



Focus



Blind Brook Changes Midterm Week Schedule

By Emily Savino & Amanda Capelli

Gone are the days where Blind Brook High School students get a full week off to study and take midterms. In January 2018, Blind Brook students will take midterms during the school day.

Blind Brook will not have an official midterm week. Previously, midterm week at Blind Brook consisted of a week designated to core class exams in designated timed test blocks. These test would be administered at the school and proctored by a teacher, and students were only required to come into school for that allotted time. The tests would range from an hour and a half to two hours, and after completing the test students were allowed to go home. Most students would go home and study for their midterm later that day, or on the following day.

However, due to New York State changing what counts towards the 180 required amount of school days per year, scheduled half days no longer count. According to the New York State Education Department, a scheduled half day is a day in which no superintendent conference is scheduled, and elementary school children receive less than five hours of instruction, excluding lunch and/or recess.

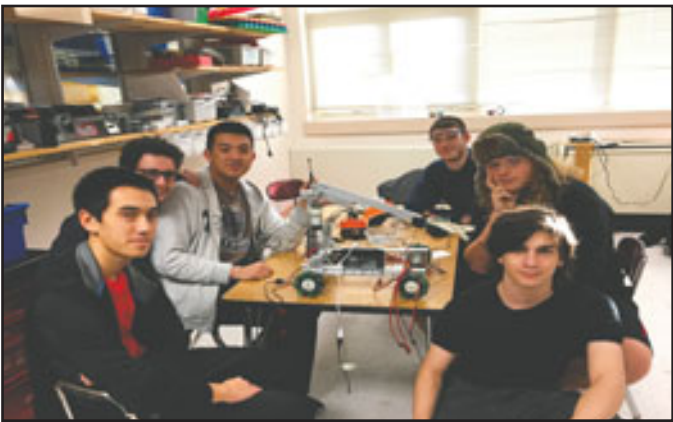
The teachers had already been discussing, prior to this change, if the way they were administering these exams was effective, according to Vice Principal Derek Schuelein. Since the midterm exams took up a full week and then some days of class time, this was time that could not be gotten back. However, New York State forced them to take this question to the next level, prompting the school to create a new schedule for midterm exams.

This upcoming January, the new midterm policy makes it so that there will be no more midterm

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Photo courtesy of Shivani Thanneer
Model UN club attends conference at Rutgers University.



Photo/Hannah Marrow
Robotics Club with their latest project.

Student Clubs Hit the Ground Running

By Abby Ochs

As Blind Brook students enter second quarter, clubs are making a lot of progress and are impacting the community in an extremely positive way.

Congress has been working on increasing student body participation, which will ensure that the actions Congress takes will “better reflect the needs of our constituencies” says junior Carly Kabot, president of Congress. Kabot describes the various other Congress happenings, saying “We raised money for victims of Hurricanes Irma, Harvey, and Maria, successfully bringing the school community together for a great cause. Another large project we are currently working on is Wellness Week, which will take place the week of March 12th.” Congress has been getting a lot done, including smaller projects, which are assigned to three new committees (Infrastructure & Maintenance, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs), which will help speed along the process of bettering the academic environment of Blind Brook.

Senate also has been getting a

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lot done. Lauren Wexler, freshman Senate member, says, “We are working on making winter homecoming very exciting for all grades. We are ordering scarves, tee shirts, and other merchandise to sell during all lunch periods, so people can wear Blind Brook apparel to the basketball games.” Senate has also been discussing the topic of the homecoming dance that will take place on Saturday, February 3, and Wexler added that, “The dance always has a secret theme, so you [will] have to come to find out!”

Model UN started off the year by attending the Horace Mann Model UN Conference. On November 29, club members attend the Rutgers University Model UN Conference. Secretary General, senior Samuel George, says, “Our delegates did an extremely good job at this extremely competitive conference. We hope to use our performances at this conference to help us in the upcoming Johns Hopkins Conference where we hope to do even better. The potential success for this club at upcoming conferences is tremendous.” Carly Kabot and Sarah Rogers both won the Best Delegate award,

A New Age of the Blind Brook Media Center

By Amanda Capelli

Blind Brook’s library has undergone a slight change under the guidance of recent hire Tracey Wong. Wong, the Blind Brook Middle School-High School library media specialist, is reinventing the way the library functions and is creating a new purpose for the space.

The library is headed towards a collaborative, creative and a more cultural, innovative experience. School can be stressful, and Wong is doing something to help break kids out of their confined stresses and allow them to create while thinking outside the box.

Wong’s goal is to introduce kids to experiences that they are not always exposed to in the classroom. She believes that the students are aspiring innovators, and that children are the future. She says, “My belief is [that] I could always be teaching the next Steve Jobs, but in order to do that, you have to be able to expose children to different things.”

Another one of Wong’s goals is to create a STREAM (Science, Technology, Research, Engineering, Art and Math) based environment within the library, beyond its traditional English and literature-based environment. There are activities throughout the library to promote these science, design and engineering based ideas. For example, there is a “Makey Makey.” The “Makey Makey” is an invention through which one can make functional keys by clipping alligator clips, similar to the ones used in the physics classroom, to regular objects like bananas or even to people, and connecting it to computer. Students can play games, type things, or create a mousepad by simply clipping the clips to the objects.

The technology in the library is advancing as well. There are QR codes to scan in with smart devices. Middle school students

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week. Each department will decide if they want to give their students a midterm, and how it will be formatted. Since students only have a forty minute period to take an exam, the teacher may format the exam to be over the span of two days. There will be no test block, and students will attend their classes following the usual daily bell schedule.

Midterms will begin on January 8, 2018. Teachers have the option of having their midterms separated into parts over a span of days due to the limited periods of 40 minutes. Junior Olivia Velta says, "If the midterms are over a span of days, then the midterm "week" will last longer than it should. Although we will be less stressed, it will last much longer, [especially] when we could be doing other work. This can be considered to be a waste of time when we could be moving onto new material in that class but we are still on the same topic."

Some consider this change to be an advantage, whereas others do not. Junior Hannah Smith says, "It becomes stressful to have to attend all of the classes afterwards, it is like [in 2016, when] they made us attend classes after taking the PSAT and everyone was exhausted and could not focus." Freshman Nicolas Chien says, "For some classes, you don't need 90 minutes to take an exam, and you end up sitting in a room staring at the clock for twenty minutes a lot of the time."

The departments are planning ahead and students are not allowed to have multiple midterms per day. Doing this will give students the chance to study and catch up on their regular work while reviewing material from September to January.

Student Clubs Hit the Ground Running

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Abe Baker-Butler won the Distinguished Delegate award, and Bryan Wei won the Most-Improved Delegate award. Soon, there will be tryouts for the Johns Hopkins Model UN Conference in February. During the first weekend of December, Human Relations had a trip to Camp Bernie in Port Murray, NJ. The students who attended the trip took part in discussions, team building, and other activities focused on bringing the group closer together. The trip ended up forming new friendships and unity between the participating club members.

On December 13, the Latin and Italian classes and clubs celebrated the Roman holiday of Saturnalia, with a modern Italian twist. Latin Club advisor Christine Sabatella says, "Saturnalia is an ancient Roman festival celebrated during Roman times to celebrate the god Saturnus, who is the father of Jupiter [the king of the gods]. This was usually to celebrate a successful harvest, so they would celebrate by having feasts and giving gifts." At Blind Book's version of the event, Italian language students and club members brought the modern food, and the Latin students and club members provided the ancient Roman food. In addition to the food, the Roman heritage of the celebration was furthered by the donning of togas made out of bed sheets by students.

This school year, Blind Brook welcomed the Roots and Shoots club started by freshman Chloe Ng. Roots and Shoots is a green/environmental club that is taking action to better the environment. Currently, the club is running a bottle drive to raise money to plant trees. Everyday, members of the club collect the bottles donated in the boxes around the school. At the end of the drive they will be recycled, and for every 20 bottles collected, another tree will be planted.

The Robotics Club is finishing up some sponsorship runs to obtain enough money to finish a robot they are working on. Their goal was to enter it in the Book Club's Open Mic Night and have it perform a poem. The club is also preparing the robot for competitions in January. President of the club, senior Ethan Tillison, has made major contributions to the robot, having spent all of fall working on a complex 3D printed robot claw. This claw will be used to pick up hard foam blocks, as this is one of the tasks in the competition.

As for Book Club, their Open Mic Night took place on December 20. There, students across grades performed pieces of writing, whether it be poems, songs, or short stories. President, junior Lisa Brady, says, "We were very excited to host our second Open Mic Night, and had an excellent time listening to so many great student performances!"

A New Age of the Blind Brook Media Center

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can sign in the computer electronically. Often, staff will come and check if certain students went to the library and were in attendance. One savvy student used the sign in sheet to prove she was where she was suppose to be when her teacher was out and she escaped having a cut on her record and did not have to serve detention.

Wong wants students to "be creative and be able to enjoy all the different facets in life." in academics. Recently, Wong has implemented a lounge area of the library where kids can sit in an informal atmosphere. There are chairs and a coffee table in an area that formerly held boxes and computer supplies. She says, "It gives scholars a chance to interact instead of just being on their phones. Often I see kids just on their phones. In the lounge area, they can talk to each other or play chess."

Last week during Hour of Code, students were in the library greating Google Doodles by coding. Originally some students flatly stated that they could not do it. But at the end of half an hour, they had coded and created their own take on a Google Doodle. For the less tech inclined, Wong also does traditional research classes. For example, the library had a graduate from Columbia Graduate School of Journalism come in to teach Focus interviewing tips.

Some students see the changes being implemented and understand the reasons behind them. Junior Bryan Wei says, "In the beginning, I didn't really see a point in the whole process of signing in, but as it progressed, it became a habit. Ms. Wong has done a good job of keeping order, while also being more lenient and keeping the library a good place to study."

Senior Julia Buccini enjoys the extra activities the library has to offer. She says, "I really like the new changes because I think that more students are going to the library for all of the new activities that you can do there."

Blind Brook Debate Team Wins Big at Yale Princeton Debate

By Julia Zarkower

On November 3, seniors Samuel George and Jacob Zarkower represented Blind Brook at the annual Yale Princeton Debate held at Ardsley High School. Debate advisor Tracey Wong accompanied the students that evening. It was the debate's 20th anniversary and the second invitation for Blind Brook in the past five years. Former Rye Brook resident Bill Nightingale, a Yale graduate, founded the debate in which different Ivy league schools compete each year.

The evening started with Yale and Princeton debate students taking the stage. After competing in a parliamentary debate forum, Yale was victorious. The college students then fanned out to assist the six high school teams. In attendance along with Blind Brook were high school student debate team members from Ardsley, Byram Hills, Fox

Lane, Rye Neck and Yonkers.

Blind Brook and Ardsley faced off in the high school debate portion of the evening. Both teams had to prepare pro and con position papers arguing the resolution: public colleges and universities have an obligation to protect their campus communities from hate speech. Ardsley won the coin toss and chose to argue con. Citing an 8-0 Supreme Court case by Samuel Alito, Charlottesville and Berkley incidents, Zarkower defended Blind Brook's position under crossfire. George followed with a strong delivery on judicial interpretation citing, among others, Schenck vs. U.S. and Chaplinsky vs. New Hampshire.

The students were judged by three sitting judges including the Honorable Evan Inlaw, a judge on the Yonkers City Court. All three judges unanimously decided in favor of Blind Brook, commending the team for its "logical, or-



Photo courtesy of Julia Zarkower
Jacob Zarkower and Samuel George with Bill Nightingale at the Yale Princeton Debate

ganized and thorough approach and reliance on Supreme Court cases." The teams then had to wait until the conclusion of the final round before hear-

ing the judges declare an overall tournament winner. The judges delivered another unanimous decision and Blind Brook was victorious.

Viewpoints

A Little More Unsettled, Frustrated and Hopeful

There have been 96 men, and 1 woman, accused of sexual assault in the past two months. 97 people is enough to fill an entire plane, play a football game, and an age older than most people live to.

Two years ago, my dad and I walked into a coffee shop in Southampton and ran into Matt Lauer, the former host of the Today Show. I was excited to see a celebrity that I had grown up watching on the news. My dad starting talking to him about Bubba Watson, his favorite golf player; because, according to my dad, Lauer was a golf fan. Lauer proceeded to roll his eyes at my Dad and did not look up from the newspaper he was reading.

Needless to say, my Dad was not a fan of him after that. However, I brushed it off, justifying it because he is famous. Of course he wouldn't want to talk to my

dad. I even made fun of my dad for trying to talk to him.

I rationalized the discourteous behavior of a well-known celebrity simply because he was famous. It is celebrities like Lauer that think they can say or do anything they want, just because of their superficial status they hold in society. In hindsight, I wish I could say that I saw him for what he really was: a sexist Hollywood celebrity that has no moral regard for anyone, especially women. However, I did not see the scope of the problem until a few weeks ago when Lauer was accused of sexual assault.

It is extremely difficult to pick out the predators. For this reason, the movement of women confronting well-known celebrities about their wrongdoings and shift in the paradigm is even more

important now than ever. The celebrities and politicians that abuse their power think they can get away with things like sexual assault. Even celebrities must be held accountable.

Every day I see the news of another allegation of sexual assault in Hollywood, and now in politics. The celebrities that we look up to as role models from a young age, whether it is athletes, Hollywood stars, or producers, are not better than us. Politicians are not better than us. The very government that is supposed to protect our human rights is comprised of the very men that deprive women of theirs. Every day that goes by, I find myself a little more unsettled, a little more frustrated, but also, a little more hopeful.

It is apparent now more than ever that both men and women are fearless. It takes an immense amount of courage and vulnerability to stand up to a male perpetrator and to re-live some of the most humiliating experiences that one can ever have in front of the public eye, and have millions of people read your personal, most bared story. For the people that have abused their power, it is time to stop. Change is long overdue.

When we advocate for rights, we focus on the issues that are easy to talk about. We fight for these rights and we avoid talking about the dreaded words like "sexual assault" or "rape". We avoid these confrontations as if they contain plague. In order to enact productive change and learn from this movement, we must first acknowledge that events like these happen to everyone, even celebrities and politicians. Conversation and dissent will help ameliorate the problem worldwide.

Fortunately, we have come a long way since the Lewinsky Scandal. Just 19 years ago, the world was introduced to the first significantly public sexual assault scandal. Back then, the media was blaringly supportive of President Clinton, the man accused of sexual assault. The media ignored the words of Monica Lewinsky, the 22 year-old White House intern, and instead defended the actions of the president, covering it up as best as possible. With the #MeToo movement, the media has become more empowering for the victim, not the aggressor.

We all deal with these situations differently, but ultimately these women are incredibly strong for exposing some of the most powerful men in the world. These women have risked everything they have

worked so hard for in order to prevent other women from suffering the same fate as them.

Salma Hayek was hesitant to publicize her experiences with Harvey Weinstein because she had thought she was over it, that she had placed her harrowing recollections in a little box that would never resurface. Although Hayek initially rejected the chance to publicize her story and accuse Weinberg of his actions, she recently published an op-ed in the New York Times detailing her experiences, including death threats and demands that were personally invasive and inappropriate. All Hayek wanted to do was to star in the movie "Frida", produced by Weinstein, for her country Mexico to debunk stereotypes about the country and its people.

Memories that are formed during traumatic events such as 9/11 or sexual assault are "flashbulb memories". These moments are particularly traumatic, and we tend to replay them in our heads, over and over. Whether it takes a few days or a few years to come to terms with traumatic events like these, they must be taken seriously.

As the movement continues, and there is a shift in the culture, there must be discussion about how to best move forward. We must create a better system of how to deal with allegations of misconduct and appropriately act. This is the time where people should break down judgment barriers. Starting with the media, it is the time to begin treating people, both women and men, with respect and dignity. The media only propagates the culture critiquing a female not for their brains but for their looks and appearances. It is the time to eradicate preconceived notions and long-held stereotypes.

We are left with a lot of questions: will celebrities like Weinstein and Lauer ever try to make a comeback? Will there be legal action involved? What happens to the people that have sexually assaulted others and are not famous? And what opportunities do women have now to ensure their safety in the workplace? I predict and hope that the #MeToo movement will spark a historic change in our culture – it's about time.

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Focus

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Responses should be no more than 350 words

Focus reserves the right to edit for length and/or content.

The Only One

Sophomore Makiko Kawakami

I remember when I first started playing soccer, I hated it. Soccer practices and games were my nightmare. Maybe soccer was not my favorite sport, but there's another reason: I played with boys.

When I was seven years old, my Mum, a former soccer player, forced me to join a soccer team mixed with boys. She put me on a boys team at that time, simply because there weren't any girls soccer teams around me. I already felt humiliated and ashamed because I could not play as well as the boys. The boys on my team called me names and pulled pranks on me just because I was the only girl playing soccer at my school.

Some female athletes are probably reading this and thinking, "Wait, I never experienced that." Well, maybe it's because they were lucky to play on a girls team in America. However, other countries like Japan may not even bother to create girls soccer teams, even though every school has a boys soccer team. In Japan, soccer organizations make few teams for girls, and as girls get older, they can't find any teams near them.

Even if one does find a team, it may take female players more time to travel to practice than ac-

tually play soccer. Just two years ago, I had to take public transportation for an hour to get to the field. I sometimes came home late at 11 PM and had to start my schoolwork after midnight. It was physically and mentally draining for me to play soccer. Some girls eventually give up playing since they can't balance soccer and school or can't find any club teams. This is not only happening in Japan. This is happening all over the world. According to FIFA, there is a huge difference between how many girls and boys play soccer. Maybe there are only a few girls who continue to play in the world because we are placed in a difficult environment. Shouldn't we make an environment comfortable for girls to play too?

Women also have a hard time continuing to play soccer professionally because of the salary. According to "Pay Disparity in U.S Soccer? It's Complicated" published by the New York Times, players on U.S. women's soccer teams filed a complaint for wage discrimination after bringing home the gold medal from the World Cup. The U.S. men's team lost in the first round and made four times as much money as the women's team, which won.

In 2011, the Japanese women's national team went to the World Cup finals against America. Nobody believed Japan would stand a chance against the best team in the world, but unexpectedly, after being tied 2-2, and two periods of overtime, the game went to penalty kicks. After all that, Japan was victorious.

This was when Japan began to recognize the existence of women's soccer. The media, particularly talk shows, were obsessed with the women's Japanese soccer team. During interviews, female players never forgot to speak up about the harsh environment they face every day. They talked about how the Japanese Football Association does not equip the women with the necessary gear, or give them the best environment to support them on the field. The media interviews gave the women, and other young girls who play soccer, hope that they will achieve their dreams and succeed as soccer players like the men.

We have to keep promoting women's sports for society to accept and embrace equality. After



Photo courtesy of FIFA.com

Japanese women's national team winning Women's World Cup 2011 in Frankfurt, Germany.

all the humiliation I had to face, the boys eventually accepted me a year after I joined the team. Yet, do we have to wait another decade for people to accept that women can play soccer just as fiercely as the men?

We are a new generation, but what can we do?

We can cheer for the Blind Brook girls soccer team or any other girls teams at our school. At Homecoming, many people came to watch us; yet, at the regular games, we barely see anyone on the bleachers other than our parents. Regardless of how well any team plays, support from our fans can only make us better. These little actions can make a big difference for the teams, the school, the community, and eventually the world.

Are High School Students Being Worked Too Hard?

Sophomore Michael Sunshine

Have you ever come home from basketball practice with piles of homework, project deadlines, and tests? I have basketball practice from five thirty to seven o'clock everyday. Showering, eating, walking my dog, and other daily routine activities are shortened and less enjoyable due to an immense amount of school work.

Many high school students come home complaining about the amount of homework they have been assigned. High school students juggle school work, tests, balancing a social life, and extracurricular activities. Homework can take up three and a half hours per day for the average student according to the LA Times article, About 3.5 Hours of Homework a Day for High Schoolers?, not including studying for tests. When some students have extracurricular activities and sports, school-related work can keep students up past midnight on some nights. Some students' lives are solely based upon school and school work, when they should be focusing on making friends and hobbies.

During school, some students go from advanced class to advanced class with immense amounts of stress, but other students go from basic classes to

basic class without any concern. Although this may be based upon personal choice, students in more advanced classes endure higher amounts of stress, and tend to partake in a variety of extracurriculars that catch the eyes of college admissions officers nationwide. Relating to my life, I have made a choice to challenge myself and take advanced classes. Living in a home with a high school senior, college is a predominant dinner discussion: "Michael, are you going to be able to live up to the same expectations as Julia?" My parents constantly bother me about my grades for the quarter, overall GPA, and extracurriculars I participate in, leaving a life outside of school essentially nonexistent. Completing school work has been difficult for many students initially, now parents and siblings add additional stress when asking to complete work to a sufficient level. Parents should leave their children alone, and allow them to challenge themselves if necessary. Without the stress from families, students are exposed to sufficient amounts of stress anyway.

Similar to the phrase "dress to impress", many students prepare for success. When preparation for an exam or presentation does not

result in a sufficient grade, students become depressed and more anxious to do better in the future. According to the article, Students Under Pressure by Amy Novotney, around 30% of students experience extreme depression and stress levels, so badly that students consider suicide. Many students aren't worried about their GPA or test grades, they are worried if their parents will be less proud or disappointed in them. From personal experience, if your parents are disappointed in you, it's the worst experience anybody could endure. In general, parents need to view school as a learning and developing experience for children. Parents should help their children do better in the future, rather than express their disappointment. Impressionable children and students will view this constructive criticism as a pat on the back, and their attitude towards school will develop from a scared, stressed student to a confident, proud person.

Most students are stressing themselves out with the people they surround themselves with and their expectations. Exchanging of grades with friends could damage a student's confidence. If one student gets a better grade than another, the student

most likely becomes less satisfied with their own grade. Students with intelligent friends succumb to their expectations and predictions, which will increase their levels of stress. If students expect themselves to do amazing A+ work, but they are not A+ students, they will continue to disappoint themselves. Grades including A's and A+'s are rare, and students striving for these grades are almost inclined to get disappointed. Unrealistic expectations and grades are causes of student stress, depression, and anxiety. One solution to these unrealistic expectations is a possible change of mindset for students. After taking tests, finishing a project, handing in an assignment, thoughts of the task linger in student's head, and problems tug at student's confidence. In order for school to be less stressful, students have to think less about their grades and more about intellectual improvements.

Students, teachers, and parents need to approach school with a positive attitude. School is not solely about grades, it is about the development of character. Character and personality will get a person further in life than good grades.



300 Years Behind Sophomore Matthew Rose



Why is it that in an age of modern technology—when we constantly update our tools, technology, and cars—that we are still using an education system designed over 300 years ago?

Almost every school addresses this, yet almost no schools have changed. From a student's perspective, that is concerning. It makes you ask the question: if we have all the technology, and we are just one baby step from success, why don't we do it?

Yes, the technology has changed and been introduced into our classes, with the introduction of computers and smartboards, in a whole new paperless world. But on the other hand, the ways that students are evaluated is still the same 300 year old method. We, as students, are still given tests that evaluate our memorization skills, not our problem solving skills. They test our capability to fill out a worksheet in 40 minutes, not how well students understand a concept. Tests in general do not prepare students for the real world. A proper system of assessment are those that do not penalize students for their mistakes. Here's a real world example that happened just a few weeks ago in my math class where the current topic being taught was challenging. The teacher, knowing the difficulty of the content, made the test out of 50 points but gave 60 points worth of questions. Because of this, students could make 10 points worth of mistakes while

still getting a 100% grade and proving that they know the material.

As a tenth grade student experiencing this day-to-day, I urge you to tell your school representatives (in my case my congress representatives) and to speak to teachers, heads of departments, principals, or even the board of ed, to change the current assessment system and many other parts of the outdated education system.

It is not just tests that are the issue, but the general school system has many flaws, including the fact that schools are teaching kids information that is not useful in life. Unless you are teaching math, when will you need to apply calculus in your everyday life? The answer is almost never. However, the skills used to solve the problem is something that is priceless.

One of the major problems I personally have with tests as student is the memorization aspect. Tests are meant to test your knowledge of a topic. They are meant to see how well you can use the information in the real world. However, there lies a major flaw. We live in the age of technology, where if someone does not know an answer they use Google, Yahoo, Bing or any other search engine. No matter what your job is, if you do not know something, you will look it up in your notes, resources, or eventually Google, thus proving that memorization is a useless trade. Even ex-memory

champion Joshua Foer agrees, saying, "Look at me. I spent a year of my life being trained on silly memory techniques, won an irrelevant memory championship, and realized that these are nothing more than a set of parlor tricks."

If this is what the real world is like, why don't we prepare for it? If schools were to truly prepare students, every test would be open note. Tests should be less based on memorization, and be more focused on the necessary skills in life. A great solution is problem solving questions that test someone's application of knowledge, not their memorization skills.

Schools like Greenwich High School have already implemented this problem solving based curriculum through their STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) program. These schools have seen great results proving that it is a necessary course. Even Ivy League colleges responded by saying that this problem-solving skill is what they look for in a student, not the student with a 5.0 GPA who is taking 6 AP classes.

What schools should be doing is teaching kids what they will need to survive in life. For example, we live in the age of fake news. Yet, why are we not learning about it? Since we live in a time where fake news is everywhere, it only makes logical sense to teach it in school. Schools should be teaching kids ways to identify fake news and ways to find cred-

ible sources. This is just one example of how schools should be preparing students for the real world.

Some people, however, disagree with these new methods of assessment. These people claim that assessing students through projects or open note tests is not valid. Or, they believe that certain curricula can only be taught a certain way. However, these people are wrong because we live in an ever changing world, and it is important for our education system to catch up and keep evolving.

Finally, according to Sir Ken Robinson, "Creativity now is as important in education as literacy." This quote says it all, driving home the point that we should be teaching what is necessary and important for a successful life, because after the thirteen years of preliminary education, the real world comes, and that is what we should be preparing for.

In conclusion, with the new developments in technology, the new ways of thinking, and the increase need of technology, our current education system is outdated and needs to be changed. From what I have seen as a student, there is only one way to do so. I urge you to speak to your representative to have your voice heard, to express your opinion, to change the system as soon as possible. Because what good does it do if this system takes 10 years to implement? Our education system needs to be changed, and it needs to be changed today.



The Tax Plan Senior Kellie Franzblau



Recently, Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi, both high ranking Democrats in Congress, made the bold decision not to attend a meeting with Trump to discuss the GOP proposed tax bill. This was after Trump tweeted that a deal would most likely not be reached. Pelosi and Schumer have stated that they have chosen to work with other Republican in Congress instead in order to try to reach a compromise.

In response to the absence of Schumer and Pelosi, the President took photos next to two empty chairs with Pelosi and Schumer's names written on the desk. In reaction to Trump's photo, Pelosi said, "His empty chair photo opp showed he's more interested in stunts than addressing the needs of the American people".

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan both had a different reaction to Trump's photo. They believe that Democrats should not have passed on the chance to go to the White House. "Democrats are putting government operations, particularly resources for our men and women on the battlefield, at great risk by pulling these antics," said Ryan and McConnell. However, Ryan and McConnell have pulled similar antics during the Obama ad-

ministration so their objection to the actions of Pelosi and Schumer is quite hypocritical.

The tax bill in question would cause some middle and lower income Americans to suffer monetary losses or in some instances, obtain minimal tax relief, while giving huge tax cuts to the rich, including Trump and his family. Therefore, this would raise the level of income inequality in the United States. The plan cuts the corporate tax from 35% to 20%, putting more money in the pockets extremely wealthy Americans and out of the pockets of everyone else. Consequently, there will be less money in the budget for public works and social programs. In fact, many corporations are already experiencing record level profits, yet the added revenue from tax cuts has not been used to hire more workers or increase wages.

Many argue that if the wealthy have more money, both wages and jobs will increase. However, historically the method of a trickle-down economy has failed more than succeeded. This is largely because wealthy Americans tend to save money or let it sit in banks, rather than spend the money that would increase the flow of money in the economy. The plan also lowers the income tax for the top wage earners from 39% to 35%,

which allows the Americans that have the most money to keep the money for themselves.

Currently people can deduct their state and local income and property tax before paying federal income tax, allowing for people to pay less in federal taxes. Republicans want to remove this deduction, causing numerous middle income individuals to have higher tax bills. This particularly impacts Americans living in liberal states because these states tend to have high state income taxes to provide for social programs. Although this tax increase impacts all levels of income, it is most harmful to the middle and lower class who can not afford to lose these deductions.

To make matters worse, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had said that this plan will raise the deficit between \$1 and 1.4 trillion over the next 10 years. Supporting this plan is hypocritical of the Republicans considering that when Democrats hold the Presidency or the majority in Congress conservatives vehemently argue that the deficit needs to be brought down and that the debt is killing the economy.

Moreover, the plan is part of a bigger strategy called "starving the beast". This means that the GOP, by giving large tax cuts to the wealthy, will cause the deficit

to rise and revenue from taxes decrease. Many Republicans argue that because of this tremendous debt, social programs should be cut. The CBO has also stated that after the first four years of the tax plan being put into action, lower and middle class Americans will suffer an increase in taxes. This is particularly troubling because this means the plan may appear to be a success until after the next election, which may allow candidates that support the tax plan to become elected under false pretenses.

In addition to raising the deficit in spending money, the plan allows Hedge Fund managers and investment bankers make millions of dollars and yet, because their earnings are referred to as carried interest, are taxed at a maximum rate of 15% rather than paying income tax, which would be taxed at 35%. This allows extremely wealthy people to get richer and robs the federal government of money that could be distributed to programs helping the poor and middle class.

The bill gives massive tax cuts to the rich, which will ultimately increase taxes on the poor and middle class and disproportionately harm the Americans living in more liberal states by issuing even more taxes.

Stranger Things 2 Earns Praise Following Netflix Release

By Justin Levine

The world turned upside down again with the release of *Stranger Things 2* on October 27. Created by the Duffer Brothers, the second season of this extremely popular Netflix original was released on October 27 to widespread praise from both fans and critics. The show, which takes place in the fictional town of Hawkins during the 1980s, primarily follows a group of middle schoolers who must deal with a series of supernatural events, government conspiracies, and alternate dimensions. This season takes place a year after the first, and each character is still dealing with the events of the last season. Most importantly, Will, who is back in school following his disappearance, has been experiencing terrifying visions of the Upside Down, the alternate dimension in which he was trapped. While the plot is surely convoluted, it successfully balances real life with the extraordinary, while never losing touch of its heart.

Arguably the most impressive aspect of *Stranger Things 2* is how it is both rooted and grounded in its diverse characters. Fan favorites include Dustin Henderson, a quirky and goofy kid whose smile is undeniably amazing, and Steve Harrington, who starts as a stereotypical jock, and then becomes both a brother-figure to Dustin and a guardian angel to all of the younger characters. One of the second season's greatest strengths is that it expands on the story, but more importantly expands on the characters as well. Most T.V. shows today neglect to focus on the lives of young characters as writers usually worry the kids will be a hindrance to the seriousness of the plot; however, *Stranger Things* breaks this all too familiar pattern. It's centered around its child characters, and junior Julia Morlino said, "Not many shows that are this popular have young kids as the main characters. They bring light to

the darkness of the show and it makes you feel more bad for them than if they were teens."

The show also makes sure to portray the reality of adolescence. The kids in *Stranger Things* swear, face bullies, and have fights. There are real challenges that the kids in the show must deal with, both in the supernatural world and in school. If the show had portrayed the kids as innocent and perfect, it would lose the important connection between the characters and the audience. The show's kids feel real, and their emotions and quirks are incredibly relatable to anyone who has, quite simply, been a kid.

Stranger Things also makes the creative decision to set the story in the 1980s, and *Stranger Things 2* specifically takes place around Halloween 1984, something made evident by Reagan campaign signs lining the lawns of several homes in anticipation of the upcoming election. As a result, the show has a unique charm of '80s nostalgia and pop culture. Whether it is the several references to *Star Wars*, a *Radio Shack* in the town of Hawkins, or the music that plays throughout the show, the setting allows *Stranger Things* to separate itself from other modern sci-fi shows and simultaneously channel the tone of classic '80s movies. To sophomore Michael Lieberman, this connects with him on a personal level. "When I was little, like really little, the only things I ever watched were those '80s classics like *The Goonies* or *Stand by Me*," he said. "I feel like those are so special because they had that '80s charm that you can't find anywhere else. *Stranger Things* made me feel that '80s charm."

A large portion of fans also feel that the show has improved itself since its first season. Senior Maya Finkman said, "The second season was much better than the first. Not only did they amp up the stakes, but the originality and atmosphere was maintained and strengthened." *Stranger Things 2* was advertised as a sequel instead of a second season, an interesting choice considering that sequels often struggle to live up to their predecessors. However, it seems that *Stranger Things 2* has succeeded in recapturing the magic of the original season.

Stranger Things is a rare show to say the least. Its setting, unique characters, and mixture of realism with the extraordinary make it one of the most appealing shows on Netflix today. *Stranger Things 2* maintains the freshness and excitement of the previous season, while also expanding on the story, and once again returns viewers to another chapter in the lives of its beloved characters.



Must-See Holiday Blockbusters



By Hannah Bailey & Kenzie Drangel

This winter when you're looking for activities on a chilly December night, a movie with friends or family is the perfect activity! This list includes the best new movie releases for the holiday season.

Daddy's Home 2 *Released November 10*



The comedy sequel to a blockbuster of the same name, hit theaters just in time for the holiday season. Father and stepfather Dusty (Mark Wahlberg) and Brad (Will Ferrell) return and have joined forces to provide their kids with the perfect Christmas. Their newfound partnership is put to the test when Dusty's old-school, masculine dad (Mel Gibson) and Brad's affectionate and emotional dad (John Lithgow) arrive and turn the holiday into complete chaos.

Justice League *Released November 17*

DC Comic's most anticipated film of the year is the perfect action filled movie to watch if you're bored during the holiday break. Bruce Wayne (Ben Affleck) enlists the help of his newfound ally, Diana Prince (Gal Gadot), to face a powerful enemy. Together, Batman and Wonder Woman recruit a team of metahumans to stand against this newly awakened threat. But despite the formation of this unprecedented league of heroes-- Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman (Jason Momoa), Cyborg (Ray Fisher), and The Flash (Ezra Miller) --it may already be too late to save the planet from an assault of catastrophic proportions.



Coco *Released November 22*



This newest Pixar film for the family is sure to warm your heart during the chilly month of December. Miguel (voiced by Anthony Gonzalez) has never understood his family's generations-old ban on music, his passion. He dreams of performing like his idol, Ernesto de la Cruz (voiced by Benjamin Bratt). After a string of mysterious events, Miguel finds himself in the beautiful and bright Land of the Dead and sets off on an adventure with his new mysterious companion, Hector (voiced by Gael García Bernal), to prove his worth as a musician and discover the reason behind his family's strange ban.

A Bad Moms Christmas *Released November 1*

This holiday comedy follows three moms Amy (Mila Kunis), Carla (Kristen Bell), and Kiki (Catherine Hahn) as they deal with the pressures of motherhood and the stress of the holiday season. When the parents of the main characters come into town and tensions are running high, the moms crack under the pressure and decide to rebel. The trio sets out for fun adventures and unconventional holiday activities. As the mothers redefine what makes for an ideal holiday season and create new traditions, they also remember the true meaning of the holidays: family, friends and love.



Recap: The American Music Awards

By Rebecca Weiss

Every award show attempts to stand out and set itself apart from the rest, leaving a lasting and memorable impact on their audience. The American Music Awards is no different. The 45th anniversary of the biggest fan-voted show certainly attracted the attention of many Americans for their outstanding list of performers.

The show opened with an important and inspiring message from Chris Rock about the tough times the world has recently faced. This just further proved that the AMAs really does care and is trying to make a difference. Following that, Kelly Clarkson and P!nk performed, the first of many strong female performers.

From the performers to the presenters, the entire evening was star-studded with Hollywood's biggest celebrities. The

red carpet was filled with various people from actors and actresses to the world's most famous artists. But, everyone was overshadowed by BTS, an up and coming Korean boy band. From 8 am that morning until the red carpet started around 3, fans lined up outside screaming and cheering for BTS. During the show, the fans continued to scream every time the band was mentioned, holding up their posters.

Shawn Mendes, Selena Gomez, and BTS were all among the performers but the best performance was Khalid and Imagine Dragons. Performing together for the first time, they sang a mashup of Imagine Dragons' Thunder and Khalid's Young Dumb & Broke. The audience was up on their feet cheering and singing along the entire time.

Diana Ross, a music legend, was honored by receiving the

Lifetime Achievement Award. She has been a singer and songwriter since she joined the Supremes in the early 1960s. Later, in 1969, she started her solo career and released songs such as Ain't No Mountain High Enough and Love Hangover. Her music career has lasted since then, providing her with a lifetime of fame. Her daughter, Tracee Ellis Ross, a lead actress in Blackish and Girlfriend, hosted the entire evening in honor of her mother receiving the award. Ross also performed a special mashup of all of her hits over the years.

Niall Horan, a former member of One Direction, was among the many winners of the night. He took home the New Artist of the Year award, taking after another One Direction member, Zayn Malik. In March of 2015, Malik announced his split from the band. Soon after, in early 2016, the band announced that

they would be taking a hiatus. The rest of the members went solo along with Zayn, and to say their careers skyrocketed is an understatement.

Bruno Mars completely swept the show with 5 awards for Artist of the Year, Favorite Pop/Rock Album, Favorite Soul/R&B Male Artist, Favorite Soul/R&B Album, and Favorite Pop/Rock Male Artist. Despacito, the chart-topping Spanish single by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee also won multiple awards, including Collab of the Year for the version featuring Justin Bieber, and Favorite Song Pop/Rock.

Overall, the American Music Awards was certainly a night to remember because of the outstanding performances, great presenters, and the looks seen on the red carpet. The biggest fan-voted awards show put on a show that will be remembered.



Photo courtesy of InStyle



Photo courtesy of All K-pop



Photo courtesy of AMAs

2017 Jingle Ball Tour

By Alyson Barsky

On Friday, December 8 at 7:30pm, thousands of people from all around the country gathered at Madison Square Garden in New York City to scream the names of their favorite singers and sing along to all the top hits. Some of this year's featured guests included Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran, Ariana Grande, Diplo, Justin Bieber, Pitbull, Shawn Mendes, The Chainsmokers, Sam Smith, Halsey, and other favorable artists. Special guest performances included G-Eazy, Fall Out Boy, Demi Lovato, Logic, Charlie Puth, Niall Horan, Camila

Cabello, Liam Payne, Julia Michaels, and Why Don't We.

This year, the Los Angeles radio station KIIS-FM Jingle Ball was presented by Capital One for the third year in a row. Capital One cardholders were lucky enough to be the first to get exclusive access to high demand tickets through a special presale. All other ticket sales went on sale on October 16 and were completely sold out just a few days later. Los Angeles and New York were the first places to sell out as they are the most popular venues. This year, the first concert was on Tuesday, November 28 in Dallas,

Texas and the tour concluded on Sunday, December 17 in Miami, Florida.

On Thursday, October 5, Billboard exclusively announced the first two artists in the lineup: Liam Payne and Camila Cabello. Payne sang his two most recent songs, Bedroom Floor and Strip That Down. Cabello sang her new hit, Havana, which can be heard repeatedly on almost every pop radio station. Both Payne and Cabello have become successful pop sensations after breaking away from their groups, One Direction and Fifth Harmony, respectively, and launching their solo careers. Although each member in

One Direction has split from the former group, Fifth Harmony is still together and has produced many hit

songs since the break from Camila earlier in the year. Fifth Harmony and other members of One Direction performed at the Jingle Ball as well.

Merchandise is sold throughout the show as people want keepsakes to cherish a memorable night. Shirts from singers are worn and photographs from the concert take up everyone's social media feeds. Glow lights are passed around in the audience and everyone shines their flashlights to the music, uniting as one large crowd. Some fans travel from state to state trying to win tickets or sign up for discounts, but any seat is considered a good seat at the concert since just being there is fun enough. There are screens everywhere for the audience to see close up views of the stage, even if one is seated high up in the back.

The Jingle Ball tour celebrates the holiday season and captures the spirit by getting everyone excited about the upcoming events. Throughout the entire evening, the city streets are bustling with customary yellow cabs, commuters, and enthusiastic screaming fans. This is also a very popular night because families and tourists come to look at the lit up Christmas tree during the day since they are in the city and want to experience both of these festive, entertaining events.





Happy

Holiday Gift Guide

By Hannah Bailey

Although the holiday season is typically known as the most wonderful and elated time of the year, choosing gifts for family and friends can be incredibly difficult. Each December, many students strive to purchase unique gifts for their loved ones that are both personal and thoughtful. Fortunately, there are a myriad of options that one can invest in to ensure that each person has an unforgettable holiday. However, the gesture is what truly counts and each gift will likely be meaningful to each recipient.

Mothers do everything for their children throughout the year, including driving their kids to sports practices, religious school, or even making dinner. As a result of their hard work, mothers often are exhausted and drained by the end of the night, seeking out leisure. A perfect gift option for any mother would be one that fosters relaxation and makes her day a bit easier. This may include a portable phone charger to ensure that her phone never dies when on the go or a scented candle to relax with after a long day. A soft blanket to use while watching movies is also a great option for the cold winter ahead. Additionally, many mothers enjoy wearing jewelry each day. To make their accessories more personalized, students can purchase jewelry with the initials of

family members or symbols that have a special meaning engraved. These are gifts that any mother will undoubtedly treasure for years to come.

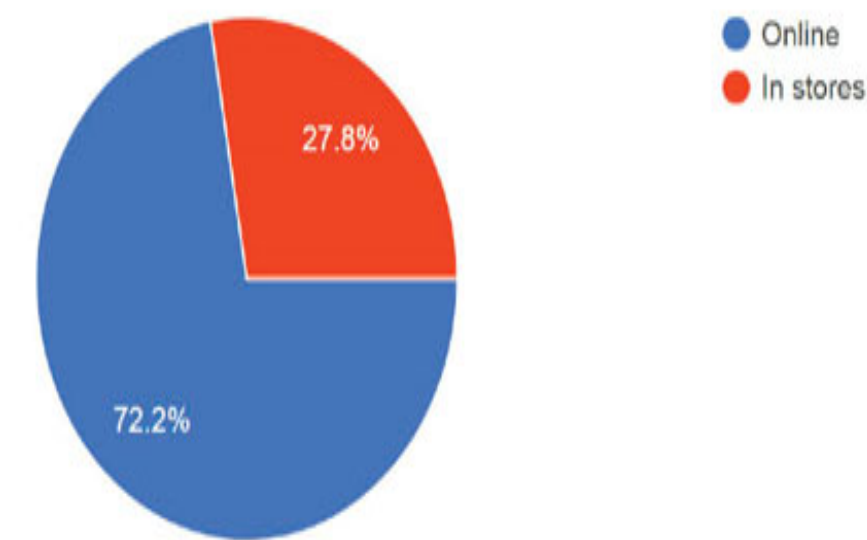
Many students often find that their fathers are less open or clear with what they would like each holiday season. Whether he is a nature lover or fitness guru, there are plenty gift options that are perfect for fathers. For the dad that loves to be outside, a skiing or camping trip would be an amazing opportunity for the family to spend extra time together without the distraction of technology. The Fitbit is also a great idea for fathers who enjoy exercising. With this device, one can track their fitness and progress, while setting goals for themselves and achieving their New Year's resolutions. If students have fathers that are interested in the latest technology trends, a drone will surely bring out their playful side. Furthermore, many fathers will not leave their house each morning without a cup of coffee. The Starbucks Brewer coffee maker is a unique gift that parents can use to enjoy their favorite coffee each morning on their way out the door. Finally, it is easy to choose a tie that any father would appreciate, whether it is silly and festive, or even a classic pattern. If working on a budget, many parents also appreciate

"gift cards" for chores such as cleaning the house, cooking dinner or babysitting for a younger sibling.

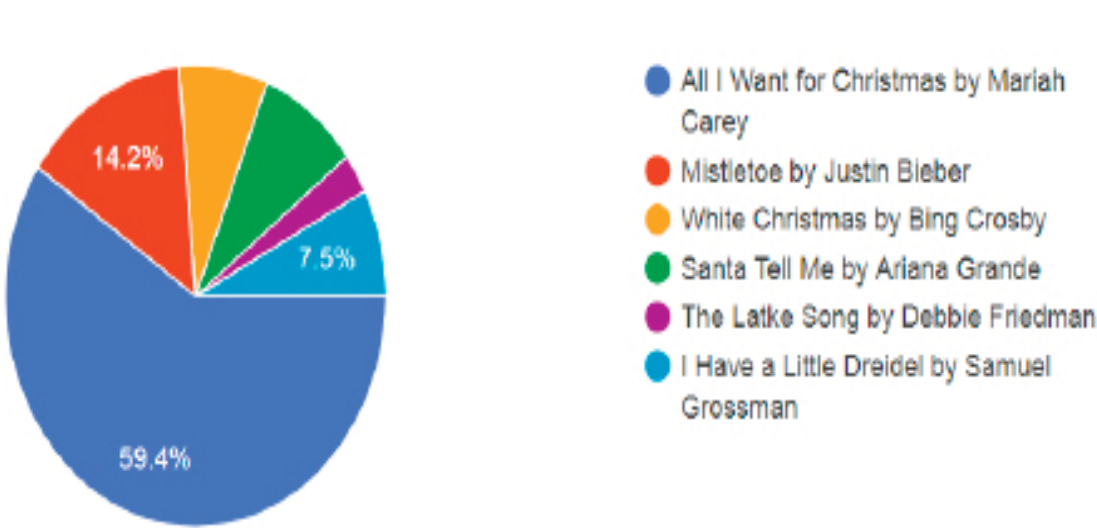
Purchasing gifts for a guy friend or brother is actually easier than most. Sal Morlino, a junior, says he loves to receive sports tickets and sweatshirts for the holidays. Harris Blumenthal agreed, as clothes from brand name designers and video games are always on his gift list around the holiday season. The latest technology accessories are also popular, such as headphones, wireless earbuds, speakers or the newest virtual reality glasses. Easier options include cologne or a favorite team's paraphernalia. A unique idea from junior Spencer Gladstone is a Chick-Fil-A gift card, as any gift card from the favorite restaurant of a gift recipient will not disappoint.

For the girl in the family or a friend, perfume is a common gift choice as it is a very usable item. Everyday Jewelry is also a very special gift for most girls, including monogrammed pieces as well as small, meaningful charms. Cozy pajamas are also perfect for this time of the year.

Where do you do your holiday shopping?



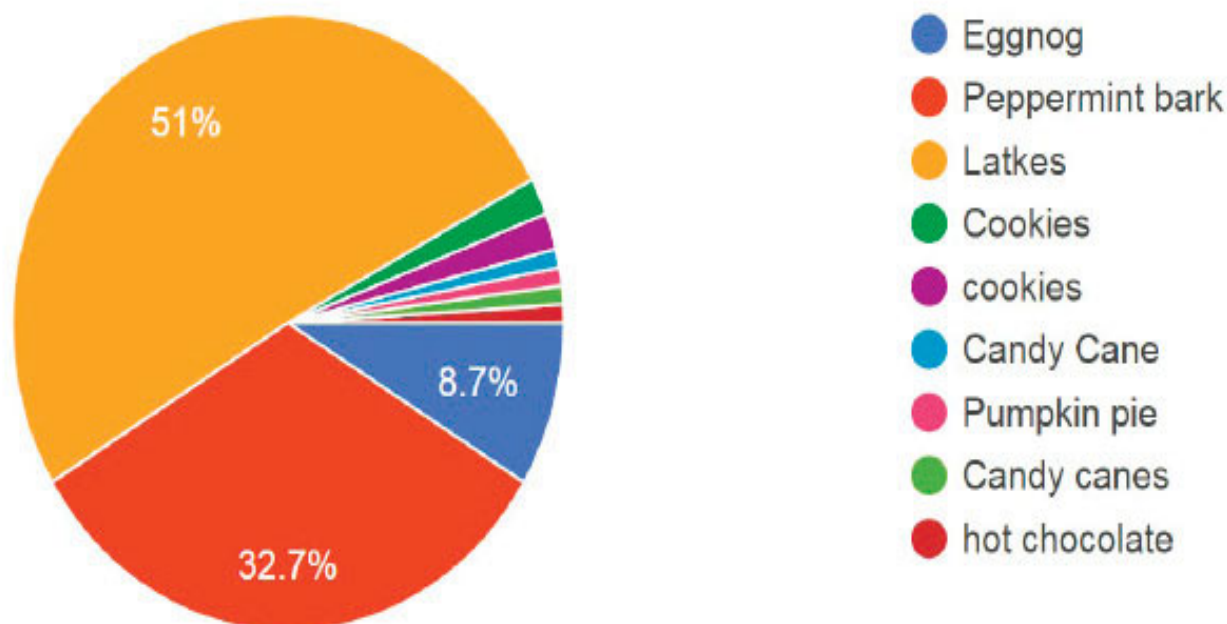
What is your favorite holiday song?



Holidays!



What is your favorite holiday dessert/drink?



Delicious Holiday Recipes

By: Abby Schlactus and Lauren DeMarco

The holiday season is here and there's no better way to celebrate than with food. From sitting by the fire with a glass of your favorite holiday drink, to a family dinner with cousins, siblings, and grandparents, holiday food is an important part of the season. These delicious holiday recipes will make your holiday dinners and desserts very special.

Eggnog

This quick holiday treat takes only 5 minutes to make, is 110 calories per serving, and has 8 servings. Add 1 ounce of JELL-O Vanilla Flavor Sugar Free Fat Free Instant Pudding and beat it in a large bowl with two cups of milk for two minutes. Then, add the remaining 5 cups of fat-free milk, 1 cup of fat-free evaporated milk, and 2 teaspoons of rum extract. Mix everything well. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Peppermint Bark

This delicious dessert takes just 8 minutes and makes 15 servings with 150 calories per serving. Add 2 cups of Nestle Toll House Premier White Morsels and 24 hard peppermint candies unwrapped. Line baking sheets with wax paper and microwave the morsels in a medium, uncovered, microwave-safe bowl on medium high power (70%) for 1 minute. Stir, but if the morsels are not fully melted, microwave for an extra time. Place the candies in a plastic bag and crush them with a rolling pin. While holding a strainer over the melted morsels, pour crushed candy into the strainer. Shake to release any small candy pieces. Reserve the larger pieces for later use. Stir the mixture and spread the mixture to the desired thickness on a prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle the reserved candy pieces and press them in lightly. You can then let it stand for 1 hour or until it hardens, then break it into pieces. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.

Latkes

Another festive treat to make are latkes. This recipe takes 40 minutes and will serve 6-8 people with 245 calorie servings. Grate 6 potatoes and 1 onion in a food processor fitted with a grater blade. Put the remnants on a clean dish towel and wrap it and twist the edges to squeeze out all of the liquid. Next, put this into a large bowl and beat in the 2 eggs and the $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of flour. Season the mixture with 1 teaspoon of salt and a pinch of pepper. Next, Heat 1 inch of vegetable oil in a large heavy-bottom skillet. Drop a tablespoon of the potato mixture into the hot oil and let it cook for 2 minutes. Then, flip it over and cook the other side for 2 minutes. Put the cooked latke on a paper towel and let it drain. Repeat this with all of the batter. Finally, serve the latkes with a side of sour cream, apple-sauce, or both!

Blind Brook students have their own opinions on the best foods and drinks during the holiday season. Junior Isabel Steinberg said, "My favorite holiday drink is hot chocolate. I love sitting by the fire with my sister and a blanket and my hot chocolate." Gaby Cuevas, a sophomore, said, "My favorite holiday food is a Spanish food called empanadas. They are delicious and I usually help my mom make them every Thanksgiving and Christmas. Whenever I smell them or eat them I know that it's that time of the year again!" Sophomore Matthew Pariser said, "I love sweet potato and marshmallow during the holidays. It makes it more festive and makes me happier to sit down and enjoy the meal."



Features

Eradicating Stress With The Click of a Button

By Arianna Kohilakis

Cell phones constantly bombard their users with messages, updates, and notifications. Due to these phone alerts that have been incessantly integrated into phone user's daily schedules, cell phones have rightfully gained the reputation of stressors. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way.

App developers have taken note of the necessity to contradict the newest societal belief that cellphones are detrimental to health by creating the latest technology movement: anti-stress applications. Just as cell phones provide rapid relief to our thirst for information and communication, specially designed anti-stress apps offer coping skills and strategies to combat health-related issues. With hundreds of anti-stress apps on the market differing in price, target audience, and design, it can be difficult to select which one will best satisfy your needs.

Hopping on this mental-health treatment bandwagon starts with learning about the available app options; below are descriptions for three apps which collectively cover treatments for a range of stress and anxiety symptoms.

1. Pacifica for Stress & Anxiety:

For those new to this market of apps, "Pacifica for Stress and Anxiety" is a great starting point. Using tools designed by professional psychologists, Pacifica provides users with a multipronged approach to dealing with everyday stress. Unlike other apps that are limited to a specific area of stress treatment and fail to end the destructive cycle of negative thoughts and emotions, Pacifica's tools target each component. These tools are based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, mindfulness meditation, health/mood tracking, and relaxation. The app boasts four categories of relaxation meditation, mindfulness exercises, "guided paths" in the forms of audio lessons and activities, regional therapist contacts, and a social media platform where users communicate via positive support messages, among other features. In terms of pricing, there is a free option but for an unlimited use of tools, subscriptions cost \$5.99 for one month, \$35.99 for one year and \$199.99 for a lifetime of use. Ranked #1 on Forbes' 4 Technologies Innovating Mental Health List, Pacifica has been tried and tested with success in the mental health industry. It is the perfect solution to those searching for a noninvasive and personalized treatment for stress, anxiety and depression.

2. Lantern

The "Lantern" app for iOS sheds light on mental health improvement through its selection of techniques supplemented by a professional mental health coach.

Arguably the most intense of the three apps, Lantern is aimed at those diagnosed with chronic stress, anxiety and depression. The program is designed to increase accessibility to a real coach and allows users to set "SMART Goals," practice mindfulness techniques and other exercises under the guidance of the assigned coach. Mental health coaches provide encouragement and support as users progress through the curriculum. Created by field experts and researchers at Stanford, the University of Washington St. Louis, and Penn State, Lantern has been met with extremely positive reviews. Its app store description states that after four months of usage, "Seventy-four percent of people experiencing significant anxiety report meaningful reduction of their symptoms." While Lantern memberships are a bit on the pricier side at about \$50 a month,

healthcare providers and employers may cover it depending on the user's diagnosis.

3. Headspace

Lack of time is one of the most common excuses for not seeking relief when stressed out.

Students often complain that time that could be spent improving and preserving mental health is taken away by studying, activities and homework. With the meditation app "Headspace," all you need is ten minutes and a cell phone for a momentary, and often much needed, escape from stress. "Headspace" provides a range of packs, specializing in condensed ten-minute classes, aiming to teach how to live a "happier and healthier life free of stress and anxiety and with improved sleep and focus." The pricing of a paid Headspace subscription is \$12.99 per month and \$94.99 per year for access to packages beyond those that are initially provided.

The statistics regarding current high school students' stress published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* are disconcerting: "Forty-nine percent of students reported feeling 'a great deal of stress' on a daily basis... and twenty-six percent noted that they had been diagnosed with depression—over four times the national average of 6 percent." The research findings are clear and evident in the lives of most Blind Brook students. During times of uncertainty, we sometimes need the reminder that not only is help out there, but it is available at our fingertips. The excessive phone use of our already-strained generation does not need to perpetuate a culture of stress and anxiety among students, as it is capable of accomplishing the opposite. Educating ourselves on using these apps as tools and coping mechanisms are steps in the right direction towards a more relaxed community.



Photo Courtesy of Arianna Kohilakis

Temporary Addition to BB Math Department

By Julia Morlino

Jessica Seeger, also known as "Seegs" by her students, recently went on maternity leave in early November. While her students were excited for their beloved math teacher and her family, many students were worried about who would replace her for the next couple of months. Fortunately, Blind Brook hired Jenifer Vazquez, an experienced and educated math teacher, as a temporary replacement.

Vazquez was raised in Yonkers, New York and has taught students from around the world. As a child, Vazquez struggled with math and was sent to summer school in fourth grade. Although she doubted herself and almost lost hope for understanding the subject, she was guided by amazing teachers who inspired her passion for math today. "I saw my math teachers as mentors and role models, which made me realize that I'd want to be a math teacher and help students myself," Vazquez said. After her life-changing experience, math became a breeze. Vazquez even admitted that she was the "tutor" student who was asked to aid classmates that were having difficulty. According to Vazquez, her impactful elementary school teachers inspired her desire to make a difference in the lives of middle and high school students through teaching math.

Vazquez took her career to a new level once she left New York to teach in Japan for two years. She taught middle and high school students at an international school. Vazquez described the experience as a "culture shock," but characterized her students as being amazing and respectful. "One of the things that stood out to me in the beginning was that they helped me understand themselves and their culture, and I took it as a great sign of respect," said Vazquez. Overall, Vazquez enjoyed the opportunity to teach children from around the world.

Vazquez later moved to San Diego, where she taught math to eighth graders for two years. She expressed a strong love for the city and once desired to live there, but ultimately found her calling at



Photo/Drew Rosenberg

Blind Brook.

Vazquez first heard about Blind Brook High School through a website called OLAS (Online Application System for Educators). She used this website to look for a job while she was moving back from California.

"When I saw that Blind Brook was listed and it aligned with my time frame of moving back, I decided to give it a try. I did research and it seemed like a really great school, especially since I am familiar with the area," Vazquez said. Her first day at Blind Brook was November 14, and has since become extremely popular in the district.

"Mrs. Vazquez connects with her students, as she often talks to us about the college application process and how we're juggling all of it. It's a nice reminder that teachers really do care," senior Justin Levine says. Junior Karyn Handler described Vazquez as someone who, "cares about her students and is a nice teacher. She is a great addition to the Blind Brook community."

Unfortunately, since Vazquez is only a replacement, she needs to begin considering future plans. Her goal is to receive a PhD in the field of education. Although she is uncertain about exactly what she wants to study, she is currently trying to figure out the best option for her, given her teaching experience and what she can do to make the most impact on students. Until then, Vazquez is encouraging students to reach their full potential.

Alexy Theuerkauf

Student Spotlight



Photo/Anna Campbell

Interviewed by Brett Goodman

1. Theuerkauf is pronounced TOY-er-cow-ff
2. His father was born in East Germany
3. The first two languages Alexy learned were French and Portuguese, but he forgot both of them
4. Knows how to throw a javelin but cannot throw a football
5. Plays the violin for fun
6. Favorite cuisine: Turkish
7. Is a self described good whistler. His method is: "Imagine you're sipping out of a straw, but then exhale instead."
8. Favorite color: green,
9. Hates mustard because he think it tastes like soap
10. Enjoys philosophy
11. Would like to be a chemist, consultant or a lawyer as a profession
12. Takes Algebra 2 Trigonometry as a Freshman

Blind Brook Seniors Unify in Light of College Decisions

By Rebecca Weiss

Each year, seniors across the world, including at Blind Brook, anxiously wait for college decisions. Whether sent in the mail or electronically, what is written can ultimately decide where these students will spend the next four years. Many are nervous yet excited to be accepted into their “dream” school or to celebrate the acceptances of their friends. Once the decision is made, a huge weight is lifted. Many Blind Brook students agree that one of the most exciting aspects of committing to college is the celebration with their friends. It is common to receive tons of calls from loved ones and posts on social media from students who are also looking forward to their journey ahead.

“I think it’s really cute how seniors surprise each other after their friends get into college,” says Junior Sydney Goldstein. “It shows how supportive everyone is even through such stressful times.”

On November 1, many Early Decision and Early Action applications are due. These applicants often find out in December or January whether they have been accepted into these schools. This can often be a stressful time of year, as Early Decision is a great option for students who have a school in mind that is their first choice. Regular Decision applications are usually due in the beginning of January, and these students do not hear their results until March or April. Although the waiting period may seem interminable, it is important to keep in mind that everything happens for a reason and that usually students will ultimately attend a school where they will be happiest.

At Blind Brook, when a student commits to the university of their choice, there are numerous traditions to celebrate this decision. Once the word is out and the senior posts on Facebook that they will be attending a particular school, many of their friends and colleagues will post supportive messages on their timeline to congratulate them on this achievement. His or her friends will also often celebrate at their house



Photo courtesy of Madison Goldberg
Lily Taub’s friends Lily Kamin, Emma Seguljic, Julia Mendelsohn, and Ayden Bauer celebrate her acceptance to Tulane University.

that day. Many bring clothes with the college’s name as well as baked goods for everyone to enjoy. Later in the year, sometimes friends will go to the student’s house and decorate their room with fun streamers, food, and apparel. These celebrations are usually a surprise, so it is enjoyable to see the person’s reaction when they see their room is transformed.

Senior Sabrina Rubinshteyn said, “It’s a really fun time. Once my friends heard that I was accepted, they rushed to my house with food and balloons, and we celebrated!”

Along with the classic Facebook posts, recently social media has also taken the celebrations to a new level. Adolescents across the country have started apparel and accessory businesses, where students can purchase college gear for their friends once they commit to the college of their choice. Many have created Instagram accounts for customized shoes, personalized cakes and trendy tailgate apparel. The techniques and skills they learn through these businesses will undoubtedly be useful in college.

The countless traditions each year at Blind Brook demonstrate how supportive and important friends are during the college process. Although this time can be stressful and competitive at times, students at Blind Brook truly come together to encourage each other. Seniors often bond over the experience because they all know how stressful the process can be, even if each person has a different experience. Even though it is sad that one might not have the opportunity to see their high school friends as often once graduating, these celebrations remind students how close they have become with their friends and how they will always be there for them. At Blind Brook, many friendships have prevailed from Kindergarten to senior year and will continue to flourish even after high school.

“I think it’s really great that people are willing to celebrate the achievements of their friends. We have all worked so hard to get to where we are today, and it is wonderful how people support each other and their endeavors,” said Senior Julia Levine.



Photo courtesy of Sabrina Rubinshteyn
Sabrina celebrates her acceptance to Northeastern University with Hannah Marrow, Olivia Morrissey, Zoe Cohen, Maya Finkman, Alexis Anello, Gabby Applebaum, Ethan Richard, and Danielle Barsky.

Stop!

By Carly Kabot

When was the last time someone told you to stop working? We live in a world where it is increasingly harder to slow down, as everything around us constantly says that we should be moving, thinking, and acting faster. Day after day, we fall into the trap of our own habits, going through the motions without truly analyzing our actions. We scurry from tests and assignments to activities without giving any of these a second thought, living in a society that is in a constant rush. This often makes us feel trapped in the whirlwind we have mistakenly created.

The quickening pace of everyday life is mirrored in our own school community, changing the way we act, think, and comprehend information.

We are continually in a race to accomplish everything, but school should not be a competition. Each assignment completed should not have to be another item to simply check off our incessant to-do lists. There is a point where we must stop and restrain ourselves from working

because reflecting is equally as important, and ceaseless activity is as ineffective as pure apathy. Consuming does not equate to learning, and we must force ourselves to make the distinction between the two.

When did school become about a percentage, letter or grade? Regrettably, few students cannot deny that school is focused more on the grades than the learning process. The ultimate question is which is more valuable and important. It is all too easy to lose sight of the bigger picture when all you can see is the mountain of textbooks and assignments piled high in front of you. It is not a simple task to ask yourself what lays beyond the grade on the test, especially when you are already preoccupied by the future.

Though it may seem impossible, we must find a spare moment to evaluate how we are spending our time. If all we can answer is trying to achieve the highest grades possible, then therein lies the problem. We are all guilty of asking the classic question, “Will this be on the test?”. Perhaps this is the best reflection of the grade-oriented culture we

live in. Everything has become focused on a number, undermining the fact that this is not the purpose of an education. To educate ourselves, we must pursue a quest for knowledge and challenge our intellectual capabilities. We are not meant to absorb everything in a forty-minute time frame, but we fear confusion and see perplexity as a threat. Many of us find ourselves in classes we are not engaged in because we were made to believe that the course would “look good” for college. We put so much emphasis on every test, only to be disappointed when we do not reach the bar we have unfairly set for ourselves. Education should be about exploration, questioning, and personal development, not a score.

Whether it is marked in red ink at the top of your paper or not, grades are a part of life and you are always being graded by someone, somewhere. All of our actions matter and our decisions have consequences we must acknowledge. There will be someone in a higher position of power judging our behaviors, intelligence, and morality. Furthermore, we are being tested daily for our compassion and character through our actions by parents, peers, and most importantly, ourselves. Strangers have drawn conclusions about who we are and made complete judgments based on a single occurrence or a few words, often without us realizing. There is no completion grade to be received, nor a final exam, but in more ways than we know, we are being graded.

Perhaps these unwritten grades are the ones that truly matter, as they define who we are. Your grade on a math test will not delineate you, but the words you convey to the world certainly will. We can make decisions based on how we want people to perceive us and how we react to others. Though there is no answer key, these are the grades we can control. We get to choose what kind of person we aspire to be and whether or not we will fulfill that potential. There is no number to be placed on self-determination, righteousness, nor ethicality, but they are the “grades” that truly make the difference.



Photo Courtesy of Carly Kabot

Sleep First, Study Second

By Margot Schwartz

An average day for a Blind Brook student goes a bit like this: wake up, go to school, attend anywhere from five to nine classes, leave school, go to extracurricular activities, then do homework for the rest of the night. Only after this extremely time-consuming process is over do we finally go to sleep. We all want to make the most out of our time and accomplish as much as possible, but too often we forget about the importance of sleep.

For me, the amount of sleep I get is always an afterthought. It is never what I plan my schedule around. Instead, it is pushed back until all other school and non-school related activities are completed. I become trapped in the mindset that if I stay up to do this one more thing, my life will be so much better and easier.

Yet, I find that this is seldom the case. While I may have completed one more item on my to-do list I have compromised my health, among other things. I will spend the next day knowing that I am awake, but unable to give my best efforts to anything that I am doing because I did not get enough sleep the night before. Too many of us at Blind Brook allow ourselves to be exhausted all day just to do as much as possible the night before.

We all want to do the best we can in every aspect of our lives. We feel pressure to be active participants in class, do well on exams, participate in extracurricular activities, and still have time for friends and family. However it becomes impossible when we are always tired. This vicious cycle of staying up late doing work only to be too tired to function the next day needs to stop.

According to a study at UCLA, the average teenager needs nine hours of sleep a night in order to feel well rested and alert. This is one hour more than the suggested minimum of sleep a teenager should get every night, which is eight hours. According to the UCLA study, most teens do not receive this amount of sleep because of our rapidly changing bodies, busy schedules, active social lives, and wrong view of sleep. Although most of these factors are out of our control, the one thing that we can completely

control is our view of sleep and its importance.

When I know that something extremely important is happening the next day, I am able to prioritize sleep for once. Whether I have something like an ACT or an interview, I am able to go to bed at a reasonable hour. I have found that a lot of my friends are able to do this as well, but only on these rare, but “important”, occasions. This means that every other day, which is probably 99% of the year, I, along with my friends, and most of the students at Blind Brook, are willing to give up alertness to stay awake for a few more hours.

We should all give more value to the amount of energy we bring every day, no matter if you have a huge exam that day or not. Too many teens, not only in our school, and myself included, view sleep as a waste of time that can be minimized as much as we feel is necessary. We consider a balanced life to be one that consists of both a social and academic life, but we leave the most important aspect of our lives out, sleep. We must take the time and effort to make sleep not an afterthought, but a priority.

There is clear evidence from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine that it is the natural biology of adolescents to want to stay up late and wake up late. So when we wake up too early for school, we are going against our biological needs. This coupled with teenagers not valuing sleep leads to disastrous sleep habits. Unfortunately, we cannot change what time school starts, but we can change how we think about sleep. If we view sleep as a vital part of our schedules, we will make more room for it.

I’m not asking anyone to make unachievable New Year’s resolutions like going to sleep at 10pm every night. We all just need to recognize that sleep is not something we can afford to give up or treat as unimportant. When we have visible deadlines and priorities it is easy to give up sleep in order to achieve other goals. That will only hurt us in the end, especially for adolescents. Getting enough sleep is vital for growth, alertness, and overall energy.



Photo Courtesy of Margot Schwartz

Coffee: Pros and Cons

By Isabella Lazar

If the aroma of freshly brewed coffee wafting about your kitchen motivates you to get out of bed in the morning, you are not alone. In fact, according to the National Coffee Association, about 68% of Americans claim to be addicted to coffee. However, there are both advantages and disadvantages that should be considered before becoming a coffee enthusiast.

Coffee can boost physical performance and increase adrenaline - the “fight or flight” response - levels in the blood. Coffee can help people lose weight by reducing the craving for sugary treats and snacks. Although coffee has many other uses, High school students often seek comfort in coffee and the accompanying caffeine boost it provides as a remedy to chronic lack of sleep; students drink coffee to help stay focused and alert.

According to Eating Well Magazine, moderate coffee drinkers that drink one to three cups of coffee per day are less likely to experience a stroke than non-coffee drinkers. This is because coffee increases the amount of antioxidants in the body. Nevertheless, increase in antioxidant levels from coffee can also cause inflammation in the arteries of the body.

Several studies have also found that coffee may potentially reduce the instance of liver disease and even liver cancer. In addition, drinking coffee can potentially help prevent type 2 diabetes and Parkinson’s disease.

Studies have shown that by drinking more than one to three

cups of coffee per day, one cannot reap that health benefits that come with moderate coffee drinking. In fact, consuming five or more cups of coffee leads to increased risk for heart disease, not to mention all of the trips to the restroom.

Coffee can also cause insomnia and restlessness. Caffeine is a powerful stimulant which affects everyone differently. Some people are left relatively unaffected and others can be found counting sheep into the wee hours of the morning. The recommended maximum amount of caffeine is 400 milligrams, which is the equivalent of about three to four cups of coffee.

Despite thorough research around the world, experts still do not agree on the addictive nature of caffeine. “There’s no question, caffeine is addictive for some people. Caffeine produces dependence and caffeine withdrawal is a real syndrome,” says Roland R. Griffiths, professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

George Koob, PhD, professor at The Scripps Research Institute in San Diego, disagrees. “While it is possible to be addicted, most people are not,” he says. He is more worried about the addictive nature of other drugs and alcohol.

Regardless of debate over the effects of coffee, most scientists agree that children, teens and the elderly may feel the adverse effects of caffeine more pointedly than others. Experts find consensus that while coffee consumption alone may not be a cause for concern, caffeine abuse is an emerging problem, especially in the teen population.



Photo/Emily Savino

The Power of Giving

By Chloe Ng

‘Tis the season to give back! Reports show that people feel more generous during the holiday season, starting with a spike in donations on #givingtuesday and ending with last minute aid on New Year’s Eve. Charitable contributions in December alone account for more than 30% of all donations given to non-profits annually.

What may surprise some, however, is that giving can actually be the source of great benefits for the giver, particularly in terms of health. Being charitable to others has been shown to be correlated with a lower likelihood of developing high blood pressure, which, consequently, can avoid potential heart disease and stroke. It also leads to an increased lifespan. Studies have shown that adults who give assistance to others have lower rates of death. Meanwhile, receiving assistance seems to have no effect. In fact, one study found that those who volunteered regularly had a more than 20% lower risk of dying early.

However, a person’s motive for helping others also plays a role in how many benefits they gain from it. Regular volunteers lived longer only if their reason for volunteering was because they wanted to do good or help others instead of themselves. Those who don’t choose to volunteer of their own accord do show increased health benefits, though not to the same degree. A study on high schoolers who were told to volunteer

at an organization once a week found that participants had lower levels of LDL cholesterol and a lower average BMI after only two months.

In addition to the physical effects of altruism, giving is associated with increased levels of happiness. Performing acts of kindness triggers the release of “feel-good” chemicals such as dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin in the brain. This rise in satisfaction known as “helper’s high” makes giving feel better than receiving, especially in the long run.

In a study by the University of British Columbia, researchers gave participants either five or twenty dollar bills and told some to spend the money on others while the second group was instructed to spend it on themselves. When the participants were called later that evening, those who had spent the money for their own purposes showed the same levels of elation, while those who had given it away were markedly more content. Moreover, the larger the amount of money they spent on others, the happier they were later on. Even purposefully donating once can lead to a happier mood up to one month later.

Giving to others also lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol, while being stingy is associated with shame and higher amounts of stress. Stress has been shown to weaken the immune system and is correlated with a myr-

riad of negative effects on the body, including lung disease, liver cirrhosis, heart attack, cancer, and even gum disease. It also causes signs of premature aging. Being able to counteract these effects through meaningful altruism could benefit the overall health of the American population.

Another long-lasting or significant effect of giving back over time is the creation of new relationships and the strengthening of old ones. These bonds contribute greatly to the lowering of stress symptoms, and studies have found that the quality of one’s relationships is perhaps one of the greatest indicators of their subsequent happiness and health. Much like those who give, people who perceive themselves to have greater social support are known to be happier, healthier, and live longer. On the other hand, feeling lonely or isolated causes people to experience a decrease in all three categories.

In addition to gains in health and happiness, reduced stress, and better relationships, those who give are more likely to report increased satisfaction with their lives and well-being. This may be because helping others raises people’s self esteem and they are able to see themselves as good people. Giving also endows people with a sense of meaning, which allows them to sleep better at night compared to the less generous. Those who have a purpose in life have been found to be much less likely to have sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome.



Illustration/Ben Striar



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Is Division the New Unity?

By Abe Baker Butler

Most have seen it: increased tension between those with different beliefs, a feeling of division, a changing landscape. In the past few years, the overall segmentation of American society has increased tremendously and it is not only a segment of the population that is experiencing or promoting this division. Whether it is modifying taxes to hurt ideological enemies, or writing off half of the country as “deplorable,” hatred and division among Americans has reached the upper echelons of the government and public dialogue. At the lower levels of American society, this division has manifested itself in many forms, ranging from familial spats to hate crimes against religious groups. In order to combat the prevalent national divisions, the population must understand its nuances. This will allow all people to use this division as a method of creating much needed change.

Even locally, some find themselves disagreeing with friends on some of the most ubiquitous political issues: taxes, the death penalty, welfare, healthcare, regulation, and more. This can cause overt hostility in some directed towards those that do not share their views. Yet, it can be much productive if we decide to agree to disagree. In effect, people can prioritize dialogue and common ground rather than incendiary statements and division. As a result, the ideological division within friendships can help each person understand the opinions of others in an more empathetic manner.

Recently, on December 12, Democrat Doug Jones won a senatorial election in Alabama, defeating Republican Roy Moore by an extremely slim margin. In fact, Jones is the first Democratic senator from Alabama in over 20 years, and the election between Jones and Moore was filled with a huge amount of vitriol and division. Additionally, Moore had numerous accusations of pedophilic behavior and molestation swirling around him throughout the election cycle. However, this election is important not because of Moore’s defeat, but instead because it serves as proof that Americans can utilize division to overcome their differences and find common ground. This elec-

tion demonstrated that although many voters were fiercely set in their beliefs, they willingly put aside their divisive feelings towards the opposite party and focus on their universal moral code. It took extreme division, caused by a flawed candidate who divided voters tremendously, to instigate a unified response that upheld the idea that shared moral and ethical beliefs must transcend political differences.

The best way for Americans to comprehensively decrease the divisiveness in society is from the ground up. By extending a hand to those who see things differently, discussing issues openly, rather than diverging paths, dialogues can be created that strengthen relationships. In working towards this goal you should think of one person that

you strongly disagree with on an issue and think about the last time you discussed an issue in which you and the other person had opposing viewpoints. Ask yourself how the last conversation ended. Chances are, given the current state of our society, that both of those answers are probably not extremely positive.

Everyone has the potential to build bridges from one side of the ideological gap to the other. Increasing individual connections is a necessity to bring the nation together.

The statement sent by the voters of Alabama is most likely the beginning of a trend of de-entrenchment. This could be a time where voters will reject the divisive politics currently running rampant within the country in favor of candidates who make an effort to bridge the gap between themselves and others using the very division they wish to overcome. This trend has the potential to unify the nation, but it can not take hold without everyday Americans working to mitigate the divisiveness in their daily lives. Everyone can do their part and contribute to a culture of kindness and collaboration rather than one of tension and animosity. Something as simple as not modifying one’s actions towards another based on their opposing beliefs goes a long way towards fostering unity and creating opportunity for a better future. In sum, everyone can make a greater effort to do what Alabama voters did just a week ago.



Photo courtesy of Abe Baker Butler

The Dubious Future of Dreamers

By Sam Lazar

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA) refers to the immigration plan, instituted by President Obama, that allows young people who entered the United States illegally as children to remain in the country legally for renewable two-year periods. The group of people protected under DACA are referred to as “Dreamers” to emphasize their desire to have better lives with greater opportunities than they would have had staying in their original country.

Dreamers most commonly come from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and a majority of Dreamers reside in California, Texas, Florida and New York. They also range in age from 15 to 36, according to the White House.

Donald Trump utilized a strong anti-immigration message in his 2016 Presidential campaign so for many, it does not come as a shock that he revoked DACA. It may be that Trump is not only opposed to the program but is also leveraging his feelings toward Obama and the manner in which the DACA executive order came to fruition.

Despite large backlash to Trump’s move to revoke DACA, there are also many people who think he did the right thing. Regarding the issue of DACA, Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader and a member of the Republican Party, said, “President Obama wrongly believed he had the authority to rewrite our immigration law. Today’s action by President Trump corrects that fundamental mistake.”

The Trump administration recently announced that it would begin an “orderly, lawful wind down” of DACA. This would include the cancellation of the memo that authorized this program, which was created by Homeland Security Secretary, Janet Napolitano, in 2012. The order of DACA during Obama’s presidency directed law enforcement to halt the deportation of Dreamers in the United States. Trump considers DACA to be unconstitutional and has said that DACA would provide undocumented immigrants with “unilateral executive amnesty”.

Without DACA, nearly 800,000 individuals currently in the program face tremendous uncertainty regarding their legal status and other DACA-related permits, including the ability to work, attend college, and live in the United States. Although Trump is attempting to phase out DACA, he is still giving Congress an opportunity to revamp the program before March 5, 2018. On that day, the president will proceed with its removal and the federal government will officially stop renewing permits for current DACA recipients.

Unless Congress passes legislation allowing a new channel for temporary or permanent legal immigration status, Dreamers will

lose their status by March in 2020. Many are worried that with the removal of protection under DACA, Dreamers will be deported and sent back to the country that they came from. For most Dreamers, it has been years since they were they have lived in the country and it is not the country in which they were raised in. It is still unclear whether or not the Dreamers will face deportation.

Democratic Senator Dick Durbin and Republican Senator Lindsey Graham have proposed a new version of the previously voted down Dream Act. This bill would grant legal status if one was attending college or in the military. It would also provide green cards to current DACA recipients, unless they disobey specific terms provided for them in the bill. This would create a system to provide conditional green cards to young undocumented immigrants. However, given the amount of Republicans that are against DACA as well as the history of the act being rejected by the government, it is unlikely this version will pass.

DACA is a very controversial topic and at times seems to increase partisanship in Congress. Democrats have been united in their effort to preserve the policy and some Republican lawmakers have suggested revising DACA instead of completely eliminating it. Those in favor of DACA feel these young people are innocent and fled their country as children with their families to seek refuge, freedom, independence, and opportunity. They believe that this takes priority over the way that the order of DACA was issued.

Many believe President Trump needs to work to create an effective system to allow more undocumented immigrants to come out of the shadows and become citizens. This system could include background checks, which would allow officials to see if an individual may cause harm once in the United States. This method would allow the United States to uphold the historical idea of the American Dream - that anyone willing to work can succeed in the United States. It will also ensure current citizens that they are protected.

Many in Trump’s hardline conservative base argue that DACA is unconstitutional. Some have even gone as far as saying that Dreamers in the United States are just as illegal as their parents and that they threaten American jobs and culture.

There are so many different benefits of the DACA Program. This would mean a greater number of people would be able to pursue careers, better provide for their families, and become American citizens.

The future of citizenship for DACA recipients is unclear, however, it is clear that Dreamers, their families, and many American citizens are worried about the future of undocumented immigrants that came as children.

America’s Most Popular Sport: Worth the Headache?

By Michael Discolo

The NFL has consistently been at the top of rankings of the most popular sports in America for the past three decades. This is largely due to the dedicated and energetic fanbase. On average approximately 70,000 people attend each game, with even more watching on a TV screen.. Additionally, the dynamic and risky nature of the gameplay is something that can not be found in any other sport. However, as the knowledge of science progresses, the NFL has been under fire due to the extreme amount of concussions and diagnosis of CTE.

Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is a progressive degenerative disease found in people that have suffered repetitive brain trauma, including sub-concussive hits to the head. CTE cannot be detected until an autopsy is performed on the brain after death and thus many players, both actively playing and retired, can be found living the majority of their life with a severe brain injury. According to a study published in the medical journal JAMA, of the 99% of deceased NFL players’ brains that were donated to science, over 110 players have been diagnosed with CTE. This includes players like Junior Seau and David Duerson who



Photo Courtesy of Michael Discolo

took their own lives due to severe depression, which can be linked to their diagnosis of CTE. Even with the staggering number of deceased players that suffered from CTE, there are still many former athletes living with CTE during their NFL career and retired players as well. Former Pro Bowl running back Larry Johnson claims that he cannot remember two of the seasons he played in the NFL and believes he is living with CTE. One of the worst things about CTE is that its victims do not just suffer from severe memory loss but also aggressive and violent demeanor. Johnson has been arrested six times since his NFL debut in 2003 with several of the incidents involving Johnson physically assaulting women.

The most well known case is that of CTE is Aaron Hernandez, former New England Patriot Tight End who was arrested for the murder of Odin Lloyd in 2013. When Aaron Hernandez died in 2017 from an alleged suicide, it was discovered that he had been living with CTE. While Hernandez had trouble with law enforcement before he began playing football at a professional level, many people, including some professionals, that the effects of playing football over a long period of time provoked the murder of Lloyd. The national reaction to the countless head injuries has given the sport of football a far more negative reputation than ever before. In the past five years, 14 states saw a 10% decrease or more in participation in football. In total, 41 states witnessed a decline in participation.

The NFL has reacted to their critics by attempting to make their gameplay safer for players. Kickoffs were moved to the 35-yard line from the 30-yard line to increase touchbacks and decrease dangerous kick-off returns. A more rigorous protocol was established for dealing with concussions. Independent medical spotters can now call a timeout if they witness a player may have been concussed. If a player is potentially concussed, recently established rules require the player to be escorted to the locker room for further evaluation. If a player is diagnosed with a concussion they are prohibited from returning to the game and must pass a “Return-to-Participation Protocol” in order to participate in the next game. Additionally, the NFL is considering updating the “targeting rule” from college football in which a player is ejected and a 15 yard penalty is enforced for making forcible contact against an opponent with the helmet crown, or the top of the tackler’s head.

However, as some fans rejoice as the NFL makes steps to make the game safer, many current players are skeptical of what the game will become. Pittsburgh Steelers safety Mike Mitchell said, “I signed up to play full-speed, contact football, and we’re

not doing that. Before I hit a guy I feel like I have to ask them, ‘Hey, are you ready for me to hit you right now?’”. Although Mitchell and many others argue that the game of football today is “unrecognizable” to that of just few years ago, American football will only survive if they continue their efforts to make a more safer environment for players. The NFL must make a continuous attempt to maintain its casual audience as its ratings are already suffering from their conservative fanbase boycotting due to the ongoing anthem protests. Additionally, by creating a safer game, this will appease many parents who are opposed to allowing their children play due to risk of injury or memory loss therefore halting the recent recent decrease in high school and pop warner football teams.

The lack of safety precautions in American football is also costing the NFL a fortune. Just in 2013 alone, they reached a \$765 million settlement over concussion-related brain injuries among its 18,000 retired players. The NFL still has thousands of pending lawsuits from former players and their families suing due the negligence of the league with regards to the safety and health of its players. If the NFL fails to fix its safety issues, the game won’t be eradicated, but rather become devalued by the American fans and players. It will become the new boxing, a dying sport due to its aggressive gameplay. Ultimately, like boxing, football will take a back-seat to the more conventional and wider appealing sports like basketball and soccer that parents aren’t scared to let their kid play,

BB Ski Team Ready to Hit the Slopes

By Lily Janjigian

The Blind Brook Ski Team is preparing for another season this upcoming winter. Although the team lost a few key members from last year’s season, there are some new team members coming in ready to work. Their coach, Mr. Flory, is making sure to push them to work their hardest for the best outcome this season. Last year’s season brought the team some success. With Alex Simon finishing in the top 10 at multiple races, he is looking for even more progress this season for his sophomore year. Sophomore Aidan O’Neill and senior Jordan Bellin also finished in the top 20 at some races last season. Aidan O’Neill exclaimed his excitement

for this year’s season, saying, “With the new snow, we are hopeful to get out and start the season. With our fast team members and some new talent, we are ready to be competitive this year.” The whole team is motivated and anxious to see what the season holds. Led by senior captains Jordan Bellin, Josh Schlactus, and Margot Schwartz, the team is hoping for more team members to finish meets in the top rankings. Bellin said, “As a team, we are running three times a week to improve our stamina so we don’t get tired on the hill. North Salem team members are normally really competitive so our goal this year is to have one of our members beat one of theirs.”

Titans Hockey Team Skates Into First Place

By Allison Chien

The Rye Town-Harrison Titans kick off the winter season with an undefeated streak of 5-0, as of December 18th. This year’s team consists of student athletes from Blind Brook, Rye Neck, Harrison, and Port Chester. Captain Max Chalfin says, “With a strong 5-0 start to the season, we feel that we have some real talent throughout the lineup, especially with our mix of experienced players and some new additions. Moving forward we have a very tough schedule, but have high expectations.”

Morale is high amongst the team members and they are hopeful for the rest of the season. The Titans won their December 11th game with a 8-3 lead, and their December 16th game resulted in a 7-2 lead. Junior Jack Shapiro says, “Since the very beginning of the season, we have been pushing ourselves in every practice to be

the best team in the section and, as of right now, it is paying off because we are 5-0.” Last season, the Titans got into the first round of playoffs before being eliminated by Clarkstown.

The athletes from Blind Brook span across the four grades, even featuring two sets of siblings. Shapiro describes playing on the same team with freshman brother Ben: “At first I thought he was going to annoy me like all younger siblings but once the season started he had one goal and it was to improve his skill. I’ve been giving him advice after every game and practice to try and I try to be a good role model for him. Playing with him has been a pretty cool experience.”

The Titans have games on December 20th against New Rochelle, December 22nd against North Rockland, and December 23rd against Irvington. In 2018, the season continues through January and into February.

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Blind Brook Seniors to Study Hard and Play Hard in College

By Scott Rosson

Three Blind Brook graduating seniors will be continuing their athletic careers this upcoming fall as they become college student-athletes. Jake Suesserman, Meghan Comstock, Hannah Schaeman, and Oliver Kleban have all committed to colleges to play their respective sports.

Suesserman has committed to Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania to pursue lacrosse on the Division III level, and the process has been a rollercoaster. He says, "The process was extremely up and down for me. I didn't decide I wanted to play in college until the summer before junior year, so I was very late on the recruiting scene. I didn't have many options until about mid-July before senior year. It was definitely a humbling experience for me because I had to swallow my pride after a coach would tell me he was no longer interested

in recruiting me. In the end, I picked the school that combined the ability to play and succeed in the classroom, and that I felt most comfortable at." Suesserman has dedicated a lot of time and has worked extremely hard to achieve his goal of playing college lacrosse. Training has been an essential part of his success. "To train, I would shoot about three buckets of 40 balls almost every day for the past two years," he says. "Lately, I've been working more on my strength and conditioning, lifting weights and working on my cardio and stamina to get ready for college." Before going to college, Suesserman has set many goals for himself, on and off the field. "I'm looking to excel both on the field and in the classroom. I want to be the best student I can be and the best player and teammate I can be." He is also looking to reach the team's goal which is to ultimately "win a Centennial Conference Championship as soon as possible." Suesserman is grateful for the opportunity and excited to take his talents to the next level.

Comstock and Schaenman both have committed to college to compete on Division I crew teams. Comstock has committed to Bucknell University in Pennsylvania and Schaenman has committed to Princeton University in New Jersey. Both have been rowing for RowAmerica Rye.

Comstock has had interests in various schools to continue her rowing career and various colleges have reached out to her as well. "I was looking at other schools too, like George Washington University and the University of Miami. I have been talking to multiple coaches since the beginning of junior year. In the summer, I went to Club Nationals

in Ohio, which is a regatta, and won 2nd in my race. After that, I got offered something called an "official" which is where the college invites you down to look at the school and rowing program. I just loved Bucknell's program, and when they offered me the spot I didn't hesitate to say yes and took it!" says Comstock.

Comstock has been rowing for a very long time, which has contributed to her success. "I started rowing in 7th grade but moved teams from Greenwich Water Club to RowAmerica Rye in 9th grade. I was on the novice team there for freshman year, then moved to varsity sophomore year. I practice every day except for Sunday from 3:30-6ish after school and sometimes before school in the fall and spring." At Bucknell, Comstock is focusing on "trying to be one of the best rowers at Bucknell while still striving to succeed in academics." Comstock's hard work and time has paid off to bring her to the next level.

Schaenman found the recruiting process difficult along with stressful. However, Schaenman had a lot of options to choose from. "The recruiting process is very exciting! All of these elite universities reach out to you and tell you they're interested in you. The part of the recruiting process when you have to pick your school is definitely stressful. You have created a relationship with all of these amazing coaches from various top programs and then after a year of talking to them you have unfortunately made your decision and tell most of them 'no,'" says Schaenman. She has spent a lot of time training, having practice about 6 times a week, for 2 and a half hours each practice. Schaenman has high expectations for

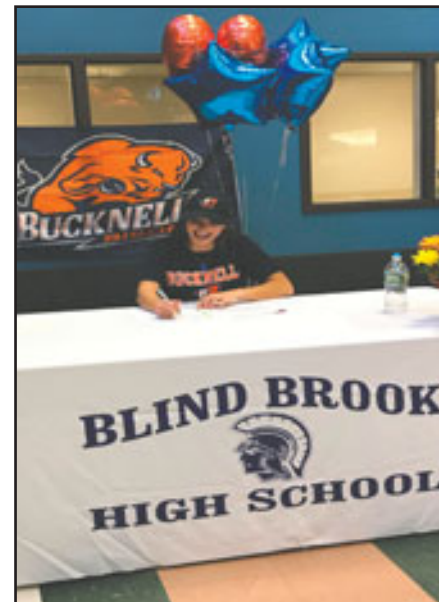


Photo courtesy of Meghan Comstock
Meghan Comstock officially signs to row for the Bucknell team.

herself and the team going to college. "At Princeton, I am looking to add to the team's speed and hopefully help them win an NCAA championship," she says. Schaenman wants to continue with crew after college as well. "Unfortunately, there is no professional rowing but I do have a dream to compete in the Olympics, and competing for one of the top rowing programs will definitely help me to achieve this goal." Schaenman is looking to carry her success from the club level into the collegiate level in order to be the best rower she can be.

On December 15, Kleban committed to New York University to play Division III soccer starting in the fall season. This past soccer season, Kleban has been an essential player on the Blind Brook Boys Varsity Trojans. He plays forward and was the leading scorer of the team.

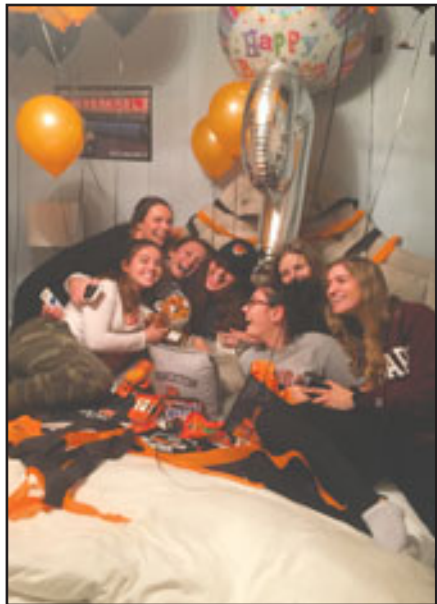


Photo courtesy of Hannah Schaenman
Hannah celebrates her recruitment to Princeton with her friends.

Boys Varsity Basketball

By Evan Ketchabaw

After a very successful winning season last year, the Blind Brook Boys Varsity Basketball Team will try to make this one even more successful. With four returning starters and three senior captains being Michael Bucci, Alex Feuerstein, and Jake DiGiansante, the team will try to make it further in the playoffs this year. "Last year we were missing leadership and dedication by each and every person on the team, and this year roles are flipped. We have a greater center of leadership with our captains and all of our seniors.

This season can be one that we will never forget and this will be because of our coach Mike Welsh. He can shape our talent together to fuse us to be one winning engine," says captain Feuerstein. Coach Welsh has been with Blind Brook for over 15 years and he is what makes this Trojan program so strong. With new additions to the team such as rising juniors Chris Bucci and Zachary Zimmerman, he has confidence as they will have to step up and help the team too.

Captain Bucci says, "I'm very excited to see what this season holds for us as a team. We have the playmakers, the scorers, the rebounders, and the defense to help us bring home a championship this year." In regards to what the team has to improve on from last year and years prior, he added, "We need to move the ball quickly and effectively. If you watch any good team at any level, that's what they do." Moving the ball is a must at this level of play and to do it efficiently is a key goal if the Trojans want to bring home the

Championship title this year. "We need to execute down the stretch and in tough situations on the road if we want to be successful as well." Playing together as a team instead of individuals is also very important at this level as well. "What makes us very intriguing is our defense, and that can't come without heart and hustle. We rush to every loose ball and make sure we secure each and every rebound," says Bucci. The Trojan's defense is always one to look at around the league.

"I want to, as a team, play as one unit because that's the only way we're going to win and I really believe that with this group of guys we can do it," says captain DiGiansante. "Key games this year include Putnam Valley and North Salem. Also, we can't forget our rival Rye Neck who is always a great matchup. However, we can't take any team in our league this year lightly." Last year, the Trojans beat Rye Neck twice and lost to Putnam Valley and North Salem one time each as well. They will look to get back at them later this year.



Photo/Noah Zeitlin
Senior Jonathon Egol jumps to shoot a basket as the opposing team tries to block him.



Photo/Noah Zeitlin
Senior Michael Bucci shooting a basket during practice.



Photo/Noah Zeitlin
Senior Jake DiGiansante jumps to shoot the ball in the gym.