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ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

The Grauer School

A Reflection on Community

By Zoe Br.

As the end of my Senior year of high school draws near, I have found myself, honestly, reflecting on my life as a whole. The people, places, opportunities, experiences, and choices, and just how much growth they have caused in me. I find that the root of all these changes—whether for better or worse—was community. My community. Communities I was adjacent to. Communities I gained and communities I lost. And, wow, there have been so many.

People come and go from our lives, and often we think little of it. The sadness at losing someone is a peculiar type of pain. The

friends who were once my closest companions have become strangers. Some I know only in passing: seeing glimpses of their lives through the connections we still share or the posts they make on social media. Others I have grown in a completely different direction from.

Those earliest playmates who taught me how to be with people who weren't my family. The early elementary school friends who curated the continued development of my imagination, who taught me how to handle and resolve conflict, and who instilled in me that I was enough. My later

elementary school friends who—for better or worse—made me fall in love with academia, who helped me through ups and downs, and who taught me that everything is going to be okay as long as you have your people. Consider this my gratitude to them, which will most definitely not fit into my Senior Defense, but is no less meaningful.

It is so easy to forget how many communities you have gone through to get here, wherever here is. It was not until the threat of losing another became my most tangible reality that I truly comprehended how my past communities shaped the way I am.

College Decision Season

By Luke W.

As the year enters its last quarter, seniors face a major decision: where they want to go next year. After years of working for high grades, clubs, extracurriculars, and applications, the decision is intense.

The college decision process is often seen as an exciting time, but for students, it can be nerve-racking. Acceptance letters bring relief, though they often lead to complicated decisions. Each college represents a drastically different potential future, including different people, places, and available opportunities.

The academics also hold a significant part in the decision. Students look for a school that can offer them an advantage in the workforce. College is a stepping stone to a person's first job. Employers often consider the prestige of the schooling and the classes a person took when applying for their first job.

Social pressure adds another layer. As friends commit to different schools, seniors may feel pressure to do the same. Seeing their friends know where they are going can put pressure on them to make an impulsive decision. It is important to continue to

make decisions based on knowledge rather than social pressure.

The entire process holds value. It allows seniors to reflect on who they are and their future goals. It is one of the first major decisions that seniors will make in shaping their future. In the end, there are no right and wrong decisions. Many students will change majors, transfer schools, and explore new paths.



ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

Grades vs. Skills: What Actually Prepares You For the Real World

By Leyton G.



For decades, grades have been treated like golden tickets. A high GPA signals discipline, intelligence, and potential. Schools, colleges, and even employers have long used grades as a shortcut to evaluate people. However, grades measure people through memorization, following instructions, test-taking ability, and meeting deadlines. This is all very useful... but also limited. Real life rarely hands you a multi-

ple-choice test with four neat answers and a time limit.

Within the world of internships, jobs, and life decisions, a very different toolkit is put to work. Skills are less about what you know and more about what you can do with what you know. A lot of these skills tend to be based in communication, problem-solving, adaptability, collaboration, and critical thinking. There could be a straight-A student who may be able to get phenomenal grades. However, that student may struggle to speak up in a meeting, handle failure or criticism, and think independently without a rubric. On the other hand, there might be a student who gets average grades and might thrive in the real-world settings because they have built resilience, creativity, or people skills. Here's where it gets nuanced. Skills without foundational knowledge can be shaky. You

can't solve complex problems without understanding the basics first. Grades can reflect work ethic, consistency, and the ability to learn structured material. The sweet spot is where you combine both. One can use grades to build discipline and knowledge, and then use skills to apply that knowledge in unpredictable situations.

Many are starting to see a movement towards skill-based evaluation. Many companies are focusing more on experience and portfolios. Internships and real-world projects have become more valuable. Interviews emphasize problem-solving over memorized answers. Grades of course play a huge role in creating a work ethic at a young age; however, skills take the lead in this scenario, preparing you for the real world through prolonged experiences. The real winners are the people who learn how to turn knowledge into action.

By MJ C.

A Day for Laughs

Every year on April 1st, people around the world celebrate April Fools' Day, a day dedicated to jokes, pranks, and some good old playful tricks. The exact origins of the holiday are a bit unclear, but many historians believe it dates back several hundred years in Europe. Over time, the tradition spread across the globe and became a way for people to have a little fun, surprising their friends, coworkers, and, best of all, family. Large companies sometimes even participate by announcing fake products or posting obviously exaggerated news stories online.

The best April Fools' pranks are the ones that are creative, unexpected, and as well, completely harmless. A good prank should only confuse someone for a moment before everyone ends up laughing about it. If you are looking for ideas this year, here are a few unique but easy pranks that are guaranteed to get you a reaction.



Auto-Correst Chaos: If you can briefly borrow a friend's phone, create a keyboard shortcut that automatically changes a normal word to a word of your choosing. For example, "Hello" can become "Howdy!!!!!" with a few clicks. When they try to text later, their messages suddenly sound completely twisted and over-the-top.

Rubber Duckies: Hide small rubber ducks throughout someone's room, backpack, or even their car. Place them in drawers, next to everyday items, and all over shelves. The best part is watching them slowly discover more and more ducks for the next week.

Backwards Bedroom: While someone is out of the room, turn as many things backwards as possible. For example, flipping or shifting picture frames, desk items, chairs, and books on shelves will make the whole room feel slightly off.

Googly-Eye Fridge: Stick googly eyes on everything inside the fridge and shift the items so that they are directly looking at the person who opens it. This will make the entire fridge of food look as if it is staring back at you.

At the end of the day, April Fools' Day is really about bringing a little humor into everyday life. As long as the prank stays friendly and harmless, it is a fun way to surprise people and give everyone a reason to laugh.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

The Ending of a Healthcare Desert

By Isabella M.



On February 14, 2026, the first-ever Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) was opened in Sierra Leone. Before this development, Sierra Leone (a country on the southwest coast of West Africa) had ranked as one of the worst in terms of maternal care. During 2020, their maternal mortality rate reached 1 out of 52 women dying during pregnancy or childbirth (for comparison: the United States had a maternal mortality rate of 1 in 3800 in the year 2020). After an 11-year civil war and the resulting broken health system with damaged infrastructure, lack of staffing, and supply chain gaps stood extremely detrimental for years after the conflict had ended. Now, a milestone has been reached with the opening of the Paul E. Farmer Maternal Center of Excellence (MCOE). Located in Koidu Town, Sierra Leone, it is named in honor of the late Dr. Paul Farmer, co-founder of Partners in Health, to honor his legacy of providing high-quality, dignified health care to all, and his belief in healthcare as a human right. However, this was not the beginning of the initiative, nor the end of it. It is simply a step toward improving maternal and newborn care; since 2014, the nonprofit, Partners in Health, has been working with local health officials to improve circumstances. In the last twelve years, they have added a blood bank and pharmacy next to an existing maternal ward, trained additional nurses and midwives, and improved access to family planning.

The MCOE is the first maternal health hospital in Sierra Leone specifically designed to provide critical care for at-risk mothers and their newborns. According to Partners in Health, the hospital added 166 beds and quality care for women and children, which is a massive improvement to the area's 48-bed maternal ward.

Throughout the construction of the hospital, Partners in Health also hired a mainly female crew, as well as training approximately 200 clinical staff in partnership with the country's Ministry of Health. This initiative of women supporting women is incredibly inspiring, especially in the medical field. The MCOE has been a six-year journey, showing incredible determination and perseverance.

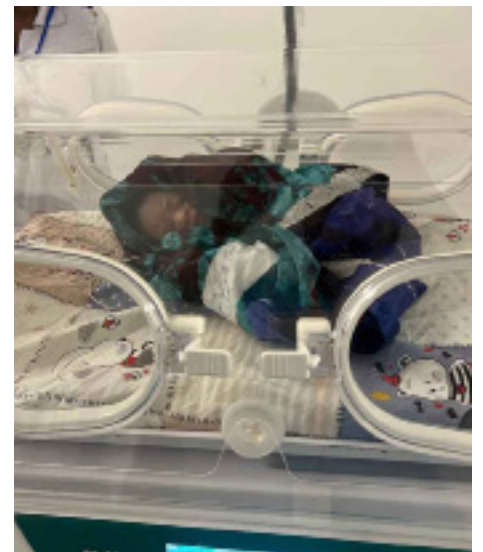


This project could not have been accomplished, however, without the help of Hank and John Green. A huge part of the funding came from these two brothers. Together, they set out to start raising funds in 2019. They began by launching the Awesome Socks Club, a platform that sells socks to donate all of their profits to Partners in Health. The platform eventually evolved into the Good Store, an online shop that sells everyday products (such as coffee, tea, soap, etc) where all profits are donated to charity.

In addition, the two brothers have donated personal money and raised millions of dollars through their annual Project for Awesome. In a video about the project,

John Green states, "I'd love to present us as the heroes of this story, but the truth is, the folks in Sierra Leone who actually built the hospital, who actually provide the care, who do the training for the nurses and midwives and traditional birth attendants, those are the people who really made this possible." John and Hank Green gained prominence through educational and entertainment content on YouTube. John Green is widely known as the author of bestselling novels, such as *The Fault in Our Stars* (recently adapted into a film), while Hank Green has built a career in science communication as well as online education. Together, they have created several education projects such as *Crash Course* and *SciShow*, which reach millions of viewers around the world. During their 2026 Project For Awesome, the MCOE opened its doors and started treating its first patients.

On Valentine's Day of 2026 at 2:13 p.m., the first child was born inside the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of MCOE. Being born at just 1.72 kg (3.79 lbs), the baby girl received immediate specialized NICU care according to the Directorate of Hospital and Ambulance Services of Sierra Leone's Ministry of Health. This first delivery came from years of coordinated efforts and marked a celebratory event in the worlds of philanthropy, global health, and community, ending a health care desert.



ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

Gelato Shop Opens in Oceanside's Iconic "Top Gun" House

By Zack H.

A new gelato shop is supposed to open inside one of Top Gun's most recognizable landmarks in San Diego. Located in downtown Oceanside, the cottage-style home gained its fame after appearing in the 1986 film *Top Gun*, where it was featured as Charlie's house. Over the years, the building has become a popular tourist destination, attracting fans of the movie and visitors interested in local history. The newly created business, owned by An's Hatmakers, will transform the historic home into a gelato shop. An's aims to create an experience that blends Oceanside's coastal culture with the charm of the iconic



house. City officials and community members have expressed excitement about the project, seeing it as a way to preserve the building while making it more interactive and accessible to the public. Rather than remaining just a photo shop, the house will now offer visitors a chance to step inside and enjoy a treat. The renovation is part of a broader effort to revitalize the area while maintaining Oceanside's historic character. The gelato shop is expected to draw both locals and tourists, continuing the legacy of the Top Gun House while giving it a fresh, flavorful future.

2016 vs. 2026

By Sadie S.M.



The first few months of 2026 have flown by quicker than the blink of the eye, and in that short, yet seemingly long, period of time, a couple of trends have popped up. At the moment, everyone is living for the unfiltered "day-in-my-life" videos and corny "no-hands dance." However, one viral craze overthrows the rest: "2026 is the new 2016." While it is unbelievable for many, 2016, a year filled with questionable fashion and lively music, was a decade ago. Hence, the revival of everyone's favorite fads is sparking serious reminiscing online, which only amplifies the question: what were the BEST moments of 2016?

Cultural Tokens: 2016 was indeed a space for reinventing oneself online. With the rise of warm-toned hue filters on Instagram and the dog emoji on Snapchat, everyone started to embrace new ideas of identity. This sense of self called for a now "cringey" sense of style with choker neck-

laces and skater skirts. 2016 also marked the beginning of Vine's, the popular social media platform, societal decline. Instead, Musical.ly, the predecessor to TikTok, took the majority interest. With that shift in social media priorities, specific trends also appeared, including the bottle flip and mannequin challenges. Both of which involved millions of ordinary and famous people. On the note of famous people, Rihanna and Drake spiked their listeners with their albums ANTI and Views, and Taylor Swift became known for her "Bleachella" era.

Political Space: While there were plenty of thrilling mementos in 2016, the year also called for various political events. One of the many was the 2016 U.S. election, when President Donald J. Trump was elected to his first term. Against the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, the race itself caused a lot of tension and questions within the political state of the U.S. In the end, while Hillary Clinton won the majority vote, Donald Trump won the electoral votes, ultimately winning the entire campaign. Outside the U.S., the UK held a close referendum —52% in favor—to leave the European Union, leading to a four-year process to complete the task. There was also a rise in authoritarian powers in Russia and Turkey, as well as an an-

ti-American government president elected in the Philippines.

Sports Highlights: Finishing on a high note, 2016 also contained a highly active sports scene. During the summer, an outstanding showcase of global talent occurred at the Rio Olympics. Athletes such as Usain Bolt and Michel Phelps etched their names into history, Bolt by completing a triple-triple and Phelps by winning 6 medals to add to his 28-medal collection. Portuguese football fans were also overjoyed with their country's UEFA win, and Leicester football fans screamed at their team beating the 5000-1 odds during the Premier League Championship. Then, at the national level, the Chicago Cubs won their first World Series in over a hundred years against the Cleveland Indians, marking a monumental moment in U.S. baseball history.

Essentially, 2016 was filled with some of the most exceptional occasions. From cultural moments to worldwide political shifts to outstanding sports, everything has defined what society is today. So, if a clip appears within the "2016 is the new 2026" trend, think about why, because the seemingly goofy videos really do connect to a bigger picture and truly showcase what 2016 was.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

Hiatus or Final Curtain Call: Was KATSEYE's Manon Pushed Out?

By Zoe Ba.

The girl group curse has struck again. KATSEYE's Manon Bannerman has officially been put "on hiatus." Although framed as a consensual decision made in the interest of her mental health and well-being, fans suspect that this choice was the result of the underlying tension that has been building since the girls' time on "Dream Academy." Manon's involvement in the group has been different from that of the other members since the beginning. From what was shown on the show, it appears as though Manon was scouted to fill the classic "visual" K-pop idol role, whereas the other girls had to pass a prior round of auditioning to be selected for the training school (this excludes Lara, who was scouted for her singing talent). Although she was selected for the group, Manon still had to partake in the rigorous singing and training courses in addition to the elimination rounds; she would later say in an interview for the Netflix show that she suspected her position was solidified.

This confidence she had in herself was perceived as arrogance both by the HYBEXGEFFEN officials as well as the other girls on "Dream Academy," especially after Manon missed a multitude of the training sessions. Although these absences were primarily the result of illness, some remark that as a Swiss citizen, Manon is accustomed to a different work-life balance than what is expected for K-pop training.

Following the backlash that came after the Netflix reality show was released, Manon said in an interview with The Cut, "Being called lazy, especially as a Black girl, is not fair. Now I feel like I always need to put in extra work to prove something, even though I really don't." These comments feel baseless, as upon immediate notice of the concerns regarding her engagement, Manon advocated for herself and spoke with the rest of the training members about her desire to be a part of the group and her willingness to work harder. This, however, did not seem to be enough.



In 2024, HYBE and GEFEN Records released KATSEYE merchandise that included an individualized portion about each member. On Manon's section of the quiz, there was a question that asked: "What does Manon think is her best feature?" The answers included "her sense of humor, her selfishness, her laziness, or her quiet nature." Immediately, fans criticized the label, as merely the act of putting being "selfish" or "lazy" as a potential characteristic of the idol only further distorted the narrative.



This distortion on the label's part does not stop at the insinuating quiz; in the months leading up to "the hiatus," Manon has frequently been missing from social media posts as well as large-scale advertisements. One such example includes being the only member excluded from the promotional solo shots taken for the Katseye x Monster High doll collaboration. Another includes a popular Glossier Billboard, where a group

photo was taken in front of the KATSEYE ad with Manon absent from the group photo, and her face (potentially purposefully) covered by fellow member Yoonchae.

However, a large portion of the controversy originates from KATSEYE member Daniella's father. After the announcement of Manon's break from KATSEYE, Rafael Avanzini commented, "THE SHOW MUST GO ON! With or without one member. KATSEYE is bigger than one girl." He then additionally wrote in response to a comment about KATSEYE requiring six members that "five is fine" and "KATSEYE does not run based off of Manon. The girls will be fine." This is not the first negative comment he's made about Manon. Avanzini has previously compared her to Daniella and highlighted that Daniella is "much better trained."

For being a group that supposedly celebrates diversity, it seems as though they have fallen into the familiar girl group pattern in which the black girl is singled out. Just look at Normani from Fifth Harmony, Leigh-Ann from Little Mix, and Melody Thornton from the Pussycat Dolls and ask yourself whether this is truly a unique occurrence. All of these women have talked about how isolating it is to be the sole black woman and the extra effort they had to put in to be taken seriously. Manon has since released a comment on Weverse (where the hiatus was originally announced), "sometimes things unfold in ways we don't fully control, but [she's] trusting the bigger picture."

Regardless of whether this hiatus is permanent or not, the girls do not seem to be giving up on each other. In a recent Buenos Aires performance, group leader Sophia shouted, "Let's give it up for Manon!" It looks as though KATSEYE's sixth member will not be leaving the group any time soon; however, if and when Manon does return, it is up to the label to assume the responsibility of protecting their girls with more vigilance.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

Jackson Taylor: Fashion, Philosophy, and His Rise to Fame

By Leyton G.

Last week, I had the privilege to talk to Jackson Taylor, whose Instagram alias is *VodkaWithRocks*. I have been an avid follower of his content for a few months now. Jackson has curated a beautiful collection of witty, intriguing, and hilarious videos. He blends advanced philosophy with relatable topics amongst the youth. Jackson has created a demeanor that I have yet to see many people embody. However, very few know Jackson's background. Luckily, he was more than welcome to talk to me about his journey.

Jackson says that as a young kid, he enjoyed making YouTube videos and vlogs. He credits a lot of his youth to who he is today. Jackson told me, "I embody a lot of my personality from my, you know, my younger days, like a child, like nature and sh*t like that. But I would definitely

say I've grown into this person." We then talked about how he got into fashion. Jackson states that his sophomore year was a huge turning point for him in terms of his personal style. He credits a lot of his fashion inspiration to Hedi Slimane, the former creative director of the fashion house Dior.

I went on to ask Jackson how he got into the world of philosophy and how he started thinking in a new manner. Jackson told me that midway through his freshman year of high school, he had a major "ego death." Jackson went on to explain that he was a bit of a bully his freshman year of high school. He would make fun of kids, and claims he was the "stereotypical jock d*ckhead." I believe that this plays a huge role in how he has developed as a person. Jackson Taylor is not an "influencer" who seeks digital fame. In fact, he

claimed his end goal is to travel the world. He explained that social media is purely something he enjoys doing for fun and to express himself through.

Towards the end of our interview, I asked Jackson a question that I do not believe he was expecting. I asked him, "If you could go and talk to your 10 year-old self right now, what would you say?" and he replied, "Nothing." Jackson Taylor told me that he is a firm believer in the "Butterfly Effect" and that he would rather watch his younger self from afar, as a quiet observer. It was an absolute honor to talk to Jackson, and I advise everyone to check out his content. What he is pioneering is funny, unique, and beautifully curated. His Instagram is *VodkaWithRocks*, and you may not know him now, but believe me, you will.

Why Orpheus Must Look Back

By Beatrix M.Y.

Over the past decade, the film industry has experienced an increased frequency of retellings. The abundance of reboots and live-action remakes has raised issues about the lack of creativity in creative fields. This pattern raises concerns that go beyond a simple lack of originality.

Of course, problems with a lack of innovation are not unfounded, and they stem from an affinity for ease. What is easier: developing an original screenplay, or reworking an already successful idea and presenting it as something "new"? Many producers looking for a quick buck will take the latter without hesitation; that is how consumers have ended up with 23 live-action remakes in the last ten years. When compared to the 25 original animated films they have produced, it highlights how originality is often pushed aside. Along with the stories being remade, there have also been small tweaks to the storylines, changing elements of the narrative to align with modern expectations (often politically), rather than telling truthful, original, and representative stories.

This also often happens with older tales, such as *Romeo and Juliet*. The fact that two teenagers fell in love in one night and then killed themselves to be with each other may seem unrealistic by modern standards. So what? It is the discussion between *Romeo and Juliet* that makes the play such a powerhouse. If Shakespeare wrote a play about two teenagers who kind of crushed on one another, but ultimately nothing happened, and they went on their way, no one would care. There have been several modern renditions of the tale, where the two characters "get a reality check" or "break the mold," but that fundamentally changes the story. Once again, in an attempt to erase the more problematic or unrealistic aspects of classics, the conversation that the stories fuel begins to fade.

This story repeats itself time and time again in the modern day, such as the TV show "*Kaos*". It is a retelling of *Orpheus and Eurydice*. The series expands far beyond their original story, and overall, it is a wonderful representation of the Greek gods, but there is one core element they miss. In

the original myth, Orpheus must trust Hades' condition and not look back as he leads Eurydice out of the underworld. Eurydice lives, why? The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is one of undying love and devotion to a fault; in the tragedy, there is beauty. An Orpheus who never risks failure would not embody the same depth of love and devotion. People all around the world have had issues with this re-telling, especially when compared to adaptations like *Hadestown*, which reinterpret the story while preserving its core meaning. This takes the tale and brings a new spin, while enhancing the original meaning of the story, not working to contradict it.

The erasure of old stories can limit opportunities for new stories to emerge, but people have recognized this repetition and are choosing to support originality. For example, *Sinners* swept the Oscars and the Baftas for a reason. It is all new; it wasn't taken from a book or someone's life. It is a new, diverse, rich tale that represents fully, rather than including diversity in a superficial or performative way.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

When Does Casting Matter?

By Zoe Ba.

From the outside, it can seem as though acting is just another popularity contest. The requirement for the next blockbuster? A well-known face to feature in the advertisements. How many people have stepped into theaters simply because an actor they liked was in the film? It is sad to say that quality has been taken over by familiarity. This has not only made movies appear as though they are repetitive, but it has also made it harder for newer actors to break into the industry and has contributed to the stigma surrounding indie films. It should be kept in mind that being well-known does not always mean that they are “good” actors or that they are widely supported by the larger community. Even so, “all publicity is good publicity,” or so it is said.

Incorrect casting assignments can contribute to issues of racism: consider *Wuthering Heights*. The book describes Heathcliff as a person of color, and yet Emerald Fennell cast a white man for the role. A large portion of the character’s internal motivation and external struggles is tied to his race. By removing this aspect, can Heathcliff even be called Heathcliff? Although a good actor, Jacob Elordi was not

the correct person for this role and may not fully represent the character as originally written to the extent demanded by the plotline.



This discussion of casting and race has also been applied to films such as the live-action remake of *The Little Mermaid*, starring Halle Bailey. Here is the difference: Ariel’s race is not integral to the role, and mermaids are fictitious creatures. In addition to this, colorblind castings subvert the national viewpoint that the only heroes children can look up to are those whose skin is white. Halle Bailey was the most qualified singer for the role, and she successfully paid homage to Jodi Benson’s Ariel.

Despite the importance of diversity in movies, merely including a person of color alone is not enough. With the release of *Wicked* and *Wicked: For Good*, some critics have argued that Michelle Yeoh may not have

been the strongest fit for Madame Morrible. As a musical, the role requires an ability to sing confidently. Although her acting was incredible, many of the character’s significant singing parts from the musical were cut to match the actress’s range. Yeoh told director Jon M. Chu that she was not a singer; however, even with this knowledge, she was assigned the role. There has been speculation that Sheryl Lee Ralph could have been *Wicked*’s Madame Morrible; if this had been done, they could have remained true to the original musical as well as added another noteworthy name to their cast (if that was their intention).

When all is said and done, the movie industry could benefit from branching out from the same rotation of actors. Although recognition is helpful for advertisements, the quality of its content will always be more appreciated. When it comes to “remakes”, it is integral to intentionally select actors who can accurately depict the characters. In terms of race, conflicts regarding representation have continued to plague the world beyond the screen: casting is just one way to challenge the long-held narrative that all heroines must be white.

Decline of Male Therapists

By Sara L.

The growing gender gap is becoming increasingly apparent in psychology, and many are concerned that the mental health needs of boys and men are not being met. As more women pursue the profession, what happens if male therapists’ presence in the field declines? How adequately can a field with an unbalanced gender ratio meet male patients’ needs?

Psychology and related fields such as social work are becoming largely female-dominated, and experts are worried that this will hinder treatment for male patients. It is well documented that men and women often experience and express mental health struggles differently. According to researchers, women are more likely to experience anxiety and depression as a result

of internalizing struggles, while men are more likely to experience anger issues and substance abuse as a result of externalizing struggles.

Another barrier to men’s mental health is cultural expectations. In society, boys are typically raised to see emotional vulnerability as a weakness, evident in sayings such as “man up” and “boys don’t cry.” As a result, many men avoid seeking professional help altogether. Even when they do seek help, many may feel more comfortable speaking to a therapist of the same gender who has experienced the same gender stereotypes and grown up under similar expectations. Representation of male therapists makes therapy more accessible and relatable for male patients. A lack of male professionals in the field may unintentionally reinforce

the harmful idea that mental health care is not for men.

It is true that many female therapists successfully treat male patients, indicating that effective therapy does not depend entirely on gender. However, increasing gender diversity in the field encourages new patients to take an active role in their mental health and offers existing patients more choices. Organizations like the American Institute for Boys and Men highlight the need to better understand and address the unique mental health challenges faced by males. Regardless of one’s personal views on the gender gap in mental healthcare, one of the primary goals of therapy is ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, feels seen, safe to seek help, and supported when they do.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

Take a Step Back

By Luke W.

The observable universe is around 93 billion light-years across, an immeasurable distance. It has also existed for 13.8 billion years. In this time, roughly 100 billion humans have lived and died on a pale blue dot that's so small that it disappears in almost every cosmic photograph. Yet this morning, I was stressed about a small spelling error in a text I had sent.



Today, we see headlines that are genuinely frightening all the time. This can be unnerving to many. If you are feeling this way, I encourage you to read this article. Our day-to-day lives are stressful. Oftentimes, we get wrapped up in complex social situations, global politics, and life at home. But in the grand scheme of things, we are just a microscopic dot in space and time. It is important to be able to relax and know what you have the power to do, and live your life to the fullest. We have to be able to take a step back and be able to chill.

Since, in the grand scheme of everything, we are just a dot in space in time. Enjoy those little moments in life and take a step back.

Revival of Skinny Standards

By Beatrix M.Y.

From thigh gaps to legging legs, has the world made any progress in uplifting the new generation of girls, or is it the same critique re-packaged? Within the past decade, society's view on the Body Positivity Movement has come full circle. Back in 2013, social media sites such as Tumblr were a breeding ground for eating disorders. Faceless creators would post daily about their lack of meals and their personal tips to stay thin. This mentality was not just contained to online spaces; it became a real-life problem, with reported eating disorders doubling in the 2010s from 3.5% to 7.8% in adolescent girls. This statistic reflects only diagnosed eating disorders, which are a medical diagnosis. It does not account for the probable thousands of girls who experienced disordered eating as a result of these trends.

During the late 2010s and the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a shift. This took the shape of social media sites holding themselves and their users accountable, with Tumblr taking active measures to ban any pro-ED or "health" blogs. Trends like Space Girl took off through the online space, focused on celebrating each person's unique body, while respecting

whatever they wanted to do with it. The average consumer saw a shift within marketing, as clothing brands hired models of all sizes for photoshoots and runways.

However, in the past two to three years, there has been a shift backward. The Body Positivity Movement has been re-branded as "anti-health" by many food/gym influencers, who often take creators, simply existing online, and subject them to ridicule and judgment. In 2024, the term "legging legs" was popularized. It started as compliments, suggesting how great certain people look in leggings. Of course, those certain people, and those legs, were all skinny. People online were quick to catch the rebrand of the 2014 thigh gaps, but the groundwork had been set, fitness creators hopped onto how to obtain "legging legs," and the term became another way to put women down.

Now, in 2026, the health blogs have moved from Tumblr to Instagram and TikTok. Creators such as Livv Schmidt, founder of 'The Skinny Society,' reflect a growing trend of content that promotes harmful beauty standards. Her videos often center on maintaining a specific body type, using language and humor that can make

restrictive eating habits seem more acceptable or normalized.

Her content centers on staying "skinni," deliberately avoiding the word "skinny." This phrasing presents the idea in a more playful way, which can downplay the seriousness of the message while still reinforcing unrealistic body standards. Her fun, care-free "I'm just a girl" videos promote saving calories for big meals and purposefully splitting meals when going out to eat, to "keep you from eating the whole restaurant." She makes fun of other girls trying to enjoy their natural bodies, and claims that we "shouldn't feed the models, they have standards to maintain."

Schmidt's content promotes harmful and unrealistic beauty standards, particularly for young audiences. It is up to the everyday consumer to ensure ideas like these do not spread further from those who promote them. We see the effects of eating disorder promotion every day, even if someone does not look like they struggle, we never know what they face on their phone or in their minds. Support the people around you, give compliments to strangers, and be kind; it is the simplest way to combat hate.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

Upcoming No Kings Protest: March 28

By MJ C.

On March 28, people across the United States are planning to gather for a nationwide protest called “No Kings III.” These demonstrations are meant to bring attention to concerns about protecting democracy and making sure political leaders do not gain too much power, especially when that power is unchecked. The phrase “No Kings” comes from the idea that in a democracy, no one should rule as a king does. Instead, leaders are supposed to represent and answer to the people.

The rally is being organized by various groups and community organizations, such as Interfaith Alliance, whose goal is to encourage people from different backgrounds and beliefs to come together and peacefully

protest about issues they care about. Organizers say that the protest is about reminding people that democracy works best when citizens stay involved and use their voices.

The No Kings protests have already drawn huge crowds across the country. Earlier demonstrations in 2025 were attended by about five million people nationwide, and a later round of protests in October grew to nearly seven million people across more than 2,700 locations in all 50 states. That made it one of the largest single-day protest movements in recent United States history.

A few protests are happening fairly close to Encinitas on March 28th. One of the bigger local rallies is expected in San Diego at Waterfront Park from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00

p.m. Another gathering is planned in Escondido along North Broadway, starting around 3:00 p.m. and going until 5:30 p.m. There is also a demonstration scheduled in the Mira Mesa area from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., where people plan to meet near Mira Mesa Boulevard and Westview Parkway.

Overall, protests such as No Kings are one way people show their support and attention for what is happening in their country. Whether someone decides to attend or not, events such as this show how speaking out and gathering together have always been a part of American civic history. For many people, it is simply about reminding leaders that the power in a democracy is supposed to come from the people.

The Truth About the Iranian Conflict Pt.1

By Sadie S.M.

Over the last few weeks, a new dilemma has sparked: the Iranian Conflict. What started with tension between countries quickly escalated into a full-blown catastrophe. Most people have probably seen news coverage of the event, filled with bombings, deaths, and an overwhelming sense of melancholy. However, there is still considerable confusion about the current situation, and as a result, the next few paragraphs will provide preliminary context for the core issues.

On February 28, 2026, the United States of America and Israel launched a large-scale attack on Iran. This aggression even caught many by surprise, despite weeks of foreshadowing from President Donald J. Trump. Nonetheless, the buildup actually came from the dissatisfaction with Iran’s decade-long nuclear program. Dating back to 1957, Iran has pursued a nuclear program similar to the one built in the U.S. during WWII; however, the initiative did not become more advanced until the 1980s, when war raged between Iran and Iraq. Following this war, agreements were made between Iran, China, and Russia, countries that were loathed by the capitalist U.S. This decision led to the first degree of national discontent

with the country.

By 2003, diplomats from all over the world were urging Iran to halt these facilities, yet Iran insisted that they were solely for nuclear power. In response to these circumstances, the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) required the country to submit reports. Failing to do so, the IAEA and UNSC (United Nations Security Council) adopted Resolution 1696 to prevent Iran from collecting uranium samples and other measures to weaken its economy. In response to these limitations, Iran’s economy and employment rates were crippled, and they did not strengthen until Hassan Rouhani won the 2013 election. After his election, though, the country not only stabilized because of the multinational Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) but also continued to disregard the limitations, developing a series of missiles.

This rejection of rules led to the first conundrum between the Trump Administration and Iran. In 2018, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the JCPOA and encouraged other countries to do so, as well. He was adamant about placing sanctions on the country, which led to the worst economic crisis in Iran over the last fifty years. Instead of negotiating,

the conflict escalated as the word ‘nuclear’ was thrown around more frequently. In April 2019, the U.S. formally acknowledged the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps IRGC, a powerful branch of the Iranian army, as a terrorist group. This ignited a series of deployments to the Middle East, including bombers and carriers, which irritated the Iranians.

Consequently, in the span of two months, six U.S. oil tankers and one U.S. Global Hawk drone were shot down by Iran in the Strait of Hormuz. The Trump Administration did not take this lightly and immediately imposed new sanctions and a cyber attack on the country. A few months later, the Trump Administration blamed Iran for backing protests to seize the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and killed Qasem Soleimani, the supreme commander of Iran’s Quds Force. Severely angered by both of these events, Iran announced that it would completely neglect the previous agreements, and in doing so, accidentally shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane. From then on, tensions stayed firm, and the scene was finally set for the conflict to shatter this year, which the next Grauer Gazette edition will surely cover.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

State of the Union: True vs. False Answer Key

By Isabella M.

Here is the answer key to the last edition's True or False game on the State of the Union Address:

1) False: The tax cut and domestic policy package that Trump signed into law last summer ranks as the sixth largest in history (as a share of the economy), according to the Tax Foundation (conservative think tank).

2) True: America gained independence on July 4, 1776.

3) False: Among eight conflicts, Trump's role is disputed in some, the fighting has resumed in others, and the term "war" may be applied too loosely to others.

4) False: Trump's signature legislation, the major tax and domestic policy bill passed last summer, made more than \$1 trillion in cuts to the Medicaid program over the next decade. This was the largest reduction in the program's history. The Nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has projected this week that tax changes in the bill would harm Medicare's long-term financing and speed up the exhaustion of the trust fund that pays for the program's hospital care benefits.

5) False: The facts do not support the claim that Trump has presided over a massive economic boom since returning to office in January 2025. The U.S. economy grew 2.2% in 2025, which was lower than in any year of the Biden presidency. There was 2.8% growth in 2024 (The fall 2025 government shutdown likely reduced growth in late 2025).

6) False: The majority of people detained by immigration officials do not have criminal convictions. 11% of those deported by ICE in a given month had violent convictions, about 40% actually had convictions, 28% pending charges, and around 21% faced no charges at all.

7) False: It is implausible that eliminating all fraud would balance the Federal budget. The Federal deficit was at \$1.8 trillion in 2025, and the 2024 report from the Government Accountability Office estimated \$233 billion to \$521 billion to be lost to fraud annually (including undetected schemes), which would only decrease the Federal deficit by $\frac{1}{3}$.

8) True: The rates of Fentanyl coming across the border have decreased significantly.

9) False: Trump lost the 2020 election to former President Biden. In the years since, there have been rumours that Trump actually won the election, but those have been refuted.

10) True: There has been an increase in construction jobs, mainly in public-sector projects and data center development as demand increases.

11) False: So, statistically, it is impossible to decrease crime by 1000%. However, post-COVID murder rates have seen steep declines.

12) False: The incidence of fraud is marginal with mail-in ballots, though experts say it is slightly higher than with in-person voting, but there is no basis to categorically describe them as "crooked."

13) False: Trump asserted that foreign countries paid U.S. tariffs, but U.S. importers are paying those prices. It is unlikely that tariff revenue will replace income taxes any time soon. In 2024, the Federal Government collected \$2.4 trillion in Federal income tax, and tariff income was approximately \$300 billion, and nearly half of it will have to be repaid due to the recent Supreme Court ruling that Trump was using emergency tariffs illegally.

14) False: The \$18 trillion figure is fiction. As of the night of Trump's address, the White House's own website said the figure for "major investment announcements" during this Trump term was "\$9.7 trillion." Even that is a major exaggeration; a detailed CNN review in October found the White House was counting trillions of dollars in vague investment pledges, pledges that were about "bilateral trade" or "economic exchange" rather than investment in the U.S. and vague statements that did not even rise to the level of pledges.

15) False: No state has an average gas price below \$2.37 per gallon, according to AAA, and only 2 states have an average below \$2.50. They have decreased from an average of \$3.12 per gallon to \$2.95 per gallon. (Note: now with the conflict in Iran, gas prices have started to increase).

16) False: There is no reliable way to verify if this is true or not, as these are not statistics measured.

17) False: Trump inaccurately described Federal data. The Department of Homeland Security and independent experts have noted that the figure it appears Trump is referring to when he uses the "11,888" number is about non-citizens who entered the U.S. not just under Biden but over the course of multiple decades, including during Trump's own first administration.

18) True: Trump has opened up millions of acres of public lands and waters to oil and gas production, which has continued to rise.

19) True: The statistic is slightly misleading. It is true that more people are employed now (roughly \$159 million in January) than at any other point, the country's population is also at its highest, leading to a skewed statistic. A more accurate representation would be a percentage of the working population.

20) False: Inflation has eased since Trump's return, according to some metrics, but measures of underlying inflation point to much stickier price pressure. Inflation under President Biden rose to a multi-decade high, but not the highest on record. Trump didn't inherit the worst inflation in U.S. history, and Biden never had the worst inflation in U.S. history. The year-over-year inflation rate in December 2024, Biden's last full month in office, was 2.9%. The rate in January 2025, the month in which Trump took over partway through, was 3.0%. The most recent rate, for January 2026, is 2.4%. The rate hit a 40-year high, 9.1%, in June 2022, but that was far from the all-time high of 23.7%, which was set in 1920. Regardless, the rate then fell sharply over Biden's last two-and-a-half years in office.

21) True: All Hamas hostages were returned under the October 2025 Deal.

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

Eileen Gu

By Sara L.



22-year-old skier, Eileen Gu, gained worldwide attention after competing in the 2026 Winter Olympics. There, Gu was awarded three medals, including a gold medal in freestyle skiing. Gu was born in California and spent most of her childhood in the United States, but visited Beijing often to maintain strong ties with her family. She essentially grew up balancing

two cultures. In 2019, she made the decision to compete for China. Critics say that as an American-born athlete, she should compete for the United States. Others attribute her decision to financial gain, as China famously invests millions in supporting foreign-born athletes. Gu stands as one of the highest-paid female athletes in the world, and many of her endorsements and sponsorships come from China.

On the other hand, Gu's supporters state that her choice reflects the reality of growing up with two cultures. Gu has spoken about her dual identity publicly, explaining how she feels American in the United States but Chinese in China. In doing so, Gu inspires important conversations among Chinese Americans, who have



similar experiences of navigating two worlds. For many, Gu is a demonstration that identity isn't limited to a single nationality.

Despite the criticism, Gu continues to focus on her sport, making history as one of the most decorated freestyle skiers ever. Her decision brings up important questions about culture and what it means to belong in an increasingly divided world.

Formula 1: A New Season

By Zoe Br.

2026			
04-06 AUSTRALIA	24-26 HUNGARY	07-09 CHINA	27-29 NETHERLANDS
10-12 JAPAN	30-31 ITALY	13-15 SAUDI ARABIA	01-03 SPAIN
16-18 BAHRAIN	04-06 SINGAPORE	19-21 SAUDI ARABIA	07-09 UNITED STATES
22-24 CANADA	10-12 MEXICO	25-27 MONACO	13-15 BRAZIL
28-30 SPAIN	31-01 LAS VEGAS	02-04 AUSTRIA	05-07 QATAR
08-10 GREAT BRITAIN	11-13 ABU DHABI	14-16 BELGIUM	

units have undergone significant overhauls. The cars are less reliable as teams figure out what works best and how their engines act. The drivers are faced with new racing mechanics, new cars, and unpredictable technical difficulties.

At the Australian Grand Prix, the season's opening race, Mercedes confirmed the dominance that had been theorized during pre-season testing. They



placed 1-2 in qualifying and finished the race with the same standings, sharing the podium with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. Three drivers failed to finish, while two did not even start, including Australian driver and hometown hero Oscar Piastri. Arvid Lindblad, this year's singular rookie, took eighth and became the third youngest driver ever to score points.

Next up was the Chinese Grand

Prix, which featured the first sprint race of the season. George Russell, for the second time this year, found himself on the top step of the podium, this time followed by the two Ferrari drivers. Qualifying for the Grand Prix shook things up slightly, as 2025 rookie Kimi Antonelli became the youngest pole sitter in history, lowering the record by almost two years. He continued this historic weekend by clinching his first-ever win, becoming the second youngest driver to win, only after Max Verstappen. He shared the podium with his teammate and seven-time World Champion Lewis Hamilton. Meanwhile, the season continued to be very interesting with four drivers not starting, three more not finishing, and many others spinning their way through the race.

As it currently stands, the top five teams are Mercedes, Ferrari, McLaren, Haas F1 Team, and Red Bull Racing. Russell leads the Driver's Championship, followed by Antonelli, Leclerc, Hamilton, and Oliver Bearman. Looking ahead, the Japanese Grand Prix this weekend is sure to bring new changes and upsets to what we have seen so far.

The 71st season of the pinnacle of motorsports, Formula One, began in March, and there is a growing number of students on campus who are extremely invested. So, if your friend has suddenly started caring about a bunch of rich men in fast cars, consider this your introduction to the chaos that is the 2026 F1 season.

This year marks a change in the sport, as both the regulations and the power

ENCINITAS, FRIDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2026

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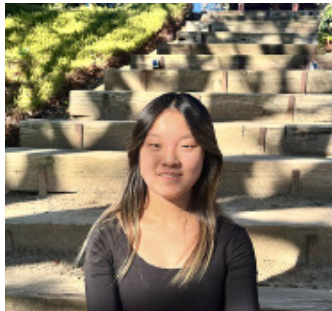
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