

## Choir Brings Holiday Cheer to Local Senior Home



Summer Park  
Grade 11  
Harvard-Westlake School



A joyful afternoon of connection and photo time with seniors at Piedmont Senior Home. [Source: Author, Summer Park]

The Young Angels Choir performed a special holiday concert for the residents of Piedmont Senior Home in North Hollywood, California, at 4 P.M. on the 13th of December. Sweet familiar melodies, laughter, and holiday spirit reigned supreme at this event. This musical performance allowed for meaningful connections between people

across different generations, hometowns, and backgrounds. Many of the residents of Piedmont Senior Home gathered early in the common area with excitement and smiles, eager to partake in this holiday treat. The Young Angels Choir performed an array of seven songs that combined celebration with emotional depth. The

opening song, “Going Home,” established a contemplative tone. The next song, “Why We Sing,” served as an important reminder of the role of music in expressing a full range of emotion from joy to pain to hope. The choir director, Choi Won Hyun, gathered the choir members before the start to motivate each performer to do their best on stage, as the choir was there not just to sing and perform, but to serve a community, more specifically, the senior citizens. He mentioned how music can positively impact the lives of people. This pep talk ended with the students placing their hands together and raising them up on a count of 3-2-1, shouting “Fighting!” in Korean. This word symbolizes unity, strength, and determination; igniting passion for singers to do their best for a cause. The holiday concert program continued with the songs “Child of Peace” and “Memories,” inviting the audience at Piedmont Senior Home to sing along and reflect on their past memories. The lyrics underscore hope,

healing, and peace, celebrating different cultures and unity. The most moving song was “Nessun Dorma,” which was performed by Young Angels Choir directors Choi Won Hyun and Oh Jung Rok. Hector, a senior citizen, commented, “Do you know Luciano Pavarotti? He is a famous Italian opera singer, and oh boy, this song brings back many memories.” This duet of a famous opera aria in Turandot showcased the technical prowess and emotions of the choir teachers, captivated the audience, earning Choi Won Hyun and Oh Jung Rok a long applause. The concert concluded with a festive medley of Christmas carols. Many residents sang or hummed along, clapping to the familiar melodies. A few wiped away tears, perhaps reminded of memories evoked by a song. After the final note, one resident asked longingly, “Can we make this an annual event? I loved it!” Her words were met with smiles and approving nods. This concert served as a reminder of the power of music to cheer folks and connect different generations.

## Wrapping Up the Year With Joy



Katie Lee  
Grade 10  
The Science Academy  
STEM Magnet



All the General, Cabinet, and Junior Board members of DTYLF together for a group photo, closing out the year 2025. [Source: Author, Katie Lee]

Dream Tree Youth Leaders Foundation (DTYLF) brought the year to a joyful close by hosting its annual end-of-year Christmas Party, uniting youth leaders, volunteers, and parents to celebrate the hard work and dedication shown since April. The festive event reflected everyone’s commitment to serving the community under the motto “Children Helping Children.” The Junior Board members, who proudly hosted this year’s celebration, demonstrated their excellent leadership and teamwork through months of planning and continuous meetings, allowing the event to run as smoothly as possible while showcasing their leadership communication skills. Their dedication also set an example to our current general and cabinet members, who will become the future Junior Board members hosting these events too. By taking ownership of this event, the Junior Board showcased how youth can take initiative and make an impact within their community in many ways. The party itself was filled with laughter and joy, with a wide range of activities that en-

gaged everyone, including games ranging from “Guess the Baby Picture of the Club presidents” to events like ‘DTYLF Winter Talent Show.’ The members eagerly took part in these games and won amazing prizes. The event concluded with our DTYLF Secret Santa, where thoughtful gifts were exchanged, putting a smile on everyone’s faces. Beyond the festivities, the Christmas party helped me re-

flect on all of the positive impacts DTYLF has made on the community. Whether it’s from serving and making food for the homeless at The Midnight Mission located in Downtown Los Angeles, donating items to the solar pantry every Saturday to the Alexandria House, or DTYLF’s sister organization, hosting Christmas parties with the Alexandria House, packaging boxes at the LA Food Bank,

and more! In addition, all the members and parents had the chance to become even closer to each other during our monthly meetings, where we go over upcoming events and reflect on past events, and monthly walkathons at Griffith Park, where we hike while getting to know one another. The motto “Children Helping Children” guides DTYLF through its volunteer initiatives. Through acts of service like street cleaning, gardening, flea markets, coin drives, helping other organizations host parties, and taking families to fun places, youth leaders work to support those in need by providing resources and care. By allowing young leaders to take action, the foundation not only addresses community needs but also builds on the youths’ leadership skills and responsibility. As the year comes to an end, DTYLF remains committed to its mission of empowering youth and serving the community. As the new year approaches, DTYLF looks forward to another year of growth, leadership, responsibility, and service under the motto “Children Helping Children.”

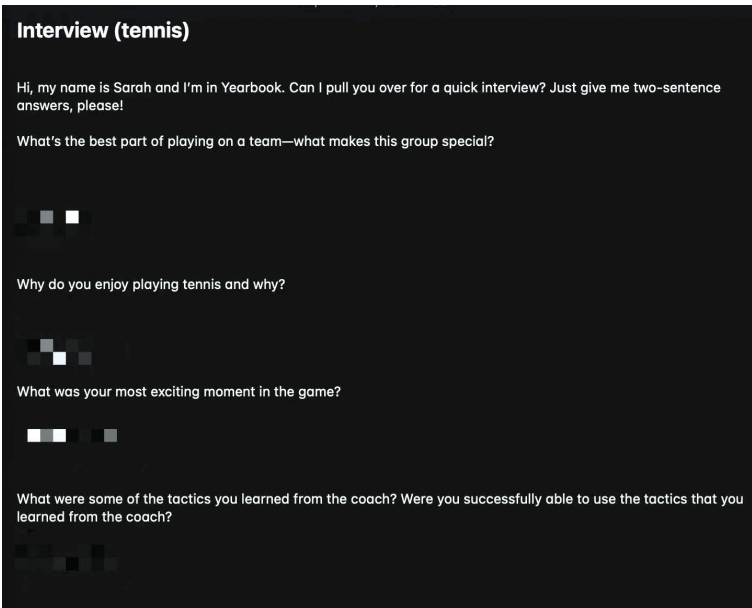
## The Story Behind the Pages



Sarah Li  
Grade 11  
Crean Lutheran High School

When I signed up for yearbook as a journalist, I thought it would simply be a job of spending hours and hours glued to my seat, drafting one article after another that all started with “In Crean Lutheran High School.” I thought all that I would need to do was repeat the write-edit process and receive a high grade. I didn’t expect the class to push me beyond my comfort zone and require close collaboration with my team. Yearbook, from the start, isn’t like any other class that I’ve taken before. Journalists don’t just type at a desk as we do in English class. Instead of staring at the screen, I found myself walking around campus, attending a variety of events, and interviewing people that I’ve never met before. A week into the semester, I encountered the first challenge. My editor asked me to interview varsity players of the girls’ tennis team. I checked the roster and realized that I knew only a few of them. I was extremely nervous about approaching strangers and asking them questions. But I reminded myself that this is my job and, with thorough preparation, everything would turn out

well. I wrote several questions on my notes, took a deep breath, and approached the players during practice. I introduced myself and explained my intention to the girls. Slowly, they began to open up. Some were even excited to provide more information for each question. Reflecting, surprisingly, I never felt awkward once I actually started doing it. All of the “what-if” scenarios and worries disappeared. This precious experience taught me an important lesson: the fear of doing something is often worse than its execution. It was not until I got involved in Yearbook that I recognized the importance of collaboration and communication. Three days before the first deadline, I encountered another great challenge: gathering enough players’ quotes to include in spreads. I reached out to them via email, but only a few responded. With no other options left, I tried to contact my editor and teammates for help. I explained my current situation and asked whether they had any solutions. Thirty minutes later, a wave of relief washed over me. Each and every one of them answered my text: they all messaged



Notes with questions that I prepared to ask the players helped me prepare for situations, such as interviewing strangers, that seemed frightening at first. [Source: Author, Sarah Li]

their friends in the sports team. Because of their assistance, the spreads were finished before due. Following this incident, I became aware that everyone should work together and even do more than just their assigned tasks. Sometimes a photographer can act as a “part-time” journalist when aid is

needed. Overall, the yearbook class is not about working independently and getting A’s on every assignment. It challenges me to communicate with strangers, which was something that filled me with fear. It showed me the value of collaboration.



Student Reporter

Celebrating the Holiday Season: How it’s Changed



Irene Kim  
Grade 11  
University Laboratory  
High School



I explore the mysterious igloo on campus, adding to the excitement of Christmas. [Source: Sangkyum Kim]

In years past, my holiday season typically started early, preparing for my Nutcracker performance in December. My schedule was packed with long rehearsals throughout the weekdays that ran

extra long on Friday and Saturday nights, dressing up according to the themes on tech week days, or the week of final rehearsals and performances, (my friends and I once dressed up as SpongeBob

characters for “favorite trio day”; I was SpongeBob.) and preparing for our dance company’s secret santa gift exchange. I danced for almost a decade, and performing in the Nutcracker Ballet was a defining part of my holiday traditions.

However, this past summer, I quit ballet. I didn’t notice its absence during the Fall semester, since junior year packed loads of work to keep me busy, but I was met with the hole it had filled when coming face-to-face while watching the Nutcracker in early December.

It was a completely different experience watching the ballet as an audience member. The experience came with sadness, but also unexpected joy. Preparing for the fancy occasion was exciting, especially after months of dressing up for school as a tired junior, and meeting my old friends to congratulate them with flowers made me proud to be their friend and feel good that we could still share that moment. Watching the Nutcracker was an initially scary but ultimately rewarding experience.

At school, I acquired a new winter hobby of discovering holiday art. On the third-floor stairwell of my school, there is a circular pattern on the floor

that’s been there for as long as I can remember. This winter, though, someone added colored stickers to it, making it appear as a snowman. Looking out from the third floor, I also found a giant heart made with footprints in the snow. I even learned about an igloo on campus through my friends in my concurrent enrollment class, and explored it afterwards. Though it didn’t look too grand on the outside, it was surprisingly quite spacious and warm on the inside.

The increased snowfall this year also boosted my winter experience. Every winter, when the weather allowed us to, my sister and I would sled down our driveway. Of course, we couldn’t miss out on it this year, especially with the extra snow padding, and this time my sister upgraded our adventure this year with a new trick. She’d learned the technique of taking a running start and diving into the sled to slide much faster. My sister is much braver than I in that sense (i.e., diving into a concrete driveway), but I couldn’t resist the fun. After multiple tries, I finally overcame my fear and joined her in speed sledding.

This winter season came with changes that brought happiness and joy to my holidays in ways I’d never imagined.

Student Reporter

Sophomore Year: Closer to College than Junior High



Tae Lee  
Grade 10  
The Science Academy  
STEM Magnet

Finishing my first semester of sophomore year, high school no longer feels like an extension of middle school. Familiar routines come with heavier expectations, and the future feels much closer. Sophomore year sits between the nervous period of freshman year and the high-pressure junior and senior years. Sophomore year is when things started to feel real.

Academically, this semester demanded more independence. Teachers expected better time management from students, forcing them to meet deadlines without reminders, and obtain a thorough understanding, versus simple memorization of the material. One teacher said, “Sophomore year is where we stop holding your hand. You have to be preparing for what comes next.” With a new mindset, I experienced a new view of high school. Assignments are longer, tests are harder, and grades feel more permanent. What stood out most was the realization that the past doesn’t come back with a reset button.

A moment that stood out this semester was a talk our high school counselor had with my class. She said, “You’re closer to college than you are to being in eighth grade,” a statement that silenced the room. Our usually



My friends on a trip to New York for an unforgettable eighth-grade culmination experience, marking the end of middle school and a step closer to graduation. [Source: Author, Tae Lee]

loud classroom paused to acknowledge those words. Science Academy STEM Magnet connects

middle and high school, allowing for a smooth transition between the two levels of education. Stu-

dents assumed there’d be no noticeable change. She continued to explain that time only moves forward and that the habits we build now stay with us. Junior high won’t return, and neither will earlier opportunities. That conversation helped me understand that sophomore year is not a pause, but a new start as a more educated, mature student.

Many classmates felt the same shift. There’s less focus on where we came from and more attention on where we’re headed. My family noticed the change too, raising expectations, not because the past defines me, but because the future depends on what I do next. Conversations about prior experiences now revolve around grades, future classes, and plans beyond high school, showing that we’re letting go of the past.

Outside of academics, social life has also changed. Friend groups feel more solid and honest. There is less room for old drama and more space for growth, welcoming people to experiment. People understand that holding onto past grudges only slows you down. Sophomore year feels like a bridge, one that only moves forward, reminding me that while memories remain, the past itself doesn’t come back.

Student Reporter

Switching to a 4x4 Schedule: Is it Worth It?



Amber Lee  
Grade 10  
La Mirada High School

When students are asked about a typical high school schedule, most would think of the traditional six-period schedule. Recently, the principal of La Mirada High School, Mr. Benjamin Webster, proposed a 4x4 schedule, where students take four classes in semester one, and four different ones in semester two, for a total of eight classes for the whole year.

The 4x4 schedule would entail 4 periods of classes, 85-90 minutes long, versus the 6 classes lasting 1 hour every day. By the end of the year, students will still complete eight full-credit classes.

This proposed change raised confusion among the students and teachers of La Mirada High School. Although I was initially tempted by the 4x4 schedule, AP classes and seasonal sports made me change my mind.

For example, students who take an AP class in semester one are likely to forget all of the materials from the previous semester

when exam time rolls around in May. Also, even if students were to take an AP class in the second semester instead, with the date of May AP exams not changing, the time to go through and master all the materials might be too short, as the second semester starts after winter break in January.

Teachers have expressed similar concerns, as one AP math teacher from La Mirada High said that a 4x4 schedule should not be imposed. “The 4x4 schedule is an absolute disadvantage to the routine of AP teachers and students,” the teacher said.

According to another AP history teacher, a traditional schedule is advantageous, as he stated, “Mr. Webster had tried this schedule out with another high school that he was a principal for in the past. As soon as he left that school, they changed it back to a traditional six-period schedule.”

Students also voiced con-

cerns about this new schedule. One junior argued, “This new switch-up is useless. Why would they try to mix everything up when it is such an important time period for us juniors?” A sophomore added, “People who don’t care about AP classes and GPA scores would like the 4x4 schedule. It is made for trying out electives, not academic achievement.”

After receiving feedback from teachers and students, agreement on the benefits of the 4x4 schedule seemed very limited. The vast majority of students seem to think that the schedule change is not worth making.

Surveys and polls posted by the principal about the 4x4 schedule also suggest that many are actively opposed to the proposed change. Although the accurate results of the staff and district’s opinions will not be revealed until closer to the end of the school year, everyone agrees on this single point: if nobody wants it, why pursue it?

AP			
9th Grade		Fall	Spring
Block 1	ELA 9H	Algebra 1	
Block 2	PE/ AP HUG**	PE/ AP HUG**	
Block 3	Elective	Elective	
Block 4	Physics	Elective	
FF: Freshman Focus **World Language Recommended			
10th Grade		Fall	Spring
Block 1	Algebra 2	AP PreCal	
Block 2	ELA HEuro 8**	ELA HEuro 8**	
Block 3	Chemistry	AP Chemistry	
Block 4	Elective* or Sport	Elective* or Sport	
**Alternating Days			
11th Grade		Fall	Spring
Block 1	AP Cal AB	AP Cal BC	
Block 2	AP Lang/PUSH**	AP Lang/PUSH**	
Block 3	Living Earth	AP Bio	
Block 4	Elective* or Sport	Elective* or Sport	
**World Language Recommended **Alternating Days			
12th Grade		Fall	Spring
Block 1	AP L&AP Gov/Econ**	AP L&AP Gov/Econ**	
Block 2	AP Elective**	AP Elective**	
Block 3	Elective	Elective	
Block 4	Elective or Free	Elective or Free	
*Only 6 class required for Seniors on track for graduation **Alternating Days			

In a 4x4 schedule, as shown above, an AP student would take their classes at times that would have them either forgetting material before the test or finishing material after the AP exams had been conducted.

[Source: La Mirada High School]