

Editors Column

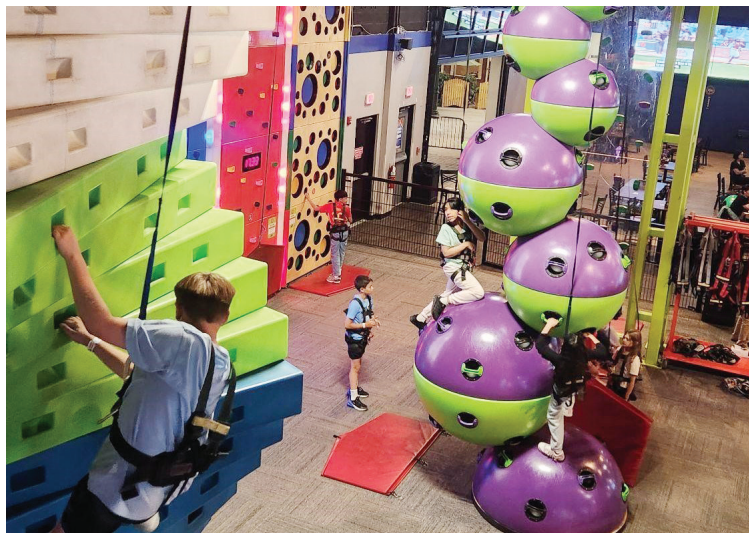
First Job Experiences: Working at Fun Land



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The lights from the arcade games flash down at you, brightening the dim floors. A flurry of movement swishes above you from someone on a zip line. A tantalizing aroma fills the air as the kitchen doors open and a party host pushes a cart loaded with pizza and fries. This is Fun Land of Fairfax.

Although it was not my first time at Fun Land, I stood at the entrance, fascinated, adjusting to the lively atmosphere. This would be where I would call my first job. I recalled searching for jobs on websites until I had spotted an attraction attendant here—because it had a close proximity to my home and required no experience, I had applied in optimism that I might become hired. When I received the notification that I had been selected, I was thrilled. After conducting a short interview session with a manager at the site and completing basic information checks, I was officially a member of the team. Now, I followed the manager I had previously interviewed with to an empty party room, where he delivered basic



When atop the rope course to run the zip line in Fun Land, I can see the kids enjoying the rock climbing walls down below. [Source: Author, Kaylyn Yu]

instructions to watch a few essential video lessons explaining safety guidelines and equipment use. Once finished, I was taught how to run the rock climbing and rope course part of the amusement park by fellow employees. It was tricky at first, but I slowly understood how to strap the harnesses, clip the rock climbers, and manage the rope course in the sky.

Despite feeling relatively prepared by the brief lecture, I did not expect the rigorous nature of the first day at work. My shift ran from 4-11:30 p.m., which was unexpectedly long for someone as inexperienced as myself. As weekends were typically busy, I struggled to keep up with the fast pace of the environment at my station as I tried to remember

the different steps I learned for each area. However, my teammates were helpful, and I quickly got the hang of the rest of the work. Many kids were very sweet and energetic, and I enjoyed helping them; I was surprised to receive a tip from a proud father as I helped a boy to reach the top of a rock climbing wall, knowing it was rare for an attraction attendant to get tipped. At the end of the night, the supervisors rounded us up to assign individual cleaning tasks.

Over time, I eased into my role at the rope course and made friends with the rest of the workers, who are mostly other high school students. I would say the best part of the job is the friends I made. Even though it is a fun work experience, it can be difficult and demanding at times when busy, and it also pays minimum wage. However, I believe Fun Land has been a great first job experience as it gives me an opportunity to control my finances, and I hope the position will lead me to attain larger roles in the future.

Student Reporter

The Influx of K-Beauty: Olive Young's Debut in California



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Stretching down blocks through Old Town Pasadena, crowds of shoppers gathered outside Olive Young's first store in America. They waited to enter a boutique that represents not only a retail milestone, but also the growing influence of Korean culture in American life. Founded in 1999, Olive Young grew into South Korea's most popular retailer for beauty and wellness. The company now operates nearly 1,400 stores and has built a global customer base. For decades, Korean companies had sold products through American retailers, but now a Korean retailer itself is entering the U.S., marking a rare and significant shift in retail history.

The view when entering the store on one of the first opening days was bright, modern, and packed with customers lining up for skin analyses, asking workers about products, and winning prizes from the pop-up brand, Medi-heal. From skincare, makeup, and hair care, there was a vast array of products lined on shelves, and the store even contained supplemental snacks and K-pop merch. Regardless of the vast number of customers, the spacious store never felt overcrowded, and as a



The new Olive Young store, displaying many brands, both Korean and American, had many shoppers eager to see what the store was all about. [Source: Author, Paisley Park]

shopper who has visited South Korea's Olive Young as well, most products were the same as those sold in the original locations. Although the store was marketed toward an American audience, it still promoted authentically Korean products. The line was long, but quick circulation and clear signage allowed the store to be navigable for newcomers. Compared to the Sephora right across the street, Olive Young's prices were generally more af-

fordable as well.

Despite the buzz of Olive Young's opening, Olive Young and other Korean beauty products are not the cause of Korean culture's popularity, but a culmination of it. Korean entertainment and cuisine have gradually and significantly influenced American trends and lifestyles, and Americans have increasingly adopted Korean fashion, food, and most significantly, beauty, as indicated

by trends such as "Korean glass skin." Korean culture has evolved from something Americans consume into something that shapes how Americans live, and the addition of Olive Young into the U.S. is a byproduct of this impact.

Considering what is in store for Olive Young, there is already a confirmed location for another in Century City; the company's American expansion will likely continue, particularly in major metropolitan markets, and greater accessibility will likely lead more Americans to enjoy Korean beauty and wellness products. Competing retailers may continue expansion of K-beauty offerings, like how Sephora has done with brands Arencia, Biodance, and Torriden.

The opening of Olive Young may appear to be a local retail event, but it reflects something much larger: Korean influence moving beyond trends and online shopping into physical American retail. Whether it becomes a nationwide success remains uncertain, but Korean culture is no longer entering the American mainstream - it is helping shape it.

Student Reporter

Hot Pot: Individual Servings or Communal Style?



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Hot pot is a deeply symbolic and culturally significant dish synonymous with community. Every hot pot comes with fresh vegetables, umami meat slices, and aromatic sauces and soup, but the food is only a small aspect of what makes this meal meaningful. The beauty of hot pot lies in its social aspect — trading side dishes around the table, lovingly cooking meat for one another, concocting communal broths, and lingering over conversation long after stomachs are full.

In the Chinese culture, the simmering pot at the center of the table represents reunion and harmony. Because everyone shares a heat source, hot pot naturally fosters a tight-knit atmosphere for enjoying good food, stories, and company.

Given the hot pot's deeply communal nature, I was in for a surprise when I visited Mumu Hot Pot with my friends and found that we would be dining from individual pots. We were also instructed to QR our orders virtually through a QR code at our table while a server briefly explained the pot settings. As we instinctively reached for our phones, I



Although not exactly the same as the original, at Mumu Hot Pot, diners enjoy hot pot individually by cooking fresh vegetables and succulent meat in personalized pots. [Source: Author, Evalyn Yu]

was surprised by how quickly our group of five fell silent. Instead of asking for recommendations or debating over side dishes, we tapped away at our screens while a server stood right in front of us. While the process was undeniably efficient, it reinforced the tone set for our meal: a dining experience focused on individual choices rather than collective participation.

After our server left, we were still puzzling over which soup bases and meat cuts to order — indecisiveness that could have been

avoided had we each ordered different options to share collectively. Eventually, three-fifths of my group opted for the same broth, sukiyaki, which made having an individual pot feel slightly redundant.

Once the food arrived, my qualms quickly disappeared. The dishes were fresh, beautifully presented in bento box-like trays, and extremely savory and comforting. As a slow eater, I enjoyed having complete control over my pot and dunking fresh bok choy, vermicelli noodles,

and beef toro into the bubbling soup at my own pace. My vegetarian friend especially appreciated being able to enjoy her meal without worrying about cross-contamination.

However, I couldn't help but notice the occasions when conversations trailed off as we became absorbed in our separate meals, monitoring when the red marbled beef turned to perfectly cooked. In those moments, I felt oddly disconnected, like I was eating in a group, but everyone was immersed in their own bubble. Once the meal ended and we playfully argued over the bill and whether or not we should get dessert, the sense of community came flooding back to me.

As hot pot becomes increasingly popular outside of Asia, I understand that its presentation adapts to accommodate different dietary needs, preferences, and dining styles. However, if given the choice, I would stick with tradition. For me, sharing a hot pot reflects kinship and a shared sense of togetherness. There is no better feeling than the delightfully messy and beautiful art of communal eating.