

NEWS

With frequent principal changes the past few years, students look for consistency with new principal.

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BLEEDING BLUE
AT THE OLYMPICS

Olympian and former Bruin Taylor Averill pays a visit to his home court.

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BACK PAGE

Did you have “brat” summer? Were you excited to see “Inside Out 2”? See what students listened to this summer.

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BEAR WITNESS



HISTORIC TOUCHDOWN

New flag football team tackles the gap between gender on the field



“To be able to even have the team is rewarding. I’m happy that I get to finally play the sport that I’ve always loved. To have that at Branham is a blessing.”

Senior Carla Granados Perez

David Tran/ Bear Witness

NEW PRINCIPAL

Under New Leadership

New principal brings a change of pace to Branham

YUJIN CHO, ALYX YOON, EMMETT SPEAR, HAILEY STEED
Staff Writers

A new chapter begins at Branham High School as Beth Silbergeld takes over the position as the principal for the 2024-25 school year. Within the past four years, Branham has had three different principals, with Cheryl Lawton serving the role from 2016 to 2022, Lindsay Schubert from 2022 to 2024 and now Silbergeld, who will begin her first year. Silbergeld started her career in education in 2001 as a biology teacher, but later decided to explore other options in education consulting. Aspiring for larger leadership opportunities, she began to take on administrative roles as the assistant principal and later principal of Leadership High School for 10 years. After living in San Francisco, Silbergeld was excited to join a larger community and return to an active role on campus, so she joined Branham. Despite her various careers, education has been a commonality. “I love that every day is different and I’m able to see the growth in others, as well as in myself,” Silbergeld said. “It’s a very unpredictable job which, to me, is exciting and I enjoy building relationships with teenagers, their families and teachers.” As a principal, Silbergeld is responsible for making decisions that impact teachers in addition to students. Today, her experience as a teacher impacts the way she takes on the role of principal because she takes into account the satisfaction of staff and students before making decisions.

SEE NEW PRINCIPAL • PAGE 2

BED ROTTING

Summer “Rot-Eras”

Students spend their summer scrolling due to feelings of stress

ELLIOTT YAU, NEVAEH GUTIERREZ, ENOCH SHIN, NOA MUVAL
Staff Writers

Some students end the school year with grand plans for summer vacation. But in actuality, many students spend a majority of their time laying in bed and doing mindless activities. This is called “bed-rotting”—a phenomenon trending on social media apps like TikTok, where there are over 28 million videos related to “Rotting Era”. Bed-rotting affects Branham students like senior Ava Abendroth, who says she slept for 13 hours a day and stayed in bed during summer days.

SEE BED ROT • PAGE 2

NEWS

SUMMER “ROT-ERAS”

Students spend their summer scrolling due to feelings of stress



David Tran/Bear Witness

YUJIN CHO, ALYX YOON, EMMETT SPEAR,
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Staff Writers

“I do it because [being on my] phone is really addicting,” Abendroth said. “There’s so much going on social media that I find interesting, or other times I just don’t have anything better to do.”

According to the American Psychological Association, 37% of U.S. teens report spending five or more hours on social media a day.

“It’s a constant flood of things to look at, and it’s really hard to pull away from them because they’re so encapsulating or enthralling,” Abendroth said. “We didn’t have that technology or those social media apps before this generation, [so] other [generations] don’t experience the same level of bedrot.”

Scrolling through social media wasn’t an option for sophomore **Lucia Nguyen** before high school, who procrastinated less and felt happier back then.

“[Procrastinating is] a very human thing to do,”

Nguyen said. “We don’t want to confront the work, so we procrastinate and do something mindless that makes us happy.”

Students under extreme academic pressure who don’t know how to find a balance often become overwhelmed, according to **Lilian Alfaro Cavlan**, a licensed family and marriage therapist who works in the Wellness Center.

“When we don’t manage our stress, it can roll over to the next day and roll over to the next day, and it just builds and builds and builds,” Cavlan said. “We reach a point where we either explode or have some sort of mental breakdown.”

Struggling with learning at full capacity, getting enough rest and feeling like one is drowning without a way out are common symptoms of high stress, according to Cavlan.

“When we become overwhelmed, sometimes it’s okay to just zone out on Tiktok and look at the reels that don’t take any mental effort,” Cavlan said.

Cavlan suggests setting a time frame for phone usage and turning off the screen an hour before bed. Other coping strategies, like exercising and breathing exercises, or even social interaction, helps with managing bedrotting as well.

“Hanging out with people helps. [When I have] other people around me, it’s harder to just decay in my room,” Abendroth said. “Having scheduled tasks [helps me] avoid being stuck in the room.”

Cavlan says balance is the most important factor for mental health.

“It’s okay to over indulge in certain things here and there,” Cavlan said. “But as long as we find our own comfort zone, and we don’t go overboard, that’s our little sweet spot. As long as we stay in that state of balance, we are able to function in many different ways.”

NEW PRINCIPAL

FROM PAGE 1

YUJIN CHO, ALYX YOON, EMMETT SPEAR,
HAILEY STEED
Staff Writers

“I still see myself as a teacher, so I’m very student-centered,” Silbergeld said. “If a student is struggling with something, academically or socially, I want to help them through it, but that can also be a barrier because I also want to make sure that I’m not doing the work of somebody else.”

Although it is only a couple weeks into Silbergeld’s journey as the principal, she has already noticed that Branham’s school spirit and enthusiasm are unmatched compared to other schools. Because of this, Silbergeld is excited to communicate and be involved with different campus extracurricular groups.

“It’s really important for me to be a good listener and to make sure that we’re building on the success of the school: the academic success, the success of our marching band, our athletics, the theater program and other leadership groups and clubs,” she said.

Senior ASB member **Jimmy Scibetta** has experienced three different principals during his time as a student. Scibetta has noticed that Silbergeld has gotten very involved already in her short time here.

“Every day during our passing periods, brunch or lunch, she does a great job engaging with the students,” Scibetta said. “She’ll go out of her way to catch me in the hall and say hi, whereas normally, I would have to walk up to [other principals]. I really appreciate how she’s actively trying to engage with the entire student body.”

Scibetta is not the only person on campus who has taken notice of Silbergeld’s extended hand. AP English Language teacher and department chair **Bobbi Arduini**, who has been teaching at Branham for 10 years, said Silbergeld has been eager to help her understand the budget for her department.

“Since I am an English teacher and I’m not super skilled at math, [Silbergeld] is helping me figure out exactly how to use the spreadsheet to keep track of the money,” Arduini said. “I think that Ms. Silbergeld was more proactive by suggesting that I learn about [spreadsheets], and she’s been helpful in terms of getting it together too.”

Additionally, Arduini has noticed improvements in communication as a teacher. She appreciates the continuation of the weekly newsletters which were started by Lawton and informs the community.

“It’s not something that is new exactly, but it’s gotten more and more streamlined,” Arduini said.

Along with improvements in communication, Silbergeld noted other changes to be made around school as well. She recognized a flaw in the way the gender-neutral system was being used by students and she anticipates finding ways to discourage students from socializing in the bathrooms. Silbergeld’s overall goal is to make sure all students feel safe in all areas of campus.

As for students, Scibetta explains the expectations and changes he and others want to see from Silbergeld this year.

“The biggest thing I would like to see out of Ms. Silb is openness as a principal,” Scibetta said. “That way, the whole student body and all of our school community in general can be better informed about the issues. There’s no negative energy towards any of the administrators or any of the school in general, and we can operate in a more formal manner and just get things done the way they’re supposed to and tackle issues.”

Although she is new this year, Silbergeld requests that students expect good things to come from her.

“It is my first year, so there will be things I need to learn,” Silbergeld said. “I want Branham [students] to both be patient, but I also want students to have high expectations of me as the school leader, and high expectations of their teachers and other staff about what we can do to provide the best high school experience for them.”

NEW
FACES

Seven new staff share their prior experience and hopes for this year



DEANNA MESA
Special Education
“Before I worked at Tahoma High School, and so far it’s very different from the charter school. I’ve actually been an ed specialist for about two and a half years, and before that I graduated from San Jose State with my Masters with a teaching credential. I’m honestly excited to teach a core class and be able to work with the teachers here.”



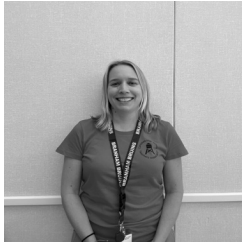
HECTOR SALGADO
Counselor
“I’ve been in education since 2011 in various different roles and I’m going into my fourth year as a counselor. I want to go to the football games, basketball, volleyball, these other events, and I’m just excited to be part of the Bruin family.”



JANISE IDLER
Special Education
“Specifically [I’m excited about] new beginnings meeting new people. I’m really excited about the staff and students and the parents and everything and just creating relationships. I think that’s really important because without that connection you can’t teach..”



JUDITH HANSON
Special Education
“I’m really excited because my students are delightful and also have a large mixture of what makes them them, and the different types of disabilities they’re dealing with. I also am a special education person because of my ADHD, and it’s been my quest to learn how to bring the tools of optimum personal development and academic success to other people who learn differently.



MICHELE LOVERING
English
“I have had 14 years of teaching experience. Everybody’s been super supportive so far. The staff is checking in on me, and the students have been sweet. I love getting to know the students and I’m ready to get into some really exciting literature, because I love teaching English.”



LAURA KING
English
“I have had 14 years of teaching experi I was ready for a change and to do something new. The students have been fantastic. Other teachers have been amazing as well. I’m really looking forward to seeing how the AP classes work out here at Branham.”



DAVID CALVERT
Special Education
“I enjoy working with little kids, but I wanted to connect with older kids, so that’s why I came to high school. I’m excited about seeing how people progress and grow throughout the school year and how they become more prepared and more confident.”



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FROM BRUIN TO BRONZE

Former Bruin takes on the Olympics, citing Branham as where he fell in love with volleyball



ANABELLE WALKER
Managing Editor

From the scoreboard buzzer in the Bruin Den to the roaring crowds of the Paris Olympics, volleyball has been quite a journey for bronze medalist Taylor Averill.

Averill, who graduated from Branham in 2010 and has played professionally for nine years, represented Team USA in men's volleyball at the Paris Olympics in August.

Averill's volleyball career didn't exactly start off this strong however. As a scrawny kid, Averill's doctor instructed him to do something about his weight. He began studying nutrition from books at the local library and hitting the gym, managing to put on 50 pounds.

It wasn't until his first year at Branham that Averill's passion for volleyball began to take flight, when he joined the school team.

"I was so bad, easily the worst one on the team," Averill said, recalling that his teammates would tease him over his low vertical jump. "[But] I just loved it. I didn't care."

During Averill's freshman year, the Branham team didn't see much success, but that didn't deter him. During his four years on the high school team and with Bay to Bay Volleyball Club, Averill made major gains in his development as an athlete.

"I knew I was gonna play division one," Averill said. "That was the first time, at least in my high school

career, that I got to be a leader."

By his senior year, he stood six feet six inches tall, weighed 190 pounds, and was a team captain, leading the program to its first ever CCS banner. He also led the team in kills, digs, aces, and receptions that season.

After high school, Averill remembers being a bit too much of a "party boy" in college, and after getting kicked off two division one teams, he eventually settled at the University of Hawaii, where he played from 2012 until he graduated in 2015.

Averill's career took him overseas after college, playing at clubs in Italy and France before he joined AS Cannes in 2020, where he won the French championship the following year and was named best middle blocker. Averill then played at two Polish clubs, joining his current team, Vero Volley Monza, in 2024.

Averill has been a part of the U.S. Men's national team since 2014, yet was forced to miss the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 after rupturing his plantar fascia, the muscle connecting your heel to your toe, in the semifinal match that year.

He returned just four years later though, beating Italy in three sets to win bronze with Team USA.

"To go from the most heartbreaking loss of your entire career to one day recover and come back to compete for a medal taught me a lot about what I'm capable of," he said. "I was also just really fortunate. I had the best tournament of my life."

Looking back on his journey, Averill can't help but think how far he's come.

"I remember all the staff and people coming to

[high school games] and just feeling 'Oh my gosh, I'm playing for my community,'" Averill said. "Now flash forward to the Olympics and you realize you're playing for your country."

He credits his first experience with volleyball at Branham, helping him get to where he is today, noting the special passion and team environment as a driving factor for his success.

"I look back and I'm so lucky that I was so blinded by and addicted to the love that I had for volleyball, and I think that's a huge reason why I was able to succeed," he said. "I still carry that childlike spirit."

Although he appreciates the accolades and medals, Averill acknowledges that volleyball for him holds a value that goes beyond bronze, silver or gold.

"The medals are great, but those are really for other people. They see it and it's exciting," Averill said. "The things that I'll hold forever, that no one can take, are the things I learned along the way. I'm in the pursuit of peace and joy, and I recognize that those come from things that don't just have to do with volleyball."

Averill doesn't plan to take any steps back, and hopes to play in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. In the meantime, he hopes to connect with the next generation of volleyball players.

"I'm a part of a huge and growing community in America and all around the world," he said. "It taught me what I'm capable of, physically and emotionally. It's so easy to be wrapped up in success. It's easy to lose yourself. And volleyball has humbled me."

Aryella Finkle-Hozer/Bear Witness

NEW ATHLETIC DIRECTOR



Tibault Thoen/Bear Witness

LUCAS SETSER AND COLIN KALANGES
Staff Writer

Following much controversy and backlash from the previous school year regarding the athletic director, the position has been filled. Kaleb Lane, a former volleyball coach enters his first opportunity as an athletic director.

He enters Branham High School with an emphasis on connecting with the community, and bridging the gap between athletes and other students.

Being his first year at Branham, Lane has begun to familiarize himself with its athletics by going to team practices and interacting with coaches. He was pleasantly surprised by both students and athletes.

"I've seen really high intensity. And that's really what it comes down to, is if you're gonna do something, do it to your best ability, do 110% no matter what it is," Lane said.

Lane expresses that the role of athletic director goes beyond just sports, making sure student athletes are in classrooms and being courteous to people around them. He puts a strong emphasis on athletes being well-rounded and premier examples of a branham student.

"Let's establish a good culture of athletics with athletes being at the forefront of how we build our school culture. If you have athletes that are in the classroom, being attentive, [and] having good grades, it builds this idea that athletes are more than just athletes."

Lane knows that he has a big expectation to uphold, replacing the previous athletic director who was well liked among students and staff. To accomplish this, he wants to be present on campus and make connections to the teachers and most importantly the student athletes.

"I feel that any school I've been at, I've always just tried to be a part of the [community]," Lane said. "That means promoting good school culture, supporting teachers, supporting anyone that wants to come my way."

Lane's focus is on fulfilling his duties as athletic director and going beyond athletics to ensure a good culture for all students.

"This school seems like it gives every kid an opportunity to do something more," Lane says. "I'm going to be the athletic director in a leadership position here. Whatever way to help you out, it's what I'm here for."

HISTORY TOUCHDOWN

Tackling the gap between gender on the field

ARYELLA FINKEL-HOZER, MILA WINDELL AND NITHYA KARAMBAKKAM
Staff Writers

After months of development and creation, Branham can finally announce girls' flag football as an addition to the athletic program for Fall 2024.

As one of the first inaugural teams to join the California Interscholastic Federation's girls' flag football league, Branham is paving the way for more opportunities for girls and inclusion in the world of sports.

For senior quarterback Carla Granados Perez, flag football has always been her preferred sport, playing since the age of seven. While she did not have the opportunity to play at the high school level in the past, Perez channeled her love for the sport by promoting it amongst the student body.

To turn the girls' flag football team into a reality, Perez sent out interest forms, rallied up students, and helped find a coach.

"To be able to even have the team is rewarding. I'm happy that I get to finally play the sport that I've always loved," Perez said. "To have that at Branham is a blessing."

Athletic Director Kaleb Lane says integrating a new sport has been relatively smooth, largely because many parents, teachers, and students have poured an overwhelming amount of support into the team.

"It's really exciting to see that many people jump

into a sport that's brand new and that doesn't have any real backing to it yet," Lane said. "They get to go out and just make a name for themselves and work hard at it."

Since this is a newly established sport, finding a passionate coach like Dana Nisich is crucial. Having grown up playing flag football in the area, Nisich is dedicated to supporting and expanding the sport at Branham.

"I always said, when they get that sport here, I would love to coach it, since I didn't have the opportunity to play it [in high school]," Nisich said.

This development has been in the works for several years, as the CIF tried to find ways to incorporate more sports for girls, particularly in football. Lane finds that an individual girls' flag football team is a more viable alternative, rather than joining the men's football team.

However, the establishment of a new team comes with its own set of challenges. Being the newest team on the Branham field, the girls have limited practice space, typically resulting in late practice sessions.

"Because we're a new sport, I think we have a little bit of lower priority, so it's hard to get field time," Perez said. "You have field hockey and football, which are sports that've been here so we just get leftover [time]. We stay out late on the field. We don't mind, but at the same time, we got bedtimes."

As girls' flag football becomes more recognized on

the high school level, Perez hopes to challenge the traditional perceptions of what sports girls can and cannot participate in.

"It sucked watching football, because I'm like, 'Wow I wish I can play or join football too,'" Perez said. "Girls can be just as competitive. A lot of people might label it as 'not feminine' or 'not very ladylike'. But honestly, girls can do it too."

Nisich grew up playing football with male teammates and is well aware of the gender disparities in sports. With this team, she hopes to break those barriers and encourage the players to prevent labels from defining their capabilities.

"When you have those leadership positions, it doesn't matter what gender you are," Nisich said. "It's all about effort in life, and if you bring the effort, you're going to be better."

"It sucked watching football, because I'm like, 'Wow I wish I can play or join football too,'" Perez said. "Girls can be just as competitive. A lot of people might label it as 'not feminine' or 'not very ladylike'. But honestly, girls can do it too."

Senior quarterback Carla Granados Perez

THE **BACKPAGE**

POPULAR RELEASES

—Compiled by Aidan Weiler, Tomer Vardi, Tibault Thoen, & Nithya Karambakkam

From classic rappers to breakout stars, and sequels in long franchise to brand new originals, this summer saw many popular releases in music and film.

ALBUMS



BEABADOOBEE

“This Is How Tomorrow Moves”
Dirty Hit

“This Is How Tomorrow Moves” is Filipino-English singer Beabadoobee’s third studio album, released on August 9th. The album debuted at #1 on the UK album charts, and was praised as more mature than her previous albums. The album, which features songs such as “Take a Bite”, “Coming Home”, and “Ever Seen”, received generally favorable reviews from critics.



CHARLI XCX

“Brat”
Atlantic Records

“Brat” is English singer Charli XCX sixth studio album, released on June 7th. The album featured songs such as “360”, “Apple” and “365.” The album was acclaimed by critics and is now the 16th highest rated album of all time on Metacritic. The album was a cultural hit, inspiring a trend known as “Brat Summer”. The simplistic cover art became an aesthetic and was even adopted by the Harris-Walz campaign, which Charli XCX endorsed.



BILLIE EILISH

“Hit Me Hard and Soft”
Interscope Records

“Hit Me Hard and Soft” is singer-songwriter Billie Eilish’s third studio album, released on May 17th. The album is her first full length in three years, and received critical acclaim for its emotional melodies and lyrics. It featured hit songs such as “Lunch”, “Chihiro” and “Birds of a Feather.”

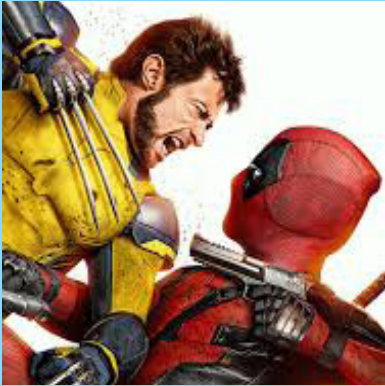


EMINEM

“The Death of Slim Shady (Coupe de Grâce)”
Interscope Records

“The Death of Slim Shady” is legendary rapper Eminem’s twelfth studio album, released on July 12th. The album was met with mixed reviews, with many critics praising Mathers’ rapping ability; however, the album received criticism due to dated and transphobic lyrics.

MOVIES



DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE

Directed by Shawn Levy
Marvel Studios

“Deadpool & Wolverine” is the third movie in the Deadpool trilogy, released on July 26th. The movie broke blockbuster records, becoming the highest grossing R rated film, and the second highest grossing movie of 2024. It received high praise in reviews, with many marking it as the best in the trilogy.



INSIDE OUT 2

Directed by Kelsey Mann
Pixar Studios

“Inside Out 2” is the animated sequel to “Inside Out”, released on June 14th. It is the highest-grossing film of the year, and the second-highest-grossing animated movie of all time. It mainly received positive reviews, but some critics stated that the plot was predictable and unsophisticated.



LONGLEGS

Directed by Oz Perkins
Neon

“Longlegs” is a horror film directed by Osgood Perkins, released by Neon on July 24th. Starring Maika Monroe and Nicolas Cage, the film was an instant hit, being propelled to success by word of mouth and hype calling the film one of the scariest of the year.



DESPICABLE ME 4

Directed by Chris Renaud
Illumination Studios

“Despicable Me 4” is the newest movie in the Despicable Me series. Critics gave scathing reviews, citing it as hastily put together with no real substance or direction. It currently has a 56% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, the lowest of all the Illumination Studio movies.



—Illustration by David Tran