



The Buzz: ICE and Immigration Policy

In this episode of The Buzz, we explore how undocumented immigrants in Berkeley have been impacted by the Trump Administration's change in policies.



Seasonal depression takes a toll on student mental health

Ilaria Marini asserts that seasonal affective disorder deserves more recognition of its impacts and harm to those affected. **PAGE 6**

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IRIS LE LIBOUX

NEWS

BHS strategizes fire alarm solutions

BY RIGZIN GYALTSEN
staff writer

In the first three months of the 2025-26 school year, there have been 14 fire alarms at Berkeley High School — 12 of which have not been emergencies. Due to the concerning rise in false fire alarms, Principal Juan Raygoza and his administration team have modified some fire alarm procedures, while still staying in bounds of state laws. The most notable change is that, during a temporary change ending in mid-November, some fire alarms across the school no longer set off their sirens across the hallways, and were instead routed to security guards on diligent fire-watch.

Firewatch is the process of patrolling for fire hazards. Berkeley Unified School District went through a process where they found faulty alarms not triggered by true

emergencies, and assigned fire-watchers to patrol the area in which the faulty alarm was silenced. “We go through a process where we have to work with all of our partners to say when we’re turning off the alarms, and we have to have a contracted person or a staff member whose sole job is firewatch. So if alarms are silenced in any way, there is someone whose only job ... is to look for fires,” BHS Vice Principal Keldon Clegg said, “We’re not ignoring alarms ... That’s illegal, even though most of our staff and a number of parents have asked us to do that.”

“Faulty sensors and system calibration issues” are the main causes of these school-wide disturbances, Raygoza wrote in an email to BHS teachers on Nov. 4, 2025. BHS relies on the company Simplex for fire detection, as do other schools across California.

Continued on PAGE 4



SAWYER M.B. ERCH

INVESTIGATIVE

Christmas dominates BHS festive season

BY AUBREY M. CASPER
staff writer

“I think that there’s definitely more of an emphasis on Christmas,” Amelia Stern, a Berkeley High School junior who identifies as Jewish and celebrates Hanukkah, said, “(but) I do think Berkeley High (School) for sure tries to be inclusive. And I think

they are for the most part, but I think it’s also just very focused on Christmas.”

As winter draws closer, talk of Christmas increases and colorful decorations begin to appear around the city. Walking around BHS, it’s common to hear mentions of Christmas, along with other December holidays. But although BHS tries to be inclusive, not every student feels

completely included during the ‘holiday season.’

“I don’t usually feel as included because a lot of people are talking about Christmas. I’ve been asked a lot, ‘what do you have on your Christmas list?’ And I kind of have to go into an explanation, like, I don’t really celebrate Christmas,” Maria Radja, a BHS sophomore who identifies as Muslim, said, “Everybody is

kind of having this universal experience ... and it can be hard seeing that and not really feeling included in all of that.”

Menashe Kirsch, a sophomore at BHS who identifies as a modern Orthodox Jew and celebrates Hanukkah, described a different experience during the winter holiday season.

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OAKLAND TURKEY TROT 2025

BY MALINAH DAVIS
staff writer

Over four thousand people from the Bay Area, Central Valley, and across the state – some travelling from Hawaii and the East Coast – gathered at Lake Merritt on Thanksgiving Day for the ninth annual Oakland Turkey Trot.

The event primarily consists of a five-kilometer run (which is approximately 3.1 miles), but additionally features a 200-yard dash for children ages 2 to 7. The race also works as a community fundraiser, partnered with the Oakland Mayor's Office, the Oakland Education Fund, the Alameda County Community Food Bank, and other local charities and organizations. Proceeds from the race go towards these groups, which altogether provide 28 million meals annually and give grants to schools for youth to participate in these races to inspire them to stay

active and involved in their lifestyles and the community.

"It's become a bit of a tradition that my family does with some of our family friends, so I always like getting to spend time with them by doing it," Sarah Marsh, a Berkeley High School senior who has run the race four times, said.

Live music played as participants flooded through closed-off streets, many wearing Thanksgiving-themed accessories and full costumes. The race began at 8:30 a.m. and brought in runners of all ages.

"Everyone starts at once ... so

it gets really crowded, and if you're looking to go fast, you have to pass a lot of

people before you have

an easy shot," Elena

Schuetzenmeister, a BHS

freshman cross-country runner

who attended the trot, said.

"About when I hit the first mile, the

group started thinning

out ... I think that's when I was

doing my best and having the

most fun," Julia Celorio Tip-

pin, a freshman on the cross-

country team who joined the

race after noticing the event on

a billboard near her house, said.

Bystanders, family, and

friends stood along the out-

sides of the race, cheering on

and motivating contestants

with homemade signs, food, and

bells.

"There were people on the

sides of the course cheering

for everybody who passed by,"

Celorio Tippin said. "I loved

how encouraging everyone was

no matter what pace you run,"

Schuetzenmeister added.

Even though several BHS

students said they didn't see

many classmates, the race

brought a general feeling of

connection to the larger Bay

Area community.

"I'm always surprised how

many people are there," Marsh

said. "And it definitely feels like

a community of people that I

might not have otherwise realized

was there," she said.

Calliope Askins, a BHS junior,

noted that the emcee contributed

to the race's welcoming

atmosphere, stating, "The

emcee was saying, 'Everyone,

turn to your neighbors, say hi,

give them a high five, talk about

what's going on.' I saw a lot of

crowd participation and people

who were really excited and

making new friends," she said.

Students also noticed the

wide range of participants,

reflecting the race's inclusivity.

"There were very elderly

people, and a bunch of children

still in strollers," Celorio Tippin

said. Marsh noted that it was

common for dogs to run the

race. She also highlighted the

race's accessibility, noting how

many participants were walk-

ing, if not running, the course.

"I hate running, but it is

a nice environment," Brooke

Matthes-Davis, a BHS junior,

said. This year marked the

fifth time she's run the race.

Costumes were a highlight

for her. "I saw a lot of people

in onesies, like turkey onesies.

There was this guy in an inflat-

able and a guy with a pool ring

in the shape of a turkey. Those

are always fun to see," she said.

For some students, the race

served as a personal challenge

instead of a competition.

Matthes-Davis explained

that she partly participates in

the race because her dad does.

However, she added that she

enjoys the challenge. "I like to

challenge myself. I don't like

running, so it's the only time I

ever run," she said.

Askins explained that the

race allowed her to make an

effort without pressure so she

could truly push herself. "It's

nice to get that feeling of like,

"Wow, we earned it," she said, "I

felt super exhausted but pretty

fulfilled."

Most students said they

would return. "If I'm home

from college, I definitely think

I would do it again because

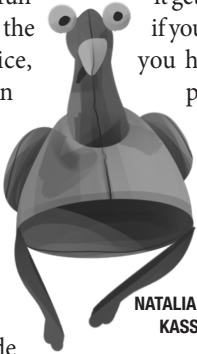
I really like the atmosphere,"

Marsh said. "We already signed

up. It's something I look for-

ward to every year," Schuetzen-

meister said.



Over four thousand people ran the Trot on Thanksgiving morning, many with strollers and families. ZOE KOHLMAYER

BHS Development Group fills gaps in funding, supports students

BY LUCY HOHN
staff writer

There are many ways that Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) is able to help fund things at Berkeley High School, such as field trips, testing, and other resources. However, there are many instances

where they haven't been able to fund everything. BHSDG was founded in 1991 and is a group that funds projects that support BHS, Berkeley Technology Academy, and BHS Independent Studies students, and help promote equity, student well-being, and academics within the school system.

In 2026, BHSDG will be celebrating its 35th anniversary.

However, this is coming at the same time that the group is facing serious issues with budget cuts coming from the district. Between this last school year and this school year, the district has had a \$15 million cut from its budget for the whole district, which affects BHS heavily.

Overall, BHSDG fills funding gaps that the district may have. "BHSDG is the only group that is focused solely on fundraising to support the high school...this means that we do things that help to address equity, help to ensure academic excellence, and help to drive student engagement and community," Stacey Hara said. Hara is a member of the development committee for BHSDG, which focuses on fundraising for the group.

"We're certainly aware that this (budget cuts) is going on, and so we're doing everything in our power to fundraise and then try to help fill in the gaps. Then we talk to the principal.

We talk to leaders in the community to see where the needs are, or see where the gaps are. We then try to help fill in," Elizabeth Stuart, the president of BHSDG, said. The group is able to find gaps by looking at BHS programs, staff, and the differences in funding that have occurred. This influences their decisions on where to reallocate grants and resources.

Students, teachers, and staff can apply for grants from the development group. The application process includes stating your idea, what you would like the grant for, and also connecting your idea to their mission of promoting equality, academics, and engagement. Examples of why people or groups may apply for a grant from BHSDG include completing funding for a school field trip, college application costs, paying for SAT testing, and much more. BHSDG has a grant selection committee, which looks at applications.

One grant that was especially

important last year was a \$60,000 grant to the BHS College and Career Center to support all of the programs that they have for juniors and seniors, including overall help and the college application process. Additionally, they provided funds for 24 BHS students to be able to tour Historically Black Colleges and Universities to help them understand college life and help encourage them in their application process.

BHSDG also includes student representatives who are a part of the Associated Student Body Leadership team at BHS. There are four representatives who work with BHSDG, students, staff, and Principal Juan Raygoza. "Our job is to bridge perspectives between the student body and the adults who are able to supply us with grants and other things. So we really work to kind of humanize the grant system," Ali Forbush, a senior and BHSDG student representative, said.

Issues such as budget cuts encourage BHSDG members to fundraise as much as possible, so they can help as many students, teachers, and staff as possible. "We know that we face other kinds of looming threats of budget cuts that threaten those pillars of equity and excellence and engagement. So we are asking for the community to dig into their pockets in any way that is meaningful for them," Hara said. Supporting BHSDG comes in many forms, be it spreading the word about the organization or students asking family members to donate.

Much of their support comes from donations. In the past, BHSDG has had a budget of around \$500,000 a year with more than 1,300 donors. "There's no donation too small to help us to ensure that we are able to continue to support (BHS), not just at the level we have in past years, but perhaps even a little bit more," Hara said.



MARTINA ROS VANO

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Free resources available over the holidays

BY EDEN ZIV
staff writer

With colder days and schools closing for break, the holiday season can

exacerbate food insecurity, particularly for students and families who receive school-based meal assistance. About 30 percent of Berkeley Unified School District students qualify for free or reduced-cost meals provided by the

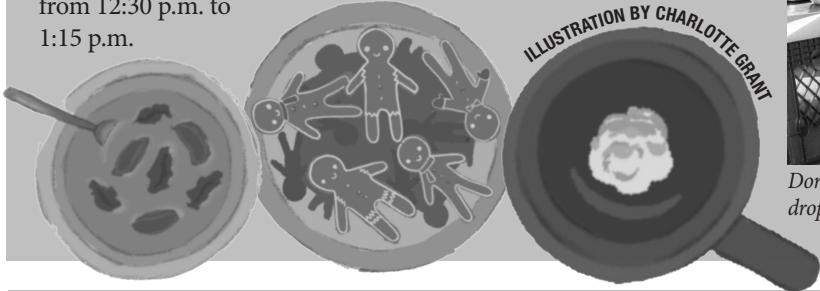
district. The Berkeley High School *Jacket* compiled a list of resources where students and families can find free holiday meals, food, and clothing during this season and beyond:



To volunteer for various roles at the pantry, email **IDA MARSHALL-LAPPE** director@berkeleyfoodpantry.org.

The Berkeley Food Pantry is open to people who reside, attend school, or are employed in Albany or Berkeley. Located at 1600 Sacramento St., the Berkeley Food Pantry is open from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. It is accessible by the 52 AC Transit bus line and is three blocks south of the North Berkeley BART Station. Community members may visit this pantry up to twice a month. Newcomers must bring a photo ID and proof of association with Albany or Berkeley to receive food. This process provides them access to all food pantries associated with the Alameda County Community Food Bank. The Pantry will be closed the day after Christmas, Friday, Dec. 26, 2025, and the day after New Year’s, Friday, Jan. 2, 2026.

Open 365 days a year, the **Dorothy Day House** offers meals, showers, laundry, clothing, lockers, medical and addiction referrals, and more to anyone in need. The drop-in center cooks and serves over 550 meals daily to Berkeley community members. It is located across the street from BHS at 1931 Center St., Berkeley, CA, 94707. The Dorothy Day House offers free breakfast from 8:30 a.m. to 9:15 a.m., Monday through Saturday. It also serves free lunch seven days a week from 12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.



Dorothy Day House helps over 15,000 drop-in visitors each year. **IDA MARSHALL-LAPPE**

The Berkeley Food Network serves over 1,000 households each week at its largest food distribution center, located at 1925 Ninth St., Berkeley, CA, 94710, and is accessible by



The Berkeley Food Network distributed 2,422,901 pounds of food in 2025. **TESS PETT-RIDGE HENNESSY**

the 51B or 72 AC Transit bus lines. The Ninth Street Pantry is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday. Each household may visit the pantry once a week. In addition, the Berkeley Food Network operates 11 community pantries and neighborhood pop-up pantries, short-term pantries that are open at select times and are easily accessible to the communities they are trying to serve. A pop-up pantry organized by the BHS Academy of Medicine and Public Service (AMPS) employing AMPS students opens at BHS during the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Other pop-up locations include the Berkeley Technology Academy, Albany High School, and the South Berkeley Senior Center. Special holiday food items will be available at Berkeley Food Network pantries leading up to the holidays. The Ninth Street Pantry will be closed on Thursday, Dec. 25, 2025; Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2025; and Thursday, Jan. 1, 2026.

The First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley serves over 100 households at its food pantry from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. on the first and third Saturdays of the month. The pantry is located at the church at 2407 Dana St., Berkeley, CA, 94704. The food pantry operates on a first-come, first-serve basis. Upon arrival, individuals are registered using a name and mobile number. On Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025, the church will offer extra food to help supply families during the break. The First Presbyterian Church also hosts Street Meals from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the church. There, people can enjoy a nutritious meal at 5 p.m. and receive clothing and toiletries on second and last Saturdays of the month.



To volunteer at the food pantry, you can visit fpckerkeley.org/food-pantry **IDA MARSHALL-LAPPE**

The Alameda County Community Food Bank partners with over 420 pantries, food distribution programs, and hot-meal programs. They distribute food to feed 60,000 people daily. Using their Food Recovery Program, which takes edible, unsalable food from local grocery stores and gives it to partner organizations, they have recovered and distributed 6.3 million pounds of food this year. The emergency food help line can be reached at (510) 635-3663, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The help line connects people with same-day food access and offers multilingual support and screenings for CalFresh (formerly known as Food Stamps).



ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIA KASS

More resources are available online at berkeleyhighjacket.com, or by scanning this QR code:



BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING: THE BRAIN

IVAN LADDISH



The brain is the most complex part of the human body. This is something we’ve been taught since the early days of science class. The hypothalamus controls body temperature, sleep, hunger, thirst, and emotions. The cerebellum controls movements and balance. There’s a lot more to the brain than that and there’s more that can be done with just a little bit of biomedical engineering.

John A. Paulson of the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences wrote, “A computer and human brain are, in many ways, more alike than they are different. A computer’s central processing unit contains billions of integrated transistors; the brain is comprised of billions of neurons.” (John A. Paulson seas. harvard.edu.) Using this idea of brains matching computers, scientists have made attempts to mimic the brain to help computers run as efficiently as possible.

This kind of engineering is called neuromorphic computing. Neuromorphic systems are designed and created to mirror the brain’s neural and synaptic structures to process information more efficiently and at lower energy costs and levels.

Integrated memory processing is a way of integrating memory storage and data processing into a specific area, this mimics the brain’s functioning. Integrated memory processing significantly increases energy efficiency, speed, and parallel processing capabilities. This technology also is a way to overcome the “von Neumann bottleneck” — von Neumann was an American-Hungarian scientist who is credited with designing the modern computer — which is the performance limitation created by the shared bus in the von Neumann architecture.

Stanford’s neurogrid is a specialized energy-efficient neuromorphic hardware system created to simulate large scale biological neural networks in real time in order to provide neuroscientists with an energy and cost efficient tool to better understand and study brain functions. The neuroscientists “interconnected neural arrays in a tree network; this choice maximized throughput. These three choices made it possible to simulate a million neurons with billions of synaptic connections in real time.” (Stanford University departments of Bio Engineering and Electrical Engineering)

This wouldn’t be one of my columns without talking about prosthetics at least once. Researchers from University of California at Berkeley and UC San Francisco have made a breakthrough in creating prosthetics controlled by the user’s brain to restore naturalistic speech for people with paralysis. What they did works around a flaw in brain-to-voice prosthetics in that there was a considerable amount of time lag between when the user attempted to speak and when they actually would. “Our streaming approach brings the same rapid speech decoding capacity of devices like Alexa and Siri to neuroprostheses,” (Gopala Anumanchipalli, Robert E. and Beverly A. Brooks UC Berkeley engineering) “Using a similar type of algorithm, we found that we could decode neural data and, for the first time, enable near-synchronous voice streaming. The result is more naturalistic, fluent speech synthesis.”

Annual Holiday Meal hosted by BHS will support community

BY MILA BOYDEN
staff writer

Extravagant celebrations of the wintertime holidays are something that most Berkeley High School students have become accustomed to. Big holiday meals, specifically, are a crucial tradition for many families. In reality, many Berkeley residents who live off of unstable incomes or are unhoused don't get the privilege of having abundant holiday meals. This is why BHS hosts an annual free Holiday Meal, serving those who can't afford this luxury on their own.

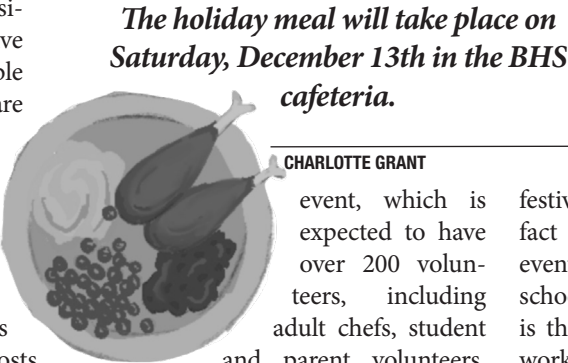
BHS' annual Holiday Meal is "warm, welcoming, and humbling," Brooks Trotmore, a BHS senior and the Chief of Service, said. "The

goal of the Holiday Meal event is to provide unhoused and home/food insecure people with the luxury of a festive holiday event as well as many essential items like winter clothing and hygiene products," Trotmore continued.

The meal will take place on Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, in the BHS cafeteria. The

these things aren't guaranteed and that not everyone gets them. Giving back to the community and serving people who don't have the same privileges as we do is an extremely important experience for every young person, I believe. It gives us this gratitude that makes us appreciate what we often take for granted."

What sets the BHS annual Holiday Meal apart from a regular day at a soup kitchen are its choir, festive decorations, and the fact that it's a school-run event. "I've worked at many schools for 31 years, and this is the only high school I've worked at that does anything like this," Karl Kaku, a BHS English teacher, said, "When I first heard we had a holiday meal, well, one, it surprised me and two, it was very exciting to see that I work in a school that's willing to give to its community. Also, as a teacher, I love that



The holiday meal will take place on Saturday, December 13th in the BHS cafeteria.

CHARLOTTE GRANT

event, which is expected to have over 200 volunteers, including adult chefs, student and parent volunteers, translators, and servers, will provide food, warm clothing, and non-perishables to unhoused and home- or food-insecure people. "The event is also beneficial to the volunteers and contributors of the event," Trotmore said, "Oftentimes, we forget that

it gives me an opportunity to see young people I work with in a different capacity. We're not in a classroom, we're actually out there doing something that's good for humanity." The planning behind the event was organized by student volunteers like Trotmore and Director of Student Activities John Villavicencio, alongside volunteers from the First Pres-



In 2023, pictured above, the holiday meal included donated goods alongside the meal.

MADELEINE WILSON

byterian Church in Berkeley. The Holiday Meal is expected to serve 200 to 300 meals to people in need.

The supplies for the meal are currently being gathered through donation drives where items such as hygiene supplies, non-perishable food, and winter coats can be donated. Clothes from BHS' reuse center, which have been donated by BHS fami-

lies, will also be given out. While the donation drives are sourcing some of the supplies, the Holiday Meal committee is also planning on buying a lot of the supplies, such as underwear and non-perishable food, which will be distributed during the event in bulk, as well as the ingredients and supplies to make the food that will be served.

Berkeley High School firewatch policy reduces false alarms

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

However, due to the sheer size of BHS, diligent maintenance is required — something Simplex and technicians with expertise have failed to provide. Simplex's unavailability, faulty calibration systems, and vaping students are all factors that have led to these unwarranted disturbances.

With numerous teachers, students, and parents voicing their concerns on the issue in school board meetings and directly to

school administration, the repercussions of these fire alarms have been impactful. They also cast a heavy burden over students at BHS. "I'm disturbed by the fact that (fire alarms) really mess up our lesson plans, and a lot of the time it can turn into

shared a personal account of when fire alarms affected her teacher's classroom environment. "I've had two fire alarms during test days and it's really frustrating to not see my true score reflected," Wadlund said. Anna Shim, a math teacher at BHS, said, "It's interrupted class time so much, losing so much instruction time. Not disrupting just one class, but multiple classes in a day. It gets too hectic."

To maintain transparency, BHS administration made it extremely clear that were not ignoring alarms

to any extent. Firewatch is a legal, state-approved procedure that BHS and other schools have been using for many years in cases of faulty alarms. The regulations are clear and require immediate evacuation of all educational facilities in the case of a fire alarm, regardless of its supposed accuracy. However, California schools are not required to have an actual alarm "sound," but rather to "voice instructions and alert and/or evacuation signals pertaining to fire emergencies," as outlined by the California

Division of the State Architect (DSA).

Firewatch "can work on multiple levels. It might be that there is a single alarm off

fire-watchers are not labor-effective either. In one instance, a firewatch occurred in an area in the Jacket Gym. Previously, the alarm in the Jacket Gym was triggered by a valve in the overhead pipes of the gym that had caused numerous false alarms. "If it was silenced as an alarm, that's still a lot of territory to cover, because you have to get back of the gym, front of the gym, all the way around the gym itself, the two bathrooms. So even if it sounds like one, it's still a lot of area and space," Clegg stated. Due to the sheer number of alarms and the magnitude of the BHS campus, implementing fire-watchers all year round is not a tangible solution to false alarms.

The firewatch period ceased in mid-November, 2025, and all alarm systems are back on. Since then, no alarms occurred for 34 days, until the alarm on Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025. BHS has maintained fire alarm updates and transparency with staff through these hectic times of false alarms. "I'm really thankful that Principal Juan Raygoza is being really clear with his communication. He clearly expressed disappointment in the amount of fire alarms and addressed ways to eliminate them. I appreciate his honesty with the staff," Shim said.

"We're not ignoring alarms ... that's illegal, even though most of our staff and a number of parents have asked us to,"

Keldon Clegg
BHS English Teacher

12
non-emergency fire alarms
in the first three months of the 2025-26 school year



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OPINION

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Amidst tariffs, choose memories not gifts

BY SORAYA JUNE BERENT
staff writer

Since President Donald Trump took office in January, his economic policies have significantly changed the prices of many imported goods. Chief among these policies are tariffs, taxes for consumers imposed on imports from other nations.

In April 2025, President Trump announced that there would be a 10 percent baseline tariff on imports from all other countries, though this rate varies greatly depending on a particular nation's relationship with President Trump. For example, there is a 25 percent tariff added to imports from countries that purchase Venezuelan oil, while products shipped from Europe are taxed at a rate of 15 percent. This tax on such a number of goods has a large impact on affordability and the stability of the U.S. economy. This means that holiday shopping and traditions rooted in consumerism will be more expensive for more people this winter. For teens, this becomes an opportunity to create a new era of community building instead of continuing the tradition of spending tons of money in the holiday season. The difficulty that tariffs are creat-

ing for shoppers opens the opportunity for prioritizing making memories over making purchases.

One of the most crucial factors in the steep increase in holiday shopping prices is President Trump's complicated relationship with China, one of America's top trading partners. While

“While tariffs are making the holiday season more expensive, they can also remind holiday buyers to prioritize finding true connection.”

most countries are facing tariffs on their imported goods, China has received incredibly high rates due to the current trade war between the two countries. This has posed a large issue for manufacturing prices, as most popular gifts during the holiday season, and indeed many of the United States' manufactured goods, are made in China. For example, due to Trump's combined tariff rates of 20 percent on Chinese toy imports, toys have become an incredibly expensive purchase for this holiday season. Additionally, common gifts like makeup, electronics, and clothes are commonly made in China and are more expensive this holiday season. The current tariffs imposed on China have made shopping for gifts significantly more expensive this year.

Buying gifts has generally been an important practice in the holiday season. While this custom isn't always problematic, it isn't very inclusive to Americans under financial strain.

Seeing material objects as the only way to express love creates extra stress during the holiday

season. Buying extremely expensive gifts is already an important factor for financial strain during and after the holidays, and with the recent imposition of tariffs, gift giving has become increasingly costly. According to a survey conducted by the Consumer News and Business Channel, 78 percent of respondents felt that holiday shopping has become much more expensive since 2024. This is an opportunity

to reduce consumerism during the holiday season. Spending money can become a smaller part of the holidays and relieve consumers from the financial burden that tariffs impose.

Extravagant purchasing during the winter removes buyers from the true intentions of the holiday season: connecting with one another. Holidays such as Christmas, Hanukkah, and

“Spending money can become a smaller part of the holidays and relieve consumers from the financial burden that tariffs impose.”

Kwanzaa center around strengthening community bonds, and buying extravagant gifts further separates holidays from the core values they preach. Zoe Knisbacher, a BHS sophomore, reflected on the holiday season feeling extremely centered on gifts. “There's no real meaning

to buying things for people. I mean, sure, you can get a thoughtful present, but ... half the time, they're going to not like what you get,” Knisbacher said. “Someone in a country across the world is working in terrible conditions ... I don't think (buying gifts) has a net positive outcome.” In America, gift-giving doesn't create true connection between people during the holidays. Making memories with experiences with friends and family is infinitely more valuable than acquiring objects.

While tariffs are making the holiday season more expensive, they can also remind holiday buyers to prioritize finding true connection with friends and family. As a new generation with the power to build new traditions, teens have the opportunity to change holiday conventions. Even after Trump's tariffs are no longer a part of our economic policy, building community should still be the most important part of the holidays. Focusing on emotional connection with loved ones during the winter time will establish new customs that bring the holiday season back to its true purpose of community. In the end, what we will remember isn't the gifts we receive, but the memories we make during the holiday season.

LOCAL LUNCHES: SAIGON EXPRESS

BY CYPHER DUFFY AND OREE GREMBEK



For this edition of Local Lunches we checked out a Berkeley classic, Saigon Express, located at 2045 Kala Bagai Way. Their menu is huge, with everything from pho and banh mi to rice plates, noodle bowls, and spring rolls. However, for BHS students, there is one very popular menu item, the banh mi sandwiches. Because of the limited time for lunch, you can't order just anything off the whole menu. They have pre-made bahn mi, which are ready in as little as ten seconds. Seriously, you may even get your sandwich before you finish paying. Because everything is made fresh and served fast, it's one of those places where you can get something comforting, filling, and flavorful without waiting forever or spending a ton.

We decided to order one of their most popular items: the beef banh mi, which cost just \$7.50. The white bread roll bun was toasted just enough to give you that crunchy exterior but still soft on the inside, which is exactly what you want in a banh mi. The beef itself was super flavorful and was perfectly tender. Paired with daikon, carrots, cilantro, and jalapeños, everything balanced out really well. Every bite had that signature mix of crisp veggies, juicy meat, and warm bread that makes a banh mi so satisfying. Saigon Express has been in this exact spot in Berkeley for at least 20 years, and you can see why. They have mastered the art of the banh mi, with good fresh ingredients, and the perfect ratio of bun to meat to toppings. One of the best parts about it is the slight fresh heat that the sliced jalapeños bring, not too spicy at all, but enough to feel that they are there. If you're hungry and want something fast but still legit, this sandwich hits the spot.

We also tried their fresh spring rolls, which they also have pre-made for the lunch rush. We got the shrimp spring rolls. The rolls were packed with vermicelli noodles, lettuce, mint, and nice big pieces of shrimp, all wrapped in soft, sticky rice paper. The peanut sauce that came with it was insanely good, being rich, creamy, perfectly nutty, and just slightly sweet without being too heavy, an amazing pair with the fresh rolls. It helped pull all the flavors together perfectly into a delicious lunch. For being such a simple dish, it was super refreshing and a great addition to the banh mi.

Overall, we'd totally recommend Saigon Express if you're looking for delicious food, fast service, and big portions. The prices are pretty reasonable, especially for how much you get, and the variety on the menu means you'll never run out of things to try. Whether you're in the mood for a warm bowl of pho, a quick banh mi at lunch, or a full meal that will actually keep you going after school, Saigon Express has you covered. We give Saigon Express a 9/10 rating for its reliability, flavor-packed dishes, and great value. It's one of those spots that's been around forever for a reason, and it definitely earns its place as a go-to lunch stop in Berkeley.



JIAYU GUAN

Seasonal depression deserves more awareness, recognition

BY ILARIA MARINI
staff writer

Despite its impressive catalogue of holidays and almost overwhelming festivity, winter is almost always associated with dreariness, drab skies, and depression. The winter months can be hard for a number of reasons. The increase in academic rigor brings additional stress for students, and winter’s lack of sunlight can disrupt one’s circadian rhythm, very commonly leading to a mild form of seasonal depression known as “winter blues.” A poll by the American Psychiatric Association showed nearly 40 percent of people experience symptoms like moodiness and fatigue associated with the winter months. People often assume seasonal depression always manifests as winter blues. However, this assumption is harmful to the approximately one in

20 people for whom seasonal depression, or seasonal affective disorder (SAD), is a serious depressive disorder that needs to be acknowledged and taken seriously. While California’s climate is quite temperate compared to other states, many residents still experience SAD. This is because SAD isn’t caused by winter’s cold weather or dreariness but rather by a change in the amount of sunlight in the day. In the wintertime, days get shorter, and this can throw off one’s internal clock and lead to depression. While this still requires further research, it is believed to be the true cause of SAD. SAD occurs primarily in the winter, though in rare

cases, it can also happen in spring or summer. Summer and winter SAD share a lot of symptoms. Both bring symptoms like hopelessness, irritability, fatigue, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, and even suicidal ideation and actions. These symptoms aren’t just ordinary winter gloominess or holiday-related stress, they’re serious and in line with many symptoms of non-seasonal depression. Teens experience SAD at similar rates to adults, and the winter months are made even harder for them by the increased workload in school. A lot of teachers start prepping their students for end-of-semester exams in the winter months, and many AP classes ramp up with the approaching test season, meaning much more stress for students as they grapple with more work and shorter days. Mental health resources like Berkeley High School’s Wellness Center are



INGRID PHILLIPS

Help is available
The BHS Wellness Center, in H-104, is open 8:40 a.m. - 3:23 p.m. everyday except, during fourth period.
Talk to a trusted friend or adult.

great for helping students work through these struggles, but they can also eat into class time, which could cause more stress for the student. This end-of-semester stress takes a toll on students’ mental health, and it makes the already taxing winter months one of the hardest times of the year. However, people are still quick to dismiss seasonal depression as ordinary winter blues, and this assumption is dangerous. SAD is a real, le-

gitimate disorder, and those who might have it should be encouraged to look into getting a diagnosis and treatment. Waving off something serious as a universal experience is the opposite of awareness; it downplays others’ struggles and prevents them from understanding their own experience and seeking help. Awareness is key. The more knowledge and conversation there is about mental health, especially SAD, the more people can do to

seek help, resources, and help others get better. SAD needs more recognition. As it stands, a lot of people are unaware of its seriousness, which can be harmful to the many affected. Winter is a difficult time of year already, especially for students, and schools need to prioritize their students’ mental health during the winter so that they can continue to learn even during such a challenging time of the year.

Trader Joe’s best winter items should stay year-round

BY HANNAH SUMNER
staff writer

Trader Joe’s is known for having a wide variety of foods, drinks, and health items that stem from various countries and cultures. The diversity of Trader Joe’s stock, in addition to its affordable prices, are some of the many reasons why Trader Joe’s has developed a cult-like following. This is true especially amongst Berkeley High School students, in part due to its close proximity to the BHS campus. Trader Joe’s has staples like Rolled Corn Tortilla Chips (Trader Joe’s Takis), Orange Chicken, and

Chocolate Peanut Butter Cups, but the main way that Trader Joe’s retains its customers’ interest is with the frequent rotation of items in its store. From pumpkin everything in autumn to Passion Fruit Granola in the summer, Trader Joe’s constantly has new stuff in store to match the season of sale. For many loyal customers, these items are not just groceries, they are yearly traditions. Although some items were made to be enjoyed during specific seasons, having them available in stores year-round would allow for their flavors and scents to always be enjoyed. Some may argue that having holiday products available year round takes away from the nov-

elty factor and would make the holidays feel less special. This sentiment is shared by BHS sophomore Lex Davis who says, “Seasonal items (are) kinda like decorations, you know? Like eating in accordance with the season is part of what makes the holiday so special.” That being said, most of these festive foods can be enjoyed regardless of the weather outside. If Trader Joe’s constantly has their seasonal stock available, people would be able to eat their favorite foods whenever they want. Despite the joy that comes with looking forward to the reemergence of seasonal goods, there would be equally as much joy in eating favorite foods depending on personal cravings, not seasons.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY NATALIA KASS, PHOTOS BY EZRA PAYNE

1. Peppermint Hold the Cones! & Peppermint Bark



These festive ice cream cones are only available during the winter months but their refreshing taste could be appreciated during any time of the year. The cooling peppermint flavor paired with the sweet chocolate cone is the perfect treat to cool down the hot summer months. These cones are a perfect bite sized treat to enjoy as a dessert, or just a pick-me-up. On top of that, Trader Joe’s peppermint bark is another festive treat. The thick fudge with crushed up candy canes embodies the holiday spirit. As BHS sophomore Nora Kaser said, “I love peppermint bark a lot. I think it should be available year round because I like peppermint bark.”

2. Mini Gingerbread People

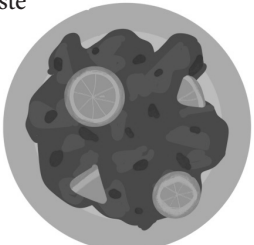
With its little arms, legs, and cute face, the personified gingerbread treat is a holiday staple. The light taste of gingerbread dipped in white chocolate fudge frosting is the perfect pairing with tea, coffee, or hot chocolate despite the time of year. The iconic gingerbread man has been a holiday favorite for centuries (since the Elizabethan era!), with its warm spices like cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg, it can also be a perfect treat for fall. These cookies are perfect for bringing in some of the holiday spirit any time of the year.



3. Cranberry Orange Spinach Salad Kit



The mix of cranberries, roasted pecans, fresh spinach, and blue cheese tied together with a tangy orange dressing is the perfect addition to any meal. From soups to sandwiches to family dinners, this salad kit brings liveliness and joy to the table even in the summertime. The fresh citrus taste of the salad pairs perfectly with the warm nights of spring. The versatility of the Cranberry Orange Spinach Salad Kit makes it a perfect contender for being a year round staple.



EDITORIAL

BUSD teachers deserve a win

During negotiations for a new labor contract with Berkeley Unified School District, the Berkeley Federation of Teachers (BFT) has been advocating for higher salaries and benefits to raise the standard of living for BUSD teachers. Negotiations have been underway since the spring, with the most recent contract expiring on June 30, 2025.

An impasse — a stall because of disagreement on both sides — has been declared between the two. Labor negotiations between teachers unions and school districts around the Bay Area have broken down. The United Educators of San Francisco have recently overwhelmingly voted to authorize a strike and West Contra Costa County teachers went on strike on Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025. After multiple rounds of negotiations, The United Teachers of Richmond agreed to end the strike in the early morning on Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025, resulting in 100 percent of healthcare benefits covered, and an eight percent wage increase in the next two years. A contract with bet-

ter pay and benefits for BUSD teachers alongside smaller class sizes would improve the learning environment for students. When teachers have better working conditions, they are simply able to do their jobs better.

The average annual salary for a public teacher in BUSD is slightly above \$100,000. This number doesn't include out-of-pocket expenses for benefits such as healthcare. A recent investigation by The Jacket calculated that a BUSD teacher making a mid-range salary may spend anywhere from 12 to 31 percent of their salary on healthcare, varying based on the number of dependents on their health insurance. Yet, the cost of living in Berkeley and the San Francisco Bay Area is dramatically higher than average, both nationally and statewide, with an estimate by MyLifeElsewhere putting the cost of living in Berkeley at 31.3 percent higher than the U.S. at large. When teachers have to balance a high cost of living with healthcare costs and an already-low salary, they are stretched thinner and are less able to focus on their students and the classroom. Our teachers are forced to balance pursuing a career they are passionate about with worries over affording their basic needs. BUSD must act to ensure a future contract includes higher salaries with more, if not all, healthcare expenses covered to ensure high quality education for their students.

The United Educators of San Francisco, and the West Contra Costa Administrators Association, alongside BFT,

are participants in the greater We Can't Wait movement, a movement uniting teacher unions around the Bay Area campaigning for key demands such as a rise in educator wages alongside smaller class sizes. Smaller class sizes provide for a more conducive learning environment by allowing for more time spent on each individual student by a teacher.

Proper resources for teachers improve standards for both teachers and students. A study from the Learning Policy Institute has shown that when teachers receive more instructional resources and community support, there is an increase in student achievement, shown through testing results, and learning outcomes. Teachers need more supportive contracts, which include things like higher wages, better benefits, smaller class sizes, alongside classroom resources. These would all prioritize the growth of students, reduce teacher turnover and workload, and compensate teachers fairly so they can focus more on their role as an educator rather than their ability to pay upcoming bills.

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping future generations. School districts that are in especially high cost-of-living locations, such as BUSD, should invest in the welfare of their staff since it is directly intertwined with the health and success of the student body. Teachers deserve wages proportionate to the cost of living to ensure the stability of BUSD and the wellbeing of our community.

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We encourage students, staff, and the community to submit letters to the Editor for publication. All submissions must be signed; anonymous letters may only be printed with a two-thirds vote of the Editorial Board.

Not all submissions will be printed and may be edited to conform to *Jacket* policy or to meet space restrictions.

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KWANZAA

Comprising seven days in late December to early January, Kwanzaa is a non-religious holiday observed by an estimated nine million Black Americans. It's rooted in the civil rights movement and inspired by a myriad of West, East, and Southwest African harvest traditions. Despite the cultural significance it has for many, it's overshadowed by other winter holidays like Christmas and Hanukkah. Kwanzaa deserves more awareness among the general population. Read below to learn a few quick facts about this holiday.

BY CID FRYDMAN & HAILEY OSTRER
staff writer & opinion editor

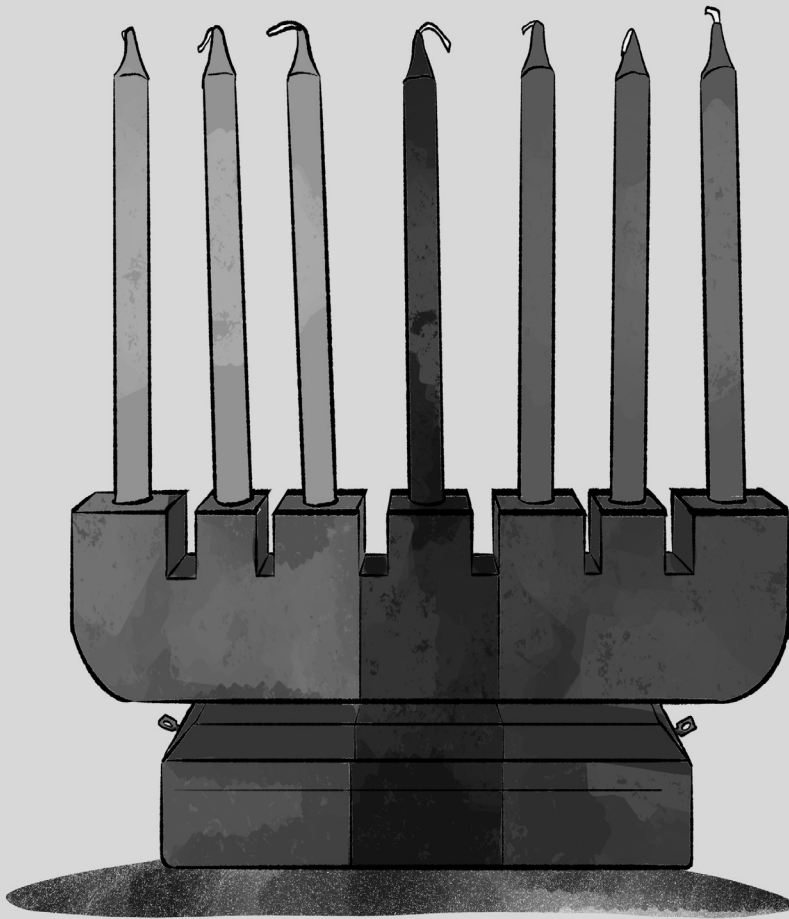
Kwanzaa is not considered a religious holiday, and more of a cultural expression and time of remembrance and honoring ancestors.

Each day of Kwanzaa focuses on celebrating one of seven principles. Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self determination), Ujimila (collective work and responsibility), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith).

Families light a candle each night on a “Kinara,” which is a special candle holder.

People decorate their houses with African art, colors, and symbols, like the classic black, red, and green combination.

On Dec. 31, many celebrate with a large feast named Karamu, meaning "feast" in Swahili.



JAY TRAUNER

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BHS' CHRISTMAS-CENTRISM IMPACTS STUDENTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"During the holiday season, like winter, I don't really feel excluded," he said, "I don't really hear my friends talking about Christmas or how they're excited, and even if they were, I wouldn't really feel that excluded."

In the background of all the student talk, the BHS Associated Student Body spends this time of year working on holiday decorations that get put up around school, including the cafeteria and the C Gallery. There are paper snowflakes, lights, banners celebrating multiple holidays, menorahs, kinaras, and a mini Christmas tree.

"Usually, especially the C Gallery, we try to have more inclusivity. The holiday meal is mostly Christmas-themed, so I think it would be cool to get more lights and hang up decorations for Hanukkah or other different holidays," Cole Geurtsen, Commissioner of Environmental Sustainability and BHS senior, said. The cafeteria, where the holiday meal is held, mostly has Christmas decorations. "I think we've done a good job of being inclusive in the past, but we just want to keep up that tone," Guertsen said.

However, some students point out that even though BHS may put up Hannukah decorations or touch on other holidays during the winter, it ignores important celebrations in different months.

"(Hanukkah) has less of a religious significance than a lot of other holidays," Nevo Naftalin-Kelman, a BHS senior who identifies as Jewish, said, adding that the holidays he finds most important are Rosh Hashanah, Passover, and Yom Kippur. "(Hanukkah's) just seen as the Jewish Christmas," Naftalin-Kelman said.

"In a way, even just the focus on Hanukkah is kind of ethnocentric, or centered around Christianity, since that's the one Jewish holiday that happens at the same time as Christmas, not because it's the one Jewish holiday that's a very big part of the Jewish identity," Jordan Kehat, a BHS sophomore who identifies as Jewish, said, "We (in Berkeley) definitely pride ourselves on being incredibly inclusive, on talking about all cultures, but really it's talked about when it's convenient. And I think the fact that if we were going to talk about Jewish culture, the only time we will talk about it is the one holiday that's just the same time as Christmas, I think just goes to show how it is just slightly performative."

Kirsch added that he's heard some inclusive vocabulary surrounding some activities, such as "Secret Santa" being relabeled "Secret Snowflake," but feels that this is a surface-level effort and is still commemorating Christmas regardless.

"It kind of sounds fun, but I don't think I'll be participating ... I don't really want to make cards out saying like, Merry Christmas, or Happy Holidays," Kirsch said, "I feel like it's just a little weird, and I don't feel like I'm missing out."

The holidays considered the most important in Islam, Ramadan and Eid, also tend to not be celebrated around the wintertime (as they run on the lunar calendar, so they occur at a different time every year), and are also not as talked about or decorated for.

"A lot of people, I feel, don't realize or know about (Ramadan or Eid) unless they have friends who are Muslim," Anastasya Gamarra, a BHS freshman who identifies as Muslim, said, adding that she often gets odd reactions when people realize she's fasting during Ramadan. "People are confused and concerned at the same time. They're like, 'what? You don't eat or drink? Oh, I could never do that.' It feels more like you're getting shamed in a type of way, or judged for the different practices that you're doing," Gamarra said.

Another popular holiday based on the lunar calendar, which generally falls in late winter, is the Lunar New Year. As a cultural holiday that spans multiple countries and religions, it's celebrated by around a quarter of the global population, including millions of Asian Americans.

"There's a lot of people (in the Bay Area) celebrating Lunar New Year, and a lot of people in general decorating their houses ... (at BHS) I don't really see that, to be honest. When it was Lunar New Year, it just felt like a normal day," Stephanie Huynh, a BHS sophomore that celebrates the holiday, said. She's glad her Mandarin teacher often does activities for Lunar New Year, but notes that there's probably a lot of kids that celebrate that aren't in Mandarin classes. "On the Bulletin this year they had a Lunar New Year thing (that the AP Mandarin class made) that was cool to see, because last year they didn't have that," Huynh said.

One thing that non-Christian holidays tend to have in common is that, unlike Christmas, they're not official school breaks. Although absences for religious or cultural holidays can be excused, students still have to make up for the work they missed in class. Sometimes, students can also miss important school events, like when this year's Spirit Week was scheduled during Rosh Hashanah.

"When (Eid is) on a school day, most Muslim kids would skip school that day or not show up. And I've just noticed that there's been a lot of quizzes and stuff planned that day. And I feel like every year, there's always something big that I've missed on that day," Radja said, "Last year, I think there was a field trip on Ramadan, and it was very draining because I couldn't eat."

Although these are not official school days off, some teachers have special policies if a student misses class during one of those times. "One of my teachers ... if you're missing school for a religious holiday, then she excuses your work — because we don't have work on Christian holidays, or school (on) Christian holidays. So she just thinks it's fair to do that," Stern said.

Kelly Boylan, a history teacher, has had this policy since almost as long as she's been teaching. "If you're gone for a religious holiday I don't think you should have to make up the work, those are important occasions and I

want to respect people's faith and their time with their family," Boylan said.

Another winter holiday that is celebrated by some people in Berkeley is the seven-day celebration of Kwanzaa, an African American tradition that originated during the Black Power movement as a Pan-Africanism celebration.

Asha Sweeney Banks, a BHS junior who celebrates Kwanzaa, said she often tries to explain it to people by comparing it to Hanukkah. "There's a candle holder, and like other holidays you spend it with your family, and kids get presents. A lot of it is about unifying Black people overall, mostly African American people, but also around the diaspora," she said.

"It would be nice to tell more people what Kwanzaa was about," Sweeney Banks said, "and especially more African American people, so that they could also celebrate it ... at school I've seen a couple things, but definitely not as much as Christmas. But also that's just because, based on numbers, not as many (people celebrate Kwanzaa)." Indeed, due to the fact that so many people in Berkeley celebrate Christmas, it can seem more like just a secular American celebration instead of one reserved exclusively for Christians.

"I think just because of how much it's been put into the world — like, there's always ads about it, there's so many movies about it — Christmas is just tied to winter time," Gamarra said, "It's just been commercialized so much that everyone just celebrates it now, like it's a normal thing."

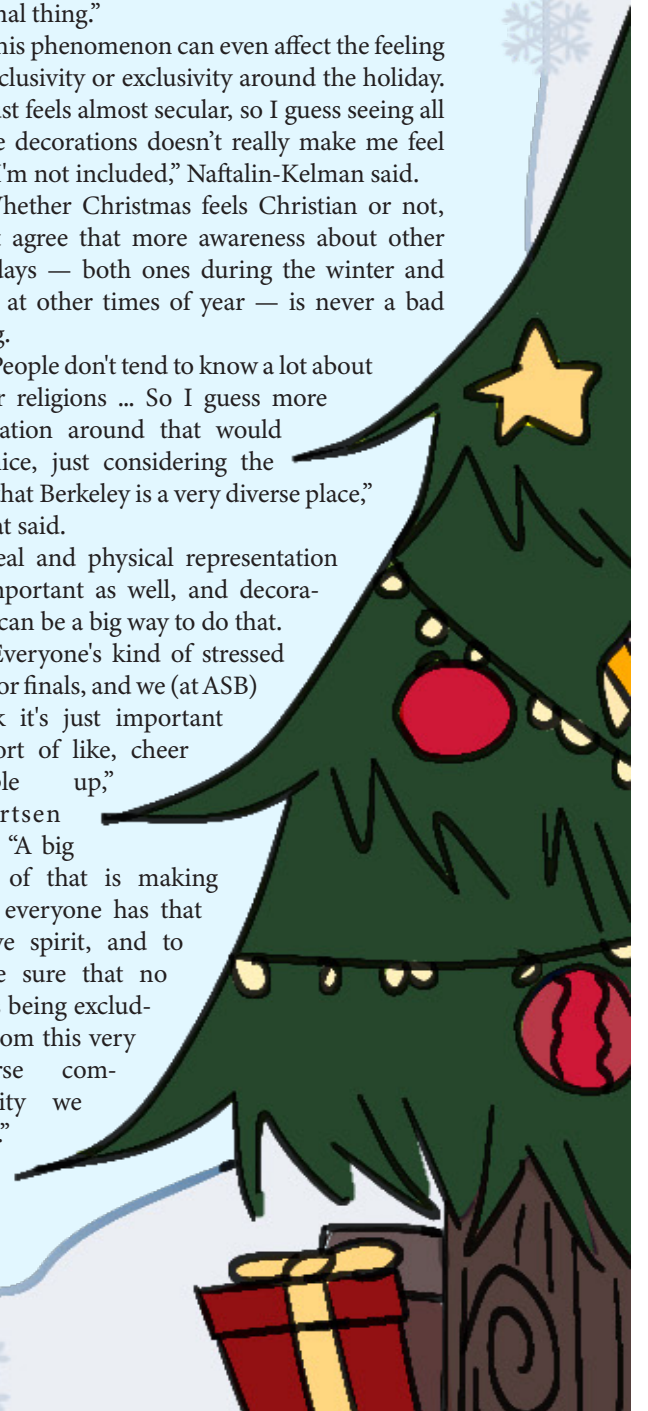
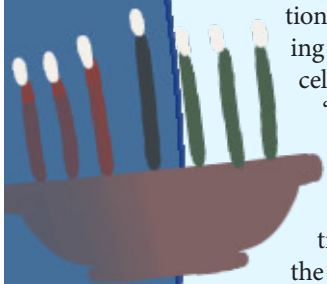
This phenomenon can even affect the feeling of inclusivity or exclusivity around the holiday. "It just feels almost secular, so I guess seeing all those decorations doesn't really make me feel like I'm not included," Naftalin-Kelman said.

Whether Christmas feels Christian or not, most agree that more awareness about other holidays — both ones during the winter and ones at other times of year — is never a bad thing.

"People don't tend to know a lot about other religions ... So I guess more education around that would be nice, just considering the fact that Berkeley is a very diverse place," Kehat said.

Real and physical representation is important as well, and decoration can be a big way to do that.

"Everyone's kind of stressed out for finals, and we (at ASB) think it's just important to sort of like, cheer people up," Geurtsen said, "A big part of that is making sure everyone has that festive spirit, and to make sure that no one's being excluded from this very diverse community we have."



FEATURES

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Saul's annual Hanukkah meal

BY KIMIA AZADPUR
staff writer

Saul's Restaurant & Delicatessen has historically been a landmark Hanukkah meal restaurant for the Berkeley community during the winter holidays, and this year is no exception. In the weeks leading up to the holiday, the block outside the restaurant fills with the smell of latkes frying, the sound of live music, and the communal energy that regulars say defines Saul's. What began years ago under former owners Peter Levitt and Karen Adelman, who first introduced musicians and open-door celebrations into the space, has continued to thrive under current owners Sam Tobis and Jesus Mendoza, who have carried the tradition forward with the same warmth and openness. "They've really kept the torch lit," musician and programming organizer Mike Perlmutter, who has per-



MAREN MATTHEWS

formed at Saul's since 2008, said. For Tobis, Hanukkah meals at Saul's are rooted in the holiday's history. He explained the story of the miracle of oil — how a small amount lasted eight days — lives on through foods cooked in oil at Saul's. "We offer latkes every day of the year, but during Hanukkah we build a special latke tent out front so people can get one hot from the fryer," Tobis said. Inside the restaurant, menorahs are placed on every table, something Tobis said he is especially proud of. "It brings people into the spirit of the holiday and makes a really warm, bright environment where you have all these candles on the table and it's beautiful," Tobis said. Live music is one of the biggest attractions, which Perlmutter describes as essential to the feeling Saul's cultivates each year. He reflected on how the Christmas Day performances in Saul's used to pack the block with lines wrapped around the corner and how the informal music gatherings under Luna Houser, a former staff member, eventually grew into full klezmer — a genre of instrumental Jewish music for celebration — street

parties. He now helps organize the Hanukkah lineup, which includes everything from upbeat klezmer to cello-violin duos, fusion music, and traditional Jewish folk music. "We always hope to bring a good feeling that might be a connection to some past, a kind of historical sound from generations back that people can resonate with," Perlmutter said. Behind the scenes, the celebration is a logistical marathon. Manager Angelica Lopez, who oversees the week's operations, said the biggest challenge is coordinating complicated orders from multiple parts of the menu: the regular items, the expanded Hanukkah offerings, and the catering selections. "The hardest orders are the ones that have a little of everything," Lopez said. Staffing is another hurdle because everyone must work extended hours, and an entirely separate team is required for the latke tent, demanding its own kitchen crew and cashiers. Keeping the operation running smoothly necessitates precise communication between the kitchen, floor, and tent staff. Lopez explained that the team relies heavily on experienced leaders: kitchen managers and senior servers, who already have strong communication skills. "It's really about



During Saul's Hanukkah meals, menorahs are placed on every table.

MAREN MATTHEWS

pre-planning and being honest, these are times where we have to tell the customer, 'Your order got lost - but don't worry - we're gonna find it.' It is just about being an open book with everybody involved," Lopez said. Despite the intensity, Lopez said the atmosphere makes it more than worthwhile. "Seeing everybody gather together, the families, the smiles, and music makes everything feel worth it," she said. Tobis also mentioned that the celebration welcomes everyone, regardless of whether they are Jewish, non-observant, of a different faith, or none at all! "It's an opportunity for any-

one who's interested to participate," Tobis said. This year, the festivities are expanding even further with a Joy Village Bazaar in the vacant space next door and Saul's first off-site catering party, where the team will bring their fryer directly to a customer's backyard. Even as the event gets bigger, the heart of it remains the same: flickering lights on every table, hot latkes served straight from the fryer, and music drifting out through Shattuck Ave. "The annual Hanukkah meal is still a very beautiful thing ... it's just taken a different shape," Perlmutter said.



The restaurant and deli invites all customers, be they Jewish or not, to enjoy the feast.

MAREN MATTHEWS



NATALIA KASS

WHO WINS: FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

CALLIOPE CAMERON



When I started writing these columns, I wanted to connect with others about the importance of physical and mental health for students, especially girls and women who do not usually receive the same recognition and attention as male athletes. However, throughout almost the entire process of writing, I was not able to participate in my sport, and I often felt like a fraud writing advice that I had neglected to take myself, putting me in a position where I couldn't run at all. It felt hypocritical to emphasize the values of physical health and listening to your body when my own body was actively breaking down.

Because of this, I feel like I have learned a lot about myself and the process that it takes to stay healthy, but the most important thing I have learned is that sometimes things go wrong: there is no perfect formula for everyone that will guarantee success and improvement. You can do absolutely everything by the book, and still be injured or lose the love for your sport. In the last two weeks that I have been back to running, two of my close friends have gotten serious running-related stress injuries, and many others have underperformed or suffered throughout the season, despite having near-perfect nutrition, strength and recovery routines. Sports can be heartbreaking.

That being said, the first thing that comes to mind for athletes who can't participate in their sport is, "When can I come back?" That's crazy if you think about it: after breaking a bone and having repetitive stress injuries, I didn't even consider that running wasn't for me, or that I was too scared to try to return.

I talked about losing the love for sports due to overwhelming pressure and performance anxiety in an earlier column, and I think it is an important idea to go more in depth on: sports can take so much out of you, but quitting can change the shape of who you are as an individual. Balancing social life, academics and sports is a near impossible task and many feel as though they are taking on more than they can handle. Despite this, sports can be a student's greatest strength and comfort after a long day or difficult test.

No one wants to continuously put themselves through pain and discomfort, but a lot of times being an athlete can feel that way. Throughout my process to recovery, I have been frustrated, sad and angry, but I have never hesitated about wanting to run again, and the end goal has remained the same. I'm always going to come back to running, even though it has caused me to suffer. I hope that everyone reading this has some space that they feel that they will never stop loving and trying harder.

My coach's advice to us is, "Run happy, run healthy and finish faster than you started." To me, this means to take joy from every opportunity to participate in your sport, whether that be a great race after a successful training block or a difficult run-walk progression after injury.

WORD ON THE STREET

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE FAMILY HOLIDAY TRADITIONS?

INTERVIEWS BY NATALIE GROSS
staff writer

PHOTOS BY MARIELLE BLED
staff photographer

Ixi Pimentel-Aparicio, a Berkeley High School junior, celebrates the Latin American version of Christmas Eve, a tradition called Nochebuena. Nochebuena is a celebration centered around a large family gathering, traditional food, and staying up late into the night together. For Pimentel-Aparicio, these traditions matter because of the time she is able to spend with family and the connection fostered through the tradition. "It's a time where I get to spend time with family that I don't usually see all the time," Pimentel-Aparicio said. She explained that she grew up with these traditions, making them feel especially significant.



BHS freshman Jari Hesse celebrates St. Nikolaus, a German holiday that happens on Dec. 6, marking the beginning of the Christmas season for many German families and building anticipation for the holiday. On this day, children clean their shoes and leave them out on the night before, receiving small gifts or sweets inside them in the morning. For Hesse, it is one of the most meaningful holidays because of the holiday spirit it inspires. "It really brings in the Christmas holiday spirit," Hesse said. Hesse finds that the holiday creates somewhat of a positive effect, making the season feel physically different, "It starts to feel more like cold weather outside," Hesse said.



Charlie Loeper, a BHS sophomore, has a Thanksgiving tradition of traveling to Sacramento to spend the day with extended family. His family celebrates with a potluck style dinner, in which each person brings a dish to share to the meal. Potlucks are a common aspect of many American Thanksgiving gatherings, with each dish contributing to a larger meal. "We meet over brunch or lunch, and everybody brings some sort of food," Loeper said. In recent years, Loeper has started to help cook. What stands out to him is the connection it creates between his family. "Family roots mean a lot," Loeper said, explaining the traditions' significance for him.



Cassian Evans, a BHS senior, enjoys the family tradition of smoking an entire turkey for Thanksgiving, which is a variation of the classic American Thanksgiving meal. Smoking a turkey requires days of preparation due to the many steps required: thawing, brining, and a low-and-slow smoke. "My father will smoke a full turkey, and if you've never had smoked turkey, I highly recommend it," Evans said. It's a core part of the holiday for Evans' family and the day feels incomplete without it. "It kind of doesn't feel like Thanksgiving when we don't have it," Evans said. For Evans' family, smoking a turkey is not just a method of cooking it, but a cherished family ritual.



Guerilla Cafe closes, legacy continues

BY CATARINA NEWMAN
staff writer

Guerilla Cafe, located at 1620 Shattuck Ave., was a cafe, art gallery, safe space, and source of inspiration for the Berkeley community. The name came from the revolutionary fighters who are part of unconventional groups that protest against larger forces. Guerilla Cafe's style harnessed this revolutionary spirit with a focus on activism. This could be seen in the table markers given to customers, which featured facts about lesser known historic freedom fighters. "It's a way to educate people," Andrea Ali, the owner of the cafe, said. Guerilla Cafe closed its doors on Saturday, Nov. 29, 2025.

The name Guerilla Cafe

pays homage to Ali's social justice background and the progressive culture of Berkeley and Berkeley High School. Ali grew up in the Bay Area and graduated from BHS in 1996. Attending BHS and making change as a student inspired the philosophy of the cafe, which Ali co-founded with Keba and Rachel Konte. "We protested, like every other week we would go to protest. And we just wanted to highlight that history of the Bay Area. So we chose the name 'Guerilla.' But really, to me, it means heroes," Ali said.

The menu at Guerilla Cafe was inspired by a few different cuisines, including Mediterranean cuisine and classic brunch food. The polenta was a favorite among customers and staff alike. They also offered gluten-free

options, most notably the gluten-free avocado toast. In addition to baked goods and breakfast dishes, they served coffee and specialty drinks. The subtle sweetness of the horchata latte warmed customers' throats and hearts.

Creativity was another prominent feature of Guerilla Cafe. Ali is a ceramic artist, and her creative identity shaped all aspects of the cafe. All of the staff were artists of some medium too: writers, musicians, visual artists, and more. There was always an art show covering the walls, showcasing local artists, and adding to the unique ambience. "It's a great place, even more so than galleries, because over 100 people will see your work in a day or two," Ali said. These exhibitions were an alternative yet effective way for local artists to get exposure and sell their work, while also adding ambience to the space.

According to customers, the community and atmosphere were Guerilla Cafe's most important aspects. Michaela Guerrero, a BHS girls lacrosse coach and regular at Guerilla Cafe, found the cafe to be a cultural melting pot, attracting a wide variety of customers. "It feels like a culture hub. It feels like

history is being made here, and it feels very intellectual," Guerrero said. Yonhei Lee, another cafe regular, said, "I also know that the owners and the people here really care about the community, which makes me feel excited to be here. I'm queer, so I feel like coming in here, I just feel safe," Lee said, "This place has felt like home since I moved to the Bay Area."

Although Guerilla Cafe became a beloved Berkeley small business, Ali wasn't confident it would work out in the early stages of development. "You can really do anything you put your mind to. Like I said before, I never owned a restaurant, but I figured it out step by step. And, you know, asking my elders and asking for help and going to the city and so really, I guess my takeaway is for, you know, especially high school students, don't put any limitations on what you can or can't do," Ali said.

Unfortunately, the Cafe's 20-year lease expired on Saturday, Nov. 29, 2025. While the Berkeley community will no longer be able to enjoy their meals, warm atmosphere, and art displays, the memory of it will live on for all of its unforgettable characteristics.



ZIVA AMENDOLA



BY CHLOE PRENDERGAST
staff writer

Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025 marked the 42nd annual Holiday Street Fair on Telegraph Avenue. This year, the street fair is scheduled to be on the first three weekends of December. Similar to past years, it will be located on Telegraph between the cross streets of

Bancroft and Dwight, only five blocks east of Berkeley High School. The market is home to over 200 local vendors with a wide variety of goods and merchandise for visitors to browse and shop from. The fair is a great opportunity to find unique and locally made gifts for your loved ones this holiday season. One of the primary features of the street fair is handmade

The Telegraph Avenue Holiday Street Fair hosts its festive 42nd annual event

and locally crafted products. There’s a wide range of these unique handcrafted goods such as handmade jewelry, custom press on nails, crocheted goods, and more. There was even one vendor who takes old books that would have been thrown away and repurposes them into notebooks

with the cover of the original book being the new cover of the notebook. Another stand called Bart Bridge makes baseball hats with the names of places in California and an image that is associated with that place. For example, the Berkeley hat has an embroidered University of California, Berkeley campus Campanile. Aviv Elis, a sophomore at BHS, mentioned her favorite vendor that she saw, “There’s a really cute store where all the succulents were pink.”

Another main focus of the fair is vintage and secondhand clothing. The last block is full of vendors with curated collections of thrifted clothes and accessories. There’s a wide variety of prices for whatever works with your budget, prices range from 10 dollars

to around 50 dollars per item. Although this is on the pricier side for second hand clothing, all of the clothes help support small businesses and are cu-

The market is home to over 200 local vendors with a wide variety of goods and merchandise to browse.

rated to be good quality and fashionable. Also, some vendors had bins of clothing that were more of a hunt to find pieces but the items were much cheaper. On average these bins had a price of five dollars per item. Siena Ingraham, a BHS sophomore, mentioned the clothing section of the market. She said, “It’s a lot of window shopping for me ... It’s a lot of different things. And I like the exit. There’s a lot of clothes at the end, which were really tempting me.”

In terms of holiday spirit, the market was more subtle with its holiday theme but there was Christmas music playing and there were

vendors that had holiday-centered items. Elis said, “It was a nice, kind of cozy place where people were just hanging out.” Elis also mentioned seeing ornaments that looked like mini houses. Zephyr Graham, a sophomore at BHS, said, “not what you would expect from a Christmas related gathering. But (there were) crochet Christmas trees. I saw a lot of secondhand clothing, which was very Berkeley. I saw a lot of crafts and a lot of very cool things.” On the overall atmosphere, Graham said, “I

“It was a nice, kind of cozy place where people were just hanging out.”

Aviv Elis
BHS sophomore

would say that (the street fair) brings the holiday spirit.” Although some of the items are on the pricier side, purchases mean a lot to the vendors who spend countless hours making these one-of-a-

kind goods or curating a perfect inventory with options for everyone. Many vendors are family businesses or someone that loves sharing their passion at markets like these. Not only is attending the festival a great way to support local small businesses, everything sold would make for unique creative gifts. Graham said, “It’s good. It’s pricey, but it’s good. But that’s the whole point, you know?” He continued by saying, “I would recommend it to anyone who really likes crafts or needs to get a gift for someone and has a little bit of money in their back pocket.”

Graham added that it’s a great experience with friends and ended by saying, “it was really just a great time.”

Telegraph’s holiday street fair was a very memorable event showcasing a wide variety of unique vendors and experiences for all who attend. Whether you need a special gift for a friend, delicious holiday treat, or a fun stroll to get in the holiday spirit, Telegraph Avenue’s Holiday Street Fair could be the event for you.

Teachers and students share effective finals studying techniques

BY TEJAL DOPMAN
staff writer

“Where you have to struggle is where you learn the most,” Aaron Glimme, AP and regular chemistry teacher at Berkeley High School, said. Glimme has seen many times how students study what they are comfortable with rather than focusing on what they don’t know, and the effects of this on their outcomes in school.

Exam-related stress and anxiety is a serious challenge that many students face when going into important tests, like finals, that have a significant impact on their grade. Louise Harm, IB Environmental Systems and Societies and AP Environmental Science teacher, explained that organization, though simple, greatly helps students manage their academic stressors and challenges. “Sit down and organize what you have so that you can see what you don’t have, what you don’t understand, what you’re missing, because it’s really easy to get caught up in the stress of it and not realize that you know a lot of the content already,” Harm said.

Benjamin Nathan, Advanced Math 2 and AP Calculus AB teacher, described how for his final exams, all of the content covered in the semester is tested in one cumulative exam, as opposed to many of the module or unit tests that require students to deeply

understand the material. “On a singular test, we go very deep with the material, so it’s going to be more challenging. But in the final it’s a lot of material, but we’re trying to make sure you understand the basics,” Nathan said.

The idea of cumulative tests are stressful and can be difficult to manage. However, with Nathan’s finals model, finals are easier because cumulative finals only demand students have a basic understanding of each of the topics.

Many BHS students cram. Cramming is a form of studying for finals in which students attempt to learn or study all the material in a highly concen-

trated amount of time leading up to the final. However, cramming is almost never effective for the actual test. Ella Newman, BHS senior, explained how it has never helped her personally. “It just stresses me out even if I learn; I just feel overwhelmed,” Newman said. According to Harm, cramming is one of the biggest mistakes students make when studying because students never actually remember what they have learned or have sufficient time to understand the material.

Many students choose to use digital apps and programs to assist their learning. Harm incentivized students to review

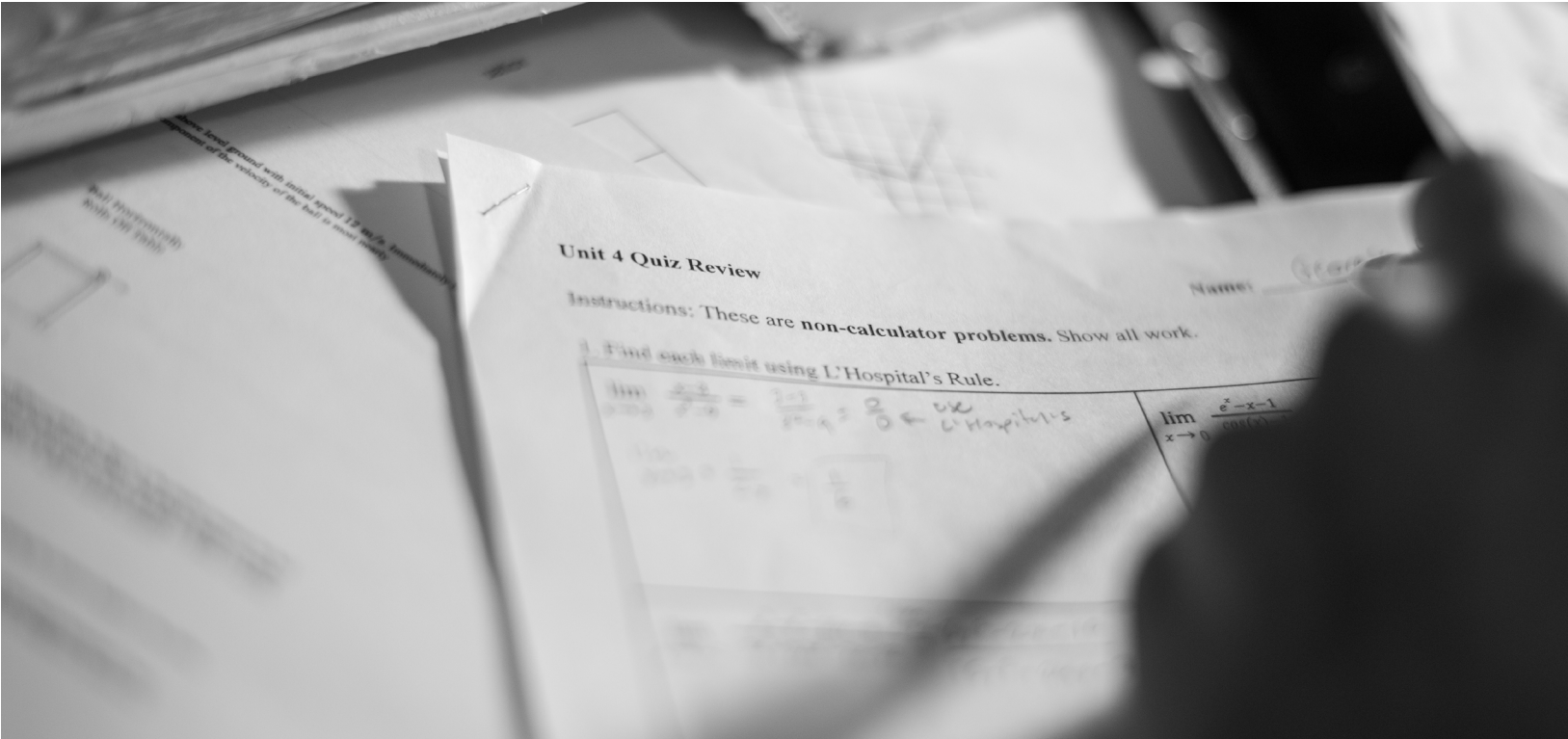
past tests as it is frequently the easiest way to learn; reviewing past tests tells students exactly what they understand and what they struggle with. Glimme also provides many practice tests to help students understand what’s going to be on the test and help them acclimate to the stress of test day.

BHS sophomore Tanish Barot described how he uses ChatGPT to study; however, rather than making it do the work for him, he uses it to ensure that the work he produces is correct. “I never use ChatGPT to do my homework, because then I can’t learn. But when I do my homework, I make sure all my answers are

correct, because if they’re not I’ve been doing it the wrong way, and then I’ll be studying the wrong way,” Barot said.

A strategy that Nathan advised students to use is studying in a variety of places, so the content dissociates from one location. “If you only studied in the classroom, you’d be fine. But let’s say you’re only studying in your bedroom. When you get here (the class), it’s a new location, and your mind doesn’t associate it the same way,” Nathan said, “But if you did it in your bedroom and then outside somewhere, and then a coffee shop, and then your friend’s house, your ability to access (the information)

wherever you are is higher.” Nick Pleskac, a BHS biology and biotech teacher, gave some valuable advice to students studying for exams. “A common mistake that students make is reading over their notes or reading a textbook, because with the answers in front of you it’s a really easy way to trick yourself into thinking that you know something. The best way for students to find out that they don’t know something is to try and write out an explanation, draw a picture to show whatever they are studying to illustrate it, and then to try and teach it to another person,” Pleskac said.



Students often make the mistake of reviewing their materials as opposed to practicing and teaching it to others, which is significantly more effective for memory retention.

GEORGIA PAULOS

ENTERTAINMENT

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ALBUMS TO LISTEN TO BEFORE YOU DIE: ‘PET SOUNDS’

MILES FELDMAN



As the last issue of my column, I felt that the album I cover should be the one I think is the most essential. That album is “Pet Sounds” by The Beach Boys. Usually when people hear The Beach Boys they think only of surf music made for teens in the early 1960s, music that is unserious and nostalgic to an older generation. But frontman Brian Wilson crafted a sole creative vision in 1966 that not only changed music forever, it changed how we appreciate it. This album feels like a secret world shared between those who fully embrace it.

This album was recorded by experienced session musicians who were directed by Wilson. He played these tracks for the other Beach Boys who loved it and contributed extra instrumentation and vocals. When “Pet Sounds” was released, reactions were mixed. In America it barely sold and received mediocre reviews, but in Britain it was praised. The singles sold loads, and musicians from all over England started calling it their main new influence. Since 1966 the album has been seen as the first statement of music as “high art” and as the first full album not used as a collection of songs but crafted with passion.

“Pet Sounds” has two qualities that make it incredible. First is instrumentation by some of the best session musicians with tangible passion. The other is incredibly emotionally intelligent lyricism. I wish I could cover every song on this album in detail but, sadly, words can’t convey how I feel about each individual moment. Each song on this album is amazing in its own unique way, and I highly recommend listening to it from start to finish.

The three singles from “Pet Sounds” provide its thesis. “Wouldn’t It Be Nice” sounds like early Beach Boys songs but with beautiful lyrics about longing and love, and by the end of the song, the band says goodnight to their old sound. There is a cover of classic sailor shanty “Sloop John B” in which the band takes a two chord verse-chorus song and turns it into a masterpiece filled with immense emotional depth. “God Only Knows” is maybe the perfect song. In just three minutes one can feel the depth of emotion that goes along with love.

The final three songs on “Pet Sounds” are the peak of its emotional climax. “I Just Wasn’t Made for These Times” deals with feeling alienated and not feeling at peace. The title track is an instrumental journey into the mind of the person whose problems are laid out in the previous song. It sounds unsteady but beautiful at the same time. Finally after that journey into the lost soul, “Caroline, No” presents a solution, falling deep into the past. “Pet Sounds” ends with the sound of a train and dogs barking, leaving the album on an ambiguous note. The finale concludes an ambitious delve into the delicate mind of a genius musician.

Swing Night attendees enjoy jazz, dancing

BY KATHRYN ZARAGOZA-AARON
staff writer

Swing music and dance is a staple of American culture. Deriving from African American jazz, swing music took over nightclubs all across the country in the 1920s. On Thursday, Nov. 20, 2025, the Berkeley High School Jazz and Dance Programs transformed the BHS Jacket gym into a time machine that took students, staff, and other community members back to this time for an iconic Swing Night.

It started with a dance lesson from swing experts Amanda Langworthy and Jack Pacific. Langworthy and Pacific began by giving the attendees a dance demonstration. Pacific noted in this introduction that the both of them primarily danced to contemporary music which is why it was special to be

able to dance to a live jazz band.

Langworthy and Pacific first split the group into two parts: leaders and followers. Leaders suggest a movement to their followers. The followers take this suggestion and execute the movement. Over the course of the next hour, Langworthy and Pacific taught four of the five basic shapes in West Coast swing: the sugar push, left side pass, sugar tuck, and right side pass.

After the lessons, the beginning jazz band commonly referred to as the 10 o’clock band started their performance. Each of the bands played for about 20 minutes throughout the night, allowing members of the other bands to enjoy themselves with the attendees. During the 11 o’clock intermediate band’s performance, Ernst Wang, a BHS junior, performed a stunning solo of the classic song “Fly Me to

the Moon.” Another notable moment of the night was the intermediate two o’clock band performance of “In the Mood” by Glen Miller’s Orchestra.

The Jacket gym was filled with student dancers, parents, and friends of those performing. The bands played classics from the swing era which created an atmosphere that encouraged dancing and fun without judgement.

Sarah Cline, a BHS jazz teacher, talked about Swing Night in regards to students learning about jazz music and history.

“It was like an iconic dance in a high school gym, just because you can kind of feel the history of that. During the 1930s there would have been people dancing to this exact music in their high school journey,” Cline said.

Cline also explained that Swing Night happened to coincide with her unit about

big band jazz, which swing music and dance was based upon.

“They got to actually experience playing the music exactly when we were studying it, but also what it would have looked like and felt like a little bit to be there at the time. It was almost like a living history lesson,” Cline said.

Regardless if participants were there for the music or the dancing, all were exposed to a unique experience that took the BHS community by storm.

“My experience at Swing Night was interesting. The music was good and the dance lessons were definitely something I’ve never thought I’d do,” Alice Cronemeyer, a BHS freshman, recalled.

BHS’ Jazz and Dance Programs will continue to organize events like Swing Night in the future. A similar event, Salsa Night, will take place on Friday May 1, 2026.

To watch video and listen to music from Swing Night, scan this QR code or visit berkeleyhighjacket.com.



Berkeley High School’s first ever swing night included music from BHS jazz band.

LEO SMOCK

Word on the street: Favorite holiday song?



Liam Knudsen, a Berkeley High School senior, holds Adam Sandler’s “The Chanukah Song” close to his heart. “I’m Jewish. So, I always felt more of an affinity for the Jewish holiday songs,” he said. With a love for Adam Sandler’s comedic talents, he was excited to learn he had made an especially comedic song centered around Hanukkah.

PHOTOS BY USNEA MCEWEN



BHS senior Jazzy Taylor’s favorite holiday song is “Last Christmas” by Wham! Although she doesn’t really celebrate Christmas, that holiday song endures. “It’s a nice connection to my childhood and also it’s a great song, and I love Wham!”

INTERVIEWS BY ALEX BOYLE
staff writer



BHS freshman Sanah Singh, says her favorite holiday song is “Rocking Around the Christmas Tree” by Brenda Lee. “It’s so surprising that the singer was 13 years old when she sung that song,” Singh said.



BHS junior Emilio Bottrell-Rogers enjoys Spanish Christmas songs. Coming from Mexican heritage, the songs connect him to his family and culture. “I feel like it’s such an important holiday in a lot of Latin America.”

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIA BLATT



Comfy or corny: The wonder of Hallmark Christmas rom-coms

BY ZOE DILWORTH
staff writer

A materialistic and ambitious businesswoman finds herself in a small and very festive town during the holidays, unexpectedly falls for a hardworking flannel-clad man, and subsequently learns the meaning of love, and also Christmas. If this plot sounds familiar, it's because it's the plot of at least half of Hallmark's extensive Christmas movie catalogue.

"It's unrealistic," Berkeley High School senior Feranmi Olawoye said, "I watched one and like, a minute in, this girl goes to France, she's there for business. And then two seconds later, this man comes in and they're kissing."

For better or for worse, Hallmark dominates the holidays, having started as a greeting card company in 1910. In the 115 years since, the company has expanded into its arguably most profitable venture: holiday movies. There are so many that it becomes hard to pin down

an exact number; IMDb currently lists 503 of these titles, and with Hallmark's annual tradition of their "Countdown to Christmas" event, in which anywhere from 24 to 40 new Christmas movies are released, that list will only increase exponentially. It's a seemingly inexhaustible source of content, and Hallmark's output of these films is so unending and consistent that for some, it comes off as more camp and silly than just greedy.

BHS sophomore Anya Wagner, whose favorite Hallmark originals include "Holiday Touchdown: A Chiefs Love Story" and "The Nine Lives of Christmas," watches them with her mom. "They get us in the holiday spirit while also letting us turn our brains off and relax while also bonding over the stupidity of the movies," Wagner explained. "I mostly like how predictable the movies are, where there's just a half attractive man with some manic pixie dream girl that's half the age of the man. They meet since the girl is a jour-

nalist, small business owner, (or) TV host and then they have some meet-cute and get to know each other and their problems and they start to bond. Then, at one point, there's a misunderstanding, and it actually doesn't matter because love is the thing that prevails all. The movies are so unrelatable and unrealistic and that's what makes them fun,"

Wagner said.

For many, winter is the time of year for tradition, whether it's exchanging gifts, participating in sacred rituals, putting up decorations that are set out each year, or all of the different

annual family and religious customs that take place during the season. It's comfort and repetition, coming back to familiar things year after year — and that includes coming back to the same stories. But instead of simply rewatching "Elf" or "The Polar Express," Hallmark creates

a new option of watching the same, or similar, plot lines time after time, but with different actors under different titles.

"I feel like they're cute," BHS senior Arya Jawaliker said, "You're not expecting, like, a documentary when you're watching them. So I feel like it's okay." At the end of the year, people just want to unwind and come together with something lighthearted, familiar, and comforting.



RUBY FITZPATRICK JERVIS

BHS Band and Orchestra winter concerts charm their audiences

BY CECILIA TILES
staff writer

"It feels great to just get everything that you've worked for out into the world," Berkeley High School junior and trumpet player Caden Kittredge said, "You can really show what you're feeling and put that energy into music." The BHS Band and Orchestra (BAO) put on their annual Winter Concert the nights of Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 17 and 18, 2025, at the Berkeley Community Theater. Family, friends, and fellow students gathered to watch part of the BHS music department show-off a variety of pieces which they have been working on for the past

three months. The Beginning & Intermediate Band and Orchestras performed on Nov. 17, followed by the Advanced Band and Orchestra on Nov. 18.

Over the course of two shows, they performed more than 20 pieces. This being the first concert for new-

as an ensemble," BHS senior and flute section leader Lina Lorenz said.

The shows opened with the Band groups, consisting of a variety of woodwinds, brass, percussion, and even a piccolo — the opening of each night was lively and a well put together welcome to the show. On the opening night of the show, Band 1 and Band 2 put on an incredible performance. With interesting and lively music, the work and joy from the performers was evident. Specifically for Band 2, the performers played a variety of different genres of music — including types of Japanese marches and even musical theater numbers. "Each piece had its own personality," Kittredge said.

For Band 3, on the second night of showings, a seemingly universal favorite was the piece "The Witch and the Saint" by Steven Reineke. As their second song of the night, it began with Andreatta turning his attention towards the audience as he provided some context in the form of a story. Composed in 2005, the piece tells the adventure tale of a pair of twins as one discovers she is a saint, and the other a witch.

"My favorite piece was 'The Witch and the Saint,'" BHS senior and french horn player Cassian Evans said, "Partially because it's so beautiful and has a good story, and partially because it's the piece I get to do the most in." A dynamic song that varies between being loud and passionate to quite tragic and melodic, it was certainly a highlight of the night.

After a brief intermission, the show then moved into the second portion of the performances which was the Orchestra. Led by seasoned BHS teacher Mary Dougherty, expectations for all three groups of students were high. For the Advanced Orchestra, their final closing numbers were particularly entertaining for the audience. As they performed "Kleine Suit," Op. 1 by Carl Nielsen, and "Three Dances" by Florence B. Price, the distinct organization into sections stood out. Each piece was organized into three unique sections. At various moment throughout the songs, they would begin to wind down as if ending soon, but then quickly jump into something completely harmoniously different.

Later on, the president and vice president of the

BAO Council Student officers, BHS senior Matilda Starbuck and BHS junior Erik Pompe, respectively, had a moment to speak to the audience. They reminded the audience of fundraisers and the importance of attending BHS art and music shows. They also shared how to continue to support the BHS Music Department through donations and attending performances.

Overall, both nights of performance were ones that left the audience thoroughly impressed. The amount of time every musician, soloist, or ensemble member put into working on these pieces was evident in the beauty of the music. "To hear that applause is just so beautiful, honestly. Like, it's just so nice to hear everything that you've worked for pay off," Kittredge said.

"Each piece had its own personality,"

Caden Kittredge
BHS junior

to-BHS Band teacher Jonah Andreatta, as well as the first time these individual ensembles would be performing together, they all pulled off an interesting and beautiful show that impressed the audience. "A lot of people were really proud of how we did



Berkeley High School's Band and Orchestra performed in the Community Theater on Nov. 17 and 18, impressing audiences with their skill and dedication to the music.

JULIAN NATHAN

Stranger Things final season revives BHS student fanbase

BY SARAH KHAN-AKSELROD
staff writer

As “Stranger Things” enters its fifth and final season, Berkeley High School students are feeling a mix of elation, nostalgia, and anticipation. The show has been part of the lives of many students as they’ve grown up. The first season, following the paranormal disappearance of Will Byers, has developed into a complex plot and subsequent fanbase over the past 10 years. For many, “Stranger Things” isn’t just a TV show, it symbolizes their entire adolescence. Between theories, character debates, and final opinions, BHS students are more invested than ever going into the fifth season, released nine years after the first.

BHS sophomore Ava Apelin has been watching the show since she was seven years old, when her cousins first introduced her to the series. She is beyond excited for the new season, but also admits she is sad to see the show end. Apelin connects most with the character Nancy, “because she’s an older sister like me,” as well as Steve whom she finds “funny and relatable.” She believes Will has stepped into his strongest role yet, saying he “really leveled up this season” after being treated like the baby of the group for so long.

For Apelin, the emotional experiences of the characters keep the show grounded and relatable despite the supernatural setting. To her, the show is ending at the right time, “the characters are evolving and becoming their

best selves,” Apelin said.

Introduced to the show by her aunt in sixth grade, BHS sophomore Aviv Elis has watched the entire series. According to Elis, the aesthetic is one of the biggest reasons the show is so fun to watch. She says she loves the 1980s setting, especially the music and fashion. She imagines that if a portal to the Upside Down existed in Berkeley, it would “obviously be at BHS.”

BHS sophomore Ella Koepsell also rushed to watch the new episodes; she and her friend binged them the day they came out. Originally, Koepsell avoided the show because she thought it was overrated, but decided to try it one day when she had nothing else to watch. She quickly got hooked, and now she loves the sci-fi elements and especially Dustin, who she calls “definitely the best



COURTESY OF NETFLIX

character,” along with Steve.

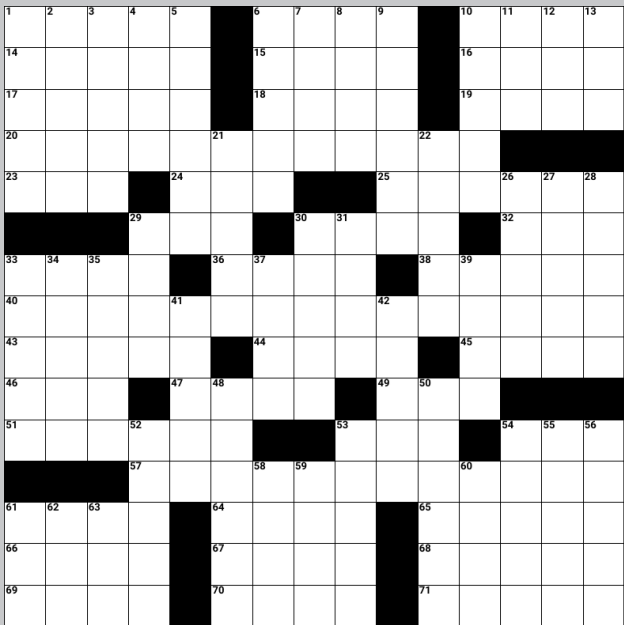
Koepsell believes that Steve has the strongest character arc, though Will might rival him after season five. Her theory for the final episode is striking: she thinks Dustin and another character might die, and she’s hoping that Vecna dies too. Koepsell hypothesizes that “Stranger Things” resonates so strongly with teens be-

cause it’s fast-paced, eerie, emotional, and filled with typical teenager themes such as friendship, family, and school drama. Like others, Koepsell feels the timing of the ending is right. “Each season had a kind of open ending, so now is the perfect time to end it,” she said.

As the season unfolds, BHS students are watching closely, not just for plot

twists, but for the closure of a story they’ve followed for years. Whether fans are cheering for characters, theorizing different endings, or arguing about potential plotpoints, one thing is clear: “Stranger Things” has left a lasting impression. As the show reaches its final moments, students look forward to the ending, even if they’re not quite ready to let go.

THE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1. Those from Syria or Lebanon, among others
- 6. Easily heard prefix
- 10. Example
- 14. Price
- 15. Singer and trumpeter Baker
- 16. Roman love
- 17. Pokémon Colosseum villain
- 18. Bridge fee
- 19. Length of metal nails, in inches?
- 20. 2006 holiday film with Danny Devito
- 23. Drink in a stein
- 24. Lost, perhaps
- 25. One following the Atkins, maybe
- 29. Furniture over a monster
- 30. Singer Billy, in two ways
- 32. Variety of 23-across
- 33. Obama-era immigration policy
- 36. Creed-Miles in “The Doll Factory”
- 38. Ancient calculators
- 40. 20- or 57-across?
- 43. PayPal cofounder
- 44. Org. for seniors
- 45. Tests most commonly taken junior year
- 46. Electric sea creature
- 47. “La La _____”
- 49. Sound on a roller coaster
- 51. Plays a jazz solo
- 53. Cassette replacements
- 54. Singer King Cole
- 57. Charles, Solomon, and Henry VIII?
- 61. 2025 Pixar movie
- 64. Rob, in war
- 65. Stone pillar
- 66. Thing offered by a shark?
- 67. Sosnovska of “All My Children”
- 68. 2024 Lizzy McAlpine album
- 69. Times New Roman, commonly
- 70. Cook sides quickly
- 71. Flutters

DOWN

- 1. Skincare company
- 2. “Daphnis et Chloé” composer
- 3. Girl down the rabbit hole
- 4. Buck’s partner
- 5. Hold onto anger
- 6. Was in a play
- 7. Words in danger
- 8. _____ Soul
- 9. “It’s all right”
- 10. “_____ Macabre”
- 11. Nickname for Game of Thrones’s Clarke
- 12. Day after Sun
- 13. Rock, in Catan
- 21. Greek underworld
- 22. Intensely sweet flower
- 26. Princess’s crown
- 27. Disney’s World’s Fair
- 28. Parts of a train track
- 29. Word (or homophone) before “necessities”
- 30. “Grr!”
- 31. “_____ Prudence” (1968 Beatles song)
- 33. “_____ Live” (2013 anime series)
- 34. Pained
- 35. Like an ice cube
- 37. K-pop fan, often
- 39. Birthday party
- 41. “Gee whillikers!”
- 42. Gardener’s card?
- 48. Houston ballers
- 50. Wants from
- 52. Toddler’s protest
- 53. _____ Rose Park
- 54. Author Okorafor
- 55. The thing on the end of your shoelace
- 56. Old Russian rulers
- 58. Spy (and author) Nathan
- 59. Toni’s beginning in pasta
- 60. “_____ cost you!”
- 61. Creature on a December shelf
- 62. British facility
- 63. Gandalf’s portrayer

— Violet Kessler

SITCOM HOLIDAY EPISODES

“*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*”

“Brooklyn Nine-Nine’s” holiday episodes always feature eccentric and festive crimes for the 99th precinct to handle. For “Die-Hard”-loving protagonist Jake Peralta, getting to save the day on Christmas is excitingly close to John McClane’s fight to save hostages at a Christmas party. From breaking up a Latvian crime ring that has Charles’ son’s Christmas present to the return of the Pontiac Bandit Doug Judy, it’s always interesting to see how the quirky personalities of “Brooklyn Nine-Nine” react to the holiday season. *Season 1, Episode 11; Season 2, Episode 10; Season 3, Episode 10; Season 4, Episode 10*

“*Friends*”

“Friends” is particularly well-known for its holiday specials. With a total of eight winter holiday episodes, it’s hard to pick one that tops them all. There’s “The One with the Holiday Armadillo,” in which Ross, in lieu of the sold-out Santa Claus costume, dresses up as an armadillo. He proceeds to teach his kid about Hanukkah as “the Holiday Armadillo.” Then, there’s “The One with the Routine” where Ross and Monica perform a dance routine they choreographed as children on “Dick Clark’s New Year’s Rockin’ Eve.” *Season 2, Episode 9; Season 3, Episode 10; Season 4, Episode 10; Season 5, Episode 10; Season 6, Episode 10; Season 7, Episode 10; Season 8, Episode 11; Season 9, Episode 10*

“*The Office*”

Every holiday episode of “The Office” involves hilarious drama at a messy office Christmas Party, which sometimes spills into two episodes. What’s more, Mindy Kaling, who plays the cast member Kelly Kapoor, wrote four of these episodes. Unlike many sitcoms, “The Office’s” holiday episodes are almost never disconnected from the rest of the season and often contain important plot points. For example, in the first Christmas episode ever, Jim chickens out of giving Pam a note he wrote her which becomes significant to their relationship in Season 9. *Season 2, Episode 10; Season 3, Episodes 10 & 11; Season 5, Episode 11; Season 6, Episode 13; Season 7, Episode 11 & 12; Season 8, Episode 10; Season 9, Episode 9*

“*Gilmore Girls*”

Many people associate the “Gilmore Girls” aesthetic with autumn, but Stars Hollow is especially charming when all lit up for the winter holidays. In the first season of the show, Lorelai Gilmore says she has always believed that snow is the universe’s little gift to her. She swears she can smell the first snow when it is about to come on. There are remarkably tender moments, such as when Luke builds Lorelai an ice skating rink and we get to see the whole Stars Hollow ensemble brought together at a Dragonfly Inn Christmas party. *Season 1, Episode 10; Season 2, Episode 10; Season 3, Episode 10; Season 4, Episode 11; Season 5, Episode 11; Season 6, Episode 12; Season 7, Episode 10*

SNOWFLAKES BY MIA BLATT

— Akhila Narayan

Winter break recharges athletes but slows training regimes

BY CEDAR GILMOUR
staff writer

With winter break just around the corner, many students are counting down the days until they can enjoy the holidays and finally take a break from the demands of school. However, for student athletes whose sports seasons are in the winter,

the holidays arrive right in the middle of their season's schedule. While some sports make practice optional or even cancel it completely, giving athletes time to recharge, other sports continue training as usual, leaving athletes to balance rest and ongoing athletic commitments.

Vivien Chiu, a junior on the Berkeley High School

girls varsity soccer team, has been playing soccer for 10 years. "A drawback (of winter break) is that I feel obligated to come to practice during break, even though it's supposed to be time off," Chiu said. "Usually we still have games on the weekend, so it's hard to take advantage of the full two weeks," she said. Because the team still holds practices and games

over break, planning a vacation can be complicated. "I think I could go on vacation, but just not maximize the full time, because I still have a commitment to soccer," Chiu said.

Even given the challenges, Chiu does appreciate that practice continues, giving her structure and a reason to stay active even when school is out. "I appreciate that there's practice, so I have a reason to get outside and exercise," Chiu said.

"We go two weeks without much practice, but it's not too hard to get back in the rhythm afterwards," said Victor Ozzello, a junior on the BHS wrestling team, explaining that their training and competition schedule comes to a halt during winter break. The wrestling team typically practices every day after school starting

in November, so the lack of structured training over break forces him to stay dis-

and bond, it translates a lot on the board," Ozzello said.

For senior Zachary Winslow who has been playing basketball for about 10 years, winter break benefits his personal performance and team connection. "It improves my performance because I have way more time to

rest my body, practice, and get reps in," Winslow said, "You have to stay mentally locked in the whole time, and can't lose focus just because it's break."

Across winter sports, the two week break can bring a mix of challenges and opportunities. For many athletes, the break forces them to stay disciplined on their own, as it can interrupt typical training. However, it offers the opportunity to rest and recover, helping them to return ready for the remainder of their season.

"A drawback (of winter break) is that I feel obligated to come to practice during break, even though it's supposed to be time off,"

Vivien Chiu
BHS junior and Varsity Girls Soccer Player



DESMOND MCKINNON RUSSELL

From ice skates to sales: Local Sports Basement's chilly past

BY MILES WISE
staff writer

20 years ago, the building nestled behind Tim Moelering, the Berkeley High School baseball diamond, once rang of laughter and the clatter of skates on ice, serving as a sanctuary of joy and camaraderie for Berkeley families. Today, this building is home to the retail store and Berkeley's provider of athletic gear: Sports Basement.

Open from 1940-2007, the former Berkeley ice rink Iceland served as a beloved community hangout spot, famous for hosting the U.S. Figure Skating Nationals and housed multiple world-renowned Olympic skaters. However, due to financial and refrigeration issues, in 2007, the rink was forced to close. In 2014, after several years of un-occupancy, Sports Basement acquired the building and began renovation, with the hopes of restoring the importance the space used to bring.

Throughout construction, Sports Basement worked hard to preserve much of the building's history and capture the nostalgia of Iceland, "There's a lot of cool memorabilia. We kept some of what we could," Tom Purcell, Sports Basement General Manager of thirteen years, said, "You'll

see we've put up some information boards around and I personally rebuilt the scoreboard. We also pulled the old sign off the roof and put it up behind the front counter."

For Irisa Charney-Sirott, Berkeley High School 1991-95 alumna and mother of two BHS students, every time she steps into the store, she is hit with a remembrance of what used to be. "The whole shape of

"There's a lot of cool memorabilia. We kept some of what we could ... I personally rebuilt the scoreboard. We also pulled the old sign off the roof and put it up behind the counter."

Tom Purcell
Sports Basement General Manager

the place is the same and those bathrooms were pretty much the exact same. Where you walk in there was a whole arcade area and space where you would rent the skates and the floor now for the store is where the rink used to be," said Charney-Sirott.

Much of Iceland's significance rested in its impact on the community of Berkeley. For the families and teenagers of the town, the rink provided a sanctuary of activity and resembled a gathering place. For Charney-Sirott and other past locals, Iceland was a meaningful place that provided the city's teenagers with a weekly hang out spot. "Everyone loved

Iceland. On Friday nights, you got dropped off and you rented skates and skated and we hung out, played pinball and drank hot chocolate," Charney-Sirott said. She also spoke about how Iceland's conversion into a store is reminiscent of how other local buildings have evolved over the years. "When we were growing up, Berkeley Bowl was a bowling alley that was turned into a grocery store," Charney-Sirott explained. There are currently two Berkeley Bowl locations, having kept the original name despite changing owners and purposes.

Purcell reiterated how many remnants of the ice skating rink remain in the building, while also explaining the massive endeavour of renovating the location to become a functional store. "I think we did more to that building than people realize," he explained, having been present for the whole redevelopment process. "We put a new roof on it, we poured a new slab, we put in over 2000 new windows. We put in all new lighting, an elevator and mezzanine level. It was a huge job. I mean, we really gutted it and rebuilt it, and there was a lot of cool history that was were, old Iceland remnants still kind of strewn around," Purcell said.

With winter and holi-

day season finally arriving, the cold crisp air and playful buzz of Iceland's skating rink is replaced by the bustling and bright atmosphere of Sports Basement as Berkeley shoppers gear up for their winter sports. For the Sports Basement staff, this time means putting up merchandise and launching their winter rental department, "We just had snow fest, which is where we get in all of the new snow clothes for the season," Elena Samuels, Berkeley Sports Basement employee and BHS senior, said. "There's lots of people that do work to make room for everything new. It's constantly changing, so a lot of people are involved in putting up new shelves and figuring out how to rearrange everything," Samuels explained.

Samuels also believes that the current store setup

echoes its past as Iceland. "(It has) a very unique ... style and structure that actually lends itself really well to a store. But you can definitely tell that it was initially an ice rink. You kind of tell temperature wise that it's a very insulated building," she expressed.

Today, Sports Basement works to continue Iceland's legacy and support the Berkeley community members through their Basemeteer Program. This program allows Basemeteer Customers to choose a beneficiary to which Sports Basement will donate 10 percent of their Basemeteer profits to the highest demanded nonprofit by the customers. For many seasons at the Sports Basement Berkeley location, several shoppers have signed up on behalf of BHS, allotting Sports Basement to donate more than

ten thousand dollars annually to the school in previous years.

Beyond the donations, Sports Basement also provides a free recreational space in their building for anyone to reserve. Frequently, this space has been home to BHS athletic team meetings or end of season gatherings like team banquets. "We love (BHS) and we love to support BHS in any way we can," Purcell said.

While the classic skates and smooth ice rink floor may be a thing of the past, the building's legacy as a fun-filled winter wonderland continues on today. Coming far from its ice rink beginnings to a chain retail store, Sports Basement provides the people of Berkeley a space to purchase and rent gear for their winter sports dreams and pursue any aspiring physical adventures.



SIENA LIBRIZZI

48.3%

of BHS students in a Jacket poll of 201 prefer snowboarding.

Do you prefer skiing or snowboarding?

51.7%

of students in the same poll prefer skiing.

BY JULIA LIU
staff writer

As the slopes begin to open, a familiar controversial question resurfaces: which is better — skiing or snowboarding? A recent Jacket poll of 201 Berkeley High School students showed that 51.7 percent of respondents voted that skiing is better, while the other 48.3 percent voted snowboarding. With such a narrow percentile difference, these results indicate that both skiing and snowboarding hold a nearly equal appeal, overall though skiing maintains a modest lead. The results further emphasize that this debate is far from settled, and any proclamation of one sport being significantly “better” would be a bias-driven and subjective statement.

SABINE SHAFFER

Figure skaters at BHS shine on ice

BY IDRA ELLIOTT
staff writer

When you think of winter sports in Berkeley, figure skating might not be the first sport to come to mind. For many years Berkeley Iceland was the hub of ice skating in Berkeley. Since Berkeley Iceland closed in 2007, the closest rink is now Oakland Ice Center. The accumulation of skaters at Oakland leaves people vying for time on the ice, which can often be expensive. This includes various ice hockey teams, University of California Berkeley’s skating team and individual figure skaters.

Lucy Wilmore, a senior at Berkeley High School, has been skating for two years. Wilmore said a major challenge to figure skating can be the cost. She additionally mentioned that making the trek to Oakland Ice Center can add a challenge to her regular practice routine. “It’s still kind of a ways to travel,

especially if you can’t drive. It’s a lot of BART and public transportation,” Wilmore said.

Saya Sano-McDermott, a BHS freshman, has been figure skating for four years. What Sano-McDermott likes most about figure skating is that it can be an individual and group sport. She explained that, “When you’re on a team, you have to depend on other people too. But in figure skating, you only depend on yourself.” There is a select group of people who participate in the solo physical endeavor, one that is heavy on both self discipline and mental difficulty.

Aspiring skaters hone their skills through hard work and the help of experienced coaches. There is strong skating expertise and networks of coaches to help young dedicated skaters to improve and be successful. Amalia Walsh, a BHS sophomore, is a newer figure skater who spoke about

the ease of finding reliable instruction in the area. “There’s a lot of coaches. I’ve definitely improved a lot in the short time that I’ve done (figure skating),” Walsh said.

There have been a fair amount of successful ice skaters within the Bay Area, including Mia Kalin, a figure skater from Oakland on the U.S. National Team, and Alysia Liu, the youngest Women’s National Champion who started her skating career at Oakland Ice Center.

Ice skating can be more challenging for skaters in Berkeley because of the lack of available ice rinks. It remains a niche sport, with a smaller, specialized group of people putting time and effort into the activity. It is a special sport and for athletes like Walsh, skating remains a thrilling and artful experience. “I like that you feel like you’re flying. That’s my favorite, that you can go really fast and it feels like you’re floating,” Walsh said.



Amalia Walsh enjoys the thrill of figure skating when she goes fast and feels like she’s floating. KAI HANSCHEN

VINCENT LONGMIRE

Athlete Profile

Berkeley High School senior and BHS wrestling team captain Vincent Longmire reflects on his past four years on the team, “I think my favorite part of wrestling is the amount of hard work and dedication you put into the sport. It has pushed me to my limits but has shaped me into the person I am today,” Longmire said. With a background in Muay Thai and Jiu Jitsu, Longmire started wrestling his freshman year after encouragement from a fellow BHS wrestler. “I fell in love with the sport and it’s been a huge part of my life since,” Longmire said. Longmire thanks his coaches and teammates for their constant support, saying that he will “treasure all the experiences he has had on the team,” and named home matches as his favorite part of the season. The hardest part of the sport for Longmire is its tough mental component, however, it has also driven the most growth for him. “I sometimes hesitate in matches instead of letting everything go and going for it,” he said, “it’s difficult to not think, but when you do, you wrestle amazingly.” Longmire sees his growth from a freshman with no skill to a team captain as his proudest accomplishment. He encourages all students considering wrestling to “just do it.”

— Sophie Cranley



JAY TOMPKINS