



Student Reporter

## Keys of Passion: A Recital to Remember



**Summer Moon**  
Grade 9  
Granada Hills Charter High School

The recital hall at the stage was quieter than usual, filled with a kind of anticipation that made every sound feel louder. As I sat backstage, I could hear faint fragments of other performances—soft scales, confident chords, and the occasional nervous mistake. My hands rested in my lap, but I couldn't keep them still. They twitched slightly, as if I was already reaching for the keys of the piano.

A piano recital isn't just about playing notes; it's about stepping into a moment where preparation meets pressure, and where something practiced in private is suddenly shared with a room full of people. When my name was called, everything seemed to blur for a second. The walk to the piano felt longer than usual, even though I had taken it many times before. As I sat down on the bench, I adjusted my posture and took a deep breath, just like I had practiced. The keys looked familiar, but also different under the stage lights. For a brief moment, I doubted myself: what if I forgot a section? Or maybe my hands would freeze. But as soon as I laid my fingers on the keys, muscle memory took over. The



The setting of the church where the recital took place was established and originally used for religious preaching. [Source: Author, Summer Moon]

hours of practice, the repetition, it all came together at that moment, and I was able to overcome the mistakes I used to make before.

As I continued to play, I became less aware of the audience and more focused on the music itself. The piece had its own flow, moving between soft, delicate passages and louder, more in-

tense moments. Each dynamic shift felt like telling part of a story, one that didn't need words. Even when I hit a slightly wrong note, I kept going, remembering that the performance wasn't about perfection but about expression. In a way, I came to realize that the recital wasn't about being judged; it was about sharing something meaningful. Looking out into the audience briefly,

I could see familiar faces, family members, friends, and my teacher scattered across the audience. I smiled warmly and reminded myself of those who had supported me along the way.

Their presence was both comforting and motivating. It reminded me that the recital wasn't just an individual effort, but the result of encouragement and guidance from others. Every lesson, every correction, and every small improvement had led to this moment on stage. When I played the final chord, there was a split second of silence before the applause began. I not only felt relief, but also a sense of accomplishment.

Walking off the stage, I realized that the recital was more than just a performance. It was a chance to grow, to face nerves, and to translate my efforts into a grand way to reflect on my annual progress and dedication. Even with imperfections, it was a moment I was very proud of, and one that made it all worth it. Even when dread and uncertainty occur, everyone should be aware of what they have achieved from their efforts.

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## My Experience at the 13th Annual BioEHSC

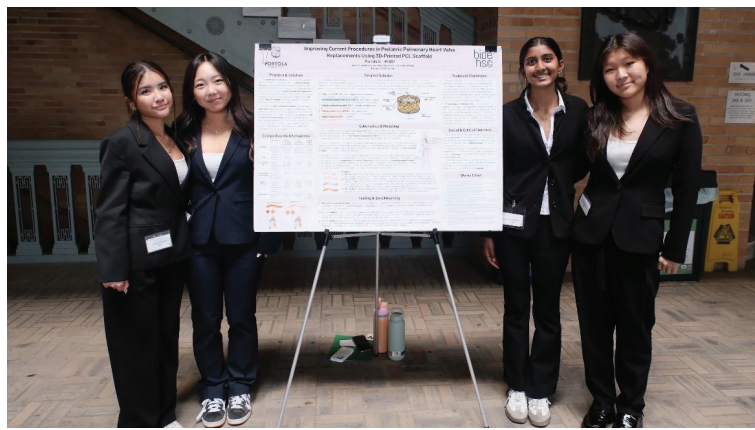


**Ellie Kim**  
Grade 10  
Portola High School

As I walked onto the campus of UC Berkeley for the 13th annual BioEHSC, I expected a typical event—presentations, having my work evaluated, and then leaving. Instead, I experienced a day full of learning, collaboration, adapting, and growth that extended far beyond just the results.

Hosted by UC Berkeley's Bioengineering Honors Society, BioEHSC brings together high school students from across the world to compete in either the biological engineering or medical engineering category. My team participated in the medical engineering category, where we presented a new pediatric pulmonary valve replacement using bioresorbable materials.

The event began with an opening ceremony, followed by a presentation from Dr. Alice Tang and her research on Alzheimer's disease. Listening to someone actively contributing to scientific advancement made the experience feel immediate and inspiring. Her presentation set the



Caption A: A team stands proudly in front of their poster as they await judging for their industry pitch during the BioEHSC event hosted at UC Berkeley. [Source: Author, Ellie Kim]

tone for the day, reminding the students that their projects could eventually have a real-world impact.

The core of the competition consisted of two presentation formats: an academic presentation and an industry pitch. For the academic presentation, we presented in classrooms to graduate and PhD student judges. Using detailed slides, we presented our research, methodology, prototype, and conclusions in a

10-minute timeframe, followed by an in-depth Q&A session... To ensure fairness, each team presented twice to a different pair of judges.

In contrast, the industry pitch required a completely different approach. We had a very short time to explain our idea and its potential market impact, followed by a five-minute Q&A. This format challenged us to simplify complex concepts and focus on exactly why our pro-

ject actually mattered. Though it was fast-paced and extremely nerve-wracking, it was incredibly valuable to learn how to communicate science beyond just an academic setting.

After presentations, each group attended workshops, including ones on consulting—a field both my team and I had known little about. Through the interactive activities and case-based problems, I gained insight into how consultants approach problem-solving and decision-making, keeping my eyes open to look out for a new career path in which science and business overlap.

The day concluded with a closing ceremony and awards. Although my team did not place, the outcome felt secondary to everything we had gained. BioEHSC was not just about competition—it was about learning how to think, communicate, and innovate. More than anything, it showed me that success isn't defined by winning, but by how much effort we put in to adjust and improve ourselves.

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## A Must-Visit Location in Irvine, CA: The Source OC



**Kristine Park**  
Grade 11  
Del Norte High School

Located in Irvine, California, The Source OC (also known as the Source Mall) is a popular go-to destination for families, students, and those who are interested in shopping and entertainment. Its modern design and wide variety of shops allow something enjoyable for anyone who visits, and it is one of the best spots where people convene to make fun memories.

One of the most remarkable features of Source Mall is the diversity and number of stores it offers. Visitors are able to indulge in a variety of fun experiences, including browsing trendy clothing shops, cozy cafes, and specialty stores that have Korean pop culture merchandise. The mall also includes a movie theater, which gives us a great opportunity for groups or individuals to spend the day with excitement. At Source Mall, there's always something to do, whether it may be shopping for new outfits, choosing song albums, or hanging out with friends.

Recently, the Source Mall hosted an exciting event called "Battle of the Bands," organized by the Fullerton School District for junior high students. The event showcased talented young performers who danced to pop-



One of the many inviting cafes at The Source OC that offer a great selection of drinks, with a trendy clothing store located right above, The Source offers a large variety of shops. [Source: Author, Kristine Park]

ular K-pop songs with notable talent and skill. Watching junior high schoolers perform at such a high level felt like watching true professionals and the actual song artists on a stage. These students were also singing live and dancing at the same time, which was truly impressive. The energy of the crowd, while they cheered and waved banners of support,

was also what made this showcase incredibly memorable.

The Source also has excellent food spots. One of my personal favorites is The Bakery, which is known for its freshly baked bread made daily. Whenever I visit, the quality is consistently high, and their mammoth bread (peanut streusel bread with buttercream, red bean paste, and strawberry

jam filled in the middle) is also very popular and is definitely worth a try. Another must-visit is Okbingsul, which specializes in bingsu (a Korean shaved ice dessert) on top of ice cream and fish-shaped pastries. Their bingsus are really refreshing and satisfying, especially on hot days in California.

For Korean pop culture fans, Kpop Music Town has a wide selection of merchandise (including albums, clothes, lightsticks, and posters) at great prices. If you are a music lover, I would definitely recommend going here.

The mall also presents great accommodations and safe spaces for families to play with young children. There is an indoor play area called PlayPie that is designed to be both fun and safe. With many obstacles and slides, it is the perfect space for kids to stay active while parents can relax nearby.

Overall, Source Mall is an excellent place for families looking for somewhere to go on a weekend trip, as it provides great shopping outlets, good food, and entertaining community events. It continues to bring people together and is a place I would definitely recommend to those visiting Irvine in the future!