Greetings fellow Falcons, faculty and staff! To welcome 2015 with a brand new edition of the Falcon's Nest, I promise you that our latest edition is now full of surprises, ideas, and lots of love for February.

We're already halfway through the school year, just 4 more months until the much longed-for summer vacation. Before you know it, it will be Spring Break, and we'll be anxious to get to the beach. Don't slack now, so you won't need to stress in your leisure time.

This February edition includes many tips to stay focused and in-the-know, especially for all those who are applying to colleges in and outside of the country. This issue also contains many reviews on the hottest films, novels, and music, world news and issues, and Valentine's Day "yay or nays," among many other articles which cover the interests of each and every Falcon out there.

So, keep those grades up, spread the love, and always be proud to be a Falcon!

Sincerely,
Your co-editor in chief Kristina Taveras
On January 6, 2015, at around 11 A.M., an improvised explosive detonated outside a building housing the local NAACP office building in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The NAACP is one of the oldest and largest civil rights organizations. The hardworking members, workers, leaders, and organizers that make up the NAACP fight for social justice for all Americans. The president of the NAACP visited Colorado Springs shortly after the bombing to promote unity in response to the recent bombing. Though the blast only caused minor damage and no injuries, Cornell William Brooks (President of NAACP) and federal investigators are treating the investigation into the blast much like a hate crime. The NAACP hasn’t experienced incidents such as this one in a number of years, but it is believed that the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, unarmed black men who were killed in incidents involving white police officers, heightened the racial tensions around the country, especially after no indictments were delivered. The nation quickly responded and protested the unnecessary police force used, especially when dealing with people of color, by trending the hashtags #BlackLivesMatter and #ICan’tBreathe on Twitter and other social media.

A December 2014 Gallup poll showed that 13% of Americans identify “racism” as the most important problem in the country today. About 40% responded that race relations in the U.S. were “good” and 23% said they were “very bad.” This is certainly a change from the 70% of respondents declaring “good” just a few years ago. As racial tensions rise, former NAACP chairman, Julian Bond, asked for all branches of the organization to stay on high alert for future incidents.
February has arrived. Many may ask themselves, why is there no White History Month or Latino History Month? Why Black History Month? For generations, African-Americans have had to endure, struggle and fight like no other people out there for daily rights—rights that were stripped away due to the color of their skin. Due to the struggle for peace, equality and tolerance, they have achieved great strides. That is something that should certainly be celebrated and praised throughout the whole entire world. They became the change they wanted to see in the world. A very important contributor to African-American culture was writer and poet Maya Angelou. Achieving international recognition at the age of seventeen with "I Know Why the Caged Birds Sing," she certainly made a mark on this Earth. Her words celebrated culture, love and the struggle of the human spirit despite great odds. Receiving more than 50 honorary awards, Angelou became one of the most influential and praised voices of our time. Apart from writing, she also worked tirelessly with Civil Rights issues and became an ambassador of good will for Black Culture. She passed away at the age of 86. Her words and actions have left a huge mark and still inspire millions today. She was and will always be remembered for her inspiration and contribution in attaining equality among the Black community all over. As she once said, "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud," she clearly shone through the cloudy times.

Valentine’s Day? How About No. By Ashley Paredes

Each year on February 14th, many people exchange cards, candy, gifts or flowers with their special "valentine.” The day of romance we call Valentine’s Day is named after a Christian martyr and dates back to the 5th century, but has origins in the Roman holiday—Lupercalia. It is celebrated in many countries around the world, although it is not a holiday in most of them.

I am completely against this holiday. Why is it necessary to have a specific day to show the people we love our affection? Why shouldn’t we show them every other day of the year? What bothers me most about Valentine's Day is the expectation of an expensive present, romantic gestures, or a dinner, as if money expenditure equals love. It’s a tax for the guilty-hearted. This is the main reason I discourage this lovey-dovey parade of a day.

This holiday has become a consumerist’s dream. It is no longer a day to cherish and admire our loved ones, it is a day to stress about the perfect gift and how much money is too much money. Others can take it, but I’ll leave it.
Saint Joseph School Sports Cup by Maria Paula Larrea

During the first game the STS female volleyball team began with a strong team with the ball at our disposition. The opposing team proved to be weak at the beginning, no strong serves, or good defence, or anything outstanding. With the Paredes sisters’ on each side of the court they maintained the balance with Lissette Mejia’s help. After giving everything they had in the first game, STS Falcons won with a score of 25 - 12.

The second set began and the STS Falcons were discouraged when the opposing team scored eight (8) points right after the other one. The girls’ were slowly growing fatigued, when one of their team mates began serving and scored up to the point where they were in a tie. Unfortunately, the girls’ lost the second set of the game, but thankfully quickly covered for the third set, which would eventually lead them to being champions. The girls’ volleyball team won and brought excitement and partnership back with them to their second home, Saint Thomas School.
Paper Towns by Kristina Taveras

Author: John Green

Paper Towns is not your typical love story where boy-meets-girl and they live happily ever after. It is everything but that. Protagonist Quentin, known as “Q” to his friends, is your typical seventeen year old leading an ordinary life in the big ol’ city of Orlando. Smart, friendly and quite the outgoing kid, the only excitement he’s ever gotten ahold of has been of his long-time crush, Margo, who happens to be his next door neighbor. When Margo suddenly awaken him one night in order to plot revenge, Q finally gets a taste of her bravery, with a touch of vengeance, which has always kept him curious ever since the day she moved next door. Margo teaches him how to be himself and to loose himself every once in a while. Q is scared by Margo’s spontaneity, and this leaves him full of doubt the following night. He starts to wonder if she might feel the same way as well. In the following days, he looks for her, yet finds that she has gone missing, only leaving a certain amount of clues she knows only Q can figure out. With the help of their friends, he embarks on a trip in order to find the girl who he thought was so perfect, only to find along the way that she is more mysterious and stranger than he thought. This young adult novel has been a #1 New York Times Bestseller, proving to all that John Green has done it again. A story filled with mystery, comedy, heartbreak, friendship, and hope forces the reader to never lose grip. A true representation that there is more than what meets the eye and it shows us all that in order to find someone, you must lose yourself first—just as Margo taught Q.

Big Hero 6 by Maria Jose Miranda

"Big Hero 6" is an action-packed comedy-adventure about robotics prodigy Hiro Hamada. He learns to harness his genius, thanks to his brilliant brother, Tadashi. Robotics prodigy Hiro (Ryan Potter) lives in the city of San Fransokyo. Besides his older brother, Tadashi, Hiro's closest companion is Baymax (Scott Adsit), a robot whose sole purpose is to take care of people. When a devastating turn of events throws Hiro into the middle of a dangerous plot, he transforms Baymax and his other friends, Go Go Tamago (Jamie Chung), Wasabi (Damon Wayans Jr.), Honey Lemon (Genesis Rodriguez) and Fred (T.J. Miller) into a band of high-tech heroes.
Black Messiah  
Review by Carlos Cuevas

Renowned R&B legend D’Angelo returns from a silent 14-year hiatus to bring forth the successor to his most successful album, “Voodoo”, which is considered a classic to most fans of the genre. While it poses as a sequel, “Black Messiah” brings completely new sounds to the table. Unlike his previous albums, the use of the electric guitar takes a more important role in the music, and there are more funk and contemporary vibes that are comparable to the calm before a storm, where the instruments quietly creep in and form a suppressed storm of sounds. The lyricism has evolved from his previous sound by being less sensually explicit, and more thoughtful and subtle. “Black Messiah” is an album that brought light towards the end of a relatively dim year, credited towards musical prodigy D’Angelo and the Vanguard, as well as

#OscarsSoWhite by Amanda Martinez

On January 15 the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences revealed its much anticipated list of nominees for the 2015 Academy Awards. The world was disappointed as they realized that the list included mostly male and white nominees. Nominations for Lead and Supporting Roles include only white people, and nominations for Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Adaptation include only those who are male. A few other categories such as Short Film, Sound Mixing, and Visual Effects have no female nominees. The world quickly responded through social media, especially Twitter, where the hashtags #OscarNoms and #OscarsSoWhite quickly trended. Although the Academy doesn’t give a breakdown of its membership, a 2012 report by the Los Angeles Times found that of its nearly 6,000 members, 94% are white, 77% are male and 86% are age 50 or older.”

The last time an Academy Awards noticeably lacked so much in diversity was in 2011, and before that, in 1998. Many argue that not only were the nominees for Best Film male and white, but the films they acted in were centered around a male character’s story line. Most notable snubs for these Academy Awards are David Oyelowo, who was considered by many a strong contender because of his role as the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in “Selma,” and the film’s director, Ava DuVernay (who received a Golden Globe nomination for best director). However, the film did receive a nomination for Best Film. Some people would argue that if minorities had the talent, they would have been nominated in a category, but that is not the case. Minorities have the talent, it’s just that they are sometimes not acknowledged for it and they are not given a chance to show them off. Producers usually cast or look for white males to play leading roles in movies, giving less opportunities to minorities because they don’t ‘fit the description,’ whether they have equal talent or not. While the world has made many steps to move away from racism, it seems as if the Academy still has a lot to learn and a lot more diverse talent to appreciate.

Nominees for the Best Male and Female Actors for the 2015 Academy Awards
Eat to Live, Don’t Live to Eat!  By Yelida Gomez

This is a question mankind has asked itself many times throughout history. As life expectancy increases, some might say we have found the answer. As the years start to show on our faces and bodies, most people wish to rewind time and lead a healthier lifestyle. Little do most people know that premature aging is prevented during a person’s youth. Every decision we make as teenagers, every time we choose not to work out, or to not eat our fruits and veggies, we need to realize we are shaping our bodies for the long-term. However, it is never too late to start making smart choices. Simple things, such as drinking 8 glasses of water per day, taking 30 minute walks, and not overeating can help us stay fit for a longer time than those who do not. Here are some tips that can guarantee a healthier, longer, life:

- Water and tea are the only things we can consider as a fountain of youth. Drinking 8 cups of water per day can cleanse the toxins out of your organs, keep you hydrated and energetic, and boost your immune system. Tea may reduce your risks of death by natural causes and it is an antioxidant, which prevents aging.
- Working out is a must if you expect to keep your body able and fit long enough. It reduces probability of all kinds of disease and strengthens bone and muscle structure. Professionals strongly recommend running because it protects all vital organs.
- Watch out for stress! Life is too short already and stress has a lot to do with this. Someone who learns how to be a hard-working person who knows how to shut off stress and relax is a happy person. Making time for activities you like is the best way to keep your stress levels under control.
- Eat your fruits and veggies!

Good nutrition is essential to health. Vegetables and fruits are natural antioxidants that supply the vitamins your body requires to stay healthy.

- Sleep. The amount of time a person sleeps or rests is directly connected with the age of that person. However, these two things are indispensable for a human being because this is the time the body takes to heal and defend itself.

These are just a few tips to live a healthier and happier life. Try them out and see how life changing they can be. Maybe eighty years from now, you’ll be alive and well to pass them on.

School and Stress by Alejandra Crespo

As the years go by, subjects in school advance and the level of difficulty increases. Although these subjects and their topics are important, sometimes the hours of homework assigned by our teachers can be overwhelming.

It’s not only the great amount of homework that challenges us; it is the lack of coordination by the teachers. This lack of communication creates a cluster of essays, presentations, practices and tests that come simultaneously and diminish our free time to involve ourselves in personal hobbies or recreational activities that help us strengthen our values and interests.

A new study has found that five times as many high school and college students are dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues than youth of the same age who studied in the Great Depression era. Also, they found that:

- 80% of the students say they frequently or sometimes experience daily stress.
- 34% of the students have felt depressed at some point in the past three months.
- 13% of the students have been diagnosed with a mental health condition such as an anxiety disorder or depression.

It seems that not all teachers take into account that the student’s body’s complaints aren’t just teenage babble or us students not wanting to commit to their work. It is, in fact, the physical and emotional incapacity that we, as students, feel when faced with the numerous assignments and tests with not enough time in-between to complete our tasks as best as we can and still have time to rest and have hobbies.
Every high school senior and most juniors know about the daunting challenges that college applications present. Not only do these students have to choose what they are going to do for the rest of their lives, but they have to choose where they're going to start that journey. Unknown vocabulary, college essays, recommendation letters, and choosing a major are only some of the unfamiliar territory applicants have to face. More often than not, students start their applications late, thinking that they will have enough time to complete it in under a week. Misinformation and procrastination lead to stress and, sometimes, to loss of opportunities. The following tips will help applicants tackle college applications, mostly stress free.

- **Start early!** There is no greater advice than this. College applications take time and there will always be little last minute tweaking that you will want to do. The earlier you start, the more time you have to plan and give your all towards your application.
- **Don’t hesitate to ask for help.** Some of the required information on the applications you will have to get from school officials, parents, and counselors. Other times you might not understand what is being asked for, and it brings more benefits to save[ the pride and ask for help rather than ruin your application.
- **Peer-check your essay.** Many students feel insecure about how strong their essay will be and will stress for days and weeks on end about it. Write your essay early on and have peers, teachers, family members, even strangers proofread it.
- **Make sure to check if the school has additional questions for you to fill out.** Some universities request applicants to submit additional essays so as to better assess them.
- **Ask for recommendation letters before summer break starts or in the first week of school.** Many teachers have extracurricular activities or classes after school, and while they might be able to write one recommendation letter on short notice, they surely can’t write over ten recommendation letters on such short notice. Be assured that you’re not going to be the only one asking for them so get a head start and ask them to write it during the summer when they have more time.
- **If you’re hoping to receive great scholarship money, apply Early Action.** Great or good grades plus being first in line usually gives you more priority when receiving financial help. This does not mean that applying Regular Action/Decision won’t guarantee you a scholarship, but it might greatly reduce the amount you receive.
- **Request transcripts and for a counselor’s recommendation as soon as possible.** Just like teachers, the school administration and counselors have many documents to deliver to students, and they need time to do so. Remember, first come, first served.
- **Consult with your parent(s) or guardian(s) how many universities you can realistically apply to, this way you won’t waste time or money filling out applications for universities you won’t attend.**
- **Take the SAT’s in the fall of your junior year.** By doing this, you can guarantee yourself enough time to study and take the tests a second time in case you are not satisfied with your results.
- **Have a second plan.** It is important to apply to safety schools- not only dream schools, in case you’re not accepted. Now, we’re not telling you to hope for the worst, but it is important to have a backup.
- **Verify if the school you’re applying to is on the Common Application, a non-profit organization that helps students to send their applications. It is a lot simpler to send applications through it and you only have to do one application for all the universities.**
- **If the school you’re applying to is not on the Common Application, make sure to send all required documents before the deadline.** The school understands that sometimes documents take 2-3 weeks to reach them and might give you a chance, but it looks a lot better to send them in on time.
- **If you’re a junior, apply Early Admission.** This will guarantee you a spot in the university on your junior year, as long as you get accepted and you keep up your grades your senior year. If by any chance you don’t get in, then you have senior year to apply once more and you will be more familiar with the process.
- **Don’t slack off during your senior year!** Universities have complete right to cancel your admission if they see you are not performing well.
- **Don’t stress too much!** It might seem like a daunting process, but as long as you plan yourself and start early, the application process will be easy.
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