

TORRANCE NEWS TORCH

Lighting the Way to Torrance High School Since 1922

THS WELCOMES SPRING WITH CHARITABLE SPIRIT

EARTH DAY REMEMBERED

BY ASHLEY MERCURIO
Club Writer

The 51st anniversary of Earth Day was recognized on April 22. The inculcation of Earth Day was prompted by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson along with environmental activist and national coordinator Dennis Hayes in 1970 after witnessing the effects of the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill. Celebrants participate in rallies, conferences, volunteering, and other activities to educate and inspire people to be more aware of the environment.

The legacy of Earth Day has led to the development of the Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, in December 1970. This resulted in a variety of legislative efforts, including: the Clean Air Act of 1970, which allowed the EPA to monitor atmospheric emissions and toxic pollutants; the Water Quality Improvement Act of 1970 gave the government more authority over water quality standards and water polluters; and the Endangered Species Act in 1973 protected endangered animals and their habitats.

In 1990, Hayes brought Earth Day to international awareness organizing events in 141 nations to mark the 20th anniversary. Two groups were formed to help

host the events in 1990: the Earth Day 20 Foundation, by Edward Furia, who was the Project Director of Earth Week in 1970; and Earth Day 1990, with Hayes and Nelson chairing both groups.

At the start of the 21st Century, Hayes included global warming and clean energy into his activism. In 2008, the campaign Call for Climate challenged people to make one million calls to Congress for climate change legislation. A Billion Acts of Green, a project to reach the goal of planting one billion trees, was achieved in 2012. In 2016, the United Nations picked April 22 to bring climate change mitigation and adaptation to the Paris Accord, which was signed by a record 175 world leaders.

With the restrictions of COVID-19 present, the in-person activities for both 2020 and 2021 were cancelled. However, over 100 million people used social media to show their appreciation for the earth and educate others of the pressing issues of the environment. Both years held online livestream events with global speakers, international leaders, and celebrities.



A government initiative that rewards farmers for engaging in sustainable forestry and environmental protection has driven Costa Rica to be recognized as the first tropical country to put an end to and reverse deforestation. Photo courtesy of CNN



Paso Pacifico, a U.S.-based conservation group working in Central America, has developed decoy sea turtle eggs fitted with SIM cards and GPS transmitters in efforts to track stolen eggs and combat trafficking. Photo courtesy of CNN



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The above ad appeared in The Philadelphia Inquirer and five other daily newspapers on April 1, 1996, to announce Taco Bell's purchase of the Liberty Bell. Photo courtesy of The Philadelphia Inquirer

NO FOOL LIKE AN OLD FOOL

BY JOSHUA FLORES
Staff Writer

At the beginning of every April, people celebrate April Fool's Day by pranking and teasing their friends and families with innocent tricks, like a whoopee cushion on a chair or a fake spider on the dinner table. This begs the question how the concept of a day filled with jokes and grins come to be celebrated as a holiday.

The exact origins of April Fool's Day are disputed. Some historians, according to history.com, speculate it started in 16th century France as a way to make fun of those who still used the Julian calendar when France officially switched to the Gregorian. Other historians speculate that it originated from the Roman festival for joy, Hilaria, which was celebrated at the end of March.

April Fool's Day began to be popular in the 18th century when it spread throughout Britain. In Scotland, it became a two-day event, with the first day being about people being sent on phony errands and the second day, Tailie Day, being about playing pranks on people, such as putting "kick me" signs on them or by pinning fake tails to their persons.

There have been a plethora of large jokes pulled on April Fool's Day that many people have fallen for. Todd Leopold for sldtoday.com writes about some of the biggest pranks pulled on April 1st. In 1957, the BBC TV show

"Panorama" had a segment dedicated to Swiss spaghetti harvesting and showed a video of people harvesting the pasta from trees.

In 1989, a Seattle comedy show reported the Space Needle had fallen down and showed pictures as proof. But a personal favorite was when in 1996 Taco Bell put out newspaper ads saying they had purchased the Liberty Bell in order to help alleviate the national debt. This of course was a clever prank and instead the fast food chain donated \$50,000 for the bell's care.

Unfortunately, some people may take pranks too far and end up hurting someone in an effort to garner laughs. Just remember that levity is subjective and what you might find funny may not be funny to others. So if you are going to prank someone just remember how you would feel if someone did that to you.

Hopefully your April Fool's was filled with pranks and jokes this year, whether they were played upon you or others considering we need to have some levity in our lives. Sometimes we focus too much on the serious things in life when we need a good laugh to remind ourselves bad things do not last forever.

THS CELEBRATES ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL DONATION DRIVE

BY VERONICA GARZA
Editor-in-Chief

Torrance High School's ASB held a hand sanitizer and wipe drive from Monday, April 19 to Friday, April 23 with donation drop-offs scheduled for every school day of that week with the exception of Wednesday, April 21. Students were told to make their donations from 8am to 9am before classes began. Drop-off stations included: the auditorium, student parking lot, Plaza Del Amo entrance, and C-building.

ASB asked that all donations be either 40 count 70% alcohol-based wipes and eight ounce hand sanitizer bottles if possible. In addition to select teachers offering extra credit in exchange for donations, ASB gave out spirit points. An eight ounce bottle of hand sanitizer and 40 count pack of

wipes accounted for one spirit point each. Much like November's canned food drive, students were required to bring a note with their name, grade, the teacher and period they wish to receive extra credit for, and the total number of items in their donation.

In total, an outstanding 2,120 donations were collected, a number well above ASB's established goal. In first place, the juniors were awarded with 698 spirit points. Following them were the sophomores with 634, the freshmen with 346, and the seniors with 316. ASB thanks Tartars for continuing their charitable nature, and looks forward to stocking THS classrooms with donated supplies.

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CRISIS IN THE CANAL

BY JOSHUA FLORES
Staff Writer

The cargo ship Ever Given ran aground on the eastern shore of the Suez Canal on March 23. The Suez Canal was built between September 25, 1859, and November 17, 1869, and it connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, which is located in eastern Egypt. The canal is a crucial part of world commerce and allows European and Asian ships to travel between their two continents without having to go around the Cape of Good Hope.

It is believed that the ship, which is owned by the Japanese company Shoei Kisen Kaisha, struck ground after high winds from a sandstorm pushed the ship sideways. However, this claim is disputed by Osama Rabie, the chairman of Egypt's Suez Canal Authority, who said in an article published by the BBC that the weather conditions "were not the main reasons" for the ship being blown off course. The Ever Given was freed on March 29 after six days with the help of 14 tugboats attempting to pull the boat from shore. Currently, the Ever Given is still in the Suez Canal in the Great

Bitter Lake. The ship is being held by Egyptian authorities until its owners pay Egypt \$1 Billion in compensation.

According to an article by Sebastian Blanco of caranddriver.com, the ship is also being held pending an investigation. Rabie said in a statement about the owners of the Ever Given: "The minute they agree to compensation, the vessel will be allowed to move."

In an article by Koustav Das for indiatoday.in, the blockage of the Suez Canal cost an estimated 12% of world trade and held up trade valued roughly at over \$9 billion per day. This equates to about \$6.7 million dollars worth of trade per minute. Fears of the canal continuing to be blocked for weeks led to prices of important commodities such as crude oil and gas to rise.

Hopefully in the future something like this does not happen again, but if it does we know that, thanks to human ingenuity, any crisis can be resolved.



Maxar Technologies satellite image depicts Ever Given container ship in Suez Canal on March 26, 2021.

Photo courtesy of *The Jerusalem Post*



NASA captures ASTER image of Suez Canal on April 4, 2021.

Photo courtesy of *Jet Propulsion Laboratory - NASA*

NEW HOPE ARISES

BY MIKI IGNACIO
Staff Writer

Over a year of quarantine has led to many misfortunes and drawbacks, but the COVID-19 vaccines broadened its age range in California. Residents fifty and older were allowed to get vaccinated from April 1, and everyone ages sixteen and older were allowed starting from April 15. While some are hesitant, many people rush to book an appointment as soon as possible.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people under eighteen can only take the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, while people over eighteen have the choice to take one of the three following vaccines: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson (J&J).

The cost of vaccinations is free and covered by the government, and health insurance or immigration status is not required. Officials recommend bringing along a driver's license or other state-issued ID to ensure eligibility, according to the American Association for Retired Persons, or AARP.

The intensity for each individual differs, but common side effects of the vaccinations include: tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, and nausea. It is widely known that the second shot is more intense than the first, so taking over-the-counter medicine (ibuprofen, acetaminophen, aspirin, or antihistamines) should ease the pain and discomfort, so says the CDC.

However, recipients are cautioned to call their medical professional if the redness or tenderness of the shot gets worse after twenty-four hours and the side effects seem to linger after a few days.

Although rare, severe allergic reactions, or anaphylaxis, could take place within thirty minutes after vaccination. However, vaccination providers are

prepared to treat this reaction. It is suggested by the CDC to refrain from taking a second dose of the vaccination triggers severe allergic reactions.

Though many have had successful vaccinations, hesitancy and caution arise from the reported blood clot cases over the past few weeks. The CDC states over 6.8 million J&J doses have been administered in the United States, and six cases of a "rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals" called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis, or CVST, has surfaced. As of April 13, the use of J&J has been preempted for safety reasons. Presently, it is unknown whether or not the J&J vaccine is related to CVST.

Generally, deaths after vaccination are not linked to the vaccines themselves. As of April 19, the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, or VAERS, reported 3,486 deaths among the 211 million vaccinated people. There is no evidence confirming that the vaccinations caused the deaths, according to the CDC. To put it in perspective, 0.0016% of the total vaccinations led to deaths in the United States over the course of five months. Unfortunately, not all vaccines can ensure a 100% mortality rate, but those who have lost their lives contribute to improving the vaccine for the future.

Appointments may be booked, but local clinics, pharmacies, and other providers sometimes accept walk-ins. A speedy vaccination is crucial to ending the worldwide pandemic and reverting back to the normal lifestyle. Vaccinated or not, it is still important and recommended to wear masks and to sanitize to prevent the spread of the virus.

BRINGING THE FUN BACK TO CALIFORNIA

BY VERONICA GARZA
Editor-in-Chief

California residents are elated at the reopening of theme parks in the month of April, including Disneyland, Universal Studios Hollywood, Knott's Berry Farm, and Six Flags Magic Mountain. The theme parks will reopen at 25% capacity. Disneyland and Disneyland California Adventure Park will reopen doors to state residents on April 30. Though experiences such as parades and nighttime spectaculars will return at a later date, characters will be available for photo opportunities while remaining mindful of social distancing protocols.

Tickets for Disneyland's reopening went on sale on April 15 at 8 a.m. Park-goers showed no signs of hesitation, as "people reported waiting up to nine hours to make reservations for the California theme park," Fox News reports. Though anyone was permitted to begin booking on April 15, the Anaheim parks will only be open to California residents, a protocol shared with Universal Studios Hollywood, which reopened on April 16 to a sold-out crowd. Most rides are said to be in operation, but some will reopen as the park complies with government restrictions. According to The Sacramento Bee, they "will have temperature checks for all guests upon arrival," and "a temperature of 100.4 degrees or more will prevent the visitor from entry."

Knott's Berry Farm will be open to season passholders on May 6, and to the general public on May 21. Again, only California residents will be permitted to enter with reservations, which were available on April 26. To celebrate its centennial anniversary, the park will introduce "The Knott's Family Reunion,"



Six Flags employees are instructed to disinfect every ride following each use. Photo courtesy of [sixflagsgreatadventure.com](https://www.sixflagsgreatadventure.com)



which "looks to reunite family and friends in a safe and fun environment after a year-long closure due to COVID-19," as per Orange County Breeze. Six Flags Magic Mountain was the first to open in the Los Angeles area on April 1.

Park-goers are required to walk through a temporary building to have their body temperatures taken, and are only permitted entry if it is below 100.4 degrees. Social distancing guidelines are heavily enforced, and this is apparent in security screenings, ride loading, the blocking of adjacent urinals, and the ordering of food through smartphone apps. While most attractions were available, "an indoor acrobatic show and a bumper-car attraction both closed because they violated the state's social distancing rules. Several indoor queuing areas were shut for the same reason," details Los Angeles Times.

As the world slowly begins to regain order, it is a comfort to know that a family favorite pastime will be available to California residents by the end of May. In addition to the excitement that results from the reopening of the parks, relief is felt by previously laid off employees. Disney was said to have released over 11,500 workers alone. The reopening of theme parks will provide many with normalcy, and some with a more stable income.

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TARTARS PERSEVERE



BY KARA SERAFIN
Staff Writer

On May 19, the annual Torrance High School achievement awards ceremony will honor students and teachers for their outstanding achievements.

The 2021 awards ceremony will be done virtually and be very similar to last year. Filming for the event concluded on April 19 and students set to be receiving awards were asked to have their pictures taken specifically for the ceremony.

Although it would be preferred to host the awards in person, at least THS students will still be getting the recognition they deserve for their efforts during these times of hardship. Mr. Girgis, the principal of Torrance High, states, "We are all excited to honor [the students'] excellence even if it's not in person for their accomplishments during this school year." Nonetheless, Mr. Girgis is still "looking forward to next year when we can

have a live awards ceremony to recognize our amazing student with their parents present in the Auditorium." There's no doubt that the feelings of pride and celebration in a shared room will be missed, but Tartars should still relish in their success and congratulate each other for their hard work.

Due to this uniquely challenging academic year, Mr. Girgis "would like the students and teachers to know how proud [he is] of all of them for what they have been able to accomplish during these unique circumstances."

There has been a lot of uncertainty this year, but THS students persevered and continued to have tremendous accomplishments. Tartars still need to be recognized for their impressive achievements, and even a global pandemic will not get in the way of that.

BACK TO SCHOOL...AGAIN

BY VERONICA GARZA
Editor-in-Chief

Torrance High School reopened its gates for the first time in over one year on March 25, welcoming all Cohort B students to attend their first, third, and fifth period classes. Cohort A students would come to school the following day to attend their second, fourth, and sixth period classes. Though many were excited to meet up with friends and transition into in-person learning, some students were initially apprehensive due to their adaptation to the independent and antisocial nature of online learning.

Students found themselves to be victims of "first day jitters," but their nerves were eased once they resumed interaction with classmates and teachers. "Going back to school is more relieving than I thought it would be, considering that I haven't made any human contact in over a year," states Junior Kailyn Yoon. Junior year is recognized as the most important in a student's high school career, so it is no surprise that Kailyn and her peers feel a sense of relief in being able

to communicate with their teachers face to face.

Some seniors, on the other hand, found the idea daunting as they were unable to participate in events like rallies and school dances. "It just felt like we had missed out on too much, so originally I was hesitant to come back," senior Tyler Muñoz comments, "but now that I'm here, I realize that there's more in store for us than I thought." Tyler is a senior class council historian and is currently working with her fellow council members to plan a celebration for seniors before graduation.

The reopening of THS has stirred a whirlwind of emotions for students; many familiarizing themselves with back to school nerves, and some feeling melancholic as they reflect upon lost time. However, one thing is for certain: the resumption of in-person learning has provided the THS community with much needed normalcy.



Seniors Phoebe Lin and Kelsey Cheng celebrate THS's reopening. Photo courtesy of Veronica Garza



THS ASB welcomes students with a video explaining new health and safety guidelines to ensure a smooth reopening. Photo courtesy of @thstartars

INCURABLE SENIORITIS

BY KARA SERAFIN
Staff Writer

Once again, the annual outbreak of senioritis has hit Torrance High, for which there is no vaccine. With college decisions being made and spring break having already passed, THS seniors are looking forward to graduation and losing motivation.

Jeric Vafloor, a Torrance High senior, reflects, "In the beginning of the year, I had five classes and started the year strong. Now, as we get closer to the end of the year, I dropped track, attend Zoom calls in a robe, and turn in most of my homework at the last minute." This gradual degradation is familiar to high school seniors once college acceptances are out and graduation is in the near future.

Although Torrance High School has been able to send many Tartars back to the classroom part-time, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably added an extra stress for all students, especially seniors. With online classes, many students find it more difficult to stay focused. This added condition makes the symptoms of senioritis worse.

Emmanuel Okpan, also a THS senior, notes that his "motivation

continues to dissipate." He also recognizes that "the pandemic has affected everyone in different ways." The pandemic is an added strain with which seniors don't usually have to deal, but Tartars have handled it well considering the circumstances.

According to Assistant Principal Paul Nitake, the grades for our school, compared to last year, are "pretty similar, especially 11th and 12th graders." Mr. Nitake also mentioned the 9th grade class was a little lower at the semester, but no analysis of Quarter 3 grades has been done as of yet.

Senioritis is difficult to battle, but some still manage to find the silver lining. Jeric expresses that he is "very happy that [his] grades haven't dropped yet." Not everyone is able to find the positive position, but looking on the bright side will definitely help seniors carry on until the end of the school year.

With AP tests and finals still in the future, it is too soon to give up. Hang in there, seniors, there is just a couple months of hard work left!



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TAYLOR'S VERSION

BY KARA SERAFIN
Staff Writer

Though it is ideal to own proprietary material, most artists do not secure the rights to their master recordings. It's a sacrifice many aspiring musicians make when they have the opportunity to be signed to a major record label.

Taylor Swift was in this position and signed to Big Machine Label Group as a teenager. After thirteen years, Swift's contract ended with Big Machine in fall 2018, and she decided not to continue with the group and instead switched to Republic Records and Universal Music Group.

In June 2019, Scooter Braun, known for managing mega stars such as Ariana Grande and Justin Beiber, purchased Big Machine for a reported \$300 million, including the rights to Swift's first six albums.

Swift first took to the website Tumblr to express her disgust, accusing Braun of "incessant, manipulative bullying." She claimed she knew Scott Borchetta would sell the label eventually, but had no idea it would be to Braun, with whom she had an unpleasant history.

Some celebrities began picking sides, and the hashtag #WeStandWithTaylor started trending. Swift explained she "pleaded for a chance to own [her] work," but the deal she was offered was earning one of her albums back for each new album she put out.

This led to more heated exchanges and accusations, and Swift pleaded, "I just think that artists deserve to own their own work." Though this amount of drama is enough to weigh anyone down, Swift continued her habit of turning her weaknesses into her strengths.

On Twitter, singer Kelly Clarkson encouraged Swift to re-record her masters, adding that she should "put brand new art & some kind of incentive so fans will no longer buy the old versions." And that's exactly what Swift did.

According to her contract, Swift could start re-recording her albums in

November 2020, excluding her sixth album Reputation, which will have to wait until November 2022 because it has not been out long enough to qualify.

Swift announced on her social media platforms in February that her new version of her album Fearless was completed and that it would be out soon, with the announcement that the re-recording of her hit song Love Story would be released that night.

On April 9, Swift released her first re-recorded album, titled Fearless (Taylor's Version). She is expected to title her future re-recorded albums in this way, with the original title and "Taylor's Version" added in parentheses, plus brand new cover art.

Along with the re-recordings, Swift is including tracks "from the vault" that she has never released before. She states, "One thing I've been loving about these From The Vault songs is that they've never been heard, so I can experiment, play, and even include some of my favorite artists."

These new releases are an incentive for people to buy the new versions instead, as Clarkson suggested.

Since Swift will now own her work, she is starting to allow her songs to be used in movies, commercials, and more. So far, Love Story (Taylor's Version) and Wildest Dreams (Taylor's Version) have been used in commercials. Even though she does not own her old masters, she had the right to deny the use of her songs in such works and is finally allowing her songs to be used again.

Taylor Swift is not the first to re-record music, and will not be the last, but her bold move to re-do her old work is inspiring other artists to stand up for themselves in the music industry. Fans can be excited for the release of her next re-recordings and theorize about which album will be next.

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IT'S JUST A JOKE, TOMMY TARTAR

BY MIKI IGNACIO
Staff Illustrator



APE OR LIZARD: WHO SHALL REIGN?



JOSHUA FLORES
Staff Writer

Because the quality of computer-generated imagery, or CGI, has increased exponentially, the expression of this technology enhances the movie viewing experience. Before modern computers, movie makers used real props and miniatures to suspend the imagination. Things have changed drastically when it comes to filmmaking, and Godzilla vs. Kong, directed by Adam Wingard, highlights how movies have improved when it comes to immersing the viewer.

If films with giant monsters and epic battles is what should be considered entertainment, then Godzilla vs. Kong is definitely enjoyable. This project connects to previous works released in the past seven years that feature Godzilla and Kong, including Godzilla (2014), Kong: Skull Island (2017), and Godzilla: King of the Monsters (2019). These films are highly recommended by professionals and viewers alike and would help in establishing context before seeing Godzilla vs. Kong. But also, they are all pretty fun to watch.

The plot revolves around Godzilla attacking humans with no explanation as to why, regardless if he is the so-called "protector of man." Additionally, Godzilla is the undisputed king of the "titans," which are the other giant beasts inhabit the

Earth. This ultimately leads to conflict with Kong refusing to bow down to anything because he sees himself as being more powerful than Godzilla.

The two leviathans are then embroiled in conflict at sea after Kong leaves his home on Skull Island in order to help a group of scientists get to the center of the Earth. The battle ends in a stalemate; neither truly defeats the other. They fight again in a decisive engagement in Hong Kong which (thanks to CGI) looks absolutely spectacular on both the big screen and on your TV at home!

I saw the movie with my friends and we generally enjoyed it because it's a giant monkey and lizard fighting each other until only one is left standing. Although we did come to the general consensus that the ending could have been significantly better, all in all, it was a good film that I highly recommend. Currently, AMC Theatres in California are operating at 25% capacity, limiting an estimated 100 patrons for each location. The movie features Millie Bobby Brown and Kyle Chandler in prominent roles. Presently, the film is available at select theatres as well as on the HBO Max streaming service.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: VERONICA GARZA
PAGE EDITOR: VERONICA GARZA
STAFF WRITERS: JOSHUA FLORES, VERONICA GARZA, MIKI IGNACIO, KARA SERAFIN
BUSINESS MANAGER: JOSHUA FLORES
CONTENT EDITOR: KARA SERAFIN
PAGE ILLUSTRATOR: MIKI IGNACIO
CLUB WRITERS: ANDREW GERGES, PHOEBE LIN, ASHLEY MERCURIO, MOMO NAKANISHI, RACHEL UGWUALA
ADVISOR: MR. J. PARKER BOSTWICK
FOR AD INQUIRY: NEWSTORCH@GMAIL.COM