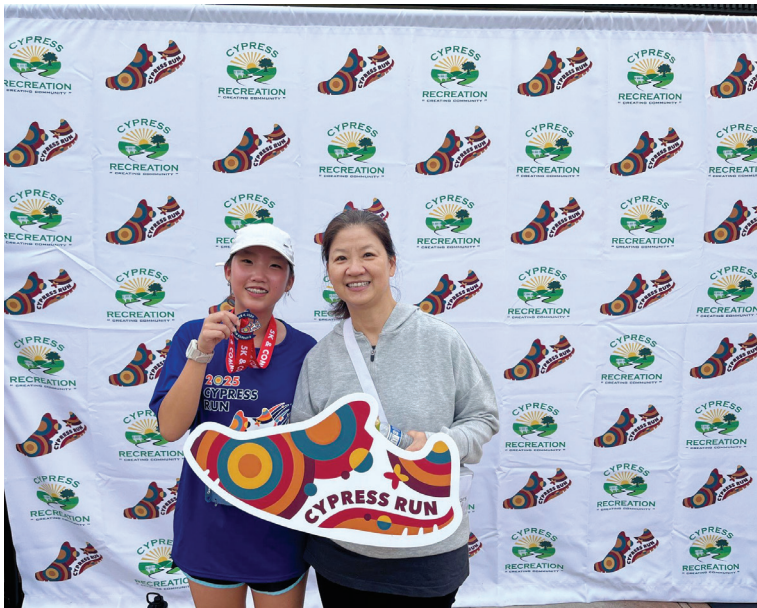
On the crisp Saturday morning of October 4th, 2025, the annual Cypress Run, a community event in Cypress, took place. Hundreds of runners laced up their shoes and waited at the starting line for an event that brought together family, friends, and athletes of all ages. The Cypress Run featured two options: a fast-paced Community Dash accompanied by a challenging 5k run, and a 5k walk. For many, this was an opportunity to celebrate fitness, build community, and challenge themselves. For me, however, it was something more - it was my first time running a 5k without my dad.

The 5k started at 7:00 am, so I arrived at the race location an hour early. The sky was still dim, the air brisk and cool. As I watched other runners pin their bibs to their shirts and warm up, I felt the nerves begin to kick in. In the past, whether I had been training for a 5k or simply running for fun, my dad had always been by my side, making sure I kept my pace and pushed myself. However, he had work on this particular Saturday, leaving me to run this one alone.

When the race started, the

energy was eccentric. The sound of sneakers hitting the pavement and laughter from families filled the air. I worried at first about my pace and whether I would be doing better if my dad were beside me. Then, gradually, as I fell into my rhythm, my problems and thoughts disappeared. The only thing that remained was me and the beat of my feet. Instead of focusing on the negative, I focused on the invigorating sound of cheers, the fresh breeze on my face, and the steady beat of my shoes.

The 5k course went through familiar neighborhoods and streets, with people from the Cypress community passing out water or cheering runners on along the way. Around the halfway point, my legs started feeling heavy, and my breath started to become uneven. This was when my worry crept in again, telling me that I wasn't good enough, that I wasn't going to make it to the end. However, as I looked around to see the happy couple running, or the dad and his daughter walking together, it reminded me that despite running our own races, we were still all in this together.



After my first 5k alone at the Cypress Run, I proudly held up my medal and took a picture with my mom. [Source: Cassidy Cheng]

As I neared the finish line, I picked up my pace and fixed my gaze ahead. Even though my legs were burning, and my breath was fast, my heart was light. Crossing that finish line was a moment I'll never forget. It meant I had done something I didn't think I could do. At the end, I was awarded a

commemorative medal, as my mom pulled me into a big hug. This event brought people of all ages together to celebrate courage, perseverance, and community. To me, this was more than just a race. It was an event that taught me to keep going even through uncertainty.

Editors Column

Nespresso’s Fall Flavors: The Season of “Gifting”?



Audrey Park
Grade 12
Northwood High School



Certain Nespresso flavors return every season by great demand, Pumpkin Spice and Pistachio Vanilla being frequent spotlights.
[Source: Audrey Park, Author]

Exchanging collectible trading cards or handmade bracelets is common. But in the world of millennial moms, there’s another alternative: trading Nespresso capsules.

I was first introduced to the practice when my mom informed me that she got a bundle of the pods in various flavors—unique

coffee to be brewed by Nespresso machines—and was looking forward to sharing them with her friends. With further inquiry, I discovered that she had been exchanging spare Nespresso capsules with friends for a few months in order to diversify their caffeine palates. And what better way is there to comprehensively

explain the process than to put it into the context of the Fall flavor collection?

In the past month, Nespresso released familiar selections like Pumpkin Spice and new, permanent concepts, such as Maple Pecan, onto its website. Immediately, my mom took to the online cart and purchased the bundle, also enticed by the freebies added into the order. When it arrived at her doorstep, she tore through the box and into its contents, which included the capsules and the free gift in question; with online orders, and some in-store purchases, you receive gifts. In the past, my mom has gotten an ice tray and a pastel green travel tumbler, which I’ve personally borrowed and enjoyed using. This season’s gift, however, was a Nespresso pod-storage jar. Although it cannot have measurable use, it has occupied a spot on the kitchen island with various capsules inside, a marker of her approval.

Throughout the past few weeks, my mother has been chipping away at the replenished inventory of capsules, which include the internationally renowned favorites mentioned

above and classics like Sweet Vanilla. In terms of taste, a lot of nutty and cinnamon flavors come through despite its initial bitterness. Its underlying sweetness brings back the same gusto I feel when I walk past the baked-goods section in a cafe. Furthermore, my mom’s favorite feature of the experience is the milky foam that collects at the top of the cup once it’s been roasted.

Beyond the flavor journey, though, she mostly appreciates the camaraderie that this shared experience brings when the capsules are exchanged with friends. During brunches and get-togethers at each other’s houses, everyone shares the different flavored pods that they purchased and makes new brews to try on the spot.

With the holiday season approaching, I have no doubt that families and friends across the country will gather to gift presents and create warm memories. In my mom’s circle, the same will be done, just over some coffee.

Now that the Fall collection is going out of stock, and the Festive flavors are available, one question remains: will you join the exchange?

Student Reporter

A Decade of Bulldog Spirit: Homecoming 2025



Ellie Kim
Grade 10
Portola High School

Each fall at Portola High, as students settle into their new classes and reconnect with old friends, the school environment buzzes with excitement. The crowds at football games begin to grow, and the energy in the stands becomes impossible to ignore. From Spirit Week to the actual dance, Homecoming Week is truly one of the most exciting and event-packed weeks of the school year.

Portola High School in Irvine, California, recently celebrated its 10th annual Homecoming. This milestone marks a decade of school spirit and community building. At Portola, the Friday of homecoming Spirit Week began with an energetic pep rally organized by ASB. ASB members arrived at 6 AM, before the sun had even risen, but I, as part of the team, could already feel the excitement building as the gym filled with balloons, posters, and music.

During the pep rally, cheer, dance company, and band all put on performances to get the crowd loud and excited. Adding to the excitement, KTLA News shone a spotlight on Portola by



Portola’s ASB gathers before the homecoming dance to celebrate all they’ve put together for an unforgettable week!
[Source: Author, Ellie Kim]

featuring it in its “School Spirit Spotlight” segment. They filmed the student section, ASB, and varsity athletes to highlight the energy of the Bulldog community. Students waved posters, followed along to chants, and showed their Bulldog pride as the cameras rolled.

Later that evening, the enthusiasm carried onto the field and

into the bleachers as the Bulldogs faced Katella High School. The stands were packed with students, parents, and alumni decked out in purple, the school color, with necklaces, shirts, tutus, and face paint. During halftime, each class council put on a dance to fit the Homecoming theme: Sing the Night Away (Disney musicals). The homecom-

ing court was also announced, and each member was walked down the field by their family or friends. The atmosphere was electric—a reflection of Portola’s growing school spirit in its tenth year.

The celebration didn’t end there; they carried on over to the next day. Although everyone stayed out late the night before for the football game, everyone was full of excitement and energy on homecoming day.

Before the Homecoming dance, students gathered in a neighborhood park to take pictures, catch up, and meet before going out to dinner. The dance itself was held at the school and had food trucks, a large area designated for dancing, and booming music that kept everyone moving. For many, it was the highlight of homecoming week—three hours of nonstop fun, laughter, and celebration. For some, their first Homecoming, and for many others, their last, the night perfectly wrapped up a week that captured the heart of Portola’s spirit, creating lasting memories for everyone who attended.

Student Reporter

4th Korean Language Scholarship Event



Caroline Lee
Grade 12
Beverly Hills High School

On October 4, 2025, the Korean Language Education Scholarship Foundation (KLESF) held its fourth ceremony to celebrate applicants, including students and teachers, who showed their efforts in spreading Korean culture. After a month of waiting, applicants learned that one teacher and 16 students were selected. To be considered for this scholarship, each applicant was required to submit their introduction and essay about their background or experiences.

The recipients of the scholarship were invited to an event, where the foundation worked to celebrate, connect, and motivate such individuals. The ceremony not only congratulated the teacher and students for their hard work, but also invited notable speakers to encourage conversation with the attendees. For example, Steve Kang, a commissioner of the city of Los Angeles’ Department of Public Works, shared about his pride in how much Korean culture has been exposed in the past decade by recalling how his personal stereotyped experiences in America, as a Korean student, contrasted with the positive experiences he sees Korean-American students facing today. Moreover, Kang mentioned the

expansion of Korean media, as he worked with large global corporations like Netflix, which boasted about the popularity of shows and movies. Ultimately, Kang encouraged students to pursue their dreams, even if they are unconventional, by including his experience of pursuing politics.

The most important result of these speakers was that students from all over the state and country were connecting with them as they shared their experiences. The new connections formed were especially apparent after selected students presented their speeches. For example, a student humorously shared his experience of finding his identity as a Korean through Korean popular culture. He further explained how he began to spread his culture by creating a club with 60 active members, despite his school having a population of 10 Koreans. After hearing this, many other students shared how they related to sharing their culture through clubs and how they had also reaffirmed their pride in their identity by seeing representation in media, not only in Korean, but globally.

Another student encouraged fellow recipients to chase their



Students settle in for the Korean Language Education Scholarship Foundation, while others prepare for their speech.
[Source: Author, Caroline Lee]

dreams and not to give up when things seem challenging. She expanded on how her dream of being a doctor had changed to being an artist and how the expectations of those around her often discouraged her. However, she explained that she had been working to challenge herself and continue forward, inspiring other students.

After these speeches, recipients were able to relax and

connect on a personal level as students shared a meal. With all the positive memories made, this scholarship not only played a role in supporting students who are actively chasing their dreams but also helped build connections and strengthen cultural bonds among attendees. With these bonds built, many left with the motivation to give back to the community that had also helped them.