

Editors Column

Pro-Level Persistence: My Mom’s Golf Camp Experience



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Golfing at the beginner level is rewarding as long as the resources and golf locations available aren’t taken for granted. [Source: Audrey Park, Author]

Though it was still night in Anaheim, California, where I was tucking myself in to sleep, my mom was already on a golf driving range in Korea, measuring where her next shot would be as the sun rose twelve time zones ahead of me. As she adjusted her position on the green, each shift in her stance and club was conditioned through five years of dedication. This commitment was the only proof she

needed to convince herself that progress can begin even before a third of the world wakes up. Golf wasn’t always this rigorous of a routine for her, though. Five years ago, she would have never thought that a foreign excursion to a golf camp could be a Thanksgiving break trip. When she first stepped onto the range, the sport was solely recreational, being limited to casual practice

sessions with her friends and slow weekend rounds. It was three years into the experience that she decided to go all-in. Balancing her work with formal lessons was initially difficult, but her continual drive towards the goal of becoming an amateur single player with consistent scores between 72 to 81, or the point average 1 (PGA players get negatives), incited change. She implemented training splits into her week; some days focused on iron work and driver swings, while others enhanced her strength control or angle shots. With this emphasis on precision, she recorded her swings, replaying them in her photo gallery frame by frame. So when the time came, and she learned about the Korean golf camp through a friend, she was instantly hooked on the idea of attending. The immersive experience would pair her with an instructor and enhance her time there through the food and board included in the payment. Within a day, she had completed the online sign-up process and received confirmation that she would have a spot in this 2-week challenge. When the time came for her

camp, she had already arrived in Korea and stepped into the professional gates. There, she addressed her most persistent weaknesses with her trainer’s guidance. Similar to the strategies she developed in Irvine, she was assessed through a device that recorded her movements and overlaid the ideal metrics needed for better swings. Every day, she worked through different club drills, including driver, iron, and putter exercises. This repetition helped her build even more confidence and fostered her game strategy. From all of these practiced techniques, she liked iron swings the most due to the raw precision it honed. Each day, she was getting closer to hitting pars as the average score; these single-digit scores showed elite amateur consistency. More specifically, she felt less frustrated with herself when practice sessions didn’t go the way she wanted, as long as she gradually got better. My mom leaves one last message to beginner golfers: “Enjoy golf at whatever level you’re at, and don’t take your practice sessions for granted.”

Student Reporter

A Taste of So. Californian Tradition – Porto’s Bakery



Karis Kim
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L.A. residents know the sight of the iconic yellow box. Whether it’s carried through the streets of LA or sitting in a corporate break-room, that box is the unofficial currency of Southern Californian hospitality. Thousands from all over the world come to try the famous bakery treats from Porto’s in its signature yellow packaging, and over time, the yellow box has become much more than just its packaging. Porto’s was started unintentionally by Rosa Porto, who learned to bake from her mother in Cuba. She sold cakes to help her family during the Cuban Revolution, and after immigrating to Los Angeles in 1971, the family relied on Rosa’s recipes. In 1976, the family opened their first official bakery in Echo Park, which quickly gained popularity and would later become one of Southern California’s most iconic bakeries. The business reflects the hard work of many immigrants with a dream and their will to assimilate into a new place. Porto’s has “The Big Three,” as they call it—the cheese rolls, potato balls, and the refugiado. The cheese roll, a crispy puff pastry filled with butter and Porto’s signature cream cheese and topped with sugar. Potato balls—a deliciously crisp ball of potatoes



A tropical twist: when ube meets coconut in sweet seasonal treats at Porto’s—a treat for both the eyes and mouth. [Source: Author, Karis Kim]



Porto’s iconic yellow box is a token of tradition, comfort, and shared moments. [Source: Author, Karis Kim]

and picadillo. And of course, the refugiado, an iconic dessert with cream cheese and guava filling. There are many other great items I consider to be delectable, such as the seasonal ube coconut eclairs and the loaded yuca fries. The items attract first-time customers and keep the long-term ones coming for more. Some question whether it is really worth the hype and wonder why people come to L.A. to get a bite of these pastries. From the viewpoint of a single individ-

ual, I believe that many can agree that these pastries with the perfect blend of savory and sweet are worth the wait, despite the drive and 30–40 minute wait lines, because the lines show how patience is always rewarded. Part of what makes Porto’s so popular is its ability to connect food with culture, community, and nostalgia. What started as a small family business has grown into a bakery that serves millions of customers each year, often creating long lines that wrap around

the building. The bakery’s success comes from consistency, affordability, and the family recipes that resonate across generations. All in all, I can say that Porto’s is a bakery with comfort food that hits home like grandma’s apple pies. From the yellow box to its pastries, Porto’s has brought people together from various backgrounds and generations, proving that comfort food is not only about the taste but about the sense of familiarity and memories it evokes.

Student Reporter

Exploring STEM Education Through SigmaCamp



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South High School

SigmaCamp is a STEM-based summer program that takes place in Connecticut. I was selected as a camper and attended this program for a week. This camp focuses on exposing a wide variety of students to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math through interactive activities, such as tournaments. Not only does this program focus on classroom-based learning, but it also involves active participation and teamwork in a curiosity-driven exploration of the STEM field. SigmaCamp enables students to make new friends with similar interests in an effective manner while also acquiring skills that are highly valued in the real world. My experience at SigmaCamp was very educational, as well as socially relevant. I was able to network with many different people and form everlasting bonds with other students who shared my passions. SigmaCamp’s strongest feature, in my opinion, is the way that it focuses on learning by experience. The activities that require student involvement—such as experimentation, engineering projects, and group work—enable them to think out-

side of the box. Not only does this make the children more knowledgeable, but it also equips them with the confidence needed to solve complex problems that they may not have encountered before. Furthermore, the ambience at SigmaCamp ensured that it was easy to meet many different people through workshops, lectures, and tournaments. One of the most memorable parts of the camp, for me, was being able to swim in a nearby lake with my newfound friends during free time. There were also very interesting lectures conducted each day, which introduced students to new ideas and concepts in the different fields of science. Along with these educational aspects, there were also recreational activities such as the sponge battles, where everyone had the chance to throw wet sponges at each other. The morning classes that I attended were also very interesting and helped increase my dedication to these subjects. Collaboration is another key element of the SigmaCamp experience. Many aspects of the camp are organized around working together, as students



An Exciting Game of Sponge Wars was held during SigmaCamp, letting students take a break from STEM topics. [Source: SigmaCamp]

must be able to articulate their ideas clearly, hear their perspectives, and cooperate in achieving shared ends. Such collaborative settings also mirror the reality of STEM-driven industries, where collaboration is more effective than isolated experimentation in generating meaningful breakthroughs. Students thus gained considerable knowledge in terms of social skills as they learned new things. Overall, SigmaCamp offers a

significant and balanced STEM study experience. By providing the students with various practical, collaborative, and educational activities, the program allows them to gain knowledge and confidence. Academic retreats similar to SigmaCamp offer examples of what a fully immersive STEM education can be like, being able to encourage curiosity, create a community, and have a beneficial influence even after the completion of the event.

Student Reporter

Lexington Jr High Celebrates Christmas Assembly



Grace Song

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Lexington Junior High School



The Advanced Band performed “Feliz Navidad” and “Trip Wire” for the Christmas Assembly, bringing festivity. [Source: Author, Grace Song]

To end the year, Lexington Junior High hosted a school-wide Christmas assembly on Friday, December 19. This event took place in the school gym and highlighted the many electives at Lexington while allowing students to bond over the holiday spirit. Each class attended during either their 6th or 7th period, allowing all students to watch the assembly without overcrowding the gym.

The assembly started with an

energetic performance from Lexington’s Lion Pep Squad. Formed this school year, the cheerleading team has performed at several of Lexington’s home volleyball games, and their performance was an amazing start to the assembly. With precise cartwheels and clean roundoff back hand springs, the Lion Pep Squad quickly impressed students and teachers.

Next, the Advanced Band

played, and it was one of the highlights of the assembly. They first performed “Feliz Navidad,” which brought festivity and spirit into the gym. Many students enjoyed hearing a familiar tune and even sang along and clapped to the beat. This start helped create a joyful atmosphere perfect for the season. For the second song, the Advanced Band played “Trip Wire,” a harder piece that showcased their musical abilities. This song required focus, precise timing, and intonation, all of which the Advanced Band demonstrated very well.

The next part of the assembly was a solo by Nikhil Thyagarajan. His performance of a festive Christmas song allowed students to bond over the holiday spirit and enjoy the amazing performance. Following the solo was a duet from Annalisa Kim and Francesa Mansana, singing “Santa, Can’t You Hear Me.” The voices of these two talented singers blended perfectly, creating a fun and enchanting performance. In addition, there was a dance crew in front whose choreography brought an extra layer of energy and engagement to the duet. This combination of singing and dancing made the performance extra

memorable. After highlighting individual performers, Lexington’s Advanced Choir performed “A La Media Noche,” a challenging song with many layers and harmonization. Their vocals filled the gym and demonstrated the choir’s hard work, passion, and teamwork.

Another memorable part of the assembly was a video compilation of holiday TikTok-style dances created by the P.E. dance classes. For around two weeks, P.E. dance students came up with their original TikTok dances using Christmas audio and incorporating modern TikTok dance moves. These videos added a new and fun touch to the assembly. Many students enjoyed watching how popular trends could be incorporated into dance and exercise.

Overall, the Christmas assembly was a great way to bring students together and showcase Lexington’s talent and electives. By featuring band, choir, P.E., dance, and Pep Squad, this assembly highlighted the hard work students have put into their electives and extracurricular activities, serving as a reminder of Lexington’s creativity, school spirit, and festivity that brings together students and teachers alike.

Student Reporter

Ice Skating in the LA Area



Eun Soo Esther Shin

Grade 12
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When you think of winter in terms of weather in Los Angeles, it’s not so much different than in the summer. This can often limit outdoor winter activities that include snow, such as snowboarding, sledding, or building snowmen. To enjoy these pastimes, people usually go far beyond the city to places like Mammoth or Big Bear. However, there are also opportunities in LA to appreciate the winter season. One of them includes ice skating.

When winter rolls around, the LA Live ice skating rink is built with a concrete slab that has pipes inside it to circulate a cold liquid to keep things frozen. Then water is sprayed in warm and cold layers to build a strong sheet of ice that’s around 1.75 inches thick.

After the first semester of my senior year ended, my friends and I planned to go ice skating to celebrate the end of finals. Most of us had little to no experience with ice skating, so we were all scared but also excited. The rink opened at 5 pm to the public, and we lined up around that time. The general admission fee was \$27 for each person for 1 hour and 30 minutes. When we got in, we had to choose our skate size and put them on before entering



Ice skating around the rink at the LA Live was a great way to enjoy the end of the semester while including holiday fun. [Source: Author, Eun Soo Esther Shin]

the rink. We made sure to tighten the skates and get our exact size so that there wouldn’t be any

blisters. To keep our bags and items safe, we stored them inside one of the provided lockers and

took the key.

As soon as I stepped on the rink, I realized how slippery the ice really was. For the first 15 minutes or so, I circled the rink while holding on to the walls like so many others. I couldn’t stop to rest, even while doing this, because there were people behind me waiting for me to go. Then I remembered the short videos we watched before entering the rink on how to ice skate. I pushed off the wall and started propelling myself forward with just one foot while the other held steady. I bent my knees to keep my balance, and I slowly started going forward. It was a bit unsteady, and I could feel myself starting to fall at times, but thankfully, I didn’t. As the rest of my friends also got the hang of it, we skated together around the rink. When it hit the one-hour mark, my feet felt really tired and sore after skating around the rink, so if you have any sports games or activities you have to do after ice skating, I would recommend going to this winter event another time.

Overall, this experience was really fun to have with friends, and I encourage you to try it out one time, whether it be at the LA Live or another location.

Student Reporter

Holiday Cheer Spread Through Albion Street



Caroline Lee

Grade 12
Beverly Hills High School

Since 1927, Beverly Hills High School has been invited to Albion Street Elementary School to give gifts to younger students during the holiday season.

Each year, students rush to sign up for the limited spots for the senior-exclusive event. One student shared how this was one of the few events she had looked forward to since the ninth grade. This year truly reflected this excitement, seeing that there were more students on the wait-list than those approved!

In preparation for the anticipated day, students were urged to bring their own material to wrap the gifts, from festive wrapping paper to scissors and tape. And for a month, during weekly lunch meetings, students dedicated themselves to wrapping sessions and informative orientations. However, each of these 40-minute periods was filled with laughter as students teased one another for their wrapping abilities or simply bustled in excitement for the event.

On the day of the event, despite having to wake up an hour earlier for school, every senior had an unusual pep in their step,

a dynamic contrast to their usual habit of dragging feet during school mornings. As they rode the bus to the elementary school, this excitement clearly increased, as the noises on the bus grew louder.

The event served as a community-building day as students were able to connect with others outside their immediate community. This intermingling of different groups started with a large circle of all the younger and older students, where they played in the classic game of “duck, duck, goose.” In hopes of increasing festive spirits and annual traditions, the student body president dressed up as Santa Claus. Additionally, the hosting school, Albion Street, provided each participant with snacks and drinks to thank each student for their efforts to spread holiday cheer.

In addition, members of prominent programs from the high school were also invited to share their passions and interests to inspire the young students to explore different fields. While the dance company and cheer team performed, the robotics team showed their machine from the previous year, explaining the



Students wrap gifts in preparation for the day of the event at Albion Street Elementary School. [Source: Author, Caroline Lee]

mechanics, as the claws of the contraptions scooped material from the floor.

After this experience, seniors shared how they felt a new connection to the younger students. When asked, one laughed with his friend, recalling that “They were so sweet...and energetic!” Another shared her excitement as she explained that a student

recognized her from the previous year.

As seniors continue to reflect on this day going into the second semester, many explain how they felt closer to not only the younger students, but also each other, as they gave back to the community through their collective efforts—reminding us about what the holidays are truly about.