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## Local teens reflect on 2022

By Ashley Dong

Ring in the New Year is a time for reflection, a time to think about all that has happened in the past year and all that is to come. For teenagers, in many ways, 2022 was a return to normalcy, especially after California officially lifted its mask mandate in March.

"I will miss the feeling of taking my first international trip after COVID," high school junior Jason Wagner said. "I went to France in April and was so excited to have the opportunity to do something I love again: international travel."

However, 2022 was also an unprecedented year in many ways: Russia invaded Ukraine, the world population hit 8 billion, the first all-woman team refereed at the World Cup. With a lot of global uncertainty, many nationwide issues remain unresolved. "One of the biggest issues society faces right now is the political division and gridlock, which hinders progress and leads to the neglect of significant problems such as climate change and the funding of public education," high school junior Vivienne Arndt said.

"A big issue facing society right now is our tolerance of violence, regarding gun violence specifically, because not enough is being done to resolve this pressing problem," high school sophomore Caleb Elkind said.

In addition, as a smaller community, Lamorinda has struggled with its own issues. "I think a huge issue for Lamorinda is the persistent academic pressure, especially for students in high school," Arndt said.

Now, at the start of 2023, many teenagers take the time to reflect on what they learned and the knowledge they accumulated over the past hectic year. "My biggest takeaway from 2022 was that you can only control what you can control, if that makes sense. If you put in your best effort, then you can't irrationally stress about the outcome, because you know you've done everything you can," high school senior Grace Liu said.

"My biggest lesson learned from 2022 is this: the best way to approach something you don't want to do is to take the small step of starting it. A lot of times, I've been scared to start something because it felt impossible to tackle," high school junior Nicole Guo said. "But, I've realized that the hardest step is just to start it, and once you get the momentum, it becomes a lot easier."

In addition to contemplating the past year, many set their hopes and resolutions for the upcoming year. "I am optimistic that I will get a second shot at some of the things I could improve on from 2022 - dance auditions, spending more quality time with my family, and keeping my plants alive," Arndt said.

"In 2023, I hope to spend my time wisely and experience new things. I'm excited to create new memories with the people I care about," Elkind said.

"There are things I'll miss about high school - and I'll definitely miss home - but, for 2023, I'm excited to meet new people, live in a new place, and take classes in topics I'm really interested in but never had the opportunity to explore before," Liu, an excited new admit to Cornell University, said.

So, pop open that fizzy champagne - or apple cider - and here's to a wonderful new year, 2023!

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