

ORACLE

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Sparkle Ball Co.

Every holiday season, Warrior Anthony Falletta creates sparkle balls to adorn trees in the neighborhoods around Troy.

Compiled by Jenny Huang, **NEWS EDITOR**, article by Anastasia Efremova, **STAFF WRITER**, photos by Aiden Chong, **PHOTO**, and courtesy of Anthony Falletta, graphics courtesy of Canva

Starting the week before Thanksgiving, sparkle balls created by senior Anthony Falletta light up the trees surrounding the area of Princeton Circle and Nutwood Avenue.

In 2002, Fullerton resident Don Bales started the tradition of crafting and adorning trees with sparkle balls by ironing or stapling plastic cups together and threading Christmas lights through the holes to illuminate them. Neighbors then gather to hang the decorations on trees and the eaves of houses, the process at times requiring up to four people and a power lift to reach higher branches.

Since its founding, the tradition has spread from its origin on Yale Avenue to other streets as a way for the community to bond and connect in the crafting process. There are currently over 40 families on Princeton Circle that participate in the creation of sparkle balls as Christmas comes around.

According to Instrumental Music Director and Princeton Circle community member Joseph Castillo, the tedious process of crafting and hanging the sparkle balls is worthwhile because the end result brings the community together. Families from all over Orange County visit these streets to admire the handmade decorations, Castillo said.

“[There are] a couple kids from Anaheim who came all the way over here just to [walk] up and down the street,” Castillo said.

“Then, when all is said and done, you look up at the trees on this corner of Fullerton and you cannot help but [admire them]. The idea was to build some sense of community and neighborly bond.”

After Falletta’s dad taught him the process of crafting sparkle balls in middle school, Falletta began making them for neighborhood parties. In 2019, Falletta launched Sparkle Ball Co., a company that crafts and sells sparkle balls.

Falletta’s business aimed to provide the outside streets of Princeton Circle with these festive decorations, encouraging them to join in on the sparkle ball tradition every November. According to elementary school teacher and Sparkle Ball Co. client Evelin Hernandez, being gifted a sparkle ball years ago made her want to be a part of the tradition as well.

“I was excited to help a young entrepreneur and connect to the community,” Hernandez said. “I love being able to connect to the students in my class who live in the neighborhood. The tradition really shows how a community can come together to bring joy to so many people.”

As Sparkle Ball Co. began during the COVID-19 pandemic, Falletta faced challenges in getting the company running. According to Falletta, the capital funds to start the business were difficult to secure, and required a lot of money management in the beginning.

“During COVID, prices went up a lot,” Falletta said. “I used to be able to make the [sparkle balls] for \$5 a piece, then the materials doubled in cost. [I] didn’t have a lot of purchasing power, because I sell around 75 per year, [so it] adds up.”

In response to these challenges, Falletta began making custom multicolor, LED and single color sparkle balls with prices ranging from \$30 to \$45. His business currently consists

of additional services, including the sparkle balls’ installation and repair. Since its founding, the business has supplied sparkle balls to over 100 customers.

Falletta has implemented changes over the years in order to help the business grow and adjust, especially after high school. Before his freshman year, Falletta started building shells of sparkle balls over summer to better prepare for distributing them in winter. This year, Falletta hired his brother and friends as employees to help him build sparkle balls.

Having crafted over 350 sparkle balls since 2019, Sparkle Ball Co. incorporates seasonal designs and specials into their products, such as the Candy Cane, the Snowman and the four-year anniversary special Mega Sparkle ball, all of which bring a personal sense of nostalgia, Falletta said.

“I grew up [near that neighborhood] and [sparkle balls] are a big part of the Christmas season for me,” Falletta said. “It has been good to bring holiday joy to everyone, and the people that live outside felt more included in this [tradition]. Even though I experienced a lot of failure, trial and error, looking back, it has all been fun. In the end, [my advice] is if you want to make something of your own, just start.”



Warrior Vocal Music Program attends Television Show “The Masked Singer”

Vocal Director Mark Henson accompanied choir students to oversee the live taping of season 13 quarterfinals and the show finale.

By Salman Waheed
STAFF WRITER

Warrior Vocal Music Program attended episodes of the television show “The Masked Singer” at RED Studios Hollywood Nov. 13 and Nov. 20. Audience development company On-Camera-Audiences invited Warrior Vocal Music Director Mark Henson to bring Warrior choir members to attend

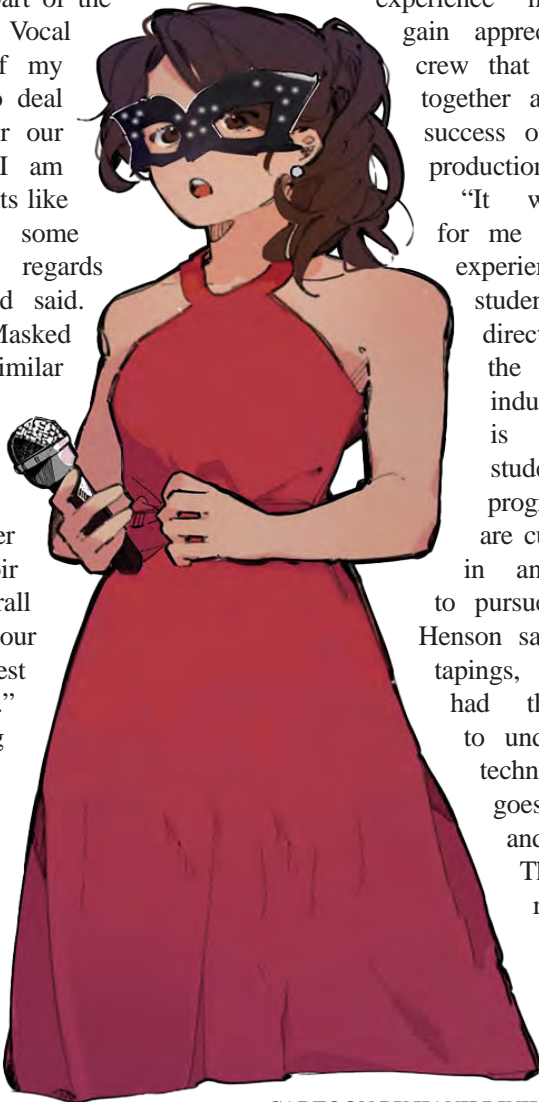


PHOTO COURTESY OF TROY CHOIR

AWESOME ATTENDEES: Warrior choir members participated in studio recordings.

live tapings of “The Masked Singer” at RED Studios Hollywood, offering to compensate the Vocal Music Program \$25 per attendee. Student attendees raised around \$1,300 for Warrior choir. Premiering in 2019 on the Fox network, “The Masked Singer” is a singing competition in which celebrities perform in costume to conceal their identities. At the end of each episode, audience members vote for their favorite performance. The singer with the least votes is then eliminated and required to reveal their identity. Participants were required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement in order to view the tapings. According to Ladies First member Desiree Arevalo-Gil, scene retakes and equipment complications also made sitting in on the live recordings a lengthy process. “We had to sign paperwork so we would not tell anyone the results of the rounds [before] we were allowed into the studio to proceed with the live viewings of the show,” Arevalo-Gil said. “When we were in the studio, we first pre-recorded several emotive reactions. [We] also [sat] through re-recordings, because there were several times when the judges had technical difficulties with their microphones.” According to Vocal Ensemble President Steven Logwood, attending off-campus fundraising events is how the Vocal Music Program primarily receives funding. All fundraising money

received is allocated towards ongoing expenses of the program, Logwood said. “Since I am a part of the counsel of the Vocal Ensemble, part of my responsibility is to deal with budgeting for our choir and what I am hoping is that events like this can alleviate some of our stress in regards to that,” Logwood said. “Attending ‘The Masked Singer’ or events similar to it will help us keep attending festivals or competitions, purchase proper attire for our choir outings and overall allow us to provide our students with the best choir experience.” According to Henson, the experience was important not only in providing the program with funding but also in giving students the opportunity to understand the work behind large-scale productions in the entertainment industry. The experience helped students gain appreciation for the crew that put the taping together and ensured the success of the television production, Henson said. “It was imperative for me to provide this experience for our choir students because it is directly affiliated with the entertainment industry, which is something that students in our choir program department are currently engaged in and most want to pursue a career in,” Henson said. “During the tapings, our students had the opportunity to understand all the technical work that goes on to manage and run a show. The experience really helped show students the various careers that are available in the entertainment industry.”



CARTOON BY HANH DINH

Warrior Club Jewelers of Troy hosts Jewelers for Health fundraiser

Club members worked together to create and sell jewelry pieces in preparation for the club’s first fundraiser.

By Paulina Lee
STAFF WRITER

Aiming to support mental health foundations, Warrior club Jewelers of Troy held their first fundraiser, Jewelers for Health, in the quad Dec. 6. Founded this year by Club President Hope Allan, Vice President Riddhi Arora and Secretary Jaqueline Diamond, the Jewelers of Troy club teaches students how to create and design jewelry pieces.



PHOTOS BY AIDEN CHONG

CREATIVITY FOR A CAUSE: The club donated jewelry sale proceeds.

The club meets every Wednesday and provides members with hands-on experience in crafting jewelry. In preparation for the fundraiser, board members taught club participants how to use resin to make jewelry. According to club member Harper Cabrera, members had the opportunity to learn more about the jewelry making process. During recent meetings, board members instructed students on how to place flowers in resin, Cabrera said. “The board showed a demonstration of how to use tweezers to cover the flowers and put them into a UV light lamp, while wearing gloves for safety,” Cabrera said. “Club meetings provide a nice moment to socialize while also teaching us how to be crafty. We learned how to turn basic charms into something fun, such as accessories that we could bring home.” During October and November, club members collected flowers to use in jewelry pieces for the event. The Jewelers for Health fundraiser showcased handcrafted resin flower necklaces and earrings, all crafted by club and board members. Necklaces were priced between \$7 and \$9 and earrings ranged from \$3 to \$5. The process of crafting the pieces included curing the flowers, drilling holes and attaching chains to create wearable pieces. Working with resin was introduced as a cost-effective way for club members to contribute, Diamond said. “I have always been interested in



FASHIONABLE FUNDRAISING: Board member Jaqueline Diamond sells resin jewelry to students.

making resin jewelry, [as] it is so eye-catching and unique,” Diamond said. “Flowers have special symbolism, so we thought they would be a meaningful choice to tie into the fundraiser.” The club is donating all proceeds to the Action Alliance Foundation. The Action Alliance Foundation, located in Fullerton, offers a residential environment for individuals experiencing homelessness, addiction or mental health challenges. According to President Hope Allan, one of the goals of the jewelry club is to support meaningful causes through fundraising efforts. “We care a lot for the community in Jewelers of Troy,” Allan said. “We would love to donate to any charity that helps create a healthy, safe and happy community.” Members advertised for the fundraiser through school announcements, social media posts and campus flyers. The club envisions hosting one to two additional fundraisers later in the school year and plans to organize after-school sessions where more students, including non-members, can participate in jewelry-making while earning service hours. Board members aim to expand outreach by starting an Etsy store or an online webpage. The club is focusing on impact rather than financial intent, said Diamond. “Since this is our first fundraiser, I am avoiding setting specific monetary goals,” Diamond said. “I just hope we can make a positive impact. We are just getting started, but I am excited for the future.”

Warrior club Observing the Future collaboratively publishes first issue

The club collaborated with other Observing the Future chapters to publish the organization’s first winter issue.

By Kylie Tien
STAFF WRITER

Warrior club Observing the Future will publish their first issue in collaboration with the Fullerton Observer newspaper Dec. 20. Founded in 2024 by Co-Presidents Tuleen Jamal and Kyla Talinio, Warrior club Observing the Future is a chapter of the larger Observing the Future publication, a student-led

partnership with the Fullerton Observer newspaper. Students from across Orange County collaborate to produce articles focused on community events, cultural features and lifestyle topics. Troy’s sector of Observing the Future will publish all articles together with the other chapters from around Orange County. The organization’s first publication over the summer led to the idea of branching out to a club at Troy, Talinio said. “In the beginning, our club meetings were more about getting our club situated, [as] we had to learn first before doing anything,” Talinio said. “Collaboration wise, it has helped me to really branch out and meet people

from other schools, especially during the summer. [It] made me happy to see that everyone universally enjoys publishing and writing and creating.” Observing the Future releases issues once every season, and Warrior Observing the Future’s winter issue will be held in collaboration with the other chapters of the organization. After club writers, editors and artists are chosen based upon skill and preference, members attend workshops to learn and improve upon skills needed for issue composition. Club members choose article topics from a communal document, utilizing a Google Calendar to ensure the timely completion of articles and assignments. Observing the Future’s winter issue will focus on lifestyle topics including pop culture, happenings within the community, holiday movies and activities to try. Articles will also focus on content relevant to students, such as cafe reviews, self care tips and college applications. Issues include a Literary Magazine showcasing student submissions of art, short stories, music and photography. After the completion of an issue, Troy’s sector of Observing the Future plans to hold an issue release party or potluck. Additional plans for completed issues include fundraising to print physical copies. The issue will be finalized around the middle of December for its release before the holidays, Jamal said. “We always make sure we get together, that we are working as a community—not just people being



WARRIOR WRITER: Club member Helen Fang works on an issue draft.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF OBSERVING THE FUTURE

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE: Observing the Future members gather at their first meeting to discuss organization details.

forced to write,” Jamal said. “It is really fun [and we] make sure that people are looking forward to our meetings, looking forward to what we do.” Writers earn volunteer hours for each article draft they complete. According to writer Helen Fang, joining Observing the Future allowed her to continue pursuing her passion for writing. “[The club] gave me the opportunity to continue doing something I love at school,” Fang said. “A lot of the clubs here at Troy are STEM-oriented, but for those dreamers, writers [and] artists who want to create things, do not be afraid to pursue your passions through alternate avenues. It can be on your own time, but do not let that passion for the humanities or your creativity tap out because it is worth it and valuable.”

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LA WARRIOR DJ

With some smooth synths and booming beats, dance the night away with senior Gianni Lomeli and Joe Gonzalez! Read about their journey as DJs and founders of LA PEOPLE.

Compiled by Eileen Um, **FEATURE EDITOR**, article by Kathleen Hong and Emma Gong, **STAFF WRITERS**, photos by Lauren Song, **PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR**

An electric energy pulses through the crowded room, teens entranced in excitement as seniors Gianni Lomeli and Joe Gonzalez skillfully blend one hit song after another. As the DJs for their co-started project, LA PEOPLE, the pair work passionately to vitalize the atmosphere of various events across Orange County. Lomeli and Gonzalez exercise their love for music to create unforgettable experiences of joy and laughter reflective of the high school experience.

Lomeli and Gonzalez started LA PEOPLE in May of 2024. The two started mixing songs together in a Guitar Center, developing a strong passion for DJing, when a realization sparked. Drawn to the social energy of various high school parties, the two friends realized that many of these events lacked the musical setup to match the emotional liveliness of the crowd. Now, Lomeli and Gonzalez own a successful DJ business, donning the name LA PEOPLE, which represents their shared Mexican heritage and love for the crowd. Their style centers mainly on hip-hop, but Lomeli deeply appreciates house music for its versatility and beat. The two are regularly booked for events,

working together to blend and connect various songs, creating seamless transitions that leave the crowd in awe and buzzing with excitement. Lomeli aims to create a concert-like experience that gives the night a magical atmosphere, making unforgettable memories for guests at the party.

“When I play a really good song and have a really good mix, I like hearing the crowd,” Lomeli said. “That’s why it’s called LA PEOPLE, it’s the people.”

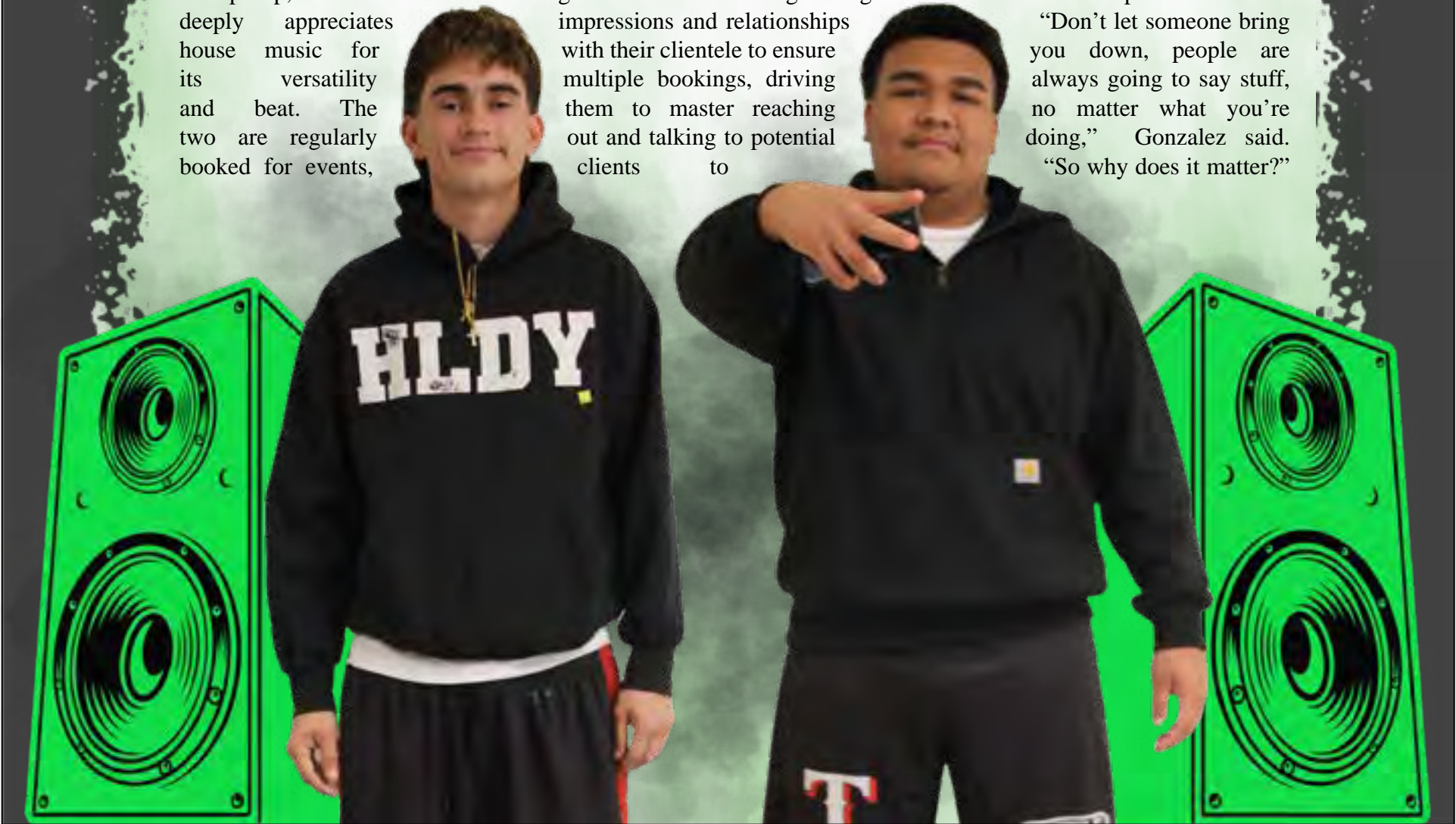
As Lomeli and Gonzalez explored the world of DJing together, every obstacle they encountered strengthened them and their business. Lomeli particularly recalls struggling with technology and crowd work, unsure of what to play to animate his listeners. Through steady practice, the pair gradually gained experience and developed a sense of the crowd’s reception. He invested in a new laptop and a new speaker, and learned to interpret crowd reception to better tweak his song choices. On the business side of LA PEOPLE, the two learned the great value of creating strong impressions and relationships with their clientele to ensure multiple bookings, driving them to master reaching out and talking to potential clients to

boost their business. Currently, they’re working to create various partnerships to better help them find and recruit more DJs, allowing LA PEOPLE to widen its reach and take on more bookings. These efforts ensure that LA PEOPLE makes good impressions and creates a lively atmosphere for the passionate young audience to thrive in.

“The meaningful part is when you see people dance,” Gonzalez said. “[It’s] when you see people come together and they’re all listening to the music, you’re the reason why.”

As LA PEOPLE continues to grow, the dynamic duo approaches every commission with a positive attitude, eager to spread the joy and liveliness they find in their work, creating fond memories for their listeners to reminisce on in the future. Lomeli and Gonzalez hopes to soon expand the business to all corners of Orange County, hiring other passionate music-lovers to cover more events. Gonzalez encourages others to take that risky step of exploration, to chase their love and their dreams and to make the most of the present moment.

“Don’t let someone bring you down, people are always going to say stuff, no matter what you’re doing,” Gonzalez said. “So why does it matter?”



DRILLS AND SKILLS

Get a head start on the Warriors' Varsity Boys soccer team as they prepare to destroy their competitors with another successful season in league.

Compiled by Kusuma Kothamasu, **SPORTS EDITOR**, article by Seungwoo Lee, **STAFF WRITER**, photos by of Seungwoo Lee, **STAFF WRITER**, graphics courtesy of Canva

Kicking off the season, the Warrior Soccer teams are advancing into their season with practices and scrimmages. With many athletes leaving last year, building chemistry is the biggest challenge for the forthcoming season.

During pre-season soccer, most athletes go to clubs and other forms of training outside of school to be on par and prepared for the season. With the guidance of the current varsity coaches, Sanjay Joshi and Lester Maldonado, the team works to get into shape. Certain drills and styles of offense and defense are emphasized and mastered in each practice for two hours after school every weekday.

Practicing with a newly formed team, they emphasize being able to work together through 7 on 7 self scrimmages and other plays that require the need for communication and bonding. Varsity defensive midfielder sophomore Archer Hufferd points out some of the pre-season aspects the team has worked on so far.

“We worked a lot on building the ball out from our defense and then

transitioning into attack with our wing play using our wide players and crossing it in for a shot. [We] did a good amount of conditioning such as jogging around the whole field, and at each corner, we would do pushups and sit-ups.”

With coaches trying to implement formations that will best suit the team for the rotations of subs and highlighting strong players, they typically use the 4-3-3 and 4-2-2 formations which are back line, middle line, and forward. Also lots of possession drills to help players get the feel for the ball and ready for their season which is going to be in a bigger league.

The Warriors’ goal this season is to win the league championship although it is unfamiliar and more competitive. Nonetheless, obtaining the league title all starts from the pre-season scrimmages.



Alongside the victory against Yorba Linda, the new Varsity team went against the Division 1 school, Anaheim, on November 26 as their second scrimmage. Coach Maldonado plans this yearly scrimmage to see how the Warriors will play against a team with a higher skill level.

The footballers showcased their competitiveness by fighting hard on defense and acquiring possessions across for offense. They went up with the ball with their right-wing player throughout the game. They also competed in the middle of the field continuously until they eventually lost two balls before and after halftime. The team gained a penalty shot near the end of the second half with Anaheim playing too aggressively. Though they did not score the penalty, their fighting spirit was admirable.

Varsity offensive midfielder senior

Haoyi Wang highlights some aspects the team could work on after a resilient game against Anaheim.

“[We] just have to keep our heads in the game, like staying focused, because we know they are a good team so we cannot have the game get away from us,” Wang said. “We just lacked a bit of chemistry since we are a new team and we have a lot of new incoming or like varsity players.”

Although in the end, it was a loss of 0-2 for the Warriors, they fought with compassion and showed each player’s potential for future games, while the coaches were able to assess who would be a key strong player. With hard work and persistence through their games, the team is confident on their win in league. Assistant Coach Joshi was proud of the team’s results and hopes to take the game as a learning experience.

“I think the boys did very well today, and Coach and I are very happy with the performance, even though on paper, it is a loss, but I think going back on the film that we have and seeing where and what we need to fix then I think it will be a good season this year.”

MIGHTY MALDONADO

Learn about the Warriors' Varsity Boys Soccer Coach Lester Maldonado's inspiring hardwork and journey into coaching and guiding the Warriors to victory.

Compiled by Kusuma Kothamasu, **SPORTS EDITOR**, article by Tejas Konka, **STAFF WRITER**, and Kusuma Kothamasu, **SPORTS EDITOR**, photos by of Aiden Chong, **PHOTO**

Thud! Thud! Thud! The ball smacks against the cleats of players sprinting at maximum speed. Boys Varsity Soccer team sprints into the season with Coach Lester Maldonado.

Maldonado knew from a young age that he wanted to delve into teaching.

“I played soccer in high school, and always knew I wanted to be a teacher and I thought I could be a good coach,” he said.

Maldonado finds joy in guiding kids and helping them achieve their dreams. He coached 15 years of high school soccer. Initially, he coached the JV soccer team at the school he graduated from, and came to coach the Warriors soon after. He has been teaching AVID, Cambridge U.S. History, and coaching the Boy’s Varsity Soccer team.

He is highly enthusiastic about this season and has high expectations for this year’s team.

The roster comprises many experienced players, and Maldonado expects them to play a big part in all of the games this season.

Maldonado describes the players this year as truly unique people when it comes down to their dedication and love for the sport. Going above and beyond the frame of a soccer team, Maldonado works to create a genuine and safe environment for the athletes to grow as people and in the sport of soccer. He strongly believes that the footballers have the growth mindset that would help push themselves and step out of their comfort zones while setting new boundaries with themselves and teammates.

“The kids are very determined and want to work hard. Some of them take soccer very seriously and they play at a high level.”

The soccer season started on December 2, when the team

played against Magnolia High School. Determined to succeed in yet another season this year, Maldonado is pushing his team to try new drills to prepare for the many challenging games that they will face. With their skills and hard work, the Warriors are confident in their success.

Compared to previous years, Maldonado is increasing his emphasis on the importance of passing drills and making sure everything on and off the field flows smoothly.

“We’ve been practicing

after school five days a week for the last two weeks now,” Maldonado said. “We mainly focus on passing patterns, kind of just giving players ideas on how to go towards the goal and creating opportunities.”



ANIMATED ADVENTURES

Step into the animated worlds of Spellbound, Arcane and Moana 2 to explore the colorful details of these three recent releases!

Compiled by Kate Berger, ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR, article by Celeste Hollingsworth and Bianca Naranjo, STAFF WRITERS, graphics by Hanh Dinh, CARTOONIST

SPELLBOUND

“Spellbound” may have cast a charm on viewers with its spunky soundtrack, but its mediocre plot fails to truly enchant audiences. Released to Netflix on Nov. 22, the movie’s characters include Ellian (Rachel Zegler), a princess in the fantastical, cheerful kingdom of Lumbria, and her parents, the king (Javier Bardem) and queen (Nicole Kidman) of Lumbria. The tale opens with Ellian struggling with her mother and father’s transformation into monsters which had required them to be locked away. However, her transformed parents suddenly escape from their restraints, stranding Ellian on a quest to find them and potentially bring them back to their human forms. Spellbound initially raised hopes with its leading characters and the incredible actors behind them, but the fantasy film failed to meet its potential with its unmemorable screenwriting. Fortunately, “Spellbound” presents an extensive amount of allure in its bewitching soundtrack, which comes as no surprise given its legendary composer, Alan Menken. Menken has contributed to countless classic compositions, dedicating his talent to the soundtracks of “Beauty and the Beast,” “The Little Mermaid” and “Tangled.” Menken’s composition and Rachel Zegler’s vocals blow away the opening of the movie with “My Parents are Monsters,” featuring a twangy and hopeful undercurrent that leaves viewers yearning for more of Ellian’s story. The song oozes with heartfelt passion and lighthearted melodies that fill the movie with soul. Later in the film, “Look for the Light” brings up morale through the funky yet harmonious combination of Zegler’s voice along with various others. As far as movie melodies go, this soundtrack is perfectly effective

in pushing the story forward with its encouraging touches of spirit. Despite the movie’s smashing soundtrack, “Spellbound” follows a predictable sequence that overshadows the movie’s complex themes of separation and emotional turbulence. “Spellbound” presents a unique family dynamic as the movie ends with Princess Ellian’s parent’s divorce, but despite this, her journey is as mundane as they come. Ultimately undermining the effect of divorce on a kid’s life, the end of the movie disregards the emotional consequences in order to follow the stereotypical structure of a happy ending. Even though the movie has a younger audience, a surface-level portrayal of these complex family dynamics holds repercussions such as misleading expectations for young kids on the reality of divorce along with a glorified perception of difficult family circumstances. Evidently, “Spellbound” does not fully commit to representing such deep themes through its flimsy, stereotypical, and ignorant plot. “Spellbound” may evoke emotion through its uplifting soundtrack, but its musical numbers and soundtrack cannot make up for its lack of nuanced plotlines. Its clichéd storyline and lackluster themes land it, at best, as a surface-level movie preventing viewers from taking away anything substantial.

The second and final season of the League of Legends show “Arcane” continues to stun audiences and critics alike, perfectly intertwining quality writing and otherworldly visuals. Released in acts across the course of November, Arcane held its viewers captive with these strategic three-episode releases and the overall immersive experience of the show. The story follows two sisters, Jinx (Ella Purnell) and Vi (Hailee Steinfeld) who have been afflicted by their past conflict. The plot is further driven by its cast of supporting characters, who reside either in Piltover, an affluent yet manipulative utopia, or Zaun, a sullen yet enticing underground city. In this season, “Arcane” explores the fallout of daunting tension between Piltover and Zaun, setting forth a high-stakes plot that is entirely enthralling to watch. “Arcane” has never shied away from inventive visuals, and its 100% on Rotten Tomatoes certainly accounts for the storytelling graphics that ooze with artful

ingenuity. In an interview hosted by SyncSketch, supervisor animator Alexis Wanneroy emphasized “Arcane’s” intention to “make [the] characters and scenes feel real [and] to have something very specific in all of them.” This goal captures the charm of the show’s animation: constantly dynamic, with gestures that invoke an incredible show-not-tell of the character’s feelings and actions. Although “Arcane” is an animated series rooted in fantastical elements, animating a complex range of human gestures allows the show to take on a realistic style that makes it all the more enchantingly engaging. Even with its strong points, “Arcane” is not the picture of perfection, and many fans have struggled in particular with this season’s rushed plot. “Arcane” has always been a thrilling experience with little room for catching your breath, but this season puts a whole new meaning to “no breathing space.” Small tinges of tranquility and light-hearted fun certainly manifest at some points, but the vast majority of the season is action-packed and intended solely to drive the plot forward. Despite this, the show manages to make its quick pace work through clever screenwriting. This season provided a plethora of plotlines for

each character, which could have contributed to the overwhelming nature of the show. However, many of these individual plot lines work together in harmony, becoming less crowded when viewing them as a whole. For example, characters like Jinx, Jayce and Heimerdinger individually explore science across numerous scenes. Yet, instead of this quantity of scenes feeling overwhelming, these scenes draw a parallel that connects the characters, making an overarching theme more resonant than each scene’s meticulous specifics. “Arcane” uses these parallels to acknowledge the unity of the human spirit, honoring a degree of realism that many shows fail to account for. The masterful incorporation of everyday nuance into whimsical splendor creates “Arcane’s” magnetism. Although the show takes place in a location and timeline completely unknown to the present world, the characters are relatable, understandable and above all, deeply human. “Arcane” will continue to persist as an unbeatable force in storytelling, as audiences look towards the screen and see their own reflections within each character.

MOANA 2

Disney truly knew the way to capture the audience’s hearts with “Moana 2.” This musical adventure film is a bold and innovative continuation of the beloved original film, and it breaks away from the reputation of spiritless sequels. Instead, the sequel flows seamlessly and naturally into the Moana universe. Released on Nov. 27, “Moana 2” takes place three years after Moana (Auli’i Cravalho) and Maui (Dwayne Johnson) return from their journey to restore life to Moana’s home island. As Moana learns about her ancestor’s voyaging history, she is inspired to find the island of Motufetu in order to connect all islands in the sea by restoring the channels that originally connected them. Even though “Moana 2” is a fictional story, it establishes itself as more than just a child’s tale, but as an acclaimed film through its showcasing of profound Polynesian history. The soundtrack of “Moana 2” follows the path of the original movie to create the peak of musical genius. The soundtrack was shaped by the talents of Emily Bear,

Abigail Barlow, Mark Mancina and Opetia Foa’i. Even without Lin Manuel Miranda, one of the acclaimed producers of “Moana,” the soundtrack does not fall short. For example, the song “Beyond” replicates a powerful collective voice created by the resonance of drums. Not only do Auli’i Cravalho’s vocals stand out, but the strong vocals echo the sounds of traditional Polynesian music. In this way, the soundtrack embodies the sense of community that The Moana films emulate. Opetia Foa’i, founder of Polynesian band Te Vaka, shared his commitment to accurately portraying South Pacific culture in an interview with The Spinoff. Foa’i said, “I wasn’t going to compromise” and “...was willing to cut Disney loose if they didn’t share my goals.” His unwavering commitment shines through the soundtrack as the music is deeply intertwined with Polynesian culture in its usage of Polynesian language, percussion and woodwinds. The music within “Moana 2” has the potential to make waves in the music industry. “Moana 2” is a more realistic story compared to “Moana” as it reflects the boundless history of voyaging in an exciting way, engaging younger audiences in the adventure and maintaining the older audience’s interest in its historical relevance. The movie captures this adventure with a vibrancy that is accredited to the vivid animation. From the smaller details like Moana’s curly hair moving in the wind to the constant shots of the deep blue ocean and shimmers of the night sky, the animation puts live-action films to shame in its beauty. Above all, there is a consistency in the animation style that conveys the seamless transition between the movies. “Moana 2” made a splash by surpassing the high bar set by the stand out original. The movie adds new and improved layers in both the storyline and music realm, establishing the Moana franchise as one of the most impactful franchises in the Disney universe!





From its intricate set designs to its powerful soundtrack, “Wicked” captures audiences’ hearts. Read Oracle’s take on the latest “Popular” musical!

Compiled by Kate Berger, ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR, article by Riddhi Arora, STAFF WRITER, cartoon by Hanh Dinh, CARTOONIST, graphics courtesy of Universal Pictures

Defying gravity, the new musical movie release, “Wicked,” takes flight from the first note, bringing viewers on a spellbinding journey! “Wicked” retells “The Wizard of Oz,” though it develops the story further with new insight into Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West (Cynthia Erivo), as well as the assumed protagonist, Glinda, the Good Witch (Ariana Grande). The stage-to-film story first opened as a musical in 2003, captivating theater enthusiasts and creating anticipation for the movie adaptation, released Nov. 22. Exploring the themes of friendship and self-love, “Wicked” is a cultural sensation, creating an absolutely “wicked” world that enchants viewers of all ages!

“Wicked’s” brilliance stunned critics who were ready to tear it apart. Many thought it would be another convoluted mess, as many musical movie adaptations are, with a weak script and none of the otherworldly magic the musical had. However, when the film was released, expectations immediately flipped. The script stayed true to the heart of the musical, the leads brought genuine life to the story, and the musical numbers were flawlessly woven into the story. Instead of the over-the-top spectacle critics expected, the film found the perfect balance of spectacle and substance, making it a delightful and unexpected success. The captivating film single-handedly changed expectations of stage-to-film adaptations, paving the way for musical adaptations to come.

With a spirited story, director Jon M. Chu immerses viewers into an entirely new and enchanting world, bringing to life the Land of Oz. The contrasting pink and green color scheme representing Glinda and Elphaba, respectively, convey the

characters’ struggles as they become witches of the Oz world. Such contrasts between pink and green also illustrate the divergence between Glinda’s “good” and Elphaba’s “evil.” Adding to the display of good versus evil, the movie utilizes a pronounced contrast between light and dark color grades throughout the movie to reflect the events taking place. A potent example is in the scene where Glinda and Elphaba reach Emerald City, a bright and busy city full of prosperity. In the scene, the Wizard of Emerald City is still believed to be divine, and therefore, Emerald City is gleaming, brimming with light and hope. However, when the corruption of the Wizard is revealed, the city plunges into darkness, hiding the Wizard’s wickedness in the shadows. The extreme contrast from one scene to another in the span of ten short minutes invokes immediate concern from the viewers, luring them deeper into the obstacles occurring in the Land of Oz. With the movie’s bold distinction between light and dark and good and evil, every moment pulses with excitement, leaving a lasting impact long after the credits roll.

The “Wicked” soundtrack certainly makes the movie “Popular,” creating an empowering display of Elphaba’s troubled life. From the

soaring hit “Defying Gravity” to the heartfelt “For Good,” the soundtrack captures the essence of self-discovery and resilience. A key moment in the soundtrack kicks in during “No Good Deed,” where the storm of strings and thumping drums match Elphaba’s violent rage. The fierce violins and deep percussion elevate the story as she expresses her frustration with the electric feel of an orchestra of brass instruments. The music creates a full-on emotional ride, mirroring her inner turmoil. Each powerful note and lyric ignites a sense of empowerment as the characters break free from societal expectations and embrace their true selves. Not only does the soundtrack narrate the tale, but it amplifies it, lifting both the characters and the audience to new heights.

With its vibrant visuals and lively performances, “Wicked” brings viewers into a world brimming with color and vigor. Against popular criticism before the release, the film’s vitalizing tone and powerful music surpass expectations. The songs, deeply emotional and filled with passion, enforce the themes of empowerment, self-discovery and friendship. “Wicked’s” magic delivers an entrancing experience leaving all viewers completely and utterly bewitched!



MARK MY WORDS

Read about the Warrior population’s holiday favorites!

“My favorite Christmas song is White Christmas because I like Bing Crosby’s voice, and I think the song is fun to sing along to.”
-Sebastian Madden, *Sophomore*

“Last Christmas: My friends and I performed a horrendous rendition of it whilst building our physics final project last year.”
-Soham Dev, *Senior*

FAVORITE HOLIDAY SONG

“All I Want For Christmas Is You by Mariah Carey because I love love songs during winter.”
-Mikaela Gonzales, *Junior*



- Nov 1
- Early November
- After Thanksgiving
- Early December
- Last-minute
- Don't celebrate

FAVORITE HOLIDAY TRADITION

“I like when we do gift exchanges because you never know what or who to expect to give the gifts.”
-Mitchell Nava, *Freshman*



- Hot Chocolate
- Candy Canes
- Gingerbread cookies
- Eggnog
- Other

“I always get together with family and we exchange gifts”
-Eliseo Ortiz, *Junior*

“I think the lights and ornaments look really pretty together, so it’s really cool to get to decorate them.”
-Jude Hulsizer, *Sophomore*

Winter overconsumption harms more than wallets—it’s a growing environmental issue

By Ethan Ferrer
STAFF WRITER



Winter overconsumption is a major issue in the United States, and people can do more to alleviate its effects. The holidays are a jolly time for all, with both New Year’s and Christmas allowing families to gather at home while settling into the winter festivities. But is it possible to settle in too much? In keeping with the holiday spirit, people across the country indulge excessively, buying products they do not need, without consideration for the waste they discard. Landfills become overfilled with Christmas goods, bins are stocked high with trash from New Year’s parties and carbon emissions skyrocket as trips are made across the country. Such overconsumption is accelerated by retail strategies, where stores stock holiday items months in advance to extend the buying window for winter goods. This causes many to buy more unnecessary goods under the pretense of holiday spirit, adding to the waste. Not only do people need to be more mindful of the effects their actions have, but businesses must change their strategies to soften their impact on the environment. Festive consumerism starts too early, and excessive waste is produced as a result—this must change. The influx of winter goods creates an untenable amount of waste in the form of

gifts, food and wrapping. The habits of retailers before the winter season contribute to this. The “Christmas creep” or “holiday creep” is a phenomenon in which retailers sell winter items far before the holiday season, extending the buying window and increasing profits. Over the past few years, this process has often begun as early as November; however, CBS News describes how this cycle started even earlier this year, with brands like Target and Amazon beginning sales events in early October. Because of this, waste will increase by more than 25%, according to ABC News. This waste inevitably ends up in landfills throughout the nation, contaminating soil and harming local ecosystems. Because of retailers’ practices, holiday consumption occurs too early. However, corporations and businesses cannot prioritize profits over environmental needs. Altering such practices and cutting the buying window for winter goods would help the environment. Furthermore, people should recognize how winter consumption causes a steady increase in carbon emissions. In wintertime, carbon emissions observe a steep rise as cars pack the roads during seasonal travel, with many travelers driving on their own rather than carpooling. The Hill notes that each person releases 1,400 additional pounds of carbon emissions during the holiday season. These emissions are not only the result of combustion-based travel. Electricity, food, shopping and even Christmas trees add tremendously to an ever-growing



CARTOON COURTESY OF NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

carbon footprint. And as the years pass, this footprint will only grow larger. As such, it is important to be aware of the impact a person may have, especially when traveling or shopping during the holidays. Although the environmental impacts of common holiday practices can be overbearing, there are many ways to mitigate their effects. Giving out sustainable gifts, finding a Christmas tree composting program, carpooling and avoiding flights, can all serve to help even out the climate-based effects wrought by holiday consumption. Adding on, overconsumption does not only affect the world in wintertime. People should aim to maintain sustainable practices year-round. Any small effort to relieve the detrimental effects of overconsumption helps and everyone should do their part. The joyous time of the holidays should not be overshadowed by the gloomy nature of environmental change. However, the influence of winter overconsumption is too severe to ignore. It is irrefutable that the “holiday creep,” performed by popular brands across the U.S., and the increased consumption of goods resulting from it has had a negative impact. Moreover, the increased travel and amount of waste resulting from the holidays cause carbon emissions to erupt, further adding to the detrimental effects. To limit environmental degradation, consumers and producers of goods must practice more sustainable habits. Although families are free to celebrate Christmas and New Year’s as they see fit, they should keep in mind the potential impacts of their actions.

Not to be a Grinch, but the Christmas season is coming too fast and is unnecessarily long

By Chelsea Engelhardt
STAFF WRITER



Christmas starting too early is detrimental to the mental health of people. The holiday season is approaching at a rapid rate that increases every year. There have been many debates on social media and other platforms discussing the proper time to start celebrating these festivities, as people have begun their celebrations earlier and earlier every year. Right now, the Christmas decorations start too early and need to slow down. Not only is winter and the holiday

season the most expensive time of the year, but it is constantly being extended to outrageous and unnecessary lengths. There is such a thing as starting to celebrate the Christmas too early, and that is occurring right now. The detrimental mental effects of the holiday season are far too overlooked. Seasonal depression exists, and with Christmas starting earlier and earlier each year, it only gets worse. According to a survey done by the New York Post, 82.4% of Americans claim to get a phenomenon called “Christmas Fatigue” from the intense advertisements, decorations and clearance sales. This term, Christmas Fatigue is a sustained exposure to stress from the overwhelming commercial aspects of Christmas

celebrations. This constant and excessive exposure is expanding with the idea of celebrating Christmas in months like November and even October. In the same survey, it was determined that four out of five Americans believe Christmas is exhausting, and with the expanding Christmas season, this could further the fatigue. Additionally, many holiday workers are facing astronomical amounts of stress from an overwhelming workload. According to The Guardian, the largest online retailer in the United States, Amazon, expects its workers to clock in mandatory overtime throughout the holidays with a fear of termination otherwise. Overall, the stressful period for holiday workers and shoppers does not need to be extended with the celebratory period of Christmas starting earlier. Celebrating Christmas too early causes other holidays to be overlooked. Therefore, the true point of the holiday season is suffocated and isn’t celebrated to its fullest extent for more material reasons. Although it seems counterintuitive to not celebrate Christmas to appreciate it more, this idea has merit. By celebrating the holidays less intensely, it can help people relax and enjoy the time. If people continue to celebrate the holiday for months on end beforehand, the actual designated day for celebration becomes less special and does not allow for the true meaning and significance of Christmas to be appreciated. This

concept can also be applied to the celebration of Thanksgiving. By starting Christmas celebrations before Thanksgiving and continuing them after the holiday, people do not stop to celebrate Thanksgiving or fully appreciate its tradition. This holiday is supposed to be about giving thanks to the things people love and appreciate but instead, the focus is centered on Christmas shopping and decorating. Although the holiday of Christmas is important and celebrating it can bring joy to the world, it should not be celebrated excessively. Even though Christmas time has been presented as a cheery holiday filled with joy, love and relaxation, it is evidently quite the opposite. This time of year can now be characterized by the stress that these seasonal workers undergo and the blurring of different holidays due to the overbearing nature of the winter season. Every year, this season gets longer and longer, furthering the torture of a fake happiness and a capitalizing economy. Although the inherent nature of Christmas is pure, with good values and traditions, it has transformed into a materialistic and stressful holiday, corrupting the entire holiday season as a result. The celebration of this holiday must be kept in moderation to give the deserved due diligence to the other holidays spanning this period and appreciate the actual Christmas day to the fullest extent. The current nature of the holiday season is exhausting and doesn’t deserve to be longer than the day that it is.



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Holiday Hobbies

As the long awaited winter break approaches, it calls for gingerbread houses, ugly christmas hoodies, and vibrant holiday adornments. This year, bring a personal touch to your seasonal festivities by baking, sewing, and decorating. Try out Oracle’s favorite holiday hobbies for yourself!

Compiled by Zoey Bahng, **LIFESTYLE EDITOR**, article by Bianca Naranjo and Kailey Reichman, **STAFF WRITERS**, cartoons by Maifaa Babiker, **CARTOONIST**

GINGERBREAD HOUSE

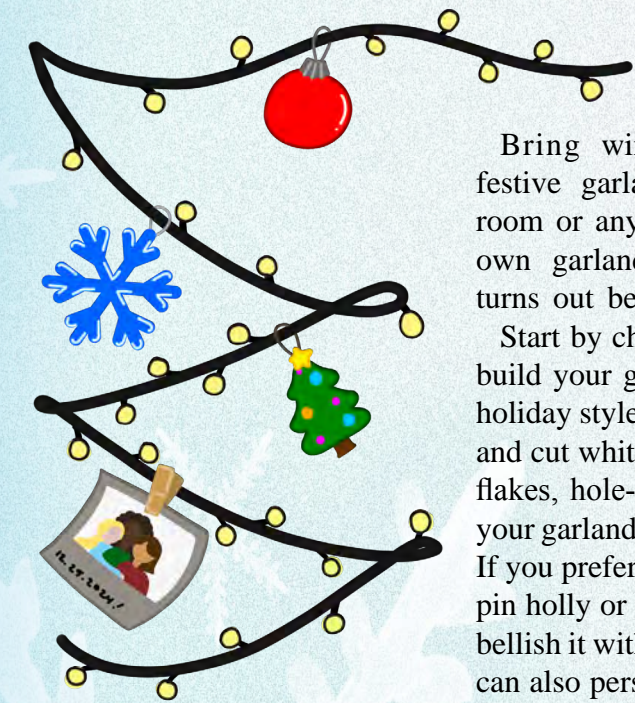
With chestnuts roasting over the open fire and marshmallows for toasting, Christmastime is packed with delicious foods and plenty of treats to select from. Yet, even with a seemingly never-ending list of holiday desserts, gingerbread houses will always be a tried and true staple thanks to the sentimental charm of customizing them.

Every house needs a solid base before it can be decorated, and the delicious gingerbread house is no exception. To make your gingerbread house one of a kind, you can take on the rewarding challenge of baking the house from scratch. Baking your own gingerbread walls gives you complete control over the design and flavor, so feel free to explore a wide variety of recipes in cookbooks or baking websites to see what suits your taste. To shape the cookies, print out online templates and mold your gingerbread dough accordingly.

While your house’s foundation is baking, you can whip up your icing. Simply mix together three ingredients: three cups of powdered sugar, two egg whites and a pinch of cream of tartar. Once the cookies finish, carefully weld together your gingerbread house.

Now it is finally time for the best part: decorating the house. Gather your favorite candies and snacks and your icing from before to get creative with a candy cane roof, a gumdrop garden or mosaic-style gummy windows. The possibilities are endless, so let your imagination run wild while decorating your sweet creation.

After completing your beautifully tailored gingerbread house, make sure to admire your masterpiece—even if it turns out to be a little messier than you expected. Whether you decide to display your house as a festive centerpiece or snack on its delicious decorations throughout the season, this homemade gingerbread house is the perfect way to savor the season.



ORNAMENT GARLAND

Bring winter magic into your home with a festive garland to adorn your living room, bedroom or any cozy corner. Not only is making your own garland a fun winter craft, but this decor turns out beautifully with only a few simple steps.

Start by choosing a string, ribbon or fairy lights to build your garland off of and think of your favorite holiday style. For a winter-wonderland aesthetic, fold and cut white and blue construction paper into snowflakes, hole-punch each one, then string them along your garland to create your very own ceiling snowfall. If you prefer a more traditional holiday look, you can pin holly or evergreen twigs to your garland and embellish it with your best red and green ornaments. You can also personalize your garland further by clipping

on Polaroid photos of family, friends and memories.

When it comes to displaying your creation, the possibilities are endless. For a whimsical look, you can hang up your fairy light garland in a zig-zag pattern along the ceiling of a hallway. Or, for a tasteful touch of festivity, drape the garland over a bookshelf, or use it to frame your window sill. Wherever you choose to display your garland, it is sure to brighten up your home with holiday joy.

Whether you embrace a traditional theme or add your own creative flair, crafting your very own garland is a wonderful way to bring warmth of holiday magic into your home. It is a simple, fun DIY project that will leave your space looking beautifully decorated and full of seasonal cheer.

PATCHWORK HOODIE

Many of us have an embarrassing ugly Christmas sweater in the back of our closets, but there is a way to make holiday hoodies become adorable staples for your holiday wardrobe. Revitalize your old garments by sewing your own patchwork hoodie that will keep your winter days cute and cozy for years to come.

Start by digging through your closet for an old hoodie, or grab a friend to thrift a sweater in need of holiday flair. Once you choose your sweater, get creative with your design: snowflakes, candy canes and Christmas trees can all be quilted with different colors and shapes of fabrics. The Christmas tree design can incorporate a fun combination of green fabrics as the evergreen tree, random ribbons as decorative garlands, and miscellaneous beads and buttons as ornaments. You can also make the experience even more enjoyable by planning matching designs

with friends or family, turning this craft into precious holiday memories. Whatever design you choose, lay out your pieces on the hoodie and temporarily secure them with pins or fabric glue.

Once you have assembled the final plans for your sweater, sew them on with a blanket stitch to ensure your decorations hold through all your holiday activities. This type of stitch is when the needle loops around the edge of the fabric, creating evenly spaced, secure stitches along its border.

With some festive inspiration and dedication, you can make your very own holiday hoodie. This Christmas, transform your closet and embrace the funky charm of a DIY holiday outfit that you will cherish for years to come.

