



EASY AS PIE

Face first into finals

Students take a break from end-of-semester-stress

By Ryan Vermont
Staff writer

See the video online at youtube.com/spartandailyyt

As finals week inches closer, the level of students' stress is monumental.

To counter the stress, the Educational Opportunity Program hosted an event offering free food, free games and potential raffle prizes to members who attended the event by Tommie Smith and John Carlos statues Tuesday afternoon.

The event was held as a way to ease students' minds before buckling down for finals in the coming weeks.

EOP is an admission and support service program designated for first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds.

"Students have some fun as it's close to that finals time, they're feeling really stressed out," said Mathew Stowe, counselors education graduate student. "It's just for students to really connect with each other, have a good day

and relax a little bit."

The carnival had several aspects of entertainment to help organization members take their minds off finals.

Some students duked it out on the inflatable joust arena, while others took out some stress by knocking a stranger into the dunk tank.

There were pictures taken, henna tattoos getting printed, pie eating contests and a raffle too.

Some students went to the food stands where free sandwiches, hot dogs and a variety of sweets were up for grabs.

Stowe planned the yearly event after joining the EOP just eight months ago.

"We just want them (the students) to feel a part of a community," Stowe said.

According to general engineering major Samrawit Estifanos, the event did just that.

"I think it engages people,

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Kavin Mistry | Spartan Daily

Sarae Mayo, freshman political science major and EOP member, competes in a pie eating contest during the stress relief event in front of Clark Hall yesterday.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

VTA stays popular among students



Quincy Bouldin | Spartan Daily

Passengers board a north bound VTA train on First Street late Tuesday night.

By Nick Avila
Staff writer

While the population in Santa Clara County has consistently risen over the years, Valley Transportation Authority ridership has continued to fall flat.

The VTA's 2015 report shows that ridership has not been able to climb out of its hole, but San Jose State University Transportation Solutions said student ridership has actually increased since 2014.

A November 2015 SJSU Student Commute Report shows that the reason students use the VTA services is because they have no other means of transportation, the availability of Eco Passes or they avoid traffic and parking hassles, among other things.

In that same report, it states that 1,058 of 2,592 students said they didn't use the service because it was too slow or took too long. This percentage is up from 30 percent in fall 2011.

Riez Ahmed, senior finance major, said there's less convenience in using VTA than if he just drives somewhere.

"VTA provides (me) less flexibility when I'm making small commutes around town," Ahmed said.

In 2001, VTA bus ridership was over 152,000 weekday riders, but since then, the amount of people using the system has decreased significantly in 2015 showing a

weekday ridership of 106,214. This is even after VTA added more than 50 active buses, from 440 in 2014 to 495 in 2015, according to the VTA website.

In a report, by consultant Jarrett Walker and Associates, which cost VTA \$50,000, it stated that 30 percent of VTA bus service is used to cover general areas, which don't have many riders. The problem with the area is, for those riders, the bus system is their only option of transportation and eliminating or reducing the amount of bus lines that travel those streets could potentially ruin its patrons' travel plans.

According to the VTA website,

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ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Lightsabers ignited for inagural 'Cats in Space' tour

By James Kim
Staff writer

Jedi Knights and Sith Lords converged in St. James Park last Friday to battle in the event called "Cats in Space," featuring lightsabers of varying colors, Star Wars music over portable speakers and Star Wars-appropriate costumes.

The event began with professional duelers, trained in martial arts such as Kendo or fencing, as they demonstrated lightsaber combat as people waited for the main battle to begin.

According to Kevin Bracken, founder of New Mind Space and the organizer of "Cats in Space," the event went well, and Downtown

San Jose was an enjoyable location to host the battle.

The attendees were divided into good and evil sides, with their lightsaber colors reflective of the side they chose.

The lightsabers contributed to the look and feel of an organized and enjoyable space battle in St. James Park. The battle was intense in its inclusion of very many participants in the good vs. evil fights, with the crowd very aware of the Star Wars theme throughout the night.

"Then what happens is we divide people into side, good versus evil, evil with the red swords, good with every other color, and then

we count down, and there's this big Braveheart-style melee in the center," Bracken said.

The event was social and individual to Star Wars enthusiasts and others who participated.

Many photographers and spectators captured and viewed the event to varying degrees of success with tripods, as the lights moved about quickly during the battle.

"After (the melee battle), people kind of break off naturally in their own battle circles," Bracken said.

The traveling Cats in Space tour sold both lightsabers and Cats in Space t-shirts. The organization donates \$1 of every sale to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

STAR WARS PAGE 3



James Kim | Spartan Daily

Lightsabers in Friday's space battle begin to blur through St. James Park as the two sides of the force face off.

NEED A RIDE?

New free app helps students commute

By Jose Munguia
Staff writer

Two SJSU students have launched the first free ride sharing application, Rydite, where students can carpool together to either concerts or back home if they live in the same area.

Co-founders, Masoud Ardestani, an SJSU psychology graduate, and Kareem Khattab, a junior software engineering major, first thought of the idea a year ago while stuck in traffic.

"Kareem and I always thought about creating the next big thing. Then Kareem said, 'Why don't we do something with carpooling?'" Ardestani said. "It was like we had a heart attack, both of us knew what we wanted to do and how this was going to benefit so many students."

Two weeks later, Ardestani and Khattab began production of the app and created

the company. Rydite was completed and launched three weeks ago making it available to all students attending CSUs, UCs, and private universities. SJSU was the first university they partnered with. The duo have continued to reach out to other schools to expand Rydite's reach.

Co-founder Kareem Khattab struggled to find a name that would fit the application.

"It's hard to come up with a name that isn't already taken. Rydite just popped up in my head," Khattab said. "We were able to grab the web domain and social media names for it so we rolled with it."

Rather than testing it all over the country, the two want to focus on getting it throughout California while expanding to some universities in Arizona.

Rydite is compatible with iPhones, iPads,

and iPod touches that have the required iOS 8.3 update or above.

Rydite Incorporated is based out of San Ramon. The co-founders work out of Khattab's garage; the two sit at a table in the garage and continue to chip away at making updates for their app. Ardestani visualizes what to add or change to the app and once he hands off the design, Khattab works on encoding the idea.

The Rydite team is currently at seven members, with three more jumping on board in the summer. They are looking to expand and hire more students on different campuses as Rydite ambassadors are spreading the word about the app.

Badges were created to help filter car ride preferences for students. Through the filter, users can choose students to carpool. If a female student wants to find a car with only females, Rydite makes that happen. There are badges for students who prefer a non-

smoking car ride, are comfortable with pets on board and even a badge created for music lovers wanting to use the auxiliary cord for a long drive.

"This is the beauty of it: you can ask to get paid through gas, food, or for that person to get the next ride," Ardestani said. "When we (were) building this we wanted to help students not paralyze their wallets."

Just three weeks after launching Rydite, it grossed over 400 members and is now closing in on 500. Co-founder Ardestani believes that by summertime, the app will have over 1,000 active users. All but three of the 23 reviews on the app gave a five star rating.

"We always talked about how we wanted to build the next big thing," Ardestani said. "We didn't want a job that we worked just for a paycheck, we wanted to start something that would help people."

Follow Jose on Twitter @Jmunguia92



Kavin Mistry | Spartan Daily

Jesus Jimenez, EOP advisor, gets dunked in the water multiple times throughout the EOP event.

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especially as a commuter, it kind of brings people together and stuff," Estifanos said. "Not everyone lives here and has a lot of friends, so I think it will give them the opportunity to make friends with each other."

The event was particularly meaningful to members of the EOP like senior African-American studies major Laporche Tenner.

"It just reminds us that these advisors and everyone that's working within EOP really care about us and they put a lot of time and effort in not only the educational workshops, but they want to make sure that we enjoy our time in college," Tenner said.

Tenner discussed the trials and

tribulations in her life that has prepared her to be where she is today.

"We worked so hard to get here," Tenner said. "We're all the first person in our family to go to college so it's kind of just something that they're showing their way of appreciating us for putting in so much hard work."

Stress has physical, emotional and psychological impacts that affect each individual differently.

The 2015 National College Health Assessment reported that 30 percent of students said that stress had negatively affected their academic performance within the past year. The same national assessment stated that 85 percent of college students felt overwhelmed by everything they had to do at some point within the past year.

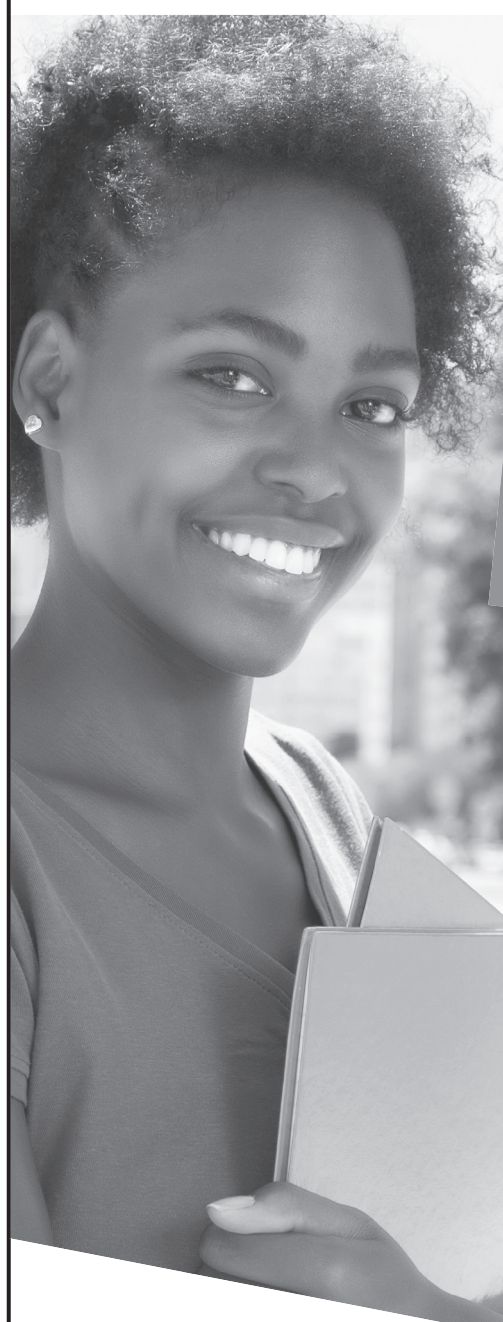
An abundance of students stopped by over the course of the event which lasted three hours.

"The ultimate goal is to show them that we're aware of the stresses, we're aware of them and that we're here for them," Stowe said. "We're here to have fun with them and we're here to make sure they focus on their goal which is graduating from college."

With finals week right around the corner, this event provided students with an burst of confidence and a support system for members of the EOP community.

With contributions from Nick Avila
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Kavin Mistry | Spartan Daily

Mathew Stowe, academic adviser (right) and Michael Bries, EOP mentor (left) battle in an inflatable jousting match in front of Clark Hall yesterday afternoon.

TRANSIT >>> from page 1

approximately 80 percent of those living in Santa Clara County are a quarter-mile from a VTA service. The VTA Board is planning to get a vote on whether or not to provide more buses in highly populated areas and reduce buses in areas with less ridership in the upcoming year.

Santa Clara County supervisor Ken Yeager, who is also a VTA board member, told the San Jose Mercury News while the decision to cut bus lines may not be something everyone agrees with, changes have to be made.

"Really, the only way to increase ridership and fare revenues is to increase the frequency on popular lines and cut service on unpopular lines," Yeager said.

According to SJSU Transportation Solutions, from fall 2014 to spring 2015, over 14,000 eco pass stickers were picked up by students (12,985) and staff (1,096) and from fall 2015, when the school implemented Eco Pass Clipper Cards, there have been 19,353 distributed.

"Based on our annual commute

survey, ridership from 2014 (to) 2016 has increased by 1.6 percent," said Lisa Tran, assistant coordinator at Transportation Solutions.

Since 2000, the VTA fares have doubled in price and with a 13 percent increase of population in the Santa Clara County, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the addition of more drivers and an increase in population have been a problem that has slowed down the time it takes for buses to get from one location to another.

Another issue is that there are no deals for bus transfers. This either forces riders to pay for each bus they use or purchase a daily pass, which costs \$6 for an adult. Express routes even go for \$12 for a day pass.

While Santa Clara County decides what their next steps will be, students who don't have any other way of getting around continue to use the service, but for those who aren't students, the decision may be costly.

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BRINGING the HEAT

By Jose Munguia
Staff writer

#30 MATT BROWN

For San Jose State pitcher Matt Brown, baseball has always been a part of life since he first started playing at the age of five.

Brown, an undeclared sophomore right-handed pitcher, stands at 6 feet 5 inches and weighs in at 215 pounds. Brown is a Bay Area native who attended Benicia High School.

As a Benicia High Panther, playing in the Solano County Athletic League (SCAL), Brown dominated the mound his junior and senior seasons with a 14-1 record. During those two seasons his ERA was 2.10.

His standout senior year earned Brown first-team All-SCAC honors, Co-SCAC MVP and third-team all state.

"High school was great," Brown said. "Benicia is a really fun baseball town. A lot of good baseball players come out of there and the town is centered around baseball."

Entering the summer after his junior year, Brown knew baseball was getting him recognized at the next level as his name started surfacing at universities.

"I was getting a lot of looks from colleges, so I was waiting for someone to offer me (a scholarship)," Brown said. "San Jose was the first, so I signed right there so I wouldn't have to worry about it anymore."

When Brown arrived at SJSU last year, the environment that surrounded the campus surprised him.

"I actually liked the area a lot more

than I thought I was going to— it's more of a college town than I expected," Brown said.

Brown got his first start last season as a freshmen against Air Force in a game they lost 12-0. Leading up to the game, he wasn't nervous. He went into the game as if he was back in high school.

Baseball has been a part of Brown's life for as long as he could remember and when he has nothing to do, he would rather play or be at practice with his teammates.

"On off days I find myself really bored I don't know why that is," Brown said. "I just really love being out on the field with my teammates."

A bond between pitcher and catcher are always needed in the game. With that bond, both players can have a feel of what pitch should be next or how the tempo of the game should go without needing to discuss it.

For Brown that connection is with junior catcher and roommate for the past two years, Joe Stefanki.

"He's a hard worker and even on off days (he) is still ready to play baseball," Stefanki said. "We've bonded for the past two years we've been roommates."

The two knew each other before coming to SJSU. They played with each other on their summer league team. Stefanki said he knew Brown would be a great pitcher when he arrived at SJSU during the summer league and

was striking out top players including Stefanki himself.

"My first impression when I first met him was that he was a really tall guy and I knew he had a strong arm," Stefanki said.

Stefanki has been with Brown for the past two seasons and has seen him develop into a premier player with still a lot to learn.

The coach who has helped develop Brown's pitching since his freshmen season is assistant coach Jimmy Meuel.

Meuel has been with the SJSU coaching staff since last October and has directly helped Brown develop into a top pitcher. Coach Meuel and head coach Dave Nakama have rotated Brown as a starter as well as a closer throughout the season.

"We've had him come in at the end of some guys and (he) has done well," Meuel said. "He's a versatile guy that we can use in a few different situations."

Brown, who will be looked at to help the bullpen next season, has the work and demeanor to be a vocal leader for the team.

"Brown is a good competitor when we're doing drills that involve a winner and a loser ... he's going to find a way to win," Meuel said. "And that's the kind of guy you want out there."

Follow Jose on Twitter
@jrmunguia92



HEIGHT 6'5
WEIGHT 215
PITCHER
BENICIA, CA

Infographic by Kevin Mistry

BASEBALL

Spartans can't come back twice

By Ryan Vermont
Staff writer

Despite a solid start by pitcher Logan Handzlik, the Spartans bullpen couldn't maintain the lead and faltered over the course of the game losing 10-5 to the Grand Canyon Lopes in game one of the two game series.

San Jose State came into the game sporting an underwhelming 14-29 record and was an underdog against the 21-20-1 Lopes from the Western Athletic Conference.

The game got off to a bright start for the Spartans as they got on the board early in the bottom of the second inning.

After a leadoff walk by sophomore infielder and pitcher Josh Nashed, sophomore catcher Brendt Citta came to the plate and rocked a home run down the left field line, putting SJSU up 2-0 against the visitors.

The middle portion of the contest was low scoring, and featured relatively few scoring chances from either side.

The game started to pick up in the eighth inning. SJSU was lead out of the dugout by sophomore pitcher Matt Brown.

Grand Canyon's bats were unleashed and nothing seemed to go Brown's way.

To add onto the poor defense in the inning (two errors), Brown gave up four runs on three hits. One man was left stranded on base to end the inning.

But the Spartans refused to concede and sophomore slugger Shane Timmons belted a solo homerun as the Spartans rebutted in the bottom half of the inning, putting the score at 5-3 heading into the ninth.

In the top of the ninth, the struggling Brown held the two-run gap and sent down the Lopes in order.

The bottom of the ninth featured some late-inning heroics, fighting back to tie up the ball game at 5-all. Pinch-hitter Joe Stefanki reached on an error and the rally began. Third-baseman Michael Breen singled and both he and Stefanki were knocked in by a two-out, clutch triple by second-baseman Ozzy Braff to send the game to extra innings.

But the comeback wasn't enough for the Spartans.

That would be all the runs the Spartans could muster up and Brown yielded five runs in the extra frame.

GCU came out swinging and put a five spot on the board leaving the score at 10-5, the score they would go on to win by.

The Spartans couldn't produce another miracle and lost for the first time in extra innings this season.

Follow Ryan on Twitter
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	R	H	E
LOPES	10	12	1
SPARTANS	5	9	2

Infographic by Daniel Reedy and photo by Kevin Mistry

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Poetry on the Paseo:
Readings by SJSU students, faculty, staff and alumni poets

8:15 - 9:30 p.m.
Hammer Theatre Center:
Poets Laureate Reading

Featuring
Juan Felipe Herrera, U.S. Poet Laureate

For more information visit:
legacyofpoetryday.wix.com/hammer

Photograph by Tomas Oyalle