



Rallies would be more popular if they had more variety



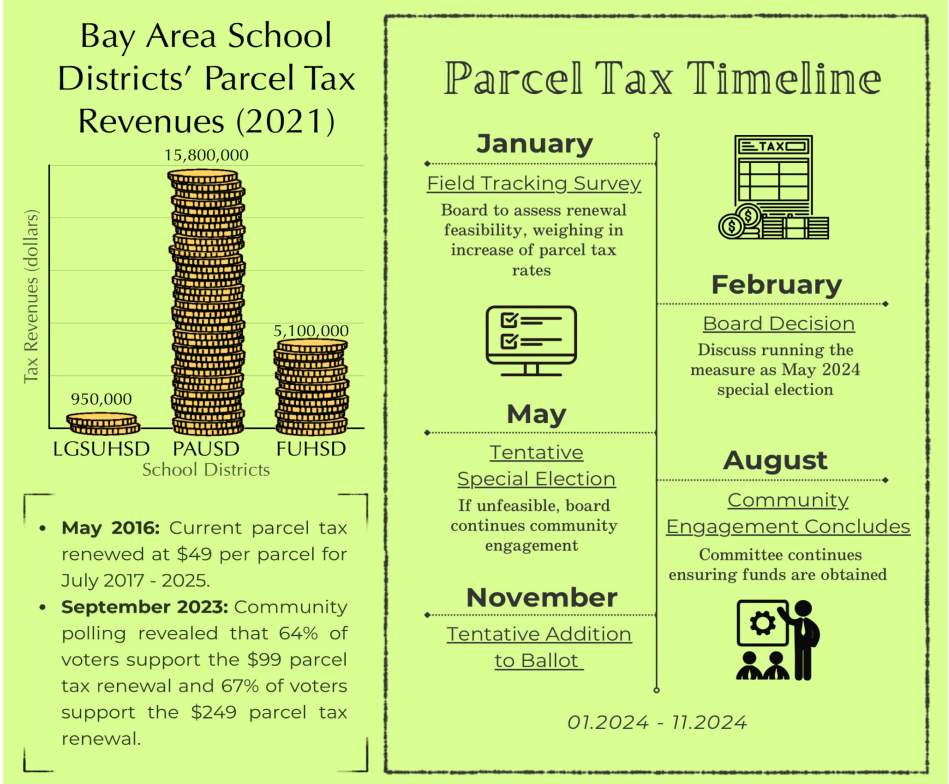
Five generations later, Wong family keeps traditions alive



Sophomore balances club dance and water polo

THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION



Teen drug abuse surges to levels before the pandemic

By SaachiJain, GraceLin & RuiyanZhu

In 2023, 17% of high schoolers nationwide are addicted to drugs, more than two thirds of high schoolers have tried alcohol illegally and 12% of high school students have said they have vaped in the past month, according to the American Addiction Centers and the National Library of Medicine.

These numbers are alarming to observers, and, more specifically, usage trends appear to be going in the wrong direction after the pandemic. Pre-pandemic in 2018, nicotine use surges related to vaping were the largest recorded in 43 years, with an additional 1.3 million nicotine vapers than in 2017.



Torrens

Prevention. Though the survey data showed a 40% decline in these rates in 2021, data validity has been called into question due to inconsistent surveying methods.

For example, the National Youth Tobacco Survey was historically conducted at school, but was completed at home during the pandemic.

For this reason, the survey methodologies were adjusted.

Assistant principal Matt Torrens said he saw the growth of the vaping first hand.

"Before the pandemic, there were a lot of vaping materials that we would find in the parking lots and all over campus," Torrens said. "After the pandemic, it has gone down. I'm not sure if the behaviors have

changed necessarily, but it's being done less on campus."

The administration mainly relies on teachers and other staff members to report these instances of usage, whether they find evidence of a student vaping or drinking or simply suspect it to be the case.

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Board weighs parcel tax for improved district funding

By WilliamCao, EricShi & AgastyaVitaldevara

In recent years, it's become harder for Bay Area schools, including Saratoga High, to recruit and retain top teaching talent in such a high-cost-of-living area. At the same time, comparable districts such as Mountain View, Los Altos and Santa Clara now pay their teachers significantly higher wages than LGSUHS.

Notably, in recent years, longtime football coach Lugo accepted the athletic director and head coach job at Mountain View High School, and longtime guidance counselor Alina Satake also left for Mountain View.

As LGSUHS has fallen behind other nearby districts, with Mountain View having an average salary of \$152,524 as of the 2023-24 school year compared to LGSUHS's average salary of \$117,963, the Board of Trustees is considering asking voters to extend and/or increase a parcel tax of LGSUHS next year.

This measure would primarily aim to

raise staff salaries in light of concerns regarding falling employee retention rates, especially among teachers.

The board's upcoming actions for the parcel tax renewal process will include these actions:

They are creating informational materials, including parcel-tax fact sheets, FAQs and online presentations on the benefit of the tax, and will launch an outreach campaign in November to engage registered voters and parents on budget constraints and continue stakeholder engagement through December.

In January, the board will conduct a field tracking survey to assess renewal feasibility involving an increase in parcel tax rates. In February, the board will decide whether to run the measure as a May 2024 special election; if that deadline is infeasible, the board will instead continue community engagement until August with the hopes of having the measure on the November ballot.

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Teachers call for return of credentialed librarian

By SamBai & ZackZhang

In spring of 2020, former librarian Kevin Heyman retired. Since then, district officials have chosen to leave the position vacant. Both teachers and students have complained about this decision, saying they no longer have the same level of guidance and access to information for research projects.

"Library technicians won't be able to run a class without a teacher in the library."

RESOURCE AIDE Raquel Kirby

from helping provide guidance on research projects to checking out books and helping maintain access to the school's databases.

In addition to Tapley, the library is being staffed by textbook technician Cynthia Cheng. Various substitutes helped maintain the facility while Tapley was out, but hours of operation were reduced this fall as a result of the staffing issues.

Regardless of these short-term problems, the bigger long-term problem is the lack of even a part-time librarian, staff members say.

"A credentialed librarian can run classes in the library," school resource aide Raquel Kirby said. "Library technicians won't be able to run a class without a teacher in the library."

In the past, Heyman ran classes on research and was available to guide students on projects such as History Day. Now teachers, in addition to their regular duties, are the ones teaching lessons on conducting research, avoiding plagiarism and properly citing sources. This adds extra workload to teachers' duties, and it also means students aren't getting the latest instruction on conducting college-level research in the digital age.

"English teachers like me could take our classes into the library and [Heyman] would do a whole demo on the various databases and be available as a resource," English teacher and journalism adviser Michael Tyler said. "As a teacher, I think [a fully functioning library] is a really nice thing to have."

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