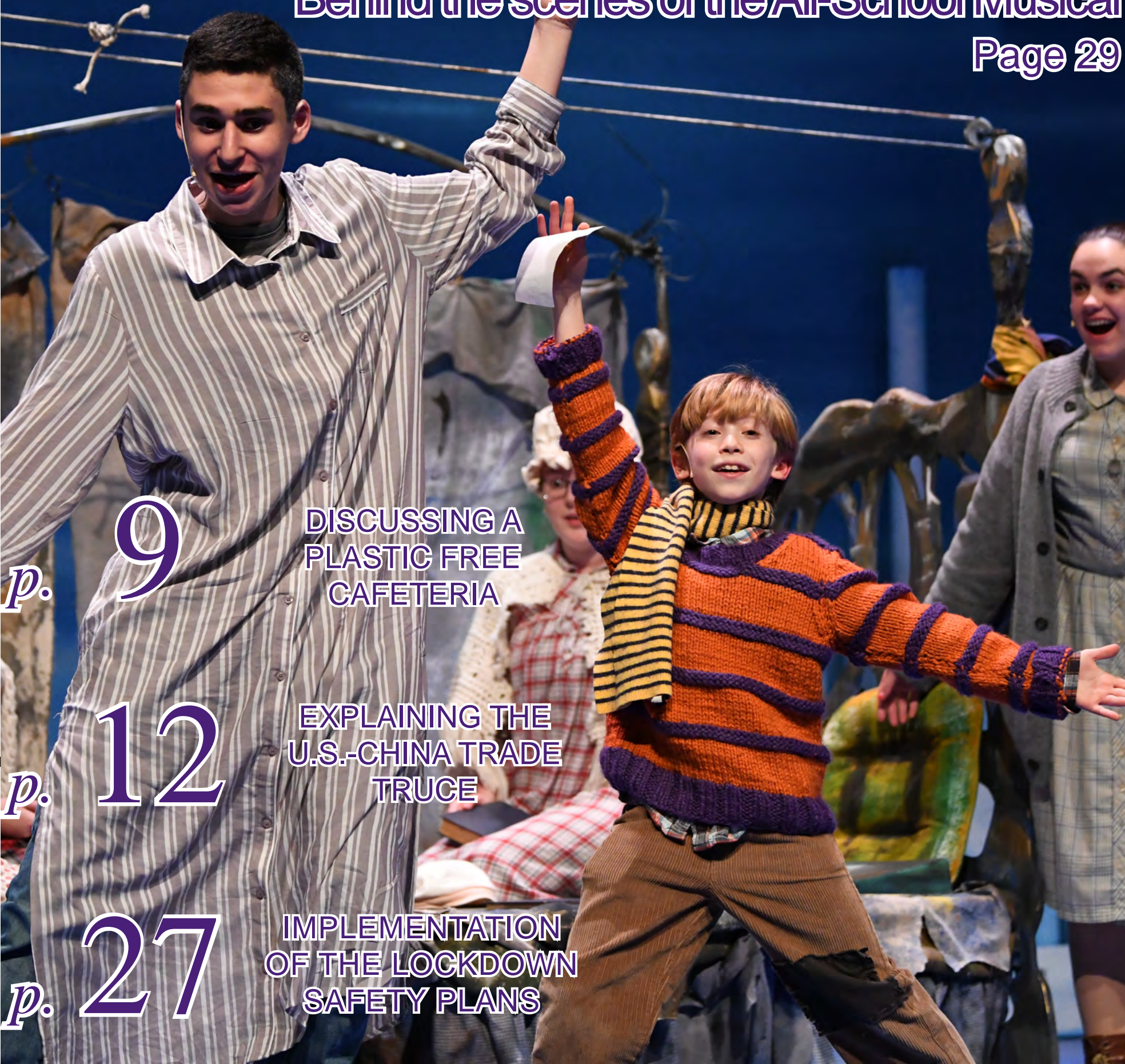


The Westword

Student voice of the Westhill community
"The test of good journalism is the measure of its public service."

Behind the scenes of the All-School Musical

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The Westword

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December 2018

Note from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the third issue of the year, we are very excited to continue serving as the student voice of the Westhill community and bring you updates about the school.

Our Editorial this month touches on the recent issues regarding mold in the buildings.

News highlights the Mock Trial teams first competition victory. In Viewpoint, we debate the ethics of genetically modifying crops.

This issue, Special Report delves into the differences in healthcare systems around the world.

This Supplement insert dis-

cusses health and the importance of self care.

Continuando con Las Noticias, debatimos las restricciones de dejar el campus durante el día escolar.

Feature contains all the donation drives that occurred in the holiday season and a new column where students can learn about their teachers from a different perspective. There is also this issue's Artist of the Month, Matthew Santos.

Limelight reviews the new film *The Grinch* and "thank u, next" by Ariana Grande. Find the Page of Fun and the top baby names of 2018 in Scatterbrain.

In Sports, we provide insight on the records that Westhill sports

have broken and our Athlete's of the Month, Themy Barkas and Maya Manders.

Online we continue to bring news from the community including the growing mold epidemic. Visit thewestwordonline.com. Be sure to check out our Instagram account for updates @thewestword.

We encourage any and all readers with comments, questions, or concerns to contact us by either dropping a letter into Addison Magrath's mailbox in room 224 or emailing us at westwordwhs@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Addison Magrath & Rachel Plotzky
Editor-in-Chief & Executive Editor

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Editorial Policy

The Westword will be guided in the publication of material by a concern for truth, human decency, and human benefit. It is published during the school year by the late night staff, along with the Communications class. Letters to the Editor, advertising requests, comments, criticism, or suggestions are always welcome. The views expressed in Viewpoint and the Op-Ed page do not necessarily represent the opinions of *The Westword*.

The Editorial Board consists of Addison Magrath, Rachel Plotzky, Alexandra Watkinson, Bailee Esposito, Katie Gaia, Chloe Giulini, Tamar Bellele, Quinn McHale, Kate Williams, Alliyah Rivera, Camila Miranda, Jason Zarrilli, Kayla Mendiola, Mr. von Wahlde, and Mr. Wooley. The Editorial can be found on page 3.

Announcements

The Westword has no announcements at this time.

Corrections

The Westword has no corrections at this time.

If you have an announcement or an advertisement you would like published in the next issue, please e-mail us at westwordwhs@gmail.com.

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Visit ourschoolnewspaper.com/Westword to view our print archives.

EDITORIAL

Addressing the mold issue

| 3

The Mold Task Force (MTF) was created by Board of Education President David Mannis, Superintendent Earl Kim, and Mayor David Martin. They recognized the rising mold issues in most of the Stamford Public Schools (SPS) and formulated this task force to mitigate the mold issues.

The MTF is tasked with “investigating, developing and implementing comprehensive remediation efforts, and ongoing monitoring programs,” according to stamfordct.gov.

The members of the MTF are made up of City of Stamford employees: Chief Financial Officer Michael Handler, Interim Director of Operations Cindy Grafstein, Deputy Superintendent Tamu Lucero, Chief Fiscal and Operations Support Officer Clarence Zachery, and City Engineer Lou Casolo.

These five employees manage the increasing mold issues and try to answer any questions about their methods as well as their everyday jobs to keep the City of Stamford operating.

The MTF holds weekly meetings on Wednesdays at the Stamford Government Center on the fifth floor at 6:00 p.m. The meeting is held until there are no more questions in the audience.

Meeting minutes are recorded and posted along with all information they receive about building conditions on stamfordct.gov/mold-task-force.

If you wish to contact the MTF with issues or questions, email them at moldtaskforce@stamfordct.gov or call 203-977-4847.

One of the main issues with the mold at Westhill is the lack of communication between SPS and the Westhill community. Many students and faculty members are unaware of the true mold issues and are not given a clear explanation of the situation.

The MTF has directed the community to visit their website for information about the type and location of the mold in the school. However, this information, although extensive, is incomprehensible to the average person.

The website has attachments of pictures of mold growing on classroom ceilings and on pipe insulation throughout the school with recommendations on how to remove the mold in the immediate

future and how to deal with it as a whole.

The website also includes reports from the health inspectors and work plans for areas around the school. The reports suggest further inspection and room remediation. One report is an air quality test that lists some of the most common types of mold and their spores per cubic meter, but with-

dents and staff.

To understand the extent of mold-related symptoms within the school, *The Westword* put out a survey to all Westhill faculty to fill out anonymously. When asked what symptoms they have experienced, 61 out of the 90 survey responders specifically cited headaches as one of their recurring symptoms. Of the 90, only ten fac-

The Westhill community has continuously voiced their concerns over the mold, but most are still worried and curious on how it is directly affecting the health of students and faculty. Most are still misinterpreting what mold really is and how it has ended up in Westhill alongside the other SPS.

“I feel mad that people come to school and do not feel their best.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), humans are exposed to small amounts of mold everyday, but an increased amount may lead to unhealthy symptoms. Teachers and students have been surrounded by this mold for many hours per day for several years, and it has not been addressed until this year.

However, something important to note is that all individuals react differently to mold. The same amount of mold in the air can seriously affect one person’s breathing and health while it may not impact another person at all.

The main problem with Westhill’s mold situation is the location of the growing fungus. It seems to be a problem in each building, and most is situated within the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system.

The HVAC system is responsible for maintaining the school’s temperature and controlling the air ventilation. There is also a fair amount of mold in plain sight, especially in the art department, but most of the mold particles are airborne and flow through the ventilation system to students and faculty.

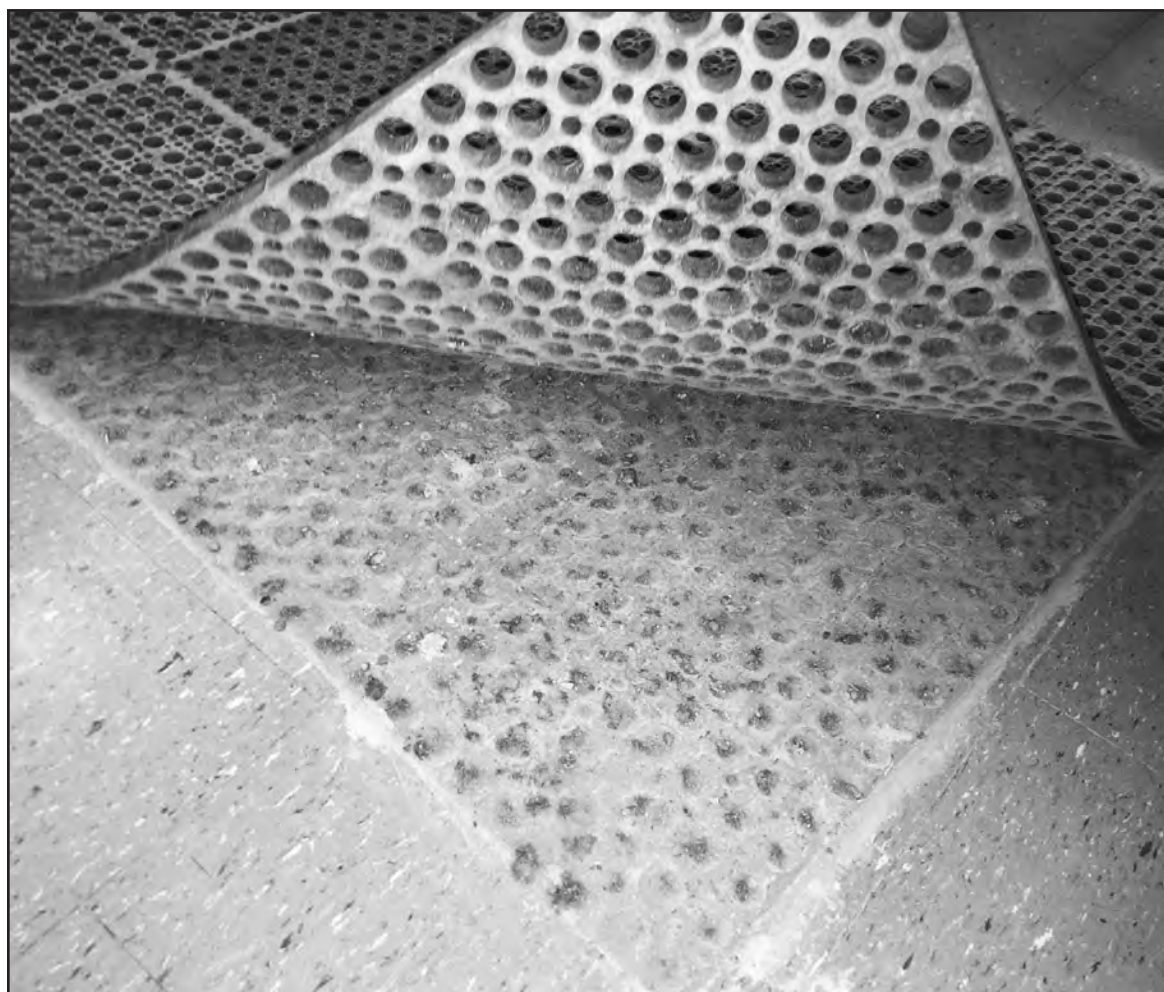
“I understand it is not the district’s fault, but we have to find a way to control the humidity in the classrooms and get rid of what is existing now. The ventilation and leaking needs to be fixed. They did not create the mold, they just do not have an adequate ventilation system,” a teacher who wishes to remain anonymous said.

Although the mold seems to be at every corner, it is difficult to remediate the current damage with a long-term solution to the HVAC system.

It is nearly impossible to replace an entire HVAC system without causing a serious distraction to the student’s learning environment. The MTF also estimates the process of replacing the HVAC will take at least two years and they have already begun the process of planning. In the meantime, small fixes are being made within the vents and on ceiling tiles for classrooms that have been reported to the MTF by staff.

Until the HVAC system is completely replaced which will cost millions of dollars and extensive time, the school cannot be guaranteed to be mold-free.

Bottom Line: The Westhill community is outraged at the lack of communication and ongoing health risks due to mold in the school.



SURFACE MOLD Throughout Westhill surface mold can be found in many areas including insulation on pipes and ceiling tiles.

Photo by **Chloe Giuliani** / Managing Editor.

out a professional to explain the documents, most of the Westhill community is unable to understand this data.

“I know that it is not in the entire school, but those rooms affected by it have students and teachers alike afraid to attend class,” Mixael Cordova (’21) said.

Students and teachers have been falling ill with numerous cases of asthma and other respiratory issues as well as intense headaches, being the most common complaint among the stu-

ulty members reported having no symptoms at all.

According to *The Stamford Advocate*, over 90 teachers in six Stamford Public Schools have claimed workers’ compensation due to mold-related issues.

High absence rates of both students and teachers has resulted in educational time not being fully utilized, which negatively affects students and their future grades. The lack of communication in the district has also sparked outrage in students, faculty, and parents.

It is frustrating to not feel healthy and to think of all that needs to be done to get rid of the mold and [everyone] wondering what needs to happen in order to fix it,” Mr. Riveles, physical education teacher, said.

Mold thrives in moist environments which allows the spores to continue reproducing and growing exponentially to other parts of the school. Mold in the school has been mostly found in ceiling tiles, on pipes, or in areas where there have been water leaks.

Mock Trial working their way to the top



DEBATING TO THE END The Mock Trial team were hard at work during their first competition at Stamford's courthouse competing against Sacred Heart and Staples.

Photos contributed by **Lexi Boccuzzi** / Reporter.

Sam Harris
Reporter

This December, the Westhill Mock Trial team won their first competition of the season going against Sacred Heart and Staples.

Mock Trial is an extracurricular offered at Westhill involving the rehearsal of legal scenarios and competing against other high schools in the area.

Every school year, Civics First, a non-profit organization in Connecticut releases a mock case to all high school Mock Trial teams. Each case purposefully does not supply the final verdict.

This year the team has been practicing since September, and their first competition was at the end of November.

Each team must split into a plaintiff and defense team. Lawyers and witnesses are then equally divided between the two teams.

Leading up to the meet, the team must master their side's argument. The students build their cross examinations and briefings ensuring their points are as strong as possible. The two teams face off against one another to scope the level of difficulty to expect during the competitions.

Both have to win their cases in order to move on to the next round. Mock Trial

operates giving only one chance to each team. If either the plaintiff or defense lose their round, both are automatically eliminated.

"Our defense competes against another school's plaintiff and our plaintiff competes against another school's defense. It is not a matter of who wins the 'case' since there is no final verdict; it

These judges critique the team on multiple factors such as lawyers' opening and closing statements and how well the lawyers and witnesses do on direct and cross examination.

All of their meets are held in real courtrooms, and this past competition took place at the downtown Stamford Courthouse.

"After the recent competition, the team sat down to discuss what we thought about each case. It is critical that during the cases we take notes on the other team and our performance to help get feedback to work off of so that we can enhance our own performance in the next round."

—Divya Gada ('20)

is whichever team gets the most points," Emma Sawch ('19) said.

In this round, Westhill scored the most points by a tribunal of judges and proceeded on to the next round.

"There are three lawyers and three witnesses per team with the main goal to convince the tribunal of judges that you have a better case," Marcello Staiano ('19) said.

With this win, the team will be moving on to quarterfinals. This was only their first competition, but considering how fast paced each match is, and how easy it is to be eliminated, the team benefits from fewer competitions, assuming they continue to win.

Westhill was the only team from Stamford to qualify. To achieve that, the team practiced every week with three

hour practices alongside Mrs. Telesco, their advisor and school psychologist.

All of their competitors travel from anywhere in Fairfield County and the farther the team progresses, the wider the area of Connecticut will be invited.

During those three hours, the team ran through the case repeatedly making sure there were no loopholes the opposing team could take advantage of.

"We are like a perfectly-oiled machine, we keep going until we cannot go any further," Staiano ('19) said.

The team will continue with their long practices in order to hopefully progress into semi-finals. Their next meet is in early January.

"After the recent competition, the team sat down to discuss what we thought about each case. It is critical that during the cases we take notes on the other team and our performance to help get feedback to work off of so that we can enhance our own performance in the next round," Divya Gada ('20) said.

Captains Lexi Boccuzzi ('20) and Hannah Nekritz ('19) also work to maintain a strong social media presence to remind Westhill of all of Mock Trial's accomplishments. Follow @westhill-mocktrial on Instagram to see more pictures from their practices and competitions and to follow their progress.

BRIEFS

PSAT Hispanic Recognition

Every year, two percent of all Hispanic juniors who participate in the PSAT are recognized for their outstanding scores.

This year, Katie Gaia ('19) and Zach Hatzis ('19) were among the two percent who won the award.

"I was recognized for being in the top percentage of Hispanic / Latino students in the country for my PSAT score. It was an incredible honor considering how selective they are, and it was nice to be recognized for all the effort I put into the test," Gaia ('19) said.

This academic honor is not considered a scholarship, but it can be included on college applications and resumes.

Teen Vision Art Winners

The Silvermine Arts Center in New Canaan offers opportunities to art students of all ages.

This year Westhill art teachers came together to select students portraying determination and skill in order to have their art portrayed in the Teen Visions Art Show.

In early November, three Westhill students were awarded based on their spectacular work. Rou Bing Liao ('20) and Luis Gallegos ('20) both placed first in separate categories. Tamar Frydman ('19) placed second place for her mixed media piece.

Liao was awarded for her ink piece and Gallegos was awarded for his 3D paper collage.

"It was a little surprising because I had not done art in quite a while. When I entered and won first place, I felt really proud of myself. It was a really big accomplishment for me," Gallegos said.

"I am so happy that I got this award. It is such an honor and I did not expect it at all," Frydman said.

Hypnotist comes to Westhill

On December 20, Westhill hosted their first hypnotism show since 2013. Comedy hypnotist Brian Eslick showcased his talent on the Westhill stage.

He has previously been featured on well-known websites such as BuzzFeed, performed for companies such as AT&T, and is currently touring high schools on the East Coast.

Senior Class President Sam Essensfeld invited anyone and everyone to come and enjoy a night of fun, excitement, and hypnotism.

Eslick was able to successfully hypnotize 11 students. These students were instructed to laugh, cry, howl, dance, and much more.

The show began at 7:00 p.m. and all profits from the ten dollar tickets went to the Senior Class.

Viking of the Month showcases Westhill leadership

Sara Gatz
Staff Writer

Viking of the Month is making an appearance at Westhill again this school year.

Every month, faculty and students are able to nominate fellow teachers and students that display academic excellence, civic responsibility, and personal growth.

These individuals are nominated once their peers fill out an online questionnaire. Questions on the form include: What has this individual done to receive this honor and how do they support Westhill pride?

The form can be found on the school's website and it is generally sent to everyone's school email.

After all the nominations have been collected, faculty discuss and vote on who is the most deserving of the award.

Each month, at least one student and one staff member is awarded Viking of the Month.

"Last year the Spirit Committee was formed and one of the initiatives

discussed was Viking of the Month. I thought it would bring spirit to the school and would be something great to be involved in, so I decided to run it," Ms. Jeffries, Agriscience teacher, said.

November's Vikings of the Month were Mrs. Porter-Collins (PC), Mr. Milas, Chloe Giulini ('20), and Madi Cortell ('19).

"It is probably the one thing I am most proud of in my years as an educator. I was humbled and honored and did not expect it at all. It was most meaningful because your students and colleagues voted on it and it shows how much you are appreciated," PC, Agriscience teacher, said.

PC was nominated by other teachers who said her open-mindedness and Viking spirit were unlike any other.

All nominees were informed of their win the same day. They all walked into the Finch office with an anonymous note saying to meet at 7:45 a.m. the following morning. It was only then that Principal Rinaldi informed them of their win.

"I really did not expect it, to be

honest. It was cool to see that my peers thought of me as someone who does good things for others and our school," Cortell said.

Cortell was nominated because her peers view her as someone who is always helping younger students on the field and always being there if someone has a question.

Giulini was nominated for her help in organizing the hygiene drive benefiting Hurricane Florence victims.

Nominations for December Viking of the Month were open from Monday, December 10 to December 21.

December's Viking of the Month can be expected to be announced after winter break in January, just before midterms.

Viking of the Month is an opportunity for those in the Westhill community to be recognized for their involvement in the school.

Nominating someone, whether it is nominating a peer who you think deserves it, a teacher you believe should earn more recognition, or any faculty member, strongly increases the spirit of all students and staff here at Westhill.

VIKING OF THE MONTH



FOLLOW THE LEADER From left to right, November Vikings of the Month include Mr. Milas, Mrs. Porter-Collins, Chloe Giulini ('20) & Madi Cortell ('19).

Agriscience collects money with plant sale

Francesca Rubino-Chuckas
Staff Writer

Each year, the Agriscience (Ag) program hosts two plant sales, one in the winter and one in the spring.

On Saturday December 1 and 8 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., the program ran their winter plant sale.

Teachers, faculty members and students

in the area usually go annually to support the Ag program.

Local churches also bought many flower arrangements in bulk.

"Hand-tied holiday wreaths of varying sizes, table centerpieces, holiday plants, such as cyclamen, winterberry, and miniature lemon cypress trees were sold," Ms. Cipolla, Ag teacher said.

The plant sale was organized and ran by

all students of the Ag program as a requirement for FFA. Ag has been a part of FFA for many years, and they go on an annual field trip to a joint conference in Indiana.

"The FFA is a youth leadership organization that focuses on career leadership, career success, and personal growth. The students have to attend certain meetings and events to be in the program," Cipolla said.

All Ag students and teachers helped in some way or another, whether it was hanging flyers, handling the sales, or helping customers find the healthiest plant.

Students and staff start preparing early in order to make sure they are prepared for the sales.

Members were responsible for growing these plants and making sure they had a sufficient healthy amount of plants to sell.

"Preparation starts early, and it gets the whole chapter involved... students benefit [from the sale] because they get real experience working and interacting with customers, and all of the earnings go towards our scholarship fund," Sydney Steinberg ('19), Ag President, said.

Many varieties of plants were available at the sale, including flowers such as poinsettias in multiple colors.

"At the plant sale, the Ag students and teachers handmade wreaths, centerpieces,

wrapped poinsettias, and gave a bunch of tours of our beautiful and welcoming building," Ariana Frattaroli ('20) said.

Days prior to the sale, students set up tables, packaged the plants, advertised, and organized the plants. Ag students were also able to choose which shifts they worked at the sale.

At least 200 people showed up to buy their plants and they were estimated to make about 4,000-6,000 dollars. All of the proceeds were going to support their scholarship program.

"It is a great way to meet new people in the community, as well as get to know the families of fellow Ag students," Livia Mastrone ('20) said.

Ag did not sell out, but they ended with a limited amount of plants left. In order to get rid of the rest of the products and still make a profit, faculty were given a discounted price.

To continue supporting Ag and its members, attend their range of fun events including the spring plant sale.

Students can also donate white collared shirts and black dress pants for students who cannot afford to purchase these items themselves.

FFA members are excited to continue the tradition of the plant sale this spring and next year.



GROWING MONEY Ag President Sydney Steinberg ('19), Ag Sentinel Ries Allyn ('19) and Mrs. Porter-Collins holding some of this year's holiday plants.

Photo contributed by **Sydney Steinberg** / Contributor.

George H.W. Bush leaves legacy behind him

Leiny Otero
Staff writer

Former President George H.W. Bush passed away peacefully at the age of 94 on November 30. The following day, President Trump declared December 5 as a national day of mourning in order to honor the late president.

According to millercenter.org, Bush was one of the most qualified candidates to come into office. He had an extensive career in domestic policies and foreign affairs.

Bush served for eight years as the Vice President, and he used these communication skills in his single term of presidency.

According to CNN, Bush dedicated his life to serving others. He flew 58 combat missions for the Navy during World War II as well as being awarded multiple medals for his valor and bravery.

During this new national holiday, all flags were at half staff, and the U.S. Postal Service took the day off from deliveries.

"I can finally agree with something that the President has done. Making it a federal holiday to remember our former President is a great way to help many people appreciate their loved ones," Ryaisha Williamson ('19) said.

The executive order closed down Capitol Hill for the day, and all non-essential

employees had the day off unless they were involved with national security or defense.

"It is a good idea to have a day where everything is pretty much on hold. Even at school principal Rinaldi went on the loudspeaker to respectfully hold a moment of silence in honor of our former president," Danasha Gross ('19) said.

The New York Stock Exchange, Nasdaq, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average also shut down all trading for the day. Private banks stayed open, but the Federal Reserve Board of Governors in Washington D.C. remained closed.

Social security offices across the nation shut their doors but left their online services open for emergencies. The Supreme Court postponed hearings for a later date. All federal courts ordering for cases to be held the next day.

Lastly, the House of Representatives and Senate postponed any voting actions until the next Wednesday.

Many former U.S. world leaders went to the funeral to pay their respects. Former Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, and their spouses

spent their morning at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. along with many other family members of the late president.

Multiple people spoke at the funeral to remind attendees of the former president's achievements.

George W. Bush, H.W. Bush's son, gave an emotional eulogy at his father's funeral.

In order to memorialize Bush's years in service, Navy jets flew over Washington D.C. before his family took him to Texas to be buried.

The following school day, Westhill students took a moment out of their day to pay special tribute to the late president in a moment of silence.



Graphic by **Jason Zarrilli** / Viewpoint Editor.

Good Month Bad Month

Column by
Sanjana Nayak
& Jessica Matloub

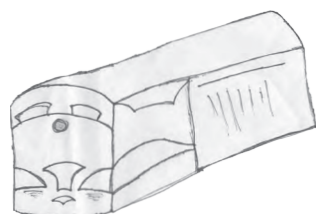


Good Month for...

Atlanta United Atlanta United surprised many soccer fans when they won the Major League Soccer (MLS) championship on December 8. Their 2-0 victory was unexpected for fans, considering the team only joined the MLS in 2017. A record crowd of 73,000 fans came out to watch the game. This game left the Portland Timbers devastated since they were hoping to win their second MLS championship. Atlanta has set high standards within the rest of their league.



School Districts The Trump administration has decided to modify Michelle Obama's school lunch program. This is due to the inability of some public schools to keep up with standards set, since it became a financial burden. Although this may have a negative impact on these students, the Trump administration states that with these modifications, students will be more pleased with their lunches. This new adjustment will also be financially flexible for all school administrations to work with.



Stamford Trains Over 22.9 million dollars has been allocated to improving the Stamford Transportation Center next year. These improvements include reconstruction of the elevators and escalators. 9.2 million dollars of the funds are from a federal grant and the rest of the money is from Governor Dannel Malloy. Proposals include a new track, elevators, escalators, and internal circulation. These renovations will increase the safety of the people and the functionality of the facility.

Bad Month for...

George H.W. Bush The 41st President of the United States passed away on November 30. Bush served as a pilot in the U.S. Navy, an Ambassador of the United Nations, and eventually President following his eight years as Vice President. His loyalty did not halt as he faced numerous health issues, including blood infections, chronic bronchitis, and vascular parkinsonism. Bush passed away at age 94 and leaves behind a lifetime of dedication to the U.S.



Michigan Six Michigan physicians have been charged with insurance fraud and unnecessarily prescribing opioids. The doctors have been charged with submitting false claims to health insurance companies and dividing the proceeds among themselves. From early 2013 until November, the doctors issued 13.2 million doses of popular opioids. This case was jointly investigated by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Inspector General, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI).



Uber After a self-driving Uber car struck and killed a pedestrian, the company has been under great duress. Even as the company faced scrutiny, its self-driving car technology has faced a handful of issues. The company is scheduled to appear on the New York Stock Exchange next year, but it has to profit this year to do so. The company lost one billion dollars in its most recent quarter. After promising to keep self-driving Ubers off roads, competitors have pushed ahead with similar projects.

Forensic crime scene bus returns to the Hill

Danielle Gleaton
Staff Writer

On December 4, Stamford Police Officer Caserta visited Westhill's forensic science classes to give a presentation regarding the importance of forensics and fingerprinting.

Forensics is key in helping officers and detectives solve crimes and prove innocence or guilt.

The presentation took place in both the media center and outside in the front of the school. Officer Caserta took students outside to show them the crime scene unit bus. In the bus were many of the forensic tools used during actual crime scenes. The bus allows materials to constantly be on hand for forensic analysis.

"As I walked onto the bus, I was shocked to see how big it was. It was incredibly cool," Michaela Depreta ('20) said.

Students from all forensics classes were encouraged to attend. These classes are taught by Mr. Otterspoor, Mrs. Grant, and Ms. Ritz.

This is the sixth year in a row that Officer Caserta visited the school and shared his professional expertise in the field.

Most of his presentation centered around the importance of forensic science in criminology and how exciting, but also demanding, the field can be.

Students who attended the presentation listened to Caserta's stories about his history in the field.

These stories, which came from Caserta's

own experiences as an officer, gave students a first hand point of view of what the job is like.

"That seems so interesting. I wish I could be in that class," Rachel Duffy ('21) said.

Officer Caserta gave his presentation over the course of two periods in the media center.

"I am looking forward to being in this class next semester. Hopefully the bus will be back for us all to see," Rebecca Alper ('20) said.

Part of the presentation included a live demonstration of the fingerprinting process and a discussion of the role it plays in forensics.

"We are grateful for the Stamford Police Department to take time out of their day to make meaningful connections with the community and our students," Grant said.



Graphic courtesy of commons.wikimedia.org.



SOLVING CRIME Forensic class students were able to look inside an actual crime scene bus, and get a glimpse into this demanding profession.

Photo contributed by **Mr. Otterspoor** / Contributor.

Food labeling: GMO or GM-no

Lexi Boccuzzi

Reporter

Genetic modification of biological organisms has been one of the most revolutionary scientific developments of the century. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are genetically altered to change one or many of the organisms' traits. This type of scientific research leads to larger, longer lasting products.

However, with these substantial benefits, many are concerned with the possible implications that the consumption of "unnatural" crops may have.

As a result, there is a pressing issue faced by both government legislatures and citizens of whether or not GM foods should be required to be labeled. Most arguments seem to point to the fact that the government should mandate for identification to be put on GM food products.

As American citizens, each individual has the right to be an educated consumer. This precedent has been set forth by the fact that food production companies held responsible for the labeling of common allergens.

"Even if there are no known reported affects [of GMOs] as of now, there could be in the future. It is the public's right to know what they are consuming and the potential risks that come with it. By

altering the DNA of these organisms we are essentially opening up a new can of worms, and the effects of this could be catastrophic," James Grosso ('21) said.

The U.S. is also very much behind the curve in terms of food regulation and mandates.

According to justlabelit.com, currently over 64 countries require GM food products to be labeled, including much of the developed world such as Italy, Great Britain and Australia.

This alone is evidence enough that the U.S. should follow the precedent set by the rest of the developed world and require the labeling of GMOs.

"GMOs should be labeled [because] consumers should have the option to be informed. As fairly new technology, concerns such as allergies have not been addressed. Someone who has never been allergic to a particular food item may suddenly react depending on what the product was spliced with," Catherine Caragine ('19) said.

The U.S. has slowly been moving towards putting stricter labeling guidelines in place for GM products.

According to theatlantic.com, many states like Vermont are also putting more restrictive labeling laws into place that require all products to be identified with their GMO status.

Molly Cannon

Reporter

Although the average person likely consumes them everyday, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) still remain under intense scepticism throughout many parts of the world.

Many organizations such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the World Health Organization, the European Union, and others are in agreement that GM foods do not pose a greater risk than any other type of food. Still, its health effects are often questioned.

The debate continues regarding their safety and place on our plates. GMOs are defined as being organisms whose genetic makeup has been modified, usually to make certain food items have a longer shelf life or be pest resistant.

The commercial selling of GMOs came in the mid-1990s when, unsuccessfully, a tomato was genetically modified to delay becoming ripe. Since then, many products have been engineered to satisfy specific needs dictated by the market and higher-yielding growing practices.

According to scientificamerican.org, it is estimated that in the United States, roughly 70 percent of all processed food,

Dan Charles, a food and agriculture correspondent for npr.org, discussed one of the earlier national bills passed in 2016 requiring all food products to have some sort of labeling.

However, it was not in the favor of most pro-labeling activists due to the fact that it allowed companies to use QR codes as an outlet for a consumer accessing the labels.

"The rest of the world has been on top of food regulation and health safety for a long time. America has been behind for a while, and they need to catch up particularly in the way of GMOs. It is the government's responsibility to allow U.S. citizens to look out for their own health safety, and until GMO labeling is mandated this will not be the case," Ellie Balcastri ('20) said.

Scientific evidence regarding GMOs has been up in the air since their discovery. However, with the health effects of GMOs aside, the government mandating GMO labeling on food products is critical in protecting the citizens' ability to be an informed consumer.

With more and more legislation being passed, this labeling will quickly become a national reality visible in every grocery store around the country.

bought and sold, is composed of some GM ingredients.

It is not a necessity to label GMO products in the U.S. Unlike products that contain possible allergens and must alert the consumer of such, GMOs do not elicit such life-threatening reactions. Food that does not pose more of a threat than all other types of food should not have to be necessarily labeled.

"Every product that we consume is going to contain some type of GMO. People are still going to consume the product no matter what," Deanna Gladstone ('20) said.

Adding labels to GMO products will not be the solution that those concerned are looking for. Labeling products that contain GM products will do nothing for the average consumer but create more fear than conversation.

A private company electing to label their products that contain GMOs is different than the government mandating that every company must.

"Not all GMOs are necessarily bad. There is an unfair, negative, connotation surrounding the phrase 'genetically modified,' but many of these modifications are meant to improve the product. Increasing shelf life, bettering nutrition analysis, and altering taste are just some of the benefits

of GMOs," Rachel Mensah ('20) said.

Creating unnecessary fear surrounding the safeness of GMOs could be detrimental to the progression of genetic modification research and the public perception of them.

Humans have been modifying their food since the beginning of agriculture. Unnatural selection has, for generations, allowed farmers to select their highest-producing livestock and breed them to produce more high-producing animals. These animals that have been selectively bred for their traits are considered by some as being GMOs.

This is because their genetics were purposely manipulated by an outside force. Farmers should not have to disclose every piece of information before releasing their products to the public.

Products that contain GMOs should not have to be labeled as such unless the individual company elicits to do so in the U.S. GMOs pose almost no health risks compared to the other food individuals consume.

Adding labels to GM products would only harm an already damaged public perception of GMOs. Although transparency is important, when it involves the food that we consume, there is a question as to how being informed may have the ability to become being paranoid overtime.

Graphics by **Ryka ChandraRaj** / Graphic Director.



Benefits of banning plastic in school cafeterias

Shaira Sunbeam
Staff Writer

In recent years, many cities, organizations, and companies have advocated for the ban of single use plastics. The most popular and recent company that took this initiative was Starbucks. The company introduced their strawless lids for cold drinks in hopes to cut down on the use of plastic straws.

Westport and Greenwich, CT have already banned plastic bags, and include an extra charge for those who want to use any of their plastic products.

Stamford has been making strides towards becoming eco-friendly like our neighbors. With the same plastic bag ban starting in 2019, hopefully in full effect by 2020.

According to CNN, the European Commission has also begun the process of banning single use plastics and they hope to be free of products such as straws, cups, and utensils by 2021.

This will not only decrease their pollution, but it will save them between 295 to 793 million dollars per year.

This is a vital step towards helping our environment reach a healthier place. Although our environment can never fully recover, there are steps individuals can take to prevent any more damage.

According to *The New York Times*, plastic makes up 80 percent of our marine litter, and there are nearly 800 species that can be harmed by the plastic individuals are depositing into the oceans.

Not only are we harming aquatic habitats, but we are also jeopardizing our own health.

However, we should not feel discouraged because there is so much that can be done to fix this damage. Similar to Greenwich

and Westport, Westhill can put steps in place that will allow for less use of plastic.

Instead of relying on the school's supply of plastic utensils and foam trays, students would feel obligated to bring their own if Westhill no longer supplied these endless products.

Rather than serving lunches on foam trays, we could provide reusable ones. The current trays being used are foam and are

thrown away right after their use. If Westhill switched to reusable trays, there would be a dramatic decrease in waste.

Another option is bringing back the spork, which is half spoon, half fork. This would be cutting out an entire utensil.

According to *The Washing-*

ton Post, however, sporks were replaced in many schools in 2015 due to their "difficulty to use."

This plan does not mean students should have to bring their own lunches everyday, but it means they can eat their food with reusable uten-

choose to start bringing their own lunch everyday, that would just be a bonus.

"It would help save the en-

vironment, and we always need to do that. However, if they really want to help save the environment, they can start buying bamboo or even biodegradable [utensils]," Katelyn Henderson ('20) said.

Imagining the amount of plastic that gets thrown away everyday at this school is unfathomable. Students use their forks for 25 minutes or some may even take one and not

use it at all. There is so much room for improvement, and this is just one step that can be taken towards making our school eco-friendly.

"I would be a supporter since it would reduce the amount of plastic waste we produce as a school," Rachel Mensah ('20)

said. I acknowledge the fact that eliminating the use of plastics in cafeterias is incredibly difficult, but these adjustments would prove to be very beneficial in the long run. These changes would help the school and global environment tremendously.

However, many students and faculty are opposed to this idea because of how difficult it would be to completely eradicate plastic in our lunch routines.

"That is a pointless and idiotic thing to be removed out of all the other things that could be," Lisa Jagodzinski ('20) said.

By removing utensils, there is a chance that some students would be left unable to eat their lunches.

The hassle of bringing their own utensils to school everyday would be incredibly exhausting for students.

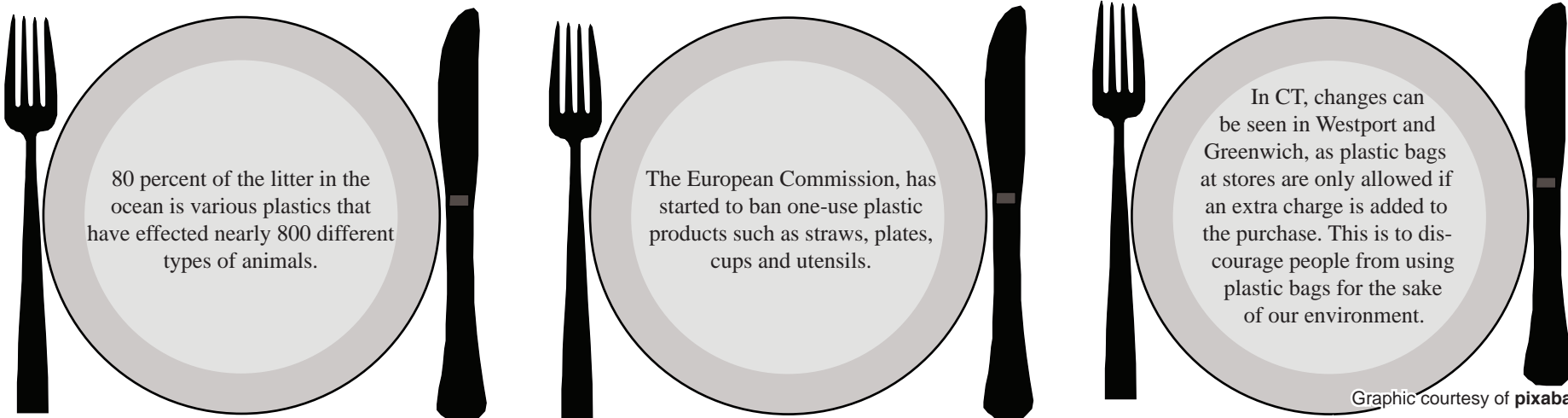
However, many students already make it a point to pack their own lunches everyday.

"In an ideal world, that would be great. However the logistics could be very difficult. It would involve changing a culture in a school," Mrs. Grant, science teacher, said.

The main point is that there is no reason Westhill should not try to become more eco-friendly. This would lessen the school's carbon foot print in the end. Even if this proves to be a challenge for many at first, eventually it would become just a part of the student's daily routine.

If Westhill adopts this idea and puts it into place, our school can feel proud for making it a point to help our environment.

Ultimately, the shift into a more eco-friendly environment is meant to propagate the idea to students about the urgency of the decrease in plastic usage.



CT driving restrictions on teenagers

Franki Spinelli Mastrone
Reporter

Driving restrictions vary from state to state, with some holding stricter laws than others. CT seems to have some of the most restrictive and unnecessary driving restrictions in the entire country.

According to CT's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), until the permit holder is granted their license, they may only practice with a qualified trainer, a license holder of four years who is 20 or older, or a guardian.

Once receiving a license, these restrictions continue, but the student is now allowed to drive alone. It is not until the second six months that immediate family other than parents can be in the car with them as well.

"If you have a sibling or immediate family, you should not have to wait six months to drive them, especially if you both go to the same school," Emma Ostrovsky ('20) said.

Once a year with the license has passed, the teens are legally granted to drive with anyone in their car.

Most students know the rules, but the extent at which they follow these rules is questionable, and varies from teen

to teen.

"It is stupid that you have to wait a year to have people in the car. I think it should be six months," Madison Mahar ('20) said.

It is safe to say that this is a general consensus among Westhill students and teens all over the state. We understand that these laws are not meant to damper the fun, but they are meant to keep us safe.

Still, they are wildly inconvenient and impractical.

There is no point in having a

car if a teen can barely use it. It is not just about driving friends.

Many student's parents work late hours and rely on their teenage children with cars to pick up younger siblings or run errands.

It is not fair for these families to have to wait six months until their child can start helping out by driving.

Despite this common attitude toward CT's excessive driving restrictions, some students do understand why they are in place.

"If you look at the statistics, nine times out of ten, a driver's first year of accidents will happen when other people are in the car. So the reason why you have to wait a year until you can have other passengers in the car is because it makes you practice your good driving habits before you have a liability in your car," Divya Gada ('20) said.

According to *The New York Times*, although this statistic is true, it is not specific to teen drivers. Sometimes people wait until they are much older to ap-

ply for a permit and continue the process of getting their license.

These individuals are just as new to the driving process as young teens, and they are just as likely to get into an accident.

Perhaps this is because they have taken driving lessons and also they realize the severity of this new adult responsibility they have taken on.

Although CT's driving restrictions for 16 and 17-year-olds are ultimately in place for our safety, they are excessive, and many do not follow them.



Photo courtesy of [wiki.common.org](#).

Why the lip dub should be biannual

Alexandra Watkinson
Online Executive Editor

Since Principal Rinaldi was hired last school year, the Westhill community has seen a noticeable spike in school spirit activities, including a Teacher vs. Student Basketball game, the creation of a Westhill app with rewards for those who go to school events, and the Viking of the Month awards.

One of most notable additions to the school since Rinaldi's hire has been the introduction of the Lip Dub.

When the Lip Dub was first announced during the fall of 2017, many students were excited about the opportunity to participate in a video promoting

the entirety of the school.

The first video was met with acclaim from parents and students, eventually earning 160,000 views across many social media platforms.

However, the excitement of the Lip Dub faded during its second year.

"Making it every other year makes it more special, however, I am sure many [students would] be upset because seniors may want to participate in the lip dub [during] their last year [of high school], but I do really think it should be every other year," Austin Tovar ('22) said.

Other students explained that the Lip Dub this year featured the same students seemingly over and over rather than

a variety.

"The Lip Dub did feature a lot of the same people as they did last year, and I think it should be every other year, just so it shows other kids during their lowerclassmen and upperclassman years," Ellie Balestriere ('20) said.

While the enthusiasm from the students shown on screen is enticing, the fact that the same people are seen over and over shows that maybe not all students were excited to appear in the video.

"This year, I would say it represented the school somewhat, but not in the best way. I am glad that there was a song in Spanish for the kids who only speak Spanish at this school, but

I feel that there was not much [done] for specific clubs," Tovar said.

A biannual lip dub would promote every club and student wanting to be featured, giving everyone an equal shot, as there would not be a comparison to the lip dub the year directly beforehand.

At this point, it is not a lip dub, but instead a music video promoting the school. There is nothing wrong with a video to make Westhill students excited about their school, but the excessive length of both videos draws viewers away, especially when it feels like the same students and similar songs from the year before are featured.

If the video were biannual,

the length could be kept the same without making it boring.

Some students believe that an annual lip dub is good the way it is.

"[Having one] every year is fine. [I think] it is pretty good," Kobe Givens ('21) said.

While students love participating in the Lip Dub, making it a more rare occasion would make it more special and enjoyable for the viewers.

"I am down for every other year because I think that for it to stay fresh and stay relevant, it should be less often," Abby Lupinacci ('19) said.

The Lip Dub is an enjoyable event for all involved, but too much of a good thing can spoil the fun.

Student dues should be a student's choice

Senior dues have always been a required payment for seniors at Westhill.

At the minimum, a senior dues package consists of a cap and gown, a class t-shirt and other expenses concerning prom and graduation. Together, this costs 60 dollars.

Other packages offer the initial expenses along with a hoodie at 80 dollars, a yearbook at 150 dollars, or both at 170 dollars.

For students who do not want the other options, or do not want to spend this much money on Westhill apparel and yearbooks, it is possible to just buy a cap and gown for 30 dollars flat.

Although 30 dollars is not a lot to some people, it is not advocated enough throughout the school that the minimum payment for senior is not actually 60 dollars.

It is also not advocated that financial aid is available to help students that would benefit from using that 30 dollars elsewhere.

Some students are not even aware of the different packages or payment options available.

"They are way too expensive and they do not offer multiple plans for families in different financial situations," Kathryn Kopec ('19) said.

Also, a portion of the 60 dollars in the initial package is used toward donations for after-prom, which is not fair for the students who do not plan on going to prom at all.

Although that may not be a large quantity of students, that price should be included in a prom ticket rather than senior dues. Walking at graduation seems like a bigger priority than having an after-prom at Westhill.

"The reason our senior dues were so high is that we had attempts at fundraising, but they [often] got cancelled," Grady Orr ('19) said.

Some students might not be comfortable asking for help paying their senior dues. It

should become more known to the student population that if they need the help, it is available.

"We have fundraising and we have also received some donations amongst the staff. There are definitely ways to help people who cannot afford it. People have set up payment plans for us, so pay us when you can. We have fully covered certain students if there is a need for that," Mrs. Grant, senior class advisor and science teacher, said.

If students are just not paying their dues and missing multiple deadlines, Mrs. Grant or Mrs. Miraballes, the other senior class advisor, will track the students down.

Consequences for not paying senior dues range from not getting a prom ticket to not walking at graduation, to eventually getting their diploma revoked.

Many students at Westhill have older siblings that have already graduated. In this case, it is not always necessary for that family to have another graduation gown.

Prior to this year, Westhill bought all of their graduation caps and gowns from a company call Jostens. Jostens would have different gowns every year so that gowns from prior years could not be used again, in order to ensure a profit every year.

For some families, this makes graduation for each of their children double or triple the price depending on how many kids they have.

"Any robes that were in the past you definitely cannot use because they are going to be completely different this year," Grant said.

However, this year, Westhill is switching the company that they buy the gowns from to Herff Jones. This new company does not charge customers every year for new gowns, which will hopefully allow future family or friends to reuse gowns. This will allow for students to not have to pay to walk at

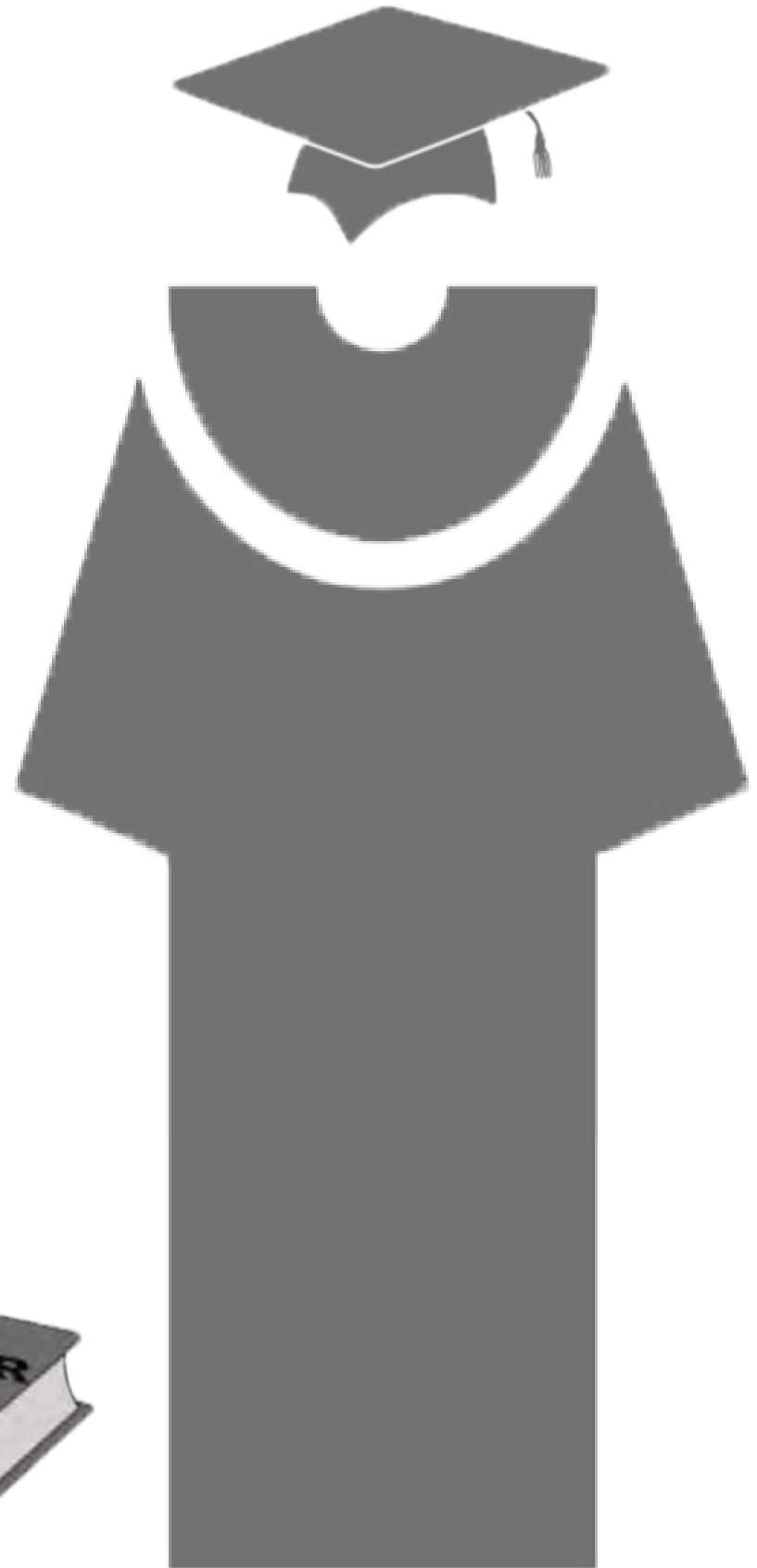
graduation.

Caps, however, are a different story because it is somewhat of a graduation tradition for seniors to decorate their cap. These are usually a representation of the university they will be attending or one of their interests.

If a student is not interested in partaking in this, then it would be reasonable to try to rent a cap, but in this instance, caps and gowns do not always come together.

Overall, senior dues should be based on a rental system so that students who do not want to keep their gown can return it without having to pay for it.

While there are multiple payment plans and there is transparency as to what is included in them, it should also be more thoroughly advocated throughout Westhill along with the fact that a cap and gown can easily be bought individually.



The China-U.S. temporary trade truce

Husayn Biggs

Staff Writer

A trade war is when two countries try to harm the other's economy through trade tariffs or restricted quotas which increases tension between the two. This is a current issue between China and the United States.

The trade war began on July 6, 2018, when China accused the U.S. of starting, "the largest trade war in economic history," according to *BBC*.

"There have been [disagreements]... As far as our relation with trade or different countries, we cannot really evaluate this until years down the road. I am indifferent at the moment. We need to wait and see how this plays out," Mr. McFillin, social studies teacher, said.

So far this year, the U.S. has imposed tariffs on a total of 250 billion dollars' worth of Chinese products. These tariffs were imposed in three rounds: the first

two placed 25 percent tariffs on 50 billion dollars' worth of Chinese products, and the third, which caused a sharp escalation in the conflict, imposed tariffs on Chinese products worth 200 billion dollars.

"The U.S. has to trade with China because they are an essential part of our economy and [many] of our imports are from China," Sammy Spingola ('19) said.

However, China retaliated in the conflict by, "placing fees on a wide range of U.S. products, including scrap aluminum, sparkling wine, and apples," according to *usatoday.com*.

President Trump justifies these actions by claiming that they will, "stop the unfair transfers of American technology and intellectual property to China and protect jobs," according to *BBC*.

"It is [ridiculous] because trading is what we have been doing for a long time," Maynor

Ramirez ('20) said.

Fast-forwarding to December, a number of things have happened, including the agreement of a 90-day trade truce between the two countries.

On December 1, President Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping forged the temporary truce over dinner in Buenos Aires, Argentina, according to *The New York Times*.

The truce was described as "very successful" by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, who added, "the two sides proposed a series of constructive plans on how to properly resolve existing differences and problems."

However, it did not take long before this peace was threatened. On the same night of the truce, Meng Wanzhou, Chief Financial Officer of Huawei, a Chinese tech company that sells phones and other technology globally, was arrested in Vancouver, Canada. Her charges are

based on a violation of the U.S. trade sanctions against Iran, according to *CNN*.

The company is not popular in the U.S. According to *CNN*, "intelligence agencies in the U.S. have said American citizens should not use Huawei phones, and U.S. government agencies are banned from buying the company's equipment."

Wanzhou is believed to have aided Huawei in circumventing U.S. sanctions by saying that a Huawei subsidiary was a separate company to financial institutions.

This arrest may have an impact on whether the U.S. continues with the trade truce or vetoes it. On December 12, Wanzhou and her father Ren Zhengfei, Huawei's founder, were given ten million dollar bail.

"As part of the deal, Wanzhou must remain in British Columbia, provide a supervisor with telephone numbers, live at a 5.6 million dollar home that was se-

lected as her residence, and stay indoors from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. every day. She will have to surrender her passports and be under the watch of a security company, while wearing an ankle bracelet," reported *theverge.com*.

Canada will not extradite Wanzhou to the U.S. unless the country gives valid evidence to support the crime she committed. If she is not brought to the U.S. within 60 days, Canada will therefore release Wanzhou.

Though the trade truce appeared to provide some temporary relief for China and the U.S., the arrest of Huawei's CFO caused a ripple in the countries' calm waters. No permanent resolution is in sight for this trade war, unless the countries' leaders can reach a lasting agreement on the issue. According to *scmp.com*, U.S. and China trade negotiators will meet again to work on the logistics of the truce.

July 6, 2018

China accuses the U.S. of starting "the largest trade war in economic history" with new tariffs on Chinese products.

December 1, 2018

China and U.S. leaders agree to a 90-day trade truce.

December 12, 2018

Huawei's CFO was granted ten million dollar bail and 60 days for the U.S. to give valid evidence before releasing her.

September 24, 2018

China placed five percent additional duties (taxes) on U.S. products.

December 1, 2018

Huawei CFO is arrested for violating U.S. trade sanctions against Iran.

January 2019

U.S. and China trade negotiators will meet again to work on the logistics of the truce.

The migrant caravan crisis

Madison Thibodeau
Staff Writer

The images from the Mexico-United States border are striking: thousands of migrants from Central America have been moving northward for months, seeking asylum and citizenship in the United States. Now that they are at the border, the story has begun to take on a more human face.

The media has been buzzing since March when news broke out about the migrant caravan making way to the United States from Honduras, Guatemala, and other Central American countries, in which all participants left their homes, jobs, country, and most of their belongings to participate.

Since there is not a single organized group, the exact number of migrants is unclear, but United Nations officials estimate about 7,200 migrants.

Immigration has been a recurring problem in the United States for decades, and the policies in regard to immigration issues have been altered several times.

Now that there is a mass

influx of people headed to the United States just following the midterm elections, many politicians and other Americans have found this to be an important topic to address.

According to theatlantic.com, President Trump has called the approaching group, “a national emergency [and] vowed to cut tens of millions of dollars in aid to three Central American countries, and will possibly cancel a recent trade deal with Mexico if the caravan is not stopped before it reaches the United States.”

The Trump administration has been dealing with immigration and family separation since Trump first stepped into office, as it was a very large component of his campaign, along with the Mexico-United States border wall that is beginning to break ground.

Most of these migrants are coming to seek asylum. In fact, Honduras leads the world as the country with the highest murder rate, according to washingtonexaminer.com.

“The country is home to 8.25 million people and has

reported 90.4 murders for every 100,000 residents,” as stated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

“It is a complex issue because it could cause a strain on the economy if the US allows everyone in. There are people who do not come to contribute anything good to the country. But some people do come to work and have a better future than they would have had in their country,” Yennifer Rico (’19) said.

José Luis Laparra Calderón, Mayor of Huixtla, Mexico, said to *The New York Times*, “these people are fleeing from the poverty of their countries. These are working people. They are not bringing bombs. They want to improve their lives.”

Jobs and population are another crucial aspect of the economy and society in the United States.

“Many of the people in the caravan come for a better and more secure future because there are more jobs here in the States. But if too many people come, then there would be less jobs available,” Kevin Perez (’20) said.

Mayor Calderón stood in the center of the town, watching the hundreds of migrants bustle around in search for food, water, and shelter.

“We want to make their passage through here as agreeable for them as possible,” Mayor Calderón said.

The New York Times also reported that, “some [migrants] plan to apply for asylum in the United States, while others know that their only chance of entry is the illegal way.”

The topic of immigration is becoming increasingly controversial all over the United States, especially due to the news reports that came out about separation of families.

“A country has to have an immigration policy where people enter the country legally. You cannot have people come in and not follow our immigration laws. [Even though] people come because of crime, corrupt government, whatever the reason, it cannot be tolerated. I do not mean do it in a cruel way, but it dislocates jobs, it dislocates neighborhoods and it cannot be tolerated,” Mr. White, social studies teacher, said.

Currently, migrants stand at the border in Tijuana, Mexico, waiting for their opportunity to seek asylum, where it has been reported that tear gas was used on them.

According to *The Washington Post*, “President Trump defended the use of tear gas on Monday [November 26], telling reporters it was deployed in response to ‘tremendous violence’ during the confrontation with authorities.”

“The accepted use of nonlethal force, also used by the Obama Administration in 2013, prevented further injury to agents and a mass illegal rush across the border,” Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen stated in *The Washington Post* article.

There is no saying how long the migrants will hold their ground, as some have already chosen to settle in Mexico or retreated back to their countries. It is also uncertain whether or not they will be allowed asylum or how long that process will take.

However, this issue is forcing the Federal government to take a stance on the immigration issues that the country faces.



SEEKING REFUGE Migrants from Latin American countries bring families in their travels, stopping at designated locations along the way.



PILING UP Bridges become congested as thousands of migrants travel northward to the Mexico-United States border.



UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS For many families, the trip is unsuccessful and they are unable to complete their journey to the United States.

Healthcare in the United States

Marta Zach
Staff Writer

Healthcare in the United States has been a topic of vast debate in politics, the media, and even everyday conversation. In order to understand where the controversy might stem from, the current state of healthcare and its issues must be considered.

The United States' medical care is much different from other nations. Unlike its first-world counterparts, where national healthcare systems are in place, the United States' capitalist economy hinders any such establishment. This system of privatized healthcare suits some and enrages others.

"America's absence of a national healthcare system shows a lack of respect for basic human rights, which should be the government's first priority in running a country," Bintou Bane ('20) said.

When President Obama took office in 2009, he worked on various healthcare programs, including the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), dubbed Obamacare.

This act expanded on Medicaid and made healthcare more affordable and accessible for low-income families. Millions of Americans signed up for insurance and it is now estimated that Obamacare covers over eleven million people.

Obamacare also covered those with pre-existing conditions, who had been denied healthcare in years past. Furthermore, it guaranteed maternal care, which once was an additional cost for women.

"All individuals, young and old, should have access to healthcare," Divyaj Parekh ('19) said.

Obamacare has benefitted millions since its establishment, and many worry about its future, considering Trump's intentions to repeal and replace it.

According to npr.org, Obamacare previously mandated the purchase of healthcare. If this mandate went unnoticed by citizens, a tax penalty

was applied. Eventually, this requirement was voided, forming an argument on whether or not the entire act should be removed.

To this day, despite programs and acts such as Obamacare, America lacks a national healthcare system.

In addition to the lack of a national healthcare system, America is facing a health crisis. Not only is the medical system poorly established, it fails to keep up with America's deteriorating health.

According to hhs.gov, 78 million Americans are obese, and obesity-related health issues cost over 190 billion dollars annually.

"More than 133 million Americans, or 45 percent of the population, have at least one chronic condition," according to fightchronicdisease.org.

Additionally, as stated by nami.org, one in five American adults will experience a mental health problem in a given year. Therefore, the healthcare system that already falls short of satisfactory must now keep up with the worsening health of Americans.

The negative impact of this deficit is illustrated by stories in the news. A man named Shane Patrick Boyle died in 2017 after his GoFundMe page to buy insulin came up 50 dollars short.

The cost of life-saving drugs is bearing a burden on many U.S. individuals.

According to thehill.com, insufficient health care is proving to be extremely costly to people in the nation.

In 2009, the Center of American Progress estimated that a lack of health insurance is costing the U.S. hundreds of billions of dollars per year.

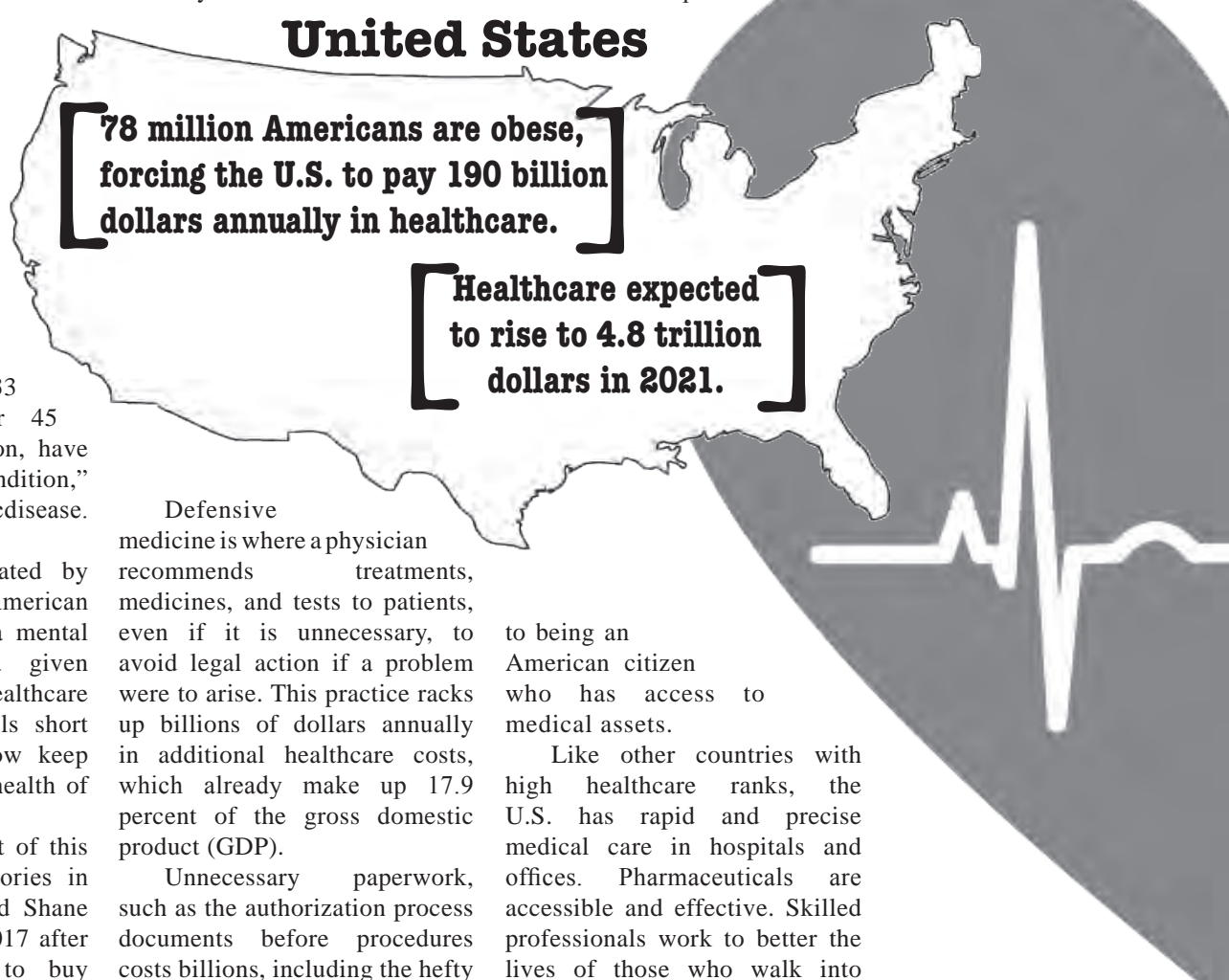
The majority of Americans have insurance, but costs are rising as quality decreases. Private insurance premiums are rising, as are out-of-pocket costs. It is reported that the cost of medical care is a leading cause of bankruptcy.

While the countless problems that surround the issue of healthcare might seem insurmountable, there are ways to rewrite the system of healthcare in the United States.

Thehill.com notes numerous means of reducing the costs of healthcare, which could end up saving billions of dollars annually.

it towards causes like public education or infrastructure. 750 billion dollars is a lot of money, and I know plenty of ways that it can be used to benefit Americans," Rachel Mensah ('20) said.

Even though the healthcare system in the United States has been under fire and subject to vast criticism, there are various benefits and upsides



Defensive medicine is where a physician recommends treatments, medicines, and tests to patients, even if it is unnecessary, to avoid legal action if a problem were to arise. This practice racks up billions of dollars annually in additional healthcare costs, which already make up 17.9 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Unnecessary paperwork, such as the authorization process documents before procedures costs billions, including the hefty price tag for lost time. According to a study, physicians and doctors spend approximately half their time doing paperwork and logging information.

A study on healthaffairs.org reported that if America followed the healthcare administration in Canada, which saves time by cutting back on such paperwork, 27.6 billion dollars per year could be saved.

According to meritaged.com, by 2021, spending on healthcare is expected to rise to 4.8 trillion dollars from its current 2.6 trillion, and it is estimated that 750 billion dollars of that is wasted.

"Instead of wasting all that money, we should allocate

to being an American citizen who has access to medical assets.

Like other countries with high healthcare ranks, the U.S. has rapid and precise medical care in hospitals and offices. Pharmaceuticals are accessible and effective. Skilled professionals work to better the lives of those who walk into offices and hospitals, as precisely and aptly as possible.

According to a study on thelancet.com, American men and women have greater chances of recovery and survival after cancer, a heart attack, or a stroke than Europeans.

Despite the various drawbacks of United States' healthcare, patients are receiving top-notch care from qualified practitioners.

Regardless of whether the United States decides to adopt a universal healthcare system, there will likely always be strengths and weaknesses to the country's healthcare system.

What type would you

Cheap with average benefits
41%

Free with high taxes
33%

vs. the rest of the world

Katie Gaia
Managing Editor

Access to healthcare is a human necessity. However, people in countries across the world have varying qualities of healthcare, some not having access to any.

of the nation's poor healthcare system was their civil war from 1991 to 2002 that ruined the nation and left medical facilities, "looted and destroyed," reported rtnews.com.

As the country attempts to rebuild itself after the war, it struggles with the lack of

to theguardian.com.

The country continues to recover from their civil war through initiatives like the Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission, as its poor healthcare system has vastly hurt the population.

Conversely, Denmark, a country in Western Europe, is recognized as having the most well-developed public healthcare system in the world by usnews.com.

The Danish government offers free universal healthcare through a system funded by taxes.

"To a certain degree, universal healthcare has proven pretty beneficial if you look at other countries. I know the Nordic countries have been pretty successful with universal healthcare, which proves that it can work," Victoria Morgan ('20) said.

The process is not cheap. It is noted to cost 4,363 dollars per person. However, the quality of the services appear to not be sacrificed, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Health Data for 2017.

The public healthcare system is vastly used by the majority of the population, and has left 90 percent of Danes satisfied with their healthcare, according to denverpost.com.

"Countries should not spend all of their money on [healthcare], but have an in-between kind of range where they are putting a lot of money into it, but also providing quality healthcare," Akshita Virdy ('22) said.

Though it is costly, it is still far cheaper than the United States' and other countries' healthcare systems because, "it is a lot simpler to manage. There are no medical insurance companies or lawyers operating for profit, or financial background checks," stated denverpost.com.

Additionally, according to huffingtonpost.com, "in Denmark, every citizen can choose a doctor in their area. Prescription drugs are

inexpensive and free for those under 18 years of age."

Denmark's healthcare system stands out due to its free quality healthcare offered to all of its citizens, who pay slightly more in taxes for a simpler healthcare process.

Israel, a Middle-Eastern country that is highly involved in tensions and conflict with neighboring states, offers free universal healthcare that is ranked higher than Denmark on the World Health Organization's 2017 analysis of the efficiency of countries' health system performance. Israel is ranked 28, while Denmark is ranked 34.

According to tabletmag.com, "one-hundred percent of [Israel's] population is entitled to comprehensive coverage provided by four competing health plans."

Israel's successful healthcare system may be attributed to its efficiency. As noted in an article in ldi.upenn.edu, Israel's hospitals are "extremely efficient," as evidenced by its low four day-average length of stay.

Though struggling in other economic areas, Israel still manages to provide free universal healthcare to its citizens without using a substantial amount of its gross domestic product (GDP).

"Many people are frustrated with the increased cost of healthcare coverage and it is difficult for small business owners to provide affordable healthcare options. Everyone should be entitled to quality healthcare and should not be discriminated against for pre-existing conditions," Mrs. Sansone, social studies teacher, said.

All in all, a country's quality of healthcare may indicate an issue occurring in the nation hindering proper access to healthcare, such as war.

Despite this, it is well-recognized that healthcare is a necessity and countries with struggling healthcare systems continue to make efforts to properly provide for their citizens in the future.

Sierra Leone

[1,360 mothers are dying for every 100,000 births.]

Denmark

[Healthcare costs the government 4,363 dollars per person annually.]

of healthcare prefer?

Expensive with low taxes 26%

Sierra Leone, a country on Africa's west coast, has earned the distinction as having one of the worst healthcare systems on earth, according to a study published by thelancet.com.

This is, in part, due to the country's corruption during an Ebola outbreak. According to theguardian.com, "up to a third of money given to fight Ebola remains unaccounted for."

One of the primary causes

medical facilities and the fact that the majority of the population lives in rural areas.

Women have particularly struggled from this healthcare issue. As stated by rtnews.com, "pregnant women have the legal right to free healthcare but the country is unable to provide it."

This has led to one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world, with 1,360 mothers dying in every 100,000 births, according



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The fact is, **we are not a driver education factory.** From day one, we have strived to offer the best possible driver education experience for each student. When it comes to driver education, just like shoes, one size does not fit all. And there is only one way we can offer this level of

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THE HIGH RIDGE DRIVING SCHOOL ADVANTAGE

	Other Driving School Options	High Ridge Driving School	<div>FREE TEST DRIVE! Any student accompanied by a parent can sit in on one of our weekday classes absolutely FREE so you can get a feel for our school, our curriculum, and our teaching methods.</div> <div>INTERESTED IN ONLY THE 8-HOUR DRUG & ALCOHOL CLASS? We offer 16 & 17 year old students the chance to take just this class every weekend. (EXCEPT MAJOR HOLIDAYS) Always separate classes for teens and adults.</div>
Flexible Schedule	No, they schedule sessions that begin and end. So, if you miss a class, you might need to go to another town, or wait quite awhile to finish your training.	Our classes NEVER end. We teach in the classroom 52-weeks a year. In the summer we offer up to 3 classes a day!	
Driving Hours	We know of students from other driving schools that have needed to go to other towns to finish their driving hours. Some schools do not even offer in-car sessions on a regular basis!	We drive 7-days a week, all year long. You're assigned an instructor who's dedicated to providing you with the best driver education experience possible. Plus, we pick-up and drop off ANYWHERE locally.	
Off-site Testing at the School	Possibly.	Always available in Stamford multiple times a month since 2005 - And always will be!	
Customer Service	Questions, phone calls, and DMV paperwork usually handled by a corporate office or a branch office in another town, generally only by phone. Some schools do not generate DMV CS-1 certificates in Stamford. VERY limited office hours in Stamford, if at all.	We're almost ALWAYS open – in person or by phone. All phone calls, certificates, and paperwork handled in Stamford. No phone queues or customer service reps, we deliver REAL customer care with our dedicated Stamford staff. We invite parents into our facility, and offer training and support to ensure the time spent driving with your teen is productive.	
The Oldest Driving School in Stamford	No.	Yes, High Ridge Driving School has been locally owned and operated since 2005!	

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The Westword

Supplement



DEBUNKING
HEALTH MYTHS
DETERMINING FACT
OR FICTION

HOW TO
STAY HEALTHY

UNKNOWN FACTS
ABOUT THE BODY
GET TO KNOW YOUR
BODY BETTER

IMPORTANCE OF
WATER FOR HUMANS
FIND OUT YOUR
RECOMMENDED DAILY
INTAKE

FOOD SWAPS
HOW TO
CHANGE UP YOUR
FOOD CHOICES

Health myths debunked

MYTH

VS.

FACT

Going gluten-free will make you lose weight.

You are more likely to experience increased food-cravings and overeating if you give up gluten without having gluten intolerance. Contrastly, a symptom of celiac disease is unexplained weight loss, so cutting out gluten might actually cause you to gain weight at first.

Drinking milk is good for you.

There is not an association between drinking more milk and having fewer bone fractures. Studies have even shown that milk consumption has been linked to heart disease and increased cancer risk, due to the hormones in the cows producing it.

Deodorant can cause breast cancer.

This myth stems from the belief that the chemicals spread to the breast cells due to being in close proximity. Insufficient research has been done to prove a link between deodorant use and breast cancer.

Eating chocolate gives you acne.

A study conducted by James E. Fulton, dermatologist, gave subjects with moderate acne chocolate containing ten times the amount of chocolate in a typical bar, and gave the remaining subjects a placebo. The participants in each group showed no changes in acne, thus disproving this myth.

Ways to stay fit in the winter

Myra Perez
Reporter

During the winter, people often find it difficult to play outdoor sports due to the cold weather and snow. To combat this, many people participate in indoor activities during this season.

Ice hockey and ice skating are common winter activities that people can participate in to stay healthy during the winter.

According to healthfitnessrevolution.com, ice skating provides many health benefits. It can improve one's balance, joint flexibility, and endurance, as well as help build leg muscle.

As there are many indoor ice skating rinks in the area, including three in Stamford alone, people can participate in these activities regardless of the cold weather.

Ice hockey also offers nu-

merous health benefits. According to sportsrec.com, it is a form of aerobic exercise that pushes the limits of your heart rate and lung capacity.

Additionally, ice hockey can be enjoyed at any age, as towns frequently offer leagues for various age groups starting at age 12.

There are also different types of hockey for people to choose from, including field, sledge, and roller hockey.

Another activity that can keep people healthy in the winter is sledding. It is a common activity frequented by children and adults alike after snowfall.

According to nspt4kids.com, sledding has many health benefits as well. It can help improve endurance and total body strength. It can also provide a cardiovascular workout.

Though a seemingly simple and childish activity, sledding is the basis of three sports in

the Olympics: bobsledding, skeleton, and luge.

Other examples of indoor activities that keep people healthy during the winter include taking a fitness class, joining a dance class, lifting weights, or working out to a fitness video at home.

"I workout at home because it is easier and more convenient for me," Sara Scalzi ('19) said.

Though people cannot play sports like basketball and soccer outdoors, sports centers such as Chelsea Piers allow people to continue playing them inside during winter.

"Playing [basketball] with friends is the main way I stay fit during the winter," Leslie Perez ('19) said.

Though a more costly option, people can also join a gym or health club for access to an abundance of workout equipment without paying to own all of it.

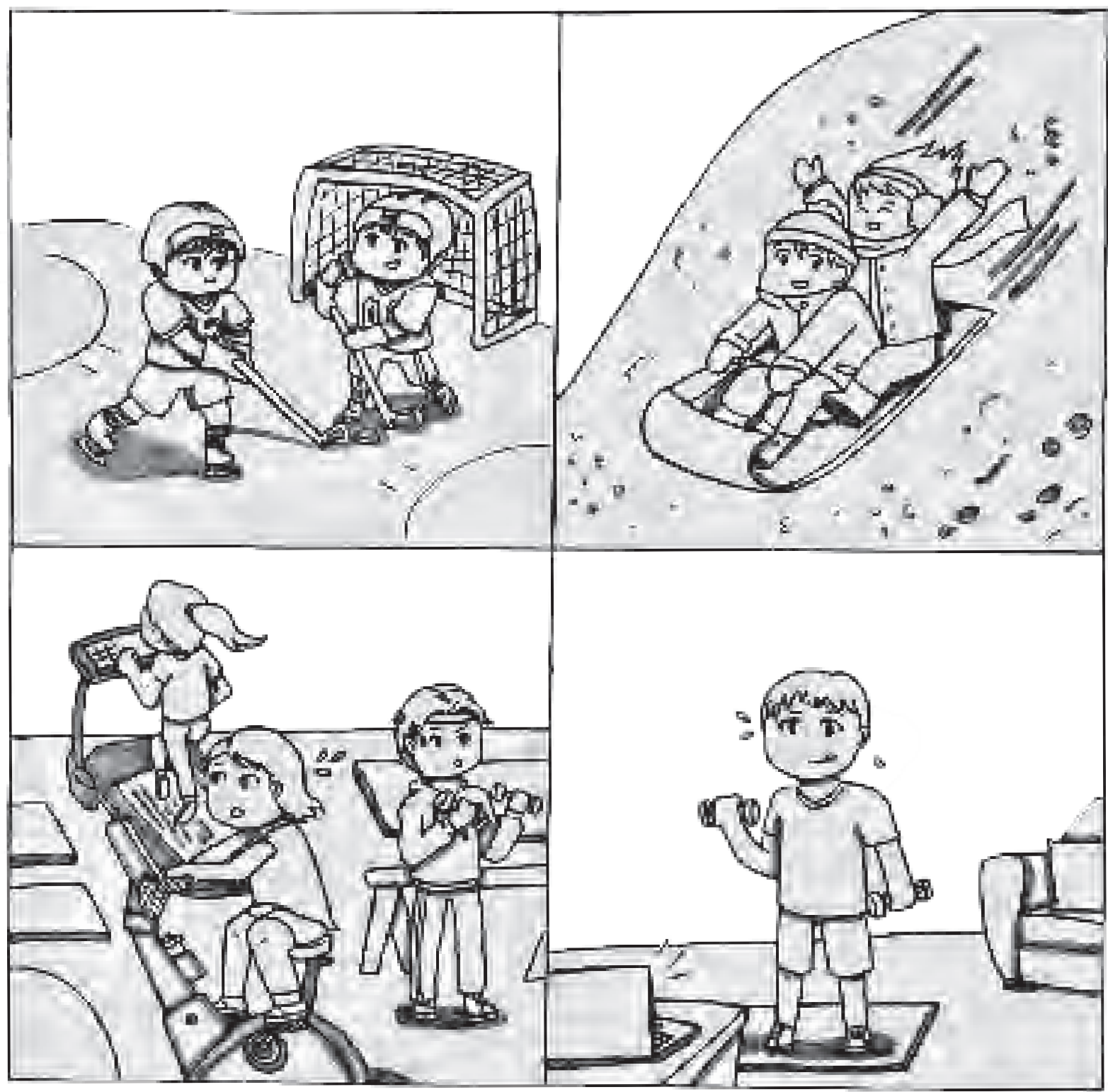
For those choosing to workout at home, fitness videos can be a great way to have a planned, productive workout without paying for a trainer or gym.

"Making sure you manage what you eat and staying on top of your exercise routine can help [you stay fit during winter]," Mario Delgado ('20) said.

People can even purchase their own equipment—like yoga mats or hand weights—to help make workouts at home more interesting and fun.

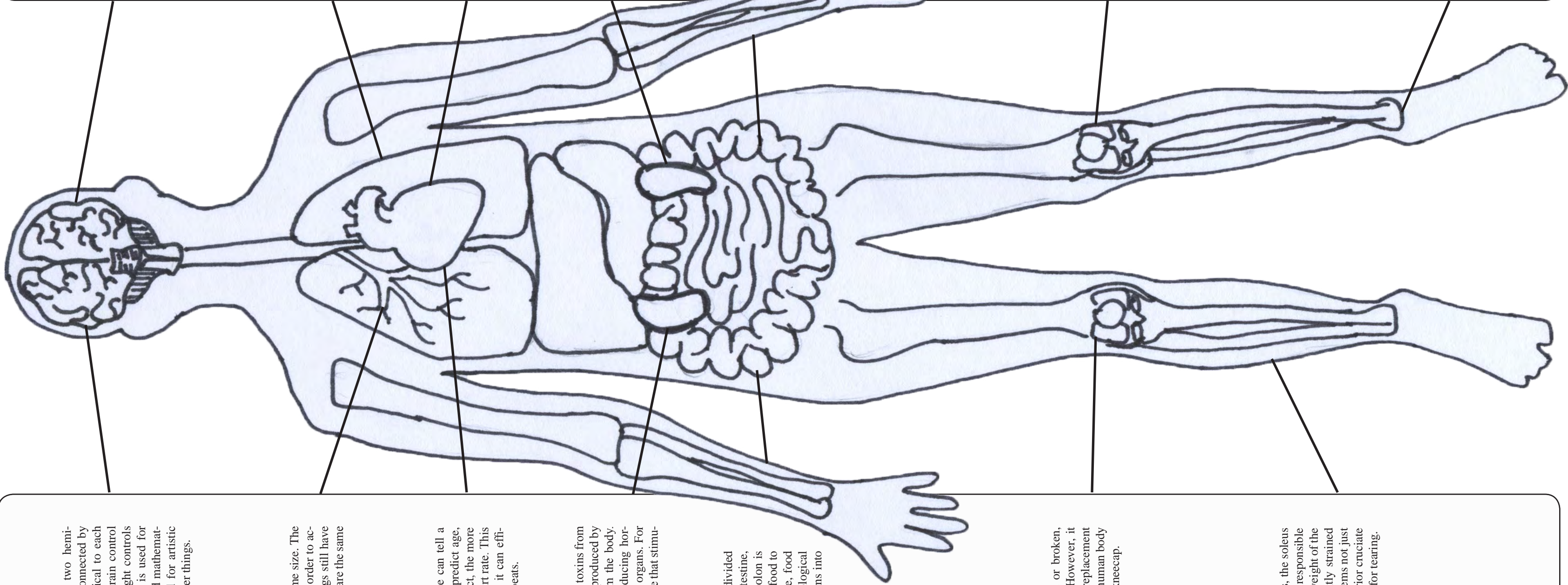
These activities can be done with friends and family members. Getting others to join you is a fun way to make the sport or activity more enjoyable. For those looking to try something new, having a friend there can be helpful so that you are not alone in trying a new and foreign activity.

There are many ways to stay fit during the winter and everyone can put their own spin on it. With all of the online fitness videos and winter fitness activities available, people can make their own fitness routine and fit it to their personal tastes.



You can play ice hockey, go sledding, workout at a gym, or guide yourself through a workout at home. With all of the vast options to choose from, exercising in the winter is not as difficult as it may seem.

The ins and outs of your body



BRAIN The brain is divided into two hemispheres: the left and right, which are connected by nerves. Despite being nearly symmetrical to each other, their functions differ. The left brain controls the right side of the body, while the right controls the left side. Along with this, the left is used for functions such as language, speech, and mathematics. In contrast, the right brain is used for artistic skills and processing senses, among other things.

LUNGS The two lungs are not the same size. The right lung is larger than the left lung in order to accommodate for the heart. However, lungs still have a large surface area. If laid out flat, they are the same size as a tennis court.

HEART A person's resting heart rate can tell a lot about their health. It can be used to predict age, as well as tell how fit someone is. In fact, the more healthy and fit one is, the slower the heart rate. This is caused by a stronger heart, meaning it can efficiently pump out more blood with less beats.

KIDNEYS The two kidneys filter out toxins from fluids that the body consumes. Urine is produced by the kidney to remove these toxins from the body. The kidney is also responsible for producing hormones that affect the functions of other organs. For example, the kidneys produce a hormone that stimulates red blood cell production.

INTESTINES The intestines are divided into two separate organs, the large intestine, or colon, and the small intestine. The colon is five feet long, taking 12 to 48 hours for food to be passed through. In the small intestine, food is broken down through the use of biological catalysts known as enzymes, until it turns into waste that is excreted from the body.

KNEE When kneecaps are shattered or broken, they are typically surgically removed. However, it is not uncommon for there not to be a replacement kneecap. This is due to the fact that the human body is capable of walking even without the kneecap.

CAVES The calf is a pair of muscles, the soleus and gastrocnemius. These muscles are responsible for moving forward and supporting the weight of the body. Because of this, they are constantly strained and without care will cause health problems not just for the calf. In fact, it is tied to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and can be responsible for tearing.

BRAIN The brain is extremely weak, being the fattiest organ in the body. Sudden jolts, bumps, and blows, may create a collection of blood called a hematoma or cause a concussion when the brain moves around in the skull. Concussions are incredibly serious, and while symptoms can vary, they can last long periods of time. Brain injuries can cause a multitude of problems, such as memory loss, inability to think, physical problems, emotional instability, and even trouble sleeping.

LUNGS Smoking causes more deaths than HIV, illegal drug use, alcohol use, firearm-related, and motor vehicle injuries combined. It can cause lung cancer, heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). There is also a high increase in risk of death for smokers.

HEART According to a study conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) in 2008, 610,000 people die of heart disease in the United States every year. This means that one out of four deaths annually is caused by heart complications. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women. Some risk factors for heart disease include: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, poor diet, and overall lack of activity.

KIDNEYS Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is incredibly deadly. In 2015, around 57 million people died worldwide and 1.2 million of those deaths were due to CKD, a surprisingly large number considering that it is a noncommunicable disease.

INTESTINES Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), which occurs in the intestines, has numerous symptoms, some of which include: diarrhea, fatigue, fever, cramps, lack of appetite, and weight loss. Despite the advancements made recently in the medical field, the exact cause for IBD is still debated and uncertain. Some attribute it to inheritance, while others to a malfunction in the immune system.

KNEE Despite the knee's small size, it can cause a lot of pain. For example, even a small strain can cause ligament issues and inflammation. There is also a plethora of diseases that weaken the knees, such as Ehlers-Danlos, which causes easy bruising and overly elastic skin in the area. Tearing one's anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), a common injury in sports, is excruciating and can even bring an end to athletic careers.

ANKLE The most common injuries in the United States are ankle sprains. This is due to how the ankle is structured, because while it allows for freedom of movement, that makes it susceptible to more damage. Sprained ankles should never be walked off, as continued use of an untreated sprain causes even worse and longer-lasting damage.

The importance of water

Glorimar Chiruzzo
Staff Writer

After working out or relaxing around the house one might be thirsty. There are many beverage options to replenish your body, so this may be a difficult choice. There are drinks that provide sugar, nutrients, and sodium. However, water remains the healthiest, most important drink.

Most people have heard the common saying, “drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day.” That being said, everyone may not need the same amount of water.

The amount of water that people should drink depends on how often they exercise, their environment, and their overall health, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Many people find ways to meet their daily water count by getting apps on their phone to track their water intake or getting

a large bottle of water and promising themselves to drink the entire thing.

Some health teachers are concerned that students do not know how much they are drinking and do not understand the measurements of their fluid intake.

“Many kids do not know [how much] a cup of water is,” Mrs. Cutolo, health teacher, said.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine determined that an adequate daily fluid intake, including fluids from water, other beverages, and food should be about 15.5 cups of fluids for men and about 11.5 cups of fluids a day for women.

This can be difficult for many students to do during school and any after-school activities they are a part of. However, it is an essential element of everyone’s daily lives.

Throughout the day, people

should, “drink water during or after a meal [because it] actually aids digestion...Water and other liquids help break down food so that your body can absorb the nutrients,” according to the Mayo Clinic.

Additionally, many people do not understand why so much water is needed. Water is the most basic fluid in humans that regulates body temperature, carries oxygen and nutrients to cells, and protects body organs, among other functions.

“Because your body loses water through breathing, sweating, and digestion, it is important to rehydrate by drinking fluids and eating foods that contain water,” according to everydayhealth.com.

Water also makes up about 60 percent of the average person’s body, making it important to replenish with fluids throughout the day.

It is recommended that upon

waking up, “one of the best things you can do...is drink at least 16 ounces (500mL) of water. Water fires up your metabolism, hydrates you, helps your body flush out toxins, gives your brain fuel, and may even make you eat less,” according to alifeofproductivity.com.

“Every morning I feel so dehydrated I do not even feel like waking up, so I drink a cup of room temperature water and then feel energized to start my day,” Britney Quintilla (’20) said.

People should be careful when drinking water before bed because your sleep cycle and heart health can be negatively impacted if you drink too close to your bedtime. To prevent this, you should stay hydrated throughout the day.

Not being properly hydrated can also have many negative side effects, such as having severe headaches, constipation, cramping and muscle cramps, according ev-

everydayhealth.com.

People should also stay away from too many sports drinks because they contain an unnecessarily high amount of sugar, although they might taste good, they can cause people to exceed their recommended daily intake.

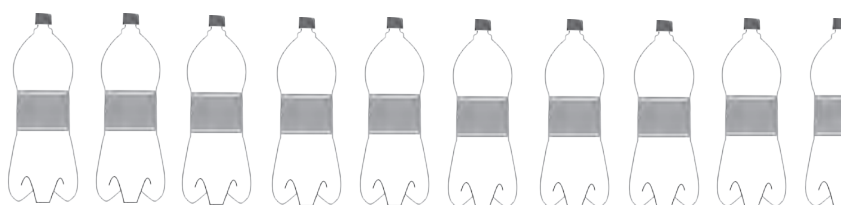
Food Network reports that, “sport drinks provide about three spoonful of sugars,” on average, per drink.

“I play field hockey which includes a lot of running. When we have a water break, I try to get as much water as I can, usually get about two or three bottles of water to hydrate myself throughout the game or practices,” Kylie Ashlund (’20) said.

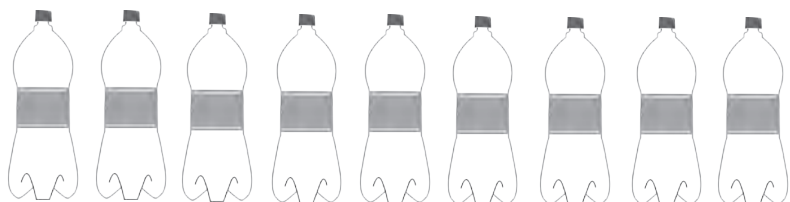
Overall, water is an important part of the human body that plays various vital roles. It is important to drink a sufficient amount of water daily to ensure you are giving your body what it needs.

RECOMMENDED DAILY WATER INTAKE

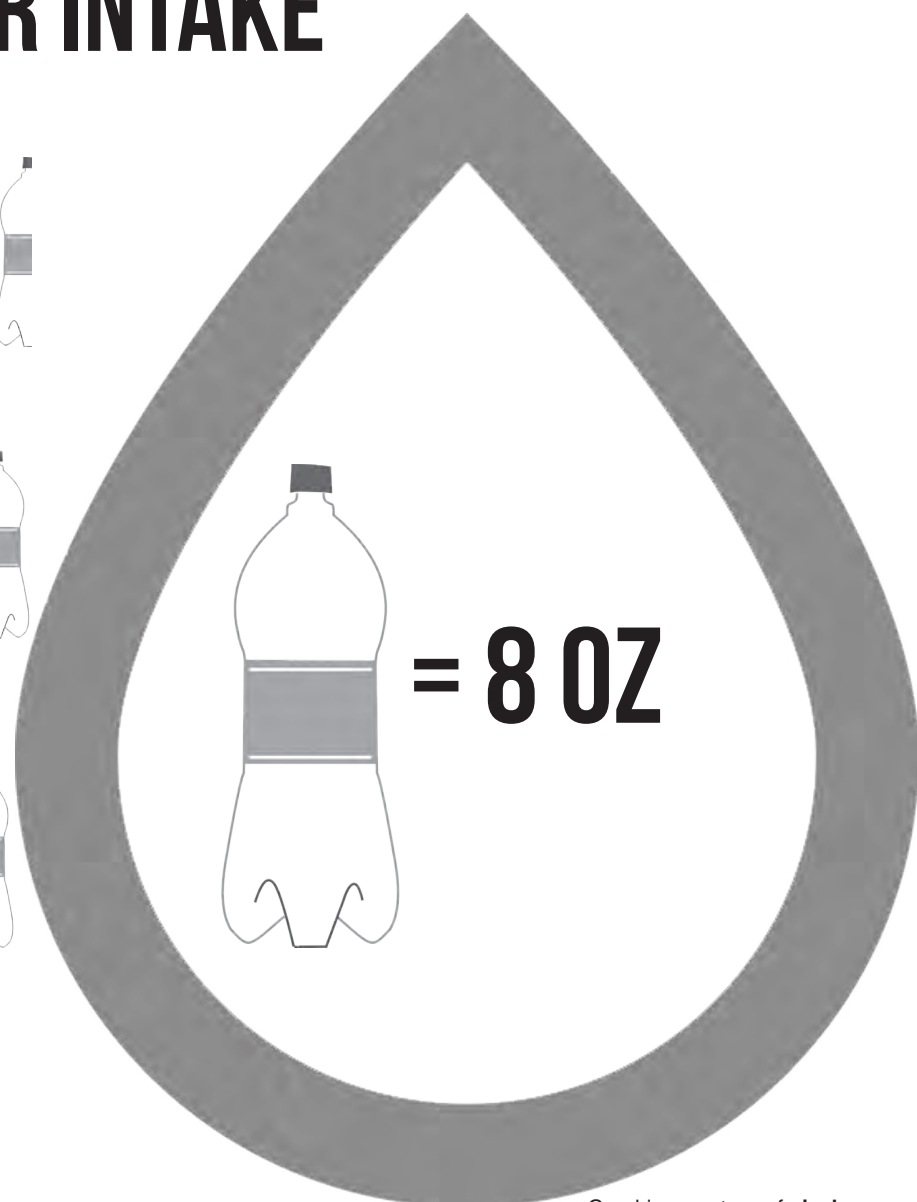
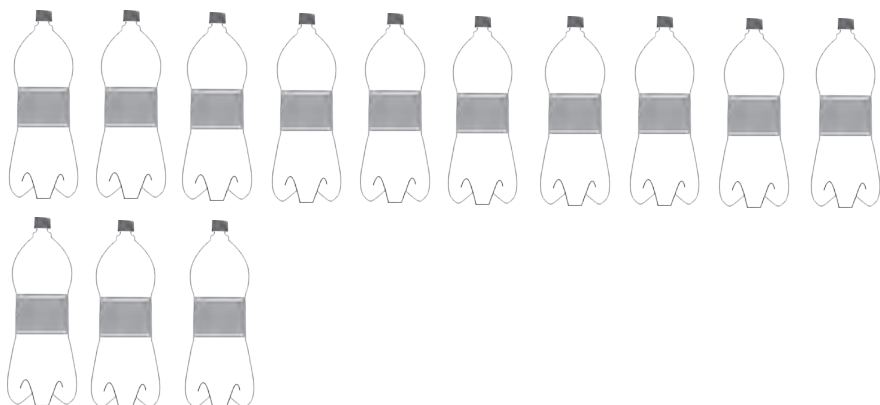
TEENS
14-18



WOMEN
19+



MEN
19+



Healthy food swaps for everyday living

WHITE BREAD → WHEAT BREAD

White bread is very high in carbohydrates and offers few nutritional benefits. There are numerous healthier alternatives that people can choose when making sandwiches.

One common switch is to whole wheat or whole grain bread, which contains more nutritional grains and fiber. White bread usually contains refined grains, which have little to no fiber.

Another alternative is to use rice cakes, which contain very few calories—around 35 per rice cake, according to usda.gov—but can still act as a “slice of bread” to adorn with spreads like peanut butter or jam, or used to enclose a sandwich.

Whether using rice cakes or whole wheat bread, taking white bread out of your diet can allow you to consume fewer calories or gain more nutritional benefits from your food.

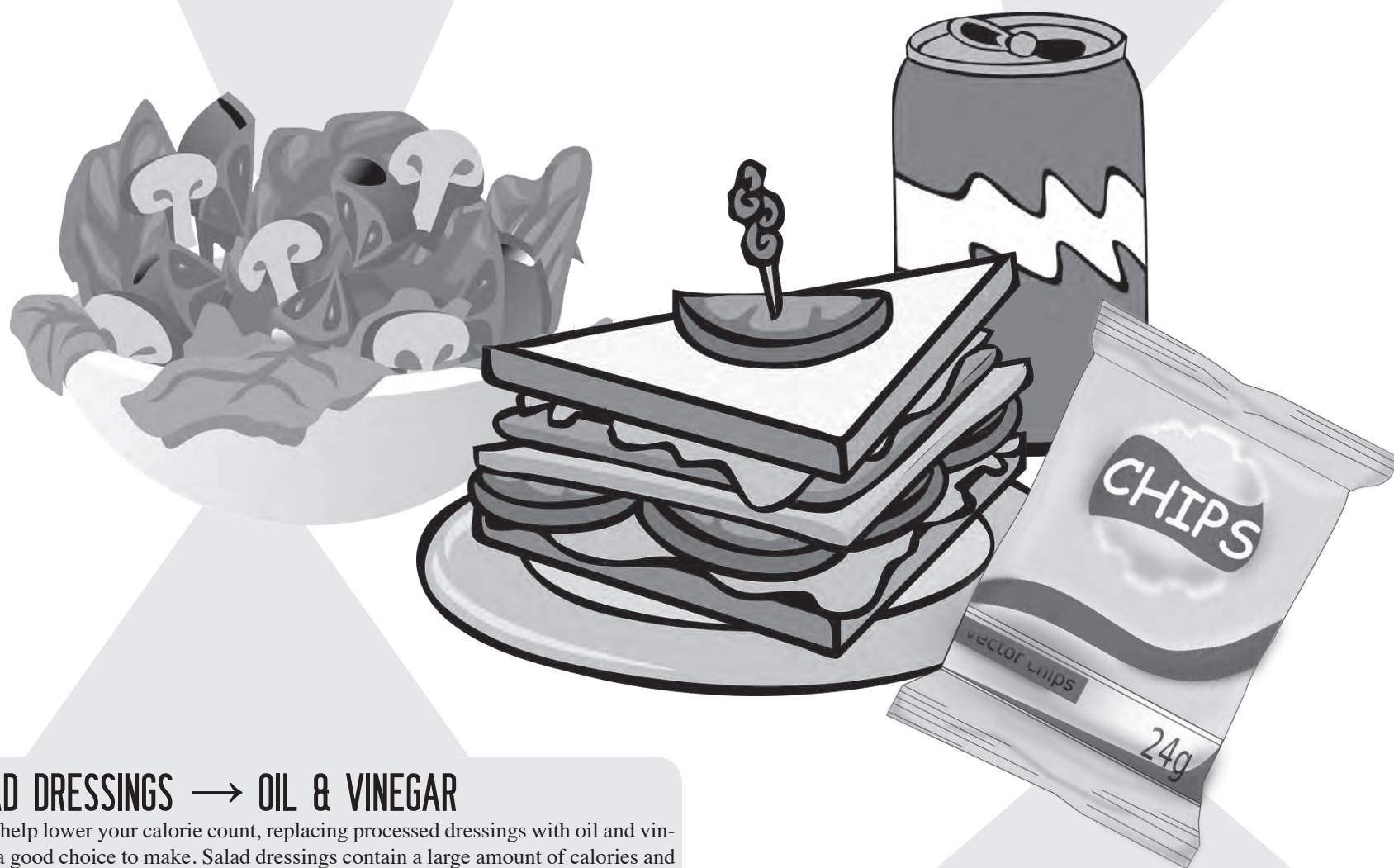
SUGARY DRINKS → CARBONATED WATER

Soda, juices, sports drinks, smoothies, and teas can contain a significant amount of the daily recommended sugar intake. Many people consume much more than this recommendation without realizing it, which can result in health risks.

Even though juices are thought of as “healthy” because of the vitamins they contain, the large amount of sugar actually makes doctors advise against drinking them.

One simple alternative is to simply drink water. For those who prefer carbonated beverages, seltzer or sparkling water is a good alternative that has no sugar.

There are also flavored seltzers that taste similar to their sugary soda counterparts.



SALAD DRESSINGS → OIL & VINEGAR

To help lower your calorie count, replacing processed dressings with oil and vinegar is a good choice to make. Salad dressings contain a large amount of calories and when poured over a salad, people can consume hundreds of extra calories without realizing it which defeats the healthy aspect of salad.

Additionally, processed dressings contain a large amount of sodium. For instance, according to nutritionix.com, one tablespoon of ranch dressing contains 328 milligrams of sodium, over one-tenth of the daily recommended intake. Considering people usually put well over one tablespoon of dressing, they can easily exceed their recommended sodium intake.

Oil and vinegar, however, contain no sodium, and are a much healthier alternative to the processed dressings that are in abundance at supermarkets.

CHIPS → POPCORN

Replacing chips with popcorn can have a positive influence on your body's calorie count. Popcorn offers a similar satisfaction to chips, but can be eaten without the guilt that chips bring.

Brands like Smartfood, Skinny Pop, or Boom Chicka Pop are all popcorn brands that have very few calories. Just 15 Lays Potato Chips are a whopping 160 calories, while three and three-fourths cups of Skinny Pop popcorn can be consumed for ten calories fewer.

For those who love snacking, swapping popcorn for potato chips would be the perfect step towards a healthier lifestyle.



OPINION: Prohibir pedir comida y salir del campus

Alessandra Pinto

Editor de Las Noticias

En los primeros días de diciembre, el Director Rinaldi hizo un anuncio a la escuela notificando que ya no se permitiría que los alimentos del cuerpo estudiantil se entreguen a Westhill High School. El anuncio también mencionó que a los estudiantes no se les permite salir del campus durante sus horas de almuerzo. Hubo reacciones conflictivas respecto al cambio.

De acuerdo con muchos sitios web de distribución de alimentos, solo los adultos mayores de 18 años pueden pedir comida de restaurantes locales para su entrega, y esto podría incluir a ciertas personas mayores.

La razón principal por la que los distritos escolares no quieren que los estudiantes reciban sus almuerzos entregados o que abandonen el campus es la competencia con los almuerzos escolares. Irónicamente, la opinión que

muchos tienen sobre los almuerzos provistos por la escuela es la razón principal por la que la mayoría de los niños piden comida, alegando que la calidad podría mejorar.

El tema de la seguridad también influye en esto, ya que distinguir las entregas de otras personas puede ser difícil, poniendo en riesgo la seguridad de los estudiantes. Además, tanto las escuelas como los estudiantes lo ven como una forma de traer artículos prohibidos a la escuela y distraer a otros estudiantes posiblemente durante la clase.

Una razón por la que muchas otras escuelas prohíben las aplicaciones de entrega de alimentos es que hacer un seguimiento de los vehículos y visitantes entrantes y salientes se estaba volviendo difícil de seguir, también es un riesgo para la seguridad.

En cuanto al tema, si los estudiantes podrían abandonar el campus de la escuela durante sus almuerzos, hay opiniones firmes

al respecto. Desde un punto de vista, esto puede enseñar a los estudiantes la responsabilidad y el cuidado personal, sin embargo, los opositores expresan diferentes razones para esto.

En particular, el riesgo de vandalismo y drogas es una base muy útil para decir que los estudiantes no deben abandonar el campus, causando una mala reputación en la escuela en sí misma si los estudiantes realizan actividades problemáticas y se hacen públicas.

Además, las olas de almuerzo generalmente duran alrededor de 26 minutos, y en el momento en que un estudiante va a un restaurante con amigos o cualquier otro lugar y regresa a la escuela, podría perder la noción del tiempo.

Para agregar, la escuela no sabría la ubicación exacta si algo le sucediera al estudiante, como por ejemplo un accidente.

Los padres también tuvieron algo que decir al respecto, afirmando que el niño es respon-

sabilidad de la escuela durante el tiempo que pase en la escuela. Esto también significa que si algo le pasara al niño a lo largo de las horas escolares, el distrito estaría a cargo de los daños causados tanto al estudiante como a otras personas afectadas.

Posteriormente, se alentará a los que tienen un vehículo a conducir más rápido para ir a un lugar determinado y regresar a tiempo para la clase. Debido al peligro de esto, las escuelas prohibieron salir del campus durante el almuerzo.

Esto lleva al tema de faltar a la escuela y las consecuencias, considerando que un estudiante simplemente podría abandonar el campus durante el almuerzo y nunca volver a clase.

La razón más probable por la que un estudiante abandonaría el campus durante el almuerzo es comprar el almuerzo en un restaurante externo, argumentando que el almuerzo escolar es de bajo nivel. Sin embargo, de manera realis-

ta, aquellos que compran o piden comida compran en una tienda de comida rápida y barata, y consumen alimentos poco saludables que los provistos por la escuela.

En contraste, los estudiantes que se oponen al cambio de reglas mencionan que sería agradable tomarse un descanso del entorno escolar durante el almuerzo gratuito.

Se dice que esto mejorará y refrescará las mentes de los estudiantes estresados en la primera sesión del día escolar, preparándose para aprender el resto del día.

Sentarse en varias aulas cinco días a la semana durante varias horas tiende a aburrir a los estudiantes, por lo tanto, un cambio de escenario es lo que muchos niños usaron para reiniciar sus mentes y ponerlos de mejor humor después.

El cambio de la regla que prohíbe la entrega de alimentos y el abandono escolar provocó distintas reacciones, y ambas partes aumentaron sus argumentos a medida que el tiempo pase.

El crisis de la caravana de migrantes

Madison Thibodeau

Escritora del Personal

Las imágenes de la frontera México-Estados Unidos son sorprendentes: miles de migrantes de América Central se han estado moviendo hacia el norte por meses, solicitando asilo y ciudadanía en los Estados Unidos. Ahora que están en la frontera, la historia ha comenzado a tomar un papel afectando la población humana.

Los medios de comunicación han estado hablando sobre este tema desde marzo, cuando salieron noticias sobre la caravana de migrantes que se abre paso a los Estados Unidos desde Honduras, Guatemala, y otros países centroamericanos. Todos los participantes dejaron sus hogares, empleos, país y la mayoría de sus pertenencias para unirse a la caravana.

Dado que no hay un solo grupo organizado, el número exacto de los migrantes no están claros, pero los funcionarios de las Naciones Unidas estiman alrededor de 7,200 migrantes.

La inmigración ha sido un tema de discusión constante en los Estados Unidos por décadas, y las normas sobre la inmigración

han sido alteradas varias veces.

Ahora que hay una afluencia masiva de personas que se dirigen a los Estados Unidos, sólo después de las elecciones de medio término, muchos políticos y otros estadounidenses han encontrado que este es un tema importante a tratar.

Según theatlantic.com, el presidente Trump ha llamado al grupo que se aproxima una emergencia nacional y amenazó a reducir decenas de millones de dólares en ayuda a tres países centroamericanos, y posiblemente cancelar un acuerdo comercial reciente con México si la caravana no se detiene antes de que llegue a los Estados Unidos.

La administración de Trump ha estado tratando con el asunto de inmigración y la separación de familia desde que Trump entró por primera vez en el cargo, ya que es una gran componente de su campaña, junto con el muro de la frontera México-Estados Unidos que se está construyendo.

La mayoría de estos migrantes vienen a buscar asilo. De hecho, honduras lleva la delantera como el país con mayor índice de homicidios, según washingtonexaminer.com.

“8.25 millones de personas reside en el país, y se ha reportado 90.4 asesinatos por cada 100,000 residentes,” según las Naciones Unidas Oficina contra las drogas y el crimen.

“Es un tema complejo porque podría causar una tensión en la economía si Estados Unidos permite que todos entren. Hay personas que no vienen a contribuir algo bueno al país. Pero algunas personas vienen a trabajar y tener un futuro mejor del que habrían tenido en su país,” dijo Yennifer Rico (’19).

José Luis Laparra Calderón, alcalde de Huixtla, México, dijo a The New York Times, “estas personas están huyendo de la pobreza de sus países. Estas son personas trabajadoras. No están trayendo bombas. Ellos quieren mejorar sus vidas.”

El empleo y la población son otro aspecto crucial de la economía y la sociedad en los Estados Unidos.

“La mayoría de las personas en la caravana vienen para un futuro mejor y más seguro, porque hay más empleos aquí en los estados. Pero si demasiadas personas vienen, entonces habría menos empleos disponibles,” Kevin

Pérez (’20) dijo.

El alcalde Calderón se paró en el centro del pueblo, observando a los centenares de migrantes moviéndose en busca de comida, agua y refugio.

“Queremos que su paso por aquí sea lo agradable posible”, dijo el alcalde Calderón.

El New York Times también informó que, “aunque algunos hacen planes para solicitar asilo en los Estados Unidos, otros saben que su única posibilidad de entrar es ilegalmente.”

El tema de la inmigración es cada vez más discutible todo sobre América, especialmente debido a los informes de noticias que salieron sobre las separaciones de familias.

“Un país debe tener una norma de inmigración donde las personas ingresen al país legalmente. No puede haber gente que entre y no siga nuestra leyes de inmigración. [A pesar de que] la gente viene por el crimen, corrupto gobierno, cualquiera que sea la razón, no puede ser tolerado. No quiero decirlo de una manera cruel, pero disloca trabajos, disloca barrios y no puede ser tolerado,” Sr. White, maestro de estudios sociales dijo.

Actualmente, los migrantes se encuentran en la frontera en Tijuana, México, esperando por su oportunidad de buscar asilo, donde se ha informado que se usó gas lacrimógeno en ellos.

Según The Washington Post, “el presidente Trump defendió el uso del gas lacrimógeno el [26 de noviembre], informando a los periodistas que se desplegó en respuesta a la ‘tremenda violencia’ durante la confrontación con autoridades.”

“El uso aceptado de la fuerza no letal, también utilizado por Obama Administración en 2013, previno lesiones a agentes y una masiva carrera ilegal a través de la frontera,” Secretario de Seguridad Nacional Kirstjen Nielsen declaró en el artículo.

No se puede decir cuánto tiempo los migrantes se mantendrán firmes, ya que algunos han optado por establecerse en México o se han retirado a sus países. Tampoco se sabe si serán permitidos asilo o cuánto tiempo tomará ese proceso.

Sin embargo, este problema ha obligado al gobierno federal a tomar una posición sobre los temas de inmigración que se está enfrentando el país.

Celebración de Navidad en países Hispanos

MEXICO

Mucha gente en México es católica, mucha gente celebra la Navidad. Muchas de sus tradiciones vienen de España. Celebran las fiestas hasta el 2 de enero. Muchos mexicanos ponen allí nacimientos. Por lo general, establecen sus nacimientos el 16 de diciembre, ponen a su bebé Jesús el 24 de diciembre y ellos, pero los tres reyes, el 6 de enero. También tienen presentaciones teatrales llamadas Pastorelas. También cantan villancicos llamados villancicos. Nochebuena es la última noche de la posada, y suele ser un día muy tranquilo. Muchos niños realizan posada el 16 de diciembre. Muchas personas asisten a misa a medianoche y luego cenar con su familia, generalmente se la conoce como una fiesta porque muchos católicos ayunan durante el advenimiento. Adviento es cuando se preparan para el nacimiento de Jesús. Adviento dura 40 días, comienza el 15 de noviembre. Muchas iglesias ortodoxas celebran la Navidad el 7 de enero.

ARGENTINA

Muchas personas en Argentina son Católicas. Celebran el advenimiento, que los prepara para la Navidad, que también se conoce como el nacimiento de Jesús para los argentinos. El advenimiento suele durar 40 días y comienza el 15 de noviembre. Muchas personas deciden ayunar para prepararse para la Navidad. Muchas personas en Argentina decoran sus casas con luces y coronas, también decoran sus casas con flores verdes, doradas y rojas. En sus puertas cuelgan guirnalda roja y blanca. Muchas personas comienzan a decorar el 8 de diciembre. Ponen una escena de la natividad porque es muy importante para ellos, y generalmente se encuentra cerca de su árbol de Navidad. A la medianoche muchas personas lanzan los fuegos artificiales. También ponen globos. Los Globos son decoraciones de papel que tienen una luz interior y se dejan ir al cielo a la medianoche del 24 de diciembre.



PANAMA

La gente en Panamá comienza a celebrar las fiestas el 8 de diciembre con la celebración de la Inmaculada Concepción, que es el día de la madre en Panamá. Ponen sus nacimientos durante la semana del 10 de diciembre. El 24 de diciembre muchas personas preparan su comida y limpian su casa. Algunos de los alimentos tradicionales que se consumen son el pavo, el relleno, el arroz dulce y los tamales, y para el postre comen pastel de frutas. Muchas personas bailan y celebran el nacimiento de Jesús en las calles con sus familiares y amigos. El 25 de diciembre van a la iglesia por la mañana y por la tarde pasan tiempo con la familia. Toman música de Navidad llamada villancicos.

GUATEMALA

Guatemala es un país lleno de mucha cultura y tradiciones. Aunque existe todavía gente indígena con diferentes creencias, durante las fiestas navideñas la mayoría tiene la tradición de hacer un nacimiento. Esta es una tradición en la cual simulan el nacimiento de Jesús. Otra tradición muy común es quemar cohetes. Normalmente se queman los cohetes en la Noche Buena en la noche o la madrugada. Comidas típicas que se comen en la Navidad son los tamales y el ponche de frutas. Estas dos comidas normalmente se comen juntas. El tamal se come con un pan francés y la taza de ponche. El ponche es una bebida caliente con frutas.

VENEZUELA

Venezuela es un país que celebra la Navidad con tradiciones y fiestas. Una tradición importante es el arbolito. El arbolito es una tradición que simboliza la llegada de la Navidad en el hogar. El pesebre es una tradición venezolana que no puede faltar. Un pesebre es una representación del nacimiento del niño Jesús. Los pesebres pueden ser de diferentes tamaños. Algunos ocupan todo un jardín y otros se colocan en un lugar importante en la casa. Las hallacas son un plato típico en Venezuela en la Navidad. Es una costumbre reunirse en familia y hacerlas todos juntos. Normalmente las familias dividen los ingredientes y cuando se reúnen, cada miembro de la familia trae un ingrediente. Después todos se comen las hallacas juntos.

New lockdown safety plans implemented

Evelyn Vasquez

Staff Writer

This school year, the addition of lockdown safety plans added to every classroom. Lauren Klym ('19) created these plans to eliminate confusion for teachers and students during a real lockdown.

After proposing this project to Principal Rinaldi, Klym attended multiple meetings to get the approval she needed to implement the safety plans throughout the school.

Klym spent her summer drawing out individual floor plans for each classroom while taking notice of where the windows, doors, and lights are in each of the rooms. This gives the room's occupants a better visual when reading the lockdown plans and ensures their comprehension.

The plans also contain a checklist and procedure for students and teachers to use as a guide during a lockdown.

For example, in room 224, *The Westword* room, the lockdown plan places students if facing the windows at the right corner of the room which is the "safe zone." This helps keep the teacher and students away from visibility through the window.

The right corner of the room also has a closet with a door that prevents anyone from being seen by the attacker.

"It is great that [Klym] took charge and contributed to bettering our school's safety," Ryaisha Williamson ('19) said.

Klym's inspiration to make the school a more secure place came from the school shooting that took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas

High School in Parkland, Florida in February of 2018.

Klym vividly recalled how a student described their horrific experience on that day. She and her classmates were out in great distress because they had a substitute teacher that day and no one was sure what to do or where to hide if a lockdown occurred.

When putting together this project, Klym kept in mind how this would benefit both faculty and students.

"It is excellent for substitutes like myself to know that they are going in the right direction in trying to protect myself and others," Mr. Als-wanger, substitute teacher, said.

Klym helped give students and teachers a step-by-step plan on how to organize themselves in the room for a lockdown situation in the saf-

est way possible. Substitutes will now be better prepared for any unexpected events without having all the confusion and anxiety of not knowing what to do.

Although people may think that this is common sense, the intensity of the moment may be overwhelming for anyone to think properly and make the right decisions.

Klym was recognized for her safety plan by the Stamford Board of Education (BOE) with a certificate for her efforts.

She has left a legacy at Westhill that has been recommended to be shared upon all SPS by the Stamford Police Department because of how efficient the lockdown plans are.

"This helps the schools prepare for future generations and stay safe from any possible forms of harm with thought out

plans like these," Lupe Tamayo ('19) said.

Not only have students like Klym taken charge in trying to better our school's safety, multiple schools across the nation have taken other initiatives to prevent any shootings.

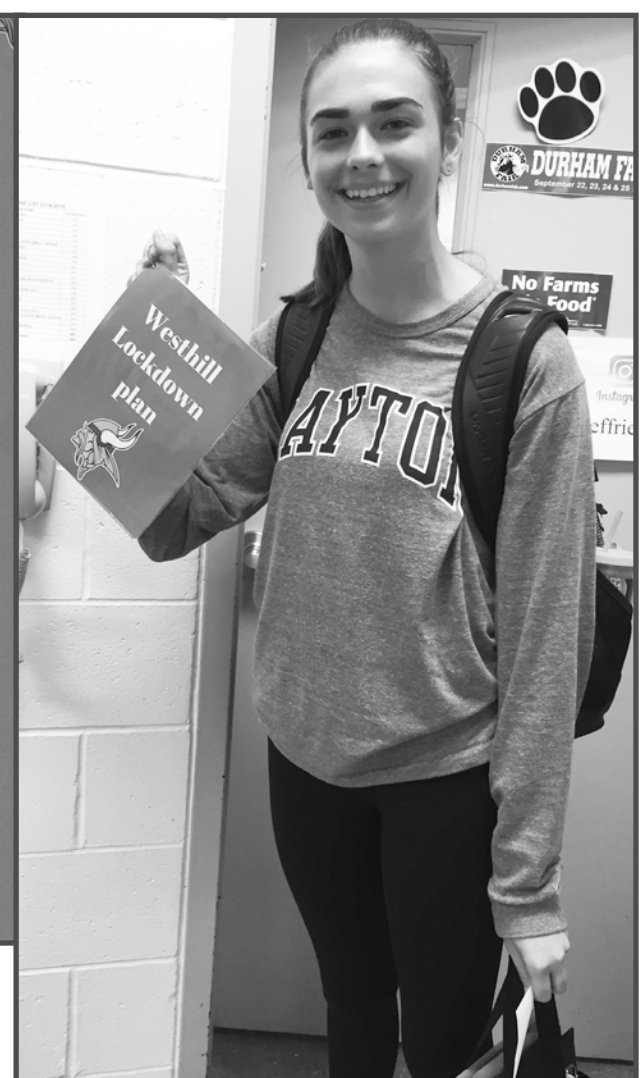
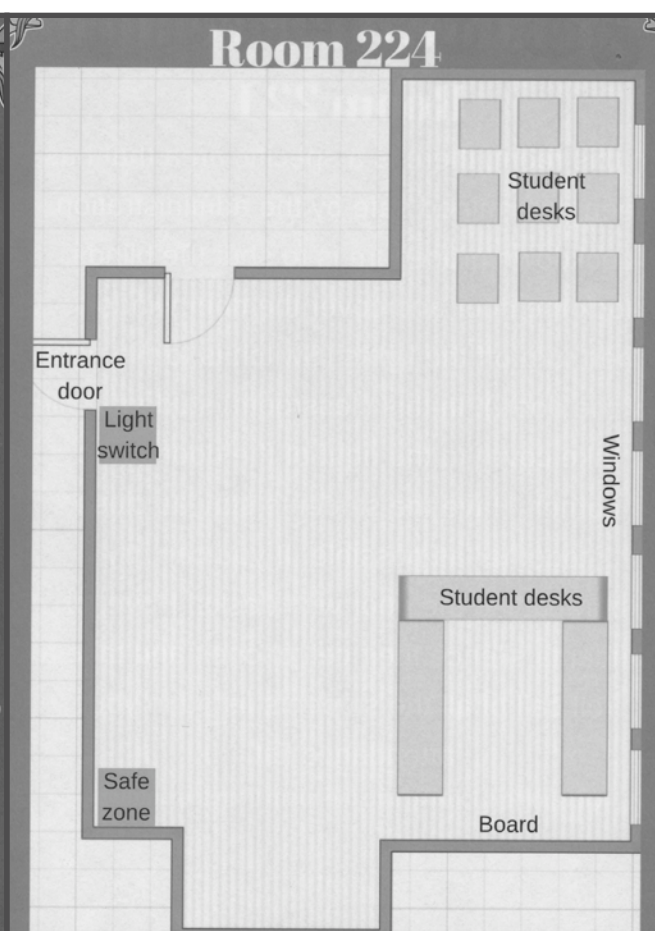
According to abcnews.com, the Broward County Public School Districts in Florida installed an additional 2,500 cameras in and outside its schools to monitor campuses at all times.

Klym's efforts have been met with great success in the school, and her recognition at the November BOE meeting demonstrates the community's gratitude.

This is the start of a bigger and more developed plan to protect any tragic events from occurring to future students, not only at Westhill but at all SPS.

Lockdown Check List

- Door is locked
- Door window is covered
- Lights are off
- Blinds are closed
- Cell phones are silenced
- Students are in the safe area
- Door is barricaded
- Attendance is taken



LOCKING IT DOWN Above are two pages from Klym's lockdown security plan. The left photo is a lockdown checklist that is in every room and the right is a layout of room 224 so both students and teachers would be able to locate the safe zone.

Teacher Talk: Mrs. Costa-Weller

"Teacher Talk" is a monthly column in which The Westword asks teachers to write about themselves so that students have a chance to get to know the staff. Mrs. Costa-Weller, world language teacher, was chosen for the December issue.

Teaching is a second career for me. I have been teaching at Westhill since 2006.

Prior to teaching, I was an Information Technology (IT) Manager for a large corporation. I directed a team of eight to ten people in a group responsible for the sales, installation, and field support of an accounting and distribution software product.

I was in charge of several national offices, including Chicago, Atlanta, and Los Angeles, which caused me to frequently travel around the country.

I have always wanted to be a teacher. When I was little, I used to torture my younger brother and make him play "school" with me. I would teach him how to spell and do simple math equations.

I enjoy helping people learn and like to see the progress that they make.

When I worked in the corporate world, I frequently conducted classes for our clients. While the classes were usually technical in nature, many of

the seminars were designed to teach businesses how to take advantage of assets, maximize earnings, and provide optimal customer service.

It was very gratifying to watch our clients' businesses grow based upon something that they learned in one of my seminars.

However, as much as I enjoyed working in the corporate sector, foreign language was—and still is—my first love. It is so interesting to learn about other cultures. It does not matter whether I am talking about customs and traditions, food, music or communication; I am drawn to all of it.

Many people never get the opportunity to travel outside of the United States. We tend to think that the world is similar everywhere, just with people speaking different languages, but it is so much more!

When I teach, I am hoping that my students get a glimpse of what life

is like for their peers in another country. My wish for all students is that they have the chance to travel in the future and can use what they learned

in the classroom.

I teach both Spanish and Italian, and this year I was needed more for Spanish, so I am teaching Spanish 2 and Spanish 3 Honors.

I also like to use a lot of visuals in my lessons, as they really assist in helping students remember. Think about it: with all the images we see daily, are we really going to remember with words alone?

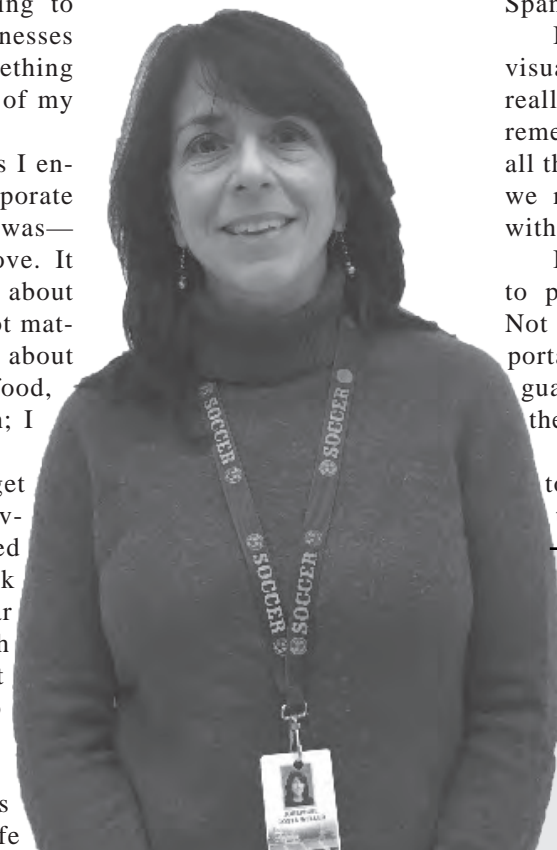
It is crucial for all students to participate in my classes. Not only is participation important for learning a language, it is also 25 percent of the grade in my classes.

To encourage students to participate, there are two Beanie babies in my

classroom: Tank, an armadillo, and Carl, a chameleon. Only the person holding one of the beanie babies can speak.

Tank has his own Instagram page: @tankwhs211. It is used occasionally to celebrate classroom achievements and news.

The most important thing is that my students walk away from my classes knowing that they have what they need to be successful moving on to the next level. I want them to feel confident in speaking and understanding Spanish, as well as knowing that it is okay to make mistakes and to never give up. To quote Dory from the movie, *Finding Nemo*, "just keep swimming" and believe in yourself.



If you wish to nominate a teacher or wish to write for Teacher Talk, email us at:

westwordwhs@gmail.com



The Hungry Vikings

Column by Maura Johnston, Mary Leydon & Alexandra Lazo

Ole Mole

Service: ★★★★★
Taste: ★★★★★
Ambiance: ★★★☆☆

The three Vikings were determined to taste cuisines of other cultures. So far on their journey this year, they had only eaten foods that were similar to those they ate as young Vikings. They wanted to try something with a little more flavor and spice, so they decided to find a Mexican restaurant.

After trekking down a path called "High Ridge Road" for what felt like miles, they finally found a small place called "Ole Mole," which advertised authentic Mexican cuisine.

The three starving Vikings ran inside of the restaurant with their stomachs growling. Luckily for them, there was no wait, despite the limited seating in the quaint restaurant.

When seated, fresh homemade salsa was placed in front of

the Vikings to devour.

Within minutes, the waitress came to take their order. Their food was also served surprisingly quickly.

Since this restaurant provides a "take-out" service, it was loud at times, with the door frequently opening and closing. However, the staff made sure the Vikings had a pleasant, experience through their fast service.

The Picky Viking was excited to go to Ole Mole for the first time. She had heard positive things about the restaurant before, but never had the chance to experience the food for herself.

As a huge fan of Mexican food, she was overwhelmed by all the options. The Picky Viking could not decide between tacos, a burrito, or an enchilada.

After a hard debate, she de-

cided to try the Carne Asada Con Enchiladas De Queso—enchiladas with roasted meat and cheese—and it did not disappoint.

These enchiladas were extremely flavorful and swimming in cheese, one of the Picky Viking's favorite foods.

The Picky Viking was fitting to her name and did not eat the beans, but luckily they were on the side. The Carne Asada was cooked very well and combined perfectly with the tortilla, cheese and rice.

THE Viking was excited to return to Ole Mole. On this particular day, THE Viking was in the mood for a quesadilla. She ordered the Quesadilla Santa Fe, which consisted of a flour tortilla stuffed with chicken, cheese, black beans, peppers, and onions with salsa verde. THE Viking's

food was prepared well and left her satisfied.

The Hangry Viking was heated and hungry for some Mexican food. She shoved the other two Vikings out of her way and charged through the entrance so she could be the first to order and eat.

As soon as the Hangry Viking got herself situated, she was elated to see the chips and salsa placed on the table. Her only complaint was that the salsa dish was far too small for the chips, making it nearly impossible to get more than part of the chip inside.

While her Viking companions were thoughtfully looking over the menu, the Hangry Viking only needed one quick glance before deciding. She ordered the Pollo de Ensalada, or chicken salad.

Her salad was loaded with grilled chicken breast and an abundance of vegetables including peppers, tomatoes, and onions, and topped with a jalapeño-lime vinaigrette. The Hangry Viking's attitude had finally settled and she was able to leave full and content.

Though the noise and foot traffic tainted their perfect experience, the Vikings had a very pleasant time overall at Ole Mole and recommend it to their friends.

They had a variety of options that would please the taste pallet of any visitor. The staff's friendliness and patience with the Vikings, who were in a rush, made the experience even more enjoyable. The Vikings will be sure to visit this restaurant, and restaurants similar to this one, again.

Westhill giving back during the holidays

Ashley Shapiro
Staff Writer

Students in Westhill have initiated numerous efforts to give back to the community as the days get colder. The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) and Future Medical Professionals Club (FMP) created winter drives to collect goods for people in need during the holidays.

FMP is a new club, that started in November. Its goal is to give students early exposure to the medical field. Their advisor, Ms. Cutolo, is a former nurse who teaches students basic medical skills, such as pulse-taking procedures.

FMP ran a book drive that lasted from November 13 to December 7. The books they collected were specifically for the

students of Roxbury Elementary School. Since elementary school students range in reading proficiency, all levels of books were accepted.

"We chose to [collect] books because our club [focuses] on helping people. When we heard that over 600 kids at Roxbury were not able to borrow books from school because there were not enough, we really wanted to help," Anita Amity ('20), FMP co-founder, said.

JROTC is commonly known around the school for their community service programs throughout the year.

This fall season, JROTC students collected non-perishable food items, as well as clean and gently-used clothing to donate. JROTC also did a Thanksgiving food drive earlier this year.

"The food banks give ev-

erything out at Thanksgiving, so consequently, the banks are empty between Thanksgiving and Christmas," Major Weber of JROTC said.

JROTC attempted to fill the gap and make sure everyone has the food they need, especially leading up to the next big holiday.

The food went to the Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County.

"We chose these services because in the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the local shelters run out of everything. We, as a program, want to help the community and help the local shelters help others," Luis Capella ('19) said.

JROTC collected clothes as the weather started getting colder and the necessity increased. All warm clothes were accepted, along with jackets, hats, gloves and other warm items.

JROTC also ran a toy drive for Toy's for Tots from December 1 to December 14. This drive collected new toys to benefit the United States Marine Corp's Toys for Tots program.

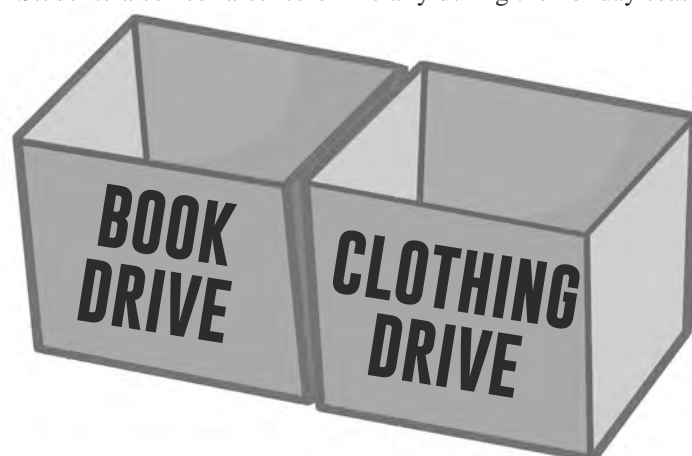
"We want to use our program to benefit people who need it," Wendy Avila ('19) said.

Students also feel a sense of

accomplishment and pride for helping their community.

"It is not only a way to help the community, it also makes you feels good," Maria LoDolce ('19) said.

All of these people, programs, and clubs at Westhill work to better our community, especially during the holiday season.



Graphic by **Angela Ramirez** / Graphic Designer.

Insight into the All-School Musical production

Ruby Streett Apicella
Staff Writer

The City of Stamford has a diverse population and one event that brings many of its citizens together each year is the All-School Musical.

The All-School takes place annually, with students from fifth to twelfth grade participating. The students do not need to live in Stamford to participate.

The idea of bringing students together from all around Stamford has brought a lot of children together, and created a bond between the cast and production team.

"It is a rigorous and intense process, but the reward is an outstanding musical. I have been a part of the All-School Musicals for the past six years and have made some really close friends. All-School has given me the opportunity to interact with students from different schools and of all different ages, whom I otherwise would have never met," Ries Allyn ('19) said.

The whole show comes together in a very short amount of time, and that can often be difficult not only for the cast members, but also for the people running the show.

"We always have plenty of time to get the production up and running, even though it is only a three month process. We have been casting and rehearsing since September. It is just the technical elements, with sets and props that takes a fair amount of time to perfect," Nancy Freedman, pro-

ducer of the musicals, said.

The All-School Musical is in its twelfth year of production, and throughout time there have been improvements to the process.

"There has not been any great changes over the past 12 years because so many of

and the *Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl.

This year's show, was performed at Westhill High School, but has previously been hosted at Rippowam Middle School. Rippowam is now used only for auditions and early rehearsals.

The story follows an adventurous

native execution.

"Being Willy Wonka was definitely my favorite role I have ever gotten to play. He is so mysterious and whimsical. Taking on a character that everyone knows is always difficult, but I tried to put my own spin on Wonka. It is such a privilege to portray such a fantastic figure and become a character I have known and loved since childhood," Audrey Molina ('19), a five-time All-School participant playing the lead character, Willy Wonka, said.

The opening night was December 1, and although nerve-wracking for those involved, the show went on. The opening night had a great audience, and the cast fed off its energy to get more amped up throughout the performance.

The production believes the shows only continued to get better from there, as each and every one had its own magic.

"It still has not sunk in that the show is over and this was my last All-School Musical ever. It does not feel real. This cast has been absolutely incredible to work with. I am going to miss them so much, and I am going to miss being Wonka. But I am so happy that I got this experience," Molina said.

Although the show is over, their outstanding performance and actors will be remembered among the students who have seen it and immortalized through the video recordings of the performances.

Photo by **Harrison Travaglino** / Photo Manager.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION The cast of the newest All-School Musical performing Roald Dahl's *Willy Wonka*.

the same people have been involved. We have always had a pretty good setup from the get-go, but we are still always looking for ways to improve," Freedman said.

This year's performance was *Willy Wonka*, based on the book *Willy Wonka*

young boy, named Charlie Bucket who wins a contest to go visit a mysterious chocolate factory with his grandfather, and discovers an man and his crazy creations.

People love this classic story because of its edgy and bold concepts with imagi-

Slay of the Month: Rafli Harahap



All of my outfits represent who I am. When I get ready in the morning, my mood dictates what I wear. I do not know if I would call myself a “hypebeast,” but expensive clothes do attract me the most and are part of the fashion style I strive for.

The main reason I dress in a unique way is because the way someone dresses can be perceived as an amazing art.

I particularly love wearing knee socks and designer brands. Some of the brands I like to wear are Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Bathing Ape, Supreme, Champion, Urban Outfitters, and Forever XXI.

On days I feel like dressing nice, I choose a combination of random clothes that match together in unexpected ways.



Even though there are many brands I love, sometimes I do not care if it is a high-end brand. I just like the piece of clothing if it matches with some of the other clothes I have.

I love color-coordinating my outfits. Colors always matter to me. Not only do I follow basic combinations, such as black with any other color, but I also wear colors that are complementary in the same outfit.

I like to accessorize sometimes with bracelets and always need a pair of sunglasses, preferably clout goggles, for my good outfits, even if it is not sunny outside.

My style is very random and pretty hard to explain, but I tend combine basic pieces of clothing to make an iconic masterpiece.

My outfits differ depending on the occasion. In school, though



sometimes I wear nice outfits, there are definitely times where I do not care about my outfit at all.

My style comes from a form of empowerment as well. If I feel very stylish with a certain outfit, I feel like I can achieve a lot more, especially if my outfit is both comfortable and fashionable.

If I wear something super sloppy I feel comfortable, but at the same time, I feel poorly about myself, which prevents me from achieving as much.

A lot of my outfits can also be inspired by famous people. For example, a reason why I like to rock oversized cute hoodies is because Ariana Grande, one of my favorite singers, wears them a lot.

I occasionally discover new brands from artists I see wearing them.

Even though these inspirations



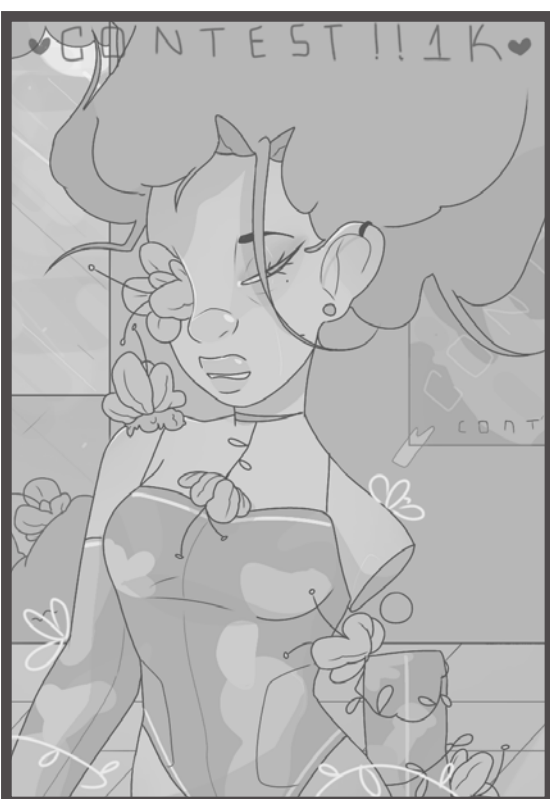
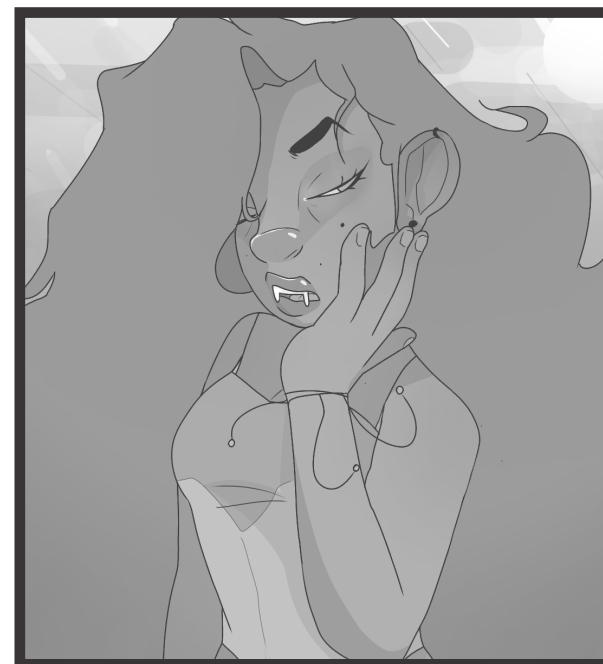
come to me, I primarily determine my own fashion sense and it is only somewhat influenced by others. I could consider it a superpower because I do not even know where the ideas for my outfits come from. People ask how I make these unique outfits, but I never really know how to answer.

Another aspect of my style may come across as obnoxious, but it is just how I choose which outfits to wear. If I buy something new from the store and intend to look good with it, I will only ever wear it again if I get at least three notices or compliments on it.

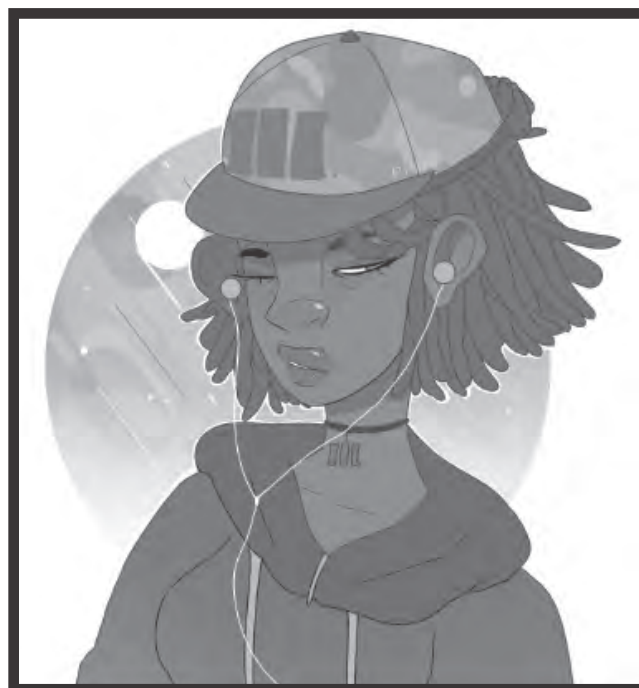
Overall, my style is very fashionable, with the brands I wear, the colors I combine, and the accessories I add making the outfit stand out with personality.



Artist of the Month: Matthew Santos



Pluto



The Westword (TW): What first made you interested in art?

Matthew Santos (MS): I first got interested in art when I was in eighth grade. I just loved the fact that you can create anything with it.

TW: How would you describe your artistic style?

MS: My artistic style is kind of a “wannabe aesthetic.”

TW: What is your preferred medium?

MS: My preferred medium is watercolors, but I only do that during the summer, so my current preferred medium is digital.

TW: Why do you only use watercolors in the summer?

MS: I only do watercolors in the summer because I can go outside and draw still-lives and nature, but it is too cold in the winter, so I cannot do that now.

TW: How did you learn to create digital art?

MS: When I was in eighth grade, I wanted to learn

how to draw on the go, so I downloaded an app called ibis Paint X and started to practice. It has been a year and I have progressed a lot.

TW: Is there a piece of work you are most proud of? If so, which one and why?

MS: I am most proud of a drawing I made for my friend Pluto because it is just a mood.

TW: Are there any messages you want to convey with your art?

MS: I do not really have any messages, I just love to create art.

TW: Would you like to pursue a career in art?

MS: For a career, I would love to be an animator because I would love to combine emotion and artistic embodiment in one. For example, if I worked for a cartoon, I could give ideas and input that could make an impact, which makes me want to be an animator. If not an animator, then I would be a graphic designer

TW: How have you grown your skills for art in your

life?

MS: I was in an art school called Fordham High School of the Arts before I came to Westhill. I was majoring in visual arts.

TW: Why did you switch from your art school?

MS: I used to go to school in the Bronx, but I moved to CT, so I just could not stay in that school.

TW: How has Westhill shaped your experience with art?

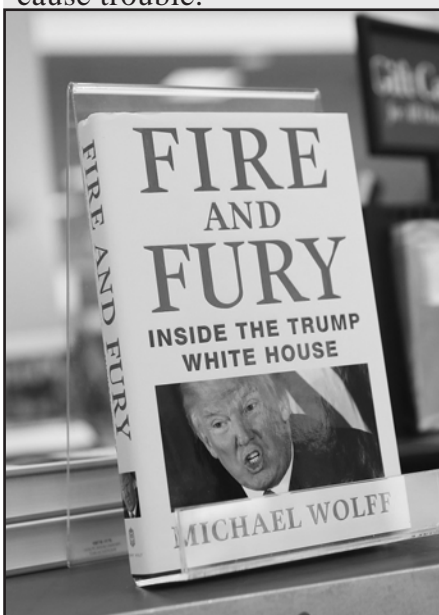
MS: Westhill has taught me to draw with more detail and use clearer lines in my art. It also let me draw my friends, which is fun.

To view more of Matthew’s art, visit thewestwordonline.com.

Top selling books and movies of 2018

Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House Michael Wolff

Wolff is an American author and journalist. This book is a tell-all of Trump's true behavior along with how his administration acted during the 2016 election. The name of the book refers to a quote by Trump saying he threatens "fire and fury against North Korea if they cause trouble."



A Higher Power: Truth, Lies, and Leadership James Comey

Comey is the former Director of the FBI and in his book, Comey discusses never-before-told experiences from some of the most high-stake situations of his career. He explores the good and bad of the current government, and how power has the ability to alter sound decisions.



Avengers: Infinity War

Directed by:
Anthony Russo & Joe Russo

In this new Avengers movie, classic *Marvel* characters including Iron Man, Hulk, and Thor unite to battle their most evil enemy yet, Thanos. The fate of the planet is left in their hands. This was the third *Avengers* movie and many were shocked to see the film bring in over two billion dollars in the box office.



Black Panther Directed by: Ryan Coogler

This *Marvel* movie was unlike any other film this year due to their predominantly African American cast. The movie follows the story of T'Challa, a Wakanda soldier battling his long lost brother for the throne of his home. Throughout its six months in theaters, the movie racked up nearly 1.4 billion dollars.



Images courtesy of [freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com), [common.wiki.com](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black_Panther_Movie_Poster) & [flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/1491111111/).

Going off the grid: Artists promote new music

Hailey Baloutch Reporter

Artists utilize many methods to attract a larger audience to their newly released music. One of the more popular ways is leaving social media with no warning. Well-known celebrities including Taylor Swift, Lorde and Miley Cyrus have recently done this.

Swift deleted her entire social media presence in order to promote her most recent album, *Reputation*. In 2017, Swift had archived all of her posts and unfollowed everyone indiscriminately, including some of her dedicated fans. This action initially left devotees reeling since most had no idea what was going on.

Her unannounced absence sparked a media meltdown. With this media attention came exposure that left people hanging on to every word from Swift, which was the intention.

"It added a lot of suspense to [Swift's] album release because we did not know what to expect of it. The move probably raised her album streams," Krystyna Cooney ('22) said.

According to MTV, when Lorde pulled a similar stunt in 2016, a similar turnout occurred ending with the song having even more listens than anticipated.

Tweets about her abrupt social media change received hundreds of likes. In return, her 2017 album *Melodrama* earned her a number one spot on "Billboard's Top 200."

However, this method will not work for everyone. Celebrities who have already achieved an A-list status will most likely receive the same number of views or listens whether or not they leave social media.

According to Billboard, "Look What You Made Me Do" was advertised without leaving social media. The single held the record for the most streams in the first 24 hours of any of Swift's music.

Also, this past November, Cyrus made a comeback to social media after a four month break to promote her feature in Mark Ronson's single, "Nothing Breaks Like a Heart."

Cyrus had over 2,000 Instagram pictures prior to her absence and went down to zero before the release of the single.

fore the release of the single.

The idea that suspense adds to the popularity of a song is supported by this new single which has racked up over 18 million streams since its early December release.

The song was released after her long break from Instagram and Twitter, and it seems the time away from the mainstream media has increased listener's interest.

"Everyone wants to know what will happen next. It is pretty much that people are drawn to mystery and secrets," Cassandra Culhane ('22) said.

However, there is a downside to this stunt. While some may flock to see a celebrity's newly bare Instagram, others scroll past the news and forget that the star exists altogether.

Sometimes only older fans are intrigued by the changes.

"If you are a new fan and you want to get to know [the star] more, you cannot, because there is nothing there. I do not really see the point of it, because if you want to add suspense you can just not post, instead of deleting everything," Maria Cabrera ('20) said.

A public figure going under the radar might lead to possible fans losing interest. Where they could normally grasp a celebrity's personality or learn more about them, they are met with a blank wall.

Though it seems that suspense plays a large factor in initial streams, the artist may be at loss in the long run if potential followers become disinterested.

Music Video Review: Grande moving on

Chloe Giulini
Managing Editor

After breaking off her engagement with Saturday Night Live (SNL) star Pete Davidson, Ariana Grande quickly released her new surprise single “thank u, next” on November 5.

Throughout the song, Grande sings about her past relationships and how all of them have built her into the strong woman she is today.

Fans are excited to see her doing well and becoming a bigger person after all of her breakups.

Grande wrote something about each of her exes, including Mac Miller who recently passed away, two years after they dated.

The most heartwarming line of the song is “wish I could say thank you to Malcolm, cause he was an angel.” This was my favorite portion of the song because it reminded me of the relationship between Grande and Miller, the couple I preferred over her and Davidson.

Fans were most interested to find out why her and Davidson broke up. Most believed the two were on the track to marriage.

However, no answers were given until the music video was released.

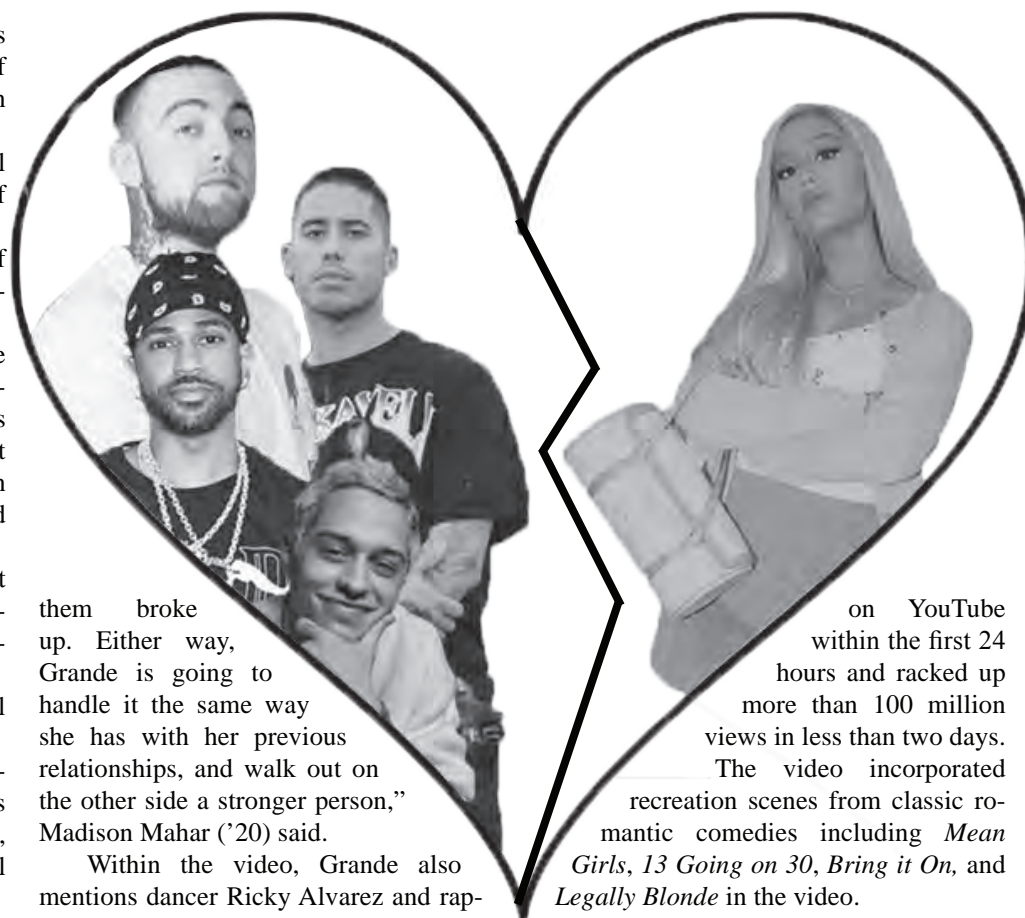
Prior to the release of the song and video, Davidson refused to answer questions on why the two broke things off. On SNL, his only comment was that the two are still on good terms.

In the video, Grande can be seen writing “sorry I dipped” next to a picture of her and Davidson. Watchers were finally given

clarification that it was Grande who ended the eight month relationship.

This was a very clever way for her to announce her views of her previous boyfriends without making the lyrics seem too verbose.

“I was really surprised that the two of



them broke up. Either way, Grande is going to handle it the same way she has with her previous relationships, and walk out on the other side a stronger person,” Madison Mahar (’20) said.

Within the video, Grande also mentions dancer Ricky Alvarez and rapper Big Sean.

Grande affirms that she and Alvarez will always be friends and that there is a

chance of her and Sean reconciling. Fans are shocked to hear that Grande would not mind getting back together with Sean and that she was willing to announce it in such a public way.

When the music video was released it became the number one trending video

on YouTube within the first 24 hours and racked up more than 100 million views in less than two days.

The video incorporated recreation scenes from classic romantic comedies including *Mean Girls*, *13 Going on 30*, *Bring it On*, and *Legally Blonde* in the video.

For each scene, many familiar faces can be seen. Previous *Victorious* co-star Elizabeth Gillies is seen in multiple shots

along side long-time friend Grande. As well as, Kris Jenner who was playing the role of Regina George’s mother from *Mean Girls* recording the girl’s Winter Talent Show.

Each scene is meant to represent Grande in a different portion of her life and how each relationship has shaped her into the strong woman she is today.

“The video was very well done. I liked the connections between the different movies, and the fact that all three films featured girls as the lead role. This conveyed Grande’s ability to overcome struggle, and see the bright side,” Claudia Benz (’19) said.

Although so many fans fell in love with the single, I had differing views. I liked the song, but once the video was released, I was no longer interested.

The way it was released turned a song with a lot of meaning into a publicity stunt featuring other celebrities to rack up more views. I would not turn this song off if it came on the radio, but I would not click on the YouTube video again.

Grande recently won “Woman of the Year” by *Women in Music*. A very large contributing factor was the release of “thank u, next” and its immediate success.

In her speech, Grande spoke about how grateful she was for this win, but that it could not be at worse timing.

Although her career is currently booming, she states her personal life could not be worse. She is excited to see all of the pieces fall into place soon.

Either way, she cannot be more thankful for her fans support of the song and her growing strength after the heartbreak.

Images courtesy of flickr.com & Instagram.

Film Review: *The Grinch* brings holiday nostalgia

Maria Mirafuentes & Evelyn Vasquez
Staff Writers

How the Grinch Stole Christmas is a classic holiday book-turned-movie that was recently redone as an animation motion picture. The book started off as a children’s tale written by Dr. Seuss in 1957.

It first hit the screen as a 26 minute TV special in 1966 and eventually became a live action film featuring Jim Carrey as the Grinch in 2000.

Since Dr. Seuss’ original story, the Grinch has been known as a green fearful monster trying to steal Christmas joy.

The Grinch (2018), starring Benedict Cumberbatch, takes the standard approach of the Grinch deciding to ruin Christmas for everyone, especially the children in Whoville.

Cumberbatch’s Grinch voiceover brings charm and humor to a very

pessimistic character.

“I like it, and you have to watch it every Christmas since it is a classic,” Alexis Vanderpool (’19) said.

The movie was very successful in the box office, bringing in over 240 million dollars. Famous actors and actresses such as Rashida Jones, Pharrell Williams, and Kenan Thompson can be heard in the new version.

“I cannot wait to see *The Grinch* because it was my favorite movie when I was a little girl even though I had nightmares,” Francesa Fry (’19) said.

Contrary to the older version, Cumberbatch portrays a calmer image of the Grinch. Carrey played a more diabolical monster, but this laid back version of *The Grinch* was made to be a family movie, sensitizing the original film to be more approachable for younger audiences.

In the original versions, the Grinch lives in a messy dark cave which

makes it scarier and less inviting to young ones. The new adaptation of *The Grinch* has a nicer, more colorful and more organized home.

Another new addition to the plot is Cindy Lou Who being presented with a new mission. In the older version, she takes on the challenge of getting the Grinch into the Christmas spirit by herself, but in this new version she is joined by her friends.

Overall, we enjoyed the movie, but it could have been better. The older version appealed to us because of the darker persona it portrayed of the Grinch.

It does appear that this newer version succeeded in targeting a younger audience because of the pleasing visuals, but most adults would find it dry.

We would recommend this film to anyone who remembers the original from their childhood and wants to relive some old memories.



2018 POPULAR U.S. BABY NAMES IN WESTHILL

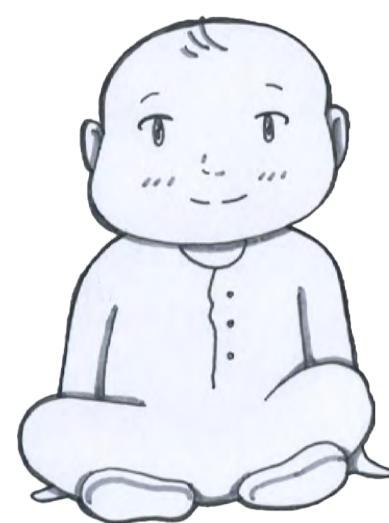
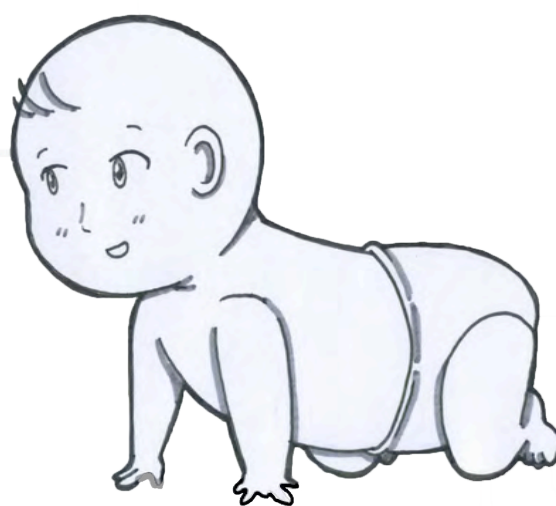
GIRLS

1. **SOPHIA**- 6
2. **OLIVIA**- 10
3. **EMMA**- 6

Baby Center has recently released their top 100 names of the 2018 year. *The Westword* was curious as to how many students had these exact names within our halls.

BOYS

1. **JACKSON**- 1
2. **LIAM**- 2
3. **NOAH**- 2



\$0-100

44%

\$100-200

24%

\$200-300

14%

\$300-400

9%

\$400-500

2%

\$500+

7%

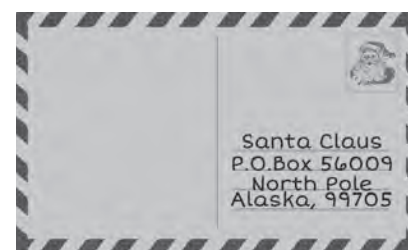
**HOW MUCH DO STUDENTS
SPEND ON THE HOLIDAYS?**

Mad libs for the winter

Sitting next to the _____, the
(object)
_____ was looking at the new
(noun)
_____ on the tree. They were
(object)
watching all the _____ Westhill
(adjective)
students celebrate _____ and
(holiday)
_____ was getting
(same noun)
_____. To ruin the _____, in
(adjective) (noun)
the _____ of _____. He
(place) (town)
took all the _____ and
(plural object)
_____ up the chimney.
(past tense verb)
However, _____ caught
(person)
_____ and made him put
(same noun)
the _____ back.
(same plural object)
_____ was saved and the
(same holiday)
_____ rejoiced.
(group of people)



Last night we celebrated _____
(holiday)
dinner at _____'s house. When
(person)
we arrived, we saw the deco-
rations were _____ and the
(adjective)
snow was all over the house. My
_____ greeted us with a _____
(relative) (adjective)
hug. When we _____
(past tense verb)
in the door the house smelled of
_____. The _____ could
(food) (group of people)
not wait to eat. Everyone hud-
dled around the _____ to get
(object)
warm. After _____ dinner,
(-ing verb)
my parents made me _____ a
(verb)
letter to _____.
(holiday figure)



Ski team keeping it cool on the slopes



KEEPING IT COOL The ski team travels far and practices often to maintain their records. The team is proud to constantly be growing and becoming more well known throughout Westhill.

Photo by **Harrison Travaglinio** / Photo Manager.

Rachel Plotzky

Print Executive Editor

One of the newest offered sports at Westhill is the ski team. The team started off as a club just seven years ago with a couple of students and has grown to almost 60 students from both Westhill and Stamford High School.

Mr. Deangelo, physical education teacher, advises the team and skis with them at every practice and coaches their meets. He was approached seven years ago by a group of students who wanted to try something new and create a club for devoted skiers.

"We grew it from the ground up, a couple kids had the idea of starting a club and it turned into something really great and now it is a permanent fixture in the school, it is cool to be a part of that from day one. To be able to see how when kids want to grow something when the desire is there, the school can get behind it and find a way for it to work," Deangelo said.

In the beginning, Deangelo would meet the students at the mountain on his own dime while

the parents ran the fundraising and transportation allowing the students to easily get to the mountain to ski.

With a growing group, Deangelo reached out to the Board of Education in an attempt to get funding to make the club more accessible as the team continued to grow. Funding was approved, along with getting two coaches—one from Westhill and the other from Stamford High—to make the team co-op.

The team now travels to Mount Southington in Southington, Connecticut to ski. They take a school bus there and the trip is about an hour and 20 minutes each way.

This year's ski team captains are Olivia Berni ('19), Alexandra Lazo ('19), and Reilly D'Onofrio ('20). Additionally, the team has a manager, Sara Gatz ('20), whose main job is taking attendance and recording times of the members so they can keep track of how much they improve throughout the season.

Before the ski team goes to the mountain, they have dry workouts at school. These are generally two

to three times a week and about one hour long. By taking part in basic preseason workouts the team hopes to prevent any injuries in the season and strengthen their cores.

The season does not start until late December, but they do not wait until the first day on the slopes to begin getting in shape for the season.

Once the season starts, the ski team will go up to Mount Southington every Wednesday for a two-hour practice. They time themselves to improve their chances at the competitions.

"I have been skiing since I was a little kid and I have always enjoyed it so when I was a freshman I figured it would be something fun to do...When I am going down the trails, whether with friends or during a race, I get an adrenaline rush and feel free. It is just a really fun experience overall," Kieran Johnston ('21) said.

The season consists of many practices and five races against other schools such as Greenwich, Staples, and Amity. The competitors are timed as they descend down the mountain and the times get compared to all the other stu-

dents that raced.

Just like any other sport, if students do extremely well, then they move on to the state races and will compete for the top 30 in the state.

"I wanted to try something different and skiing has always been a part of me so I decided to try racing. I also thought it would be a great opportunity to learn new techniques, go skiing more, and have a great time with friends," Lily Carroll ('20) said.

Like most sports, team members need to bring their own equipment. However, the school now helps with transportation costs and the Board of Education gives the ski team minimal money for registration fees. The registration fees without funding would be 385 dollars per person which is 29 dollars per lift ticket for every race and practice they go to.

Due to the ski team increasing in size, soon the team will have to become more competitive and have tryouts that consist of a time trial to decide who will make up the Junior Varsity and Varsity teams.

For the first time, the team

will have customized racing suits this year with Stamford High and Westhill gear on it, the 30 fastest people, or Varsity, will get the uniforms and be able to represent the school with their gear on.

In order to raise school awareness and spirit for the team, starting last year, the school planned a trip to Mount Snow, in the Green Mountains of Montgomery, Vermont, that is open to anyone in the Westhill community. The hope for the trip is to rally school spirit for the team and share the ski team experience with more of the school.

"There is a huge skiing community at Westhill and a lot of kids did not even know [the ski team] existed, we are starting to infiltrate and educate that there is a program and by doing those yearly ski trips maybe we can advertise what it is that we do as a racing team," Deangelo said.

Overall, the ski team has grown over the last seven years and allows students to participate in a sport that not every school offers.

To keep up with their practices and competitions, follow them on Instagram at @westhillskiteam.

Winter weather making fans battle the cold

Olivia Butler
Staff Writer

With the winter athletic season passing by, many Westhill athletes and fans are bearing the extreme winter temperatures at sports games. These low temperatures do

not generally encourage a large fan turnout.

Many were shocked at the large turnout of the Stamford High vs. Westhill football game considering the temperatures were below freezing. Still, Purple Pack managed to round up a very large crowd.

"The hockey jamboree was on Sat-

urday [December 8] and although the ice rink is cold, we still had one of the best fan turn outs of the whole season. More people came to watch then during the football season when it was warm outside. Generally people still come out to watch the games despite the weather," Nevaeh Mills ('19) said.

However, this is a notorious game most students looked forward to when increasing fan turnout.

Games that are known to be incredibly popular encourage the students to brave the cold.

Ice hockey is another one of the Westhill sports at risk to lose fans due to the cold since students have to stand in the cold arena to watch the games.

Most of the ice hockey games are played at Terry Connors in Stamford. It is not a far drive for most Westhill students, but many would not be excited to step inside a cold place

in the winter.

Despite the freezing temperatures, many fans and family members will make their way to the meets.

Basketball, another winter sport, always receives a great turnout due to their enthusiastic team members. The basketball team's Instagram is constantly promoting upcoming games to gather a larger crowd.

"It really depends on the sport. People come out to watch basketball and indoor track because they are indoors and heated... since it is my senior year, I plan on attending as many games as I can while I am still at Westhill," Adrian Chung-Wilks ('19) said.

Additionally, Principal Rinaldi manages to appear at every home game helping Purple Pack and fans support the team.

"If any of the sports were played outdoors then I do not think people would come out to watch them, but almost all of the sports are played inside in an arena or on a court. I do not believe that the cold affects the turn out," David Sagastume ('19) said.

The Westhill App also encourages students to attend games and earn points to gain merchandise and other rewards.

To keep up with all upcoming Westhill games and their results, follow @westhill-purplepack.



KEEPING UP THE PRESENCE Purple Pack braves the cold at outdoor games to keep up the spirit of fans.

Photo by **Harrison Travaglini** / Photo Manager.

Maintaining and breaking records at Westhill

Tamar Bellele
Assistant Managing Editor

Westhill athletics has broken numerous records in many sports and activities over the years.

As students and faculty walk into the gym, they can see the banners that represents the accomplishments the Westhill community has managed to achieve.

In the 1980s, the Westhill Track and Field Team were the ones to beat. Several students during that time proved to be excellent runners and some of their scores are still unbeaten today.

Westhill students can walk into the main gym and read these scores. For instance, students and faculty can see how in 1981, Kevin King of the Indoor Track and Field Team ran a mile in only four minutes and seven seconds.

Ellis Bennet also managed to break the high jump record with a six foot and eight inch

jump in 1980.

The most recent record to be broken was Colin McLaughlin ('21) in Cross Country. His hard work and dedication has led him to a four minute and 50 second mile time, which is the best time from a freshman runner.

"It felt really rewarding to do it because I was a couple seconds off multiple times and then I had a breakthrough run and was able to beat it by nine seconds," McLaughlin said.

In addition to Cross Country and track, the Westhill volleyball team's record this year is the best since 1984. The girls had a record of 18-2, not including FCIAC and state games, and 22-4 including FCIAC and state games. Not only was this volleyball team the FCIAC runner up, but they were also Western Division champions.

The Westhill girls volleyball team has not made it this far in FCIACs in over 30 years.

"We had an amazing, unforgettable season, and we will

continue to grow as players and coaches throughout the years," Marianna Linnehan, the Head Varsity volleyball Coach, said.

Grace Hansen ('19), also broke a record by scoring her 100th goal in her high school career in May of 2018. This kind of achievement has not been accomplished by a Westhill girls lacrosse player ever before.

"I remember my coach one day telling me we should count my goals because I was probably close to 100. It turned out I was only five away from reaching that goal. When I scored the 100th one, I felt overwhelmed and so happy," Hansen said.

Many Westhill athletes have proved their determination

and talent. They have managed to break many tedious and difficult records.

The history of the Westhill

athletic community makes it very likely that many Westhill athletes will be breaking numerous records in the future.



SCORES TO BEAT Many Westhill records are displayed throughout the Main Gym for all students and faculty to observe.

Photo by **Cailey Koch** / Photographer.

Manders maintaining the balance



Sabrina Boyd
Staff Writer

Maya Manders is a sophomore and one of the shining stars on the gymnastics team. She started her training at eight years old and has been competing ever since then. She has been on the team since she started at Westhill. Manders is consistently showing her determination and is excited for the team to excel this season. The Westword sat down with Manders to ask a few questions about her gymnastics career and her plan for the season.

The Westword (TW): How long have you been practicing gymnastics?

Maya Manders (MM): I have been doing gymnastics since I was eight so it has been six years.

TW: Why did you decide to start gymnastics?

MM: I decided to start gymnastics because I would learn to do the basics on my own like a cartwheel or back walkover and one day my mom noticed and

she suggested I go to classes, so I gave it a shot.

TW: Where did you learn gymnastics?

MM: I started at Arena Gymnastic for my first classes, but then I went to Chelsea Piers for more advanced classes. Eventually, I joined the competition team.

TW: What role does sports play in your life?

MM: Sports influenced my life greatly. They taught me how to be determined, and how to put in work to achieve my goals. Sports also taught me time management, because you do not have a lot of time between school and sports to do homework.

TW: What is your favorite memory so far from gymnastics?

MM: My favorite memory is from competing. It was my last meet of my level four season and beam was last. I hit my routine perfectly and stuck my landing. This also helped the team, because of my high score since the person before me fell off.

TW: What are the events you do in gymnastics?

MM: I do all the events: vault,

bar, beam, floor, but I like vault the best. I like vault the best because you can make it look graceful and powerful.

TW: Are there any professional gymnasts that you admire?

MM: I like Aly Raisman because she went to the Olympics twice, and she spoke up with the Larry Nassar case.

TW: Do you have any goals you want to accomplish this season?

MM: I would love to get a tsukahara vault. The tsukahara is a round off on the vault then a back tuck out of it.

TW: Do you see yourself doing gymnastics in college?

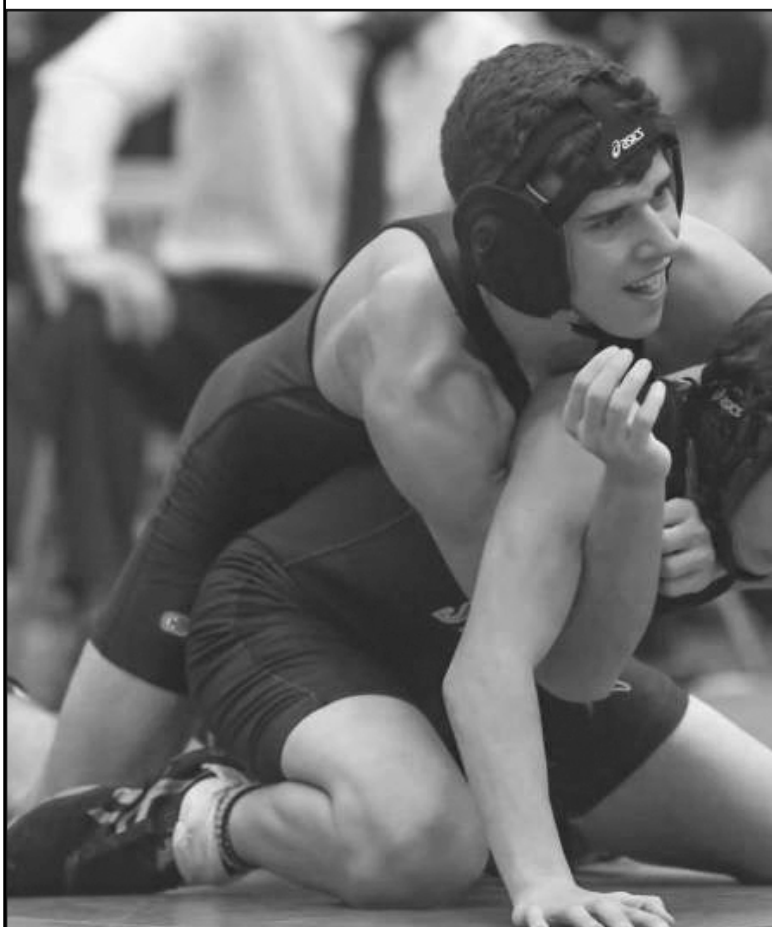
MM: I think I would do club gymnastics but I would not compete for the school in the higher divisions.

To witness Manders and the rest of the gymnastics team in action, come to Westhill on January 8 for their next competition against New Canaan and Staples. To keep up with results and upcoming meets, follow them on their Instagram @whshsgymnastics.

STAYING BALANCED Manders showing her skill at a gymnastics competition.

Photo contributed by **Maya Manders** / Contributor.

Barkas tackling his goals



Yulia Lozynska
Staff Writer

Themy Barkas, a senior at Westhill, has poured hours of hard work and practice into wrestling. He started competing his freshman year. Barkas is a hard working, passionate athlete. He has always been more than willing to help his teammates excel at becoming stronger wrestlers. Barkas' leadership has paid off tremendously in the past. The Westword sat down with Barkas to ask more questions on his future wrestling career.

The Westword (TW): How long have you been wrestling for?

Themy Barkas (TB): I first started wrestling my freshman year.

TW: Where do you practice?

TB: I started wrestling off season at a club in New York.

TW: How often do you practice?

TB: I practice for a few hours each day.

TW: What inspired you to start wrestling?

TB: I was always interested in the sport.

TW: Who do you look up to in wrestling?

TB: I look up to UFC fighter, Conor McGregor.

TW: Do you see yourself wrestling in the future?

TB: Yes, I do see myself wrestling in the future.

TW: Do you want to wrestle in college?

TB: I do not want to wrestle in college.

TW: Why did you start wrestling?

TB: I started wrestling just to join a sport and to keep myself occupied.

TW: How is the team going to perform this season?

TB: The team is looking good and they are working hard. They are practicing to

get in shape and get ready for competitions.

TW: Who stands out to you on the team?

TB: The person that stands out to me is Chase Parrott ('19). He is really good.

TW: What is your favorite thing about wrestling?

TB: My favorite thing is that it is a one-on-one sport so you have no one to blame if you lose. Instead, you just have to get better and learn from what you did wrong.

TW: What is the most important match this year?

TB: Stamford High. We beat them every year.

To see Barkas and his teammates crushing the competition, travel to their next match on January 9 at Stamford High. Purple Pack will be in attendance. To keep up with more information on players, matches, and results, follow Purple Pack on Instagram at @westhillpurplepack.

STAYING ON TOP Barkas keeping his eye on the prize as he holds his opponent in a defensive position.

Photo contributed by **Themy Barkas** / Contributor.

Graphics by **Angela Rameriz** / Graphic Designer.

Equipment costs for student athletes

Bella Vaccaro
Staff Writer

Specific equipment is needed for each sport. Based on which sport the athlete is playing, the equipment being bought and supplied is essential in order to participate.

Equipment can range in price, fit, style, and brand. No matter what sport the athlete is participating in, certain quality equipment will lead to more efficient practices, games, and events.

Many Westhill athletes choose to pay for their own equipment from outside stores due to the better quality. Most of the equipment Westhill provides has been used for many years and has faced wear-and-tear through the many player's uses.

"The school does provide equipment, but I think everyone feels comfortable using gear they own," Mike Berlingo ('19) said.

On average, between cleats, consistently buying new batting gloves, pants, and accessories, Berlingo spends close to 300 dollars per baseball season on equipment.

For many athletes, certain pieces of equipment need to be constantly replaced throughout the season.

"On average, I would have to say I

spend a total of 200 to 800 dollars on gear for softball each season," Madi Cortell ('19) said.

Depending on the sport, even more money can be spent every season making sure the player's equipment is up to game standards.

Each sport has their own set of rules for equipment, so it is crucial players are making sure their equipment works for them and obliges to the sport's rules.

"Lacrosse and field hockey are great sports to play because the equipment is very inexpensive," Michaela DePreta ('20) said.

For girls lacrosse, as long as the players have their stick, mouthguard, and goggles, they are ready to play.

Lacrosse is one of the few sports where gender plays a large role in the price of equipment.

Male lacrosse players are forced to buy much more expensive equipment due to their game's stricter guidelines.

Equipment is important for all sports, but it can tend to be on the more expensive side.

No matter what sport it is—baseball, softball, or lacrosse—athletes need to buy equipment that keeps them safe and allows them to perform to the best of their ability.



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Visit our website Lusheonline.com

Westhill students with their ID
will get \$3 milkshakes with
the purchase of a meal every
Monday through Friday
from 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

JANUARY SPORTS CALENDAR

Week 1 (1-7)

DATE: 3
EVENT: Varsity Boys Basketball
OPPONENT: Wilton
LOCATION: Zeoli Field
TIME: 7:00 p.m.

DATE: 3
EVENT: Varsity Wrestling
OPPONENT: Danbury
LOCATION: Home
TIME: 5:00 p.m.

DATE: 5
EVENT: Varsity Girls Ice Hockey
OPPONENT: East Catholic
LOCATION: Newington Arena
TIME: 8:50 p.m.

Week 2 (8-15)

DATE: 10
EVENT: Varsity Girls Basketball
OPPONENT: Danbury
LOCATION: Danbury H.S. Gym
TIME: 7:00 p.m.

DATE: 12
EVENT: Varsity Indoor Track
OPPONENT: Staples
LOCATION: Staples H.S.
TIME: 5:15 p.m.

DATE: 14
EVENT: Varsity Girls Gymnastics
OPPONENT: New Canaan,
Fairfield Ludlowe, Fairfield Warde
LOCATION: GCA Fairfield
TIME: 10:00 a.m.

Week 3 (16-23)

DATE: 16
EVENT: Varsity Girls Ice Hockey
OPPONENT: New Canaan
LOCATION: Home - Terry Conners
TIME: 7:30 p.m.

DATE: 19
EVENT: Varsity Boys Diving
OPPONENT: Glastonbury
LOCATION: Glastonbury H.S.
TIME: 3:00 p.m.

DATE: 22
EVENT: Varsity Boys Basketball
OPPONENT: St. Joseph
LOCATION: Home
TIME: 7:00 p.m.

Week 4 (24-31)

DATE: 26
EVENT: Varsity Wrestling
OPPONENT: Ridgefield
LOCATION: Home
TIME: 3:15 p.m.

DATE: 28
EVENT: Varsity Girls Gymnastics
OPPONENT: New Canaan
LOCATION: Home
TIME: 5:30 p.m.

DATE: 29
EVENT: Varsity Girls Hockey
OPPONENT: Darien
LOCATION: Home - Terry
Conners
TIME: 7:40 p.m.



Officer Caserta contributes to the forensic science classes *p. 7*

A look into the Agriscience plant sale *p. 6* / Mock Trial's first competition win *p. 4*

