

Blind Brook is Nationally Ranked



By Emma DePaola

Blind Brook High School is ranked #33 in the United States according to Newsweek's "America's Top High Schools 2015." The list that Newsweek has comprised is based solely on performance and they use their "College Readiness Index" to decide the placements of all the different high schools.

In 2013, Blind Brook was ranked as 95th in the nation, and in 2014 the school received the high rank of the 9th-best high school in the country. Although the criteria changes slightly each year, the high school has still managed to rank highly on an annual basis.

"I'm proud to be in a school that is rated so highly," said junior Emily Crumley.

According to Newsweek, the six criteria that determine the placement of each individual school include: College Enrollment Rate, Graduation Rate, Weighted AP Enrollment Composite, Weighted SAT/ACT Composite, Student Retention (how many students drop out between ninth and twelfth grade), and Counselor-to-Student Ratio. Each of these requirements is weighted differently, and every school receives a percentage, which gives each school their ranking.

Despite this new ranking, many students are unsure as to what differentiates Blind Brook from the many other schools that were also recently ranked by Newsweek.

"I think that [the ranking] is impressive, but I would like to know what the differences are between our school and those that are more highly ranked," said junior Sarah Simon.

Newsweek's 2015 list shows that seven out of the top ten ranked high schools are what are known as "magnet" schools. This means that the students at those specific schools were

chosen to attend school there, which causes their student population to have less academic diversity than schools more similar to Blind Brook.

These schools are still ranked based on the same criteria, but because the students at a "magnet" school are more likely to achieve higher levels of academic accomplishments, their "College Readiness Index" scores are higher than those of less selective high schools.

Many members of the Blind Brook community, including students and faculty, are proud of the school's accomplishments that have helped it to rank so highly amongst other prestigious schools in the US.

"It's always great to be recognized as one of the top high schools in the nation, and regardless of the changes in this year's list, we are still highly ranked," said Principal Patricia Lambert.

"While I think it's great to be ranked so highly, it's more important for us to make the school great, rather than a ranking saying so," said junior Bryan Weintraub.

The high school also ranked highly on U.S. News & World Report's 2015 list of "Best High Schools." Blind Brook was awarded a gold medal and ranked as 9th in the state of New York, 23rd for STEM, and 73rd overall.

U.S. News & World Report uses a similar methodology as Newsweek to gather data for its lists. The news source computes information on the student body, average test scores, the school district, and the profile for a school in order to calculate its standings.

Blind Brook was given a College Readiness Index score of 85.0, with 100% of the student body measuring as proficient in English and 97% as proficient in mathematics.

Changes in Physical Education Curriculum



Photo/Jeremy Marek

A Tactical Sports class smiles for a photo with teacher Mr. Flory.

By Daniel O'Neil

At the start of the new school year, the high school unveiled a new physical education program called Tactical and Strategic Sports. The course was created under the former Athletic Director Greg Russo's jurisdiction.

Each of the gym teachers has taken it upon themselves to make the program their own in some way. According to the course description in the Course of Study Guide, the new curriculum offers an advanced approach to traditional and non-traditional team and individual sports.

The class also offers higher-level motor skills, team build-

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Seniors Selected as Semifinalists for National Merit Scholarship



Photo/Emily Sachs

National Merit Semifinalists Sam Zarkower, Melissa Blum, and Jacob Zeitlin

By Hannah Brady

Blind Brook seniors Melissa Blum, Sam Zarkower, and Jacob Zeitlin were included this year in the list of Semifinalists for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

Each year, 16,000 students from across the nation are named semifinalists for the program, which is a competition for academic scholarships and recognition by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC), based in Illinois. If Blum, Zarkower, and Zeitlin advance further in the competition, they will be named

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Welcoming New Staff

By Carly Kabot

The high school welcomes new staff members math teacher Jessica Seeger and Athletic Director Douglas Goldman.

Jessica Seeger is currently teaching Geometry B, Algebra II/Trigonometry, and Pre-calculus.

She also stressed that she wants her students to have a conceptual understanding of what it is that they are learning and to see the purpose in learning certain concepts of mathematics.

Seeger said that the skills taught during a high school can be used as a foundation for skills needed later in life.

"I want [students] to learn why math is important and where it applies to the real world," Seeger said.

Seeger received her Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from the University of Connecticut in 2008. She went on to earn her Master's degree in Adolescent Education from Mercy College two years later.



Photos/Amanda Capelli

New staff members Douglas Goldman (left) and Jessica Seeger (right).

"I want to grow and develop as an educator," said Seeger.

The same year, in 2010, Seeger served as a teaching assistant in a math class at Blind Brook Middle School. Before teaching here, she previously taught Geometry, Algebra, and Advanced Placement Calculus AB.

Douglas Goldman graduated from University of Miami, where he



earned his major in Sport Administration, while minoring in Spanish and Business. He then went to Manhattanville College to receive a Master's in Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy. Goldman later attended the college of St. Rose in order to earn a degree in Educational Leadership.

Goldman now teaches a leadership class with the Director of Guid-

ance and Counseling Mary Mediate. He does not want to make drastic changes this year to any programming in the athletic department, but made it clear he would rather use the time to form strong relationships with teachers, coaches, and students.

Goldman said that he genuinely cares about his students' lives, both on and off the field.

"Getting to know the students is very important to me," Goldman said.

He has taken on numerous new responsibilities such as coordinating schedules, handling any athletic related issues, and overseeing all decisions that affect the school's athletic department.

"I want to first figure out the culture of the school.... I've worked at other schools and all of them work and run differently. Building positive relationships is the most important for me right now and eventually, making this [school] a better place," said Goldman.

Seniors Scavenge No More

By Spencer Kaplan

The Senior Scavenger Hunt, a longstanding Blind Brook tradition, was cancelled on August 31 several hours before its scheduled completion due to complaints that seniors were not obeying traffic laws.

The Hunt, organized annually by the Senior Class Officers, typically involves groups of seniors in cars driving to different locations to complete listed objectives in a timely manner. This year, the event was ended early at the recommendation of faculty advisor Charlene Decker.

"There was concern about the safety of the kids, so I was asked to ask them to stop the event," said Decker.

Decker was contacted by Principal Patricia Lambert, who was troubled by the list of activities that the participants were following.

"The concern was being drawn from the items on the list and how it could be literally interpreted," said Lambert. "The link was made that students would be drinking and driving."

Senior Class Officer Nadav Neuman refuted the claims that alcohol was involved.

"The reason it was cancelled midway through the event is because parents were worried that there was speeding and a disobeying of traffic laws going on."

Dr. Jonathan Ross, Superintendent of Schools, was also concerned with the list.

"Some of the items that were mentioned to me on the list had me concerned about health and safety," said Ross. He then notified the police to look out for un-

safe behavior. "Our concern is the health and safety of the students."

Although the school got involved indirectly through Decker, the only action they could truly take was alerting the police.

"[Decker] recommended the stopping, but did not enforce it, as the school was not officially involved," said Senior Class Officer Amanda Hurwitz.

A frequent misconception about the tradition is that the Hunt is affiliated with Blind Brook High School.

"The Senior Scavenger Hunt has no official affiliation with the school district," said Hurwitz. "That is commonly misunderstood [because] the Class Officers do step up to plan it. But it is not at all through the school."

"It's never been a school sanctioned activity," added Lambert.

In regard to next year's event, both Lambert and Ross said that the Senior Class Officers should look into safer alternatives.

"I think the tradition of starting the year with the Senior Scavenger Hunt is fun, but the time element needs to be better thought out," said Lambert. "I would question if maybe there are other ways to go about this activity."

"Any activity that is planned should be vetted through the office of the senior class and run through the advisor," said Ross.

Class Officers were commended for stopping the event when they were informed of the school's concerns.

"I would like to give kudos to the senior class because once they were told it needed to end, it ended," said Ross. "Our kids did the right thing."

Clubs with Character

By Jack Wells

The six high school clubs that draw the greatest enrollment following are Model United Nations, Mock Trial, Human Relations Club, Yearbook, International Food Club, and Community Service Club.

Model United Nations (MUN) is a longstanding club in which students debate issues about international affairs, imitating procedure of the actual United Nations. Due to the club's popularity, students must tryout to compete at one of three conferences attended each year.

The current board of the club are Co-Presidents Alyssa Wei and Jacob Zeitlin, Vice President Haley Feuerman, Secretary Joanna Goodman, and Treasurer Spencer Kaplan.

"Model U.N. aims to provide students with an opportunity to learn about international politics," said Zeitlin.

Mock Trial, another club that requires interested students to tryout for a position, examines controversial legal cases. Students act as lawyers and witnesses in competitions against other high school teams in courtrooms throughout Westchester.

Over the past few years, Mock Trial has achieved immense success in the courtroom, advancing to the third and sometimes final rounds while competing with other schools. This year's club Co-Captains Jacob Zeitlin and Josh Rosson.

The Human Resources (HR) Club focuses on building relationships between students of all ages with the principal goal to make people feel comfortable in their own skin and around others.

"Our club is built upon the principle of expanding horizons and meeting new people you wouldn't normally talk to or hang out with," said Co-President Matthew Streichler.

The other board members are Co-President Alex Silverstein, Secretary Skylar Zakarin, and Treasurer Jordan Kotler.

Yearbook Club designs and distributes Spectrum, the annual Blind Brook High

School yearbook. Members use graphic design programs to edit each page of the annual publication.

"I think it's really important to preserve the details of events at the school so that when we're all old and nostalgic we can look back at our yearbooks and be reminded of our high school years," said Editor-in-Chief Melissa Blum.

The International Food Club exposes its members to foreign countries, cultures and cuisines. Each week one student makes a presentation about a specific country and brings in food indigenous to that region. The club is led by Co-Presidents Marly Suesserman and Noah Lubin, Vice President Jamie Kerner, Secretary Oliver Kleban, and Treasurer Chloe Greenwald.

"Since joining International Food Club freshman year, I've always looked forward to Wednesday's at 2:40, where I know I'll be learning something I never knew about a country and then enjoying great food. To me, International Food Club is a time to expand my knowledge on an unknown topic. It's a great time for me to de-stress from school work and enjoy an educational and tasty afternoon," said Suesserman.

The Community Service Club, along with faculty advisor and Community Service Coordinator Jane Romm, plans and executes volunteer activities for high school students. Service options through the club include volunteering at the soup kitchen, being a pen pal with a Port Chester Elementary School student, and peer tutoring fellow student or a student of Port Chester Middle School.

"Students benefit by being able to experience reaching out and helping people. It is also a good chance to give back to the community. To be able to use my knowledge to help others is the most valuable part of Community Service Club," said Vice President Jake Cohen.

Criminal Law Class Trip to Sing Sing Correctional Facility

By Paul Soden

Social Studies teacher Martine Curto and her Criminal Law class visited Sing Sing Correctional Facility located in Ossining, New York on October 15. The trip is a long-standing biannual tradition that aims to inspire students to make wise decisions throughout their lives by demonstrating the negative ramifications of one wrong choice.

Curto first began this trip in 1990 to complement her Criminal Law class's curriculum. After teaching undergraduate programs through Mercy College at Sing Sing, she decided to reach out to the Youth Awareness Program (YAP), which is the only program that allows high school students to visit the prison. The program informs, rather than intimidates, students about the realities of the American criminal justice system.

The trip begins with presentations from inmates currently serving time at the maximum-security prison.

"We sat in a circle with seven or eight men in prison. The discussion was basically based on questions we had for them," said senior Katy Comstock.

The inmates at Sing Sing are convicted criminals that have committed class A, B, or C felonies.

According to Cornell University's Legal Information Institute, Class A felonies are defined as the most severe crimes such as treason and murder. Class B felonies are less severe infractions such as homicide, rape, and armed robbery. Class C felonies are the least severe offenses in New York state. Some Class C felonies include assault, fraud, and theft.

"Many inmates usually sign up to participate in this program. They start by telling their story and discussing the consequences of their actions," says Curto.

"It is hard for them to break through the lines of poverty, causing them to ultimately make poor choices for which they will have to pay the consequences," said Curto.

These decisions will continue to plague them for the remainder of their lives.

"A majority of the inmates have family in New York City, and the prison's close proximity allows for them to visit often," said Curto. The prisoners say that these family ties help them to get through prison, as they have something positive to focus on.

After the some of the inmates' presentations, the group discusses specific topics, such as peer pressure, that can potentially lead students down the

wrong paths. The group then tours the prison facility, which includes one of the largest cell-blocks in the region.

"We got to walk around the prison, which was interesting. We ate lunch in the mess hall that they eat in and ate the same lunch that they eat," said Comstock.

The trip culminates with meetings between students and inmates, which Curto says is "the most powerful part of the trip." Despite being in a maximum-security prison, the discussion topics are unrestricted and students are able to ask the prisoner anything about their crime, prior life, plans for the future, and what their life in prison is like.

In turn, the prisoner may also ask students questions about themselves and try to dissuade them from making the same mistakes that they made. To many students, this is the most influential part of the trip and pushes them to make the right choices in life.

"I really thought [the trip] was amazing and something that more people should be able to do. Coming from Rye Brook, we don't really see a lot of the things the guys we met had seen growing up, but I could still relate," said senior Brandon Weston.

Although each year is pretty similar for her, Curto looks forward to seeing the inmates on each trip.

"Every year I usually see the same inmates as they are unfortunately serving long sentences for their crimes. I look forward to seeing their progress each year," she said.

After five hours, the students leave the prison. Curto said that people do not realize how both physically and mentally exhausting it is to be constantly on guard for a period this long.

This trip enriches the Criminal Law curriculum, as the class is broken up into two units: crime and the criminal process. It serves as an integral juncture between the two units, serving as both a review of the crime unit as well as an introduction to the criminal process unit.

"Students are able to identify the crimes that each inmate committed and are then introduced to the criminal process and how convicts are punished for their crimes," said Curto.

Ex-convicts also act as guest speakers to add to the course.

"[The inmates] gave us a lot of advice and really made us all learn that one bad choice can influence the rest of your life, and that no one is invincible," said Comstock.

Community Forum Held for Superintendent Search

By Lana Fabrizio

The Board of Education held a Community Forum in the George Trautwein Auditorium on October 6 to encourage citizens of Rye Brook to share their thoughts on the ongoing search for a new Superintendent of Schools.

This week, a new face sat at the Board of Education table. Dr. Harold Coles of District Superintendent of Southern Westchester BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Service) was requested to moderate the meeting and to answer questions that community members submit.

"Dr. Coles distributed a list of topics and questions at the beginning of the forum, then asked community members to comment," said Board of Education President Jeff Diamond.

"The goal of the forum and the three other focus groups was to get input from the different constituencies regarding the qualities, characteristics and experience that the Board [of Education] should seek when selecting a new superintendent," he added.

Approximately 25 people attended the meeting, which was an opportunity for parents and other community members to express their views on the

school district, to discuss what they like about Blind Brook, and to give feedback on what they feel the district's priorities should be as they plan for the future. They also discussed the qualities, credentials and characteristics that the Board of Education should look for in a new Superintendent.

"Some of the qualities that the community would like to see in the next superintendent are previous experience as a superintendent, a charismatic and hardworking leader who will motivate teachers and administrators, and good communication skills that will promote the district throughout the wider community and energize everyone in the school community," said Diamond.

Former Superintendent William Stark resigned in March after eight years of service and Assistant Superintendent Jona-

than Ross is currently filling the role as Interim Superintendent for the remainder of the 2015-2016 academic year. Ross has been at Blind Brook for fourteen years.

"I do feel that the meeting was a success although it would have been nice to see a larger turnout. Choosing a superintendent does not happen very often, and it is the most important responsibility of the Board of Education," said Diamond.

According to Diamond, this is the first time that Blind Brook had a community forum for the purpose of hiring a new superintendent. The meeting lasted for about one hour and the Board received multiple opinions and comments about the community expectations.

"Several community members noted that the renovation of the facilities at the Bruno M.

Ponterio Ridge Street School should be a priority. There were also some community members who wanted to see more educational technology, like the ChromeBook Initiative currently in the Middle School, as well as more emphasis on STEM curriculum," said Diamond.

"Some current examples [of STEM] are the robotics classes in the middle school, and the new computer science class at the high school," he said.

This feedback will help the Board during the rest of the search process. There were more focus groups planned, with teachers, administrators, and school-related personnel.

A full list of the District Goals can be found on the Blind Brook Schools website. Also on the Blind Brook Schools website is a page dedicated to the superintendent search, which includes the Blind Brook Superintendent Search Brochure, Blind Brook Superintendent Vacancy Announcement, and the Blind Brook Superintendent Application.

The application deadline for prospective superintendents is November 16 and whoever is selected as the new Superintendent will assume the position on July 1, 2016.

It's Time to Have "The Talk"

Blind Brook High School is a top-notch educational institution. Doubtful? Just take a peek at the U.S. News & World Report's selection of best high schools in which we are rated #73 in the country and #9 in the state of New York.

But when we examine our high school's mission statement, cracks begin to shatter the facade.

We are told that our school is "...committed to preparing our students to be reflective, adaptable citizens with an open world view [sic]," to instilling "...integrity as a core value" and to influencing "...our students to be ethical and responsible members of society."

This should mean that my fellow students and I have been amply prepared for the trials and tribulations of higher learning. But it does not.

As a community, we are painfully lacking education in one of the most pervasive problems on college campuses: sexual violence. With nearly all of Blind Brook graduates attending college each year, it

is especially important to provide this information before students collect their diplomas.

The topic is broached during the sexual education unit in Health and in electives such as Criminal Law and AP Psychology, but then largely tossed aside for the remainder of high school. And when we do discuss sexual violence—meaning assault, harassment, and rape—in school, we do so in a way that keeps the issue at arm's length, as if to say, "Yes, this happens, but not to us, not to you, not to people you know."

This method sterilizes sexual violence and attempts to make it a clear-cut, Styrofoam-packaged deal. But sexual violence is messy. It is confusing and it is definitely hard to talk about with a bunch of teenagers. The ambiguous borders between innocence and malice, intent and circumstance, right and wrong make it immensely challenging to understand.

But that doesn't mean that we should give up. If anything, it means that we must strive harder for clarity.

The first step we must take is to cement the concept of consent. Too often, students struggle both with defining consent and identifying when it is or is not being given.

In fact, a recent article by The Washington Post showed that of the one thousand college students surveyed, nearly all were mystified when asked to determine if nonverbal signs of approval, such as nodding one's head or getting a condom, demonstrated consent.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control also shows that approximately 20% of women and 6.25% of men will become victims of sexual violence on campus.

This means that when my fellow graduates and I march across the SUNY Purchase stage this June, every fifth woman will be walking headfirst into a statistic that says she is likely to be raped, assaulted, or harassed.

Right now, Blind Brook is squandering its ability to work against this statistic. We have the resources to do so—\$42,817,803 worth, according to the 2015-16 Proposed Budget. Allocating even the smallest piece of this could transform the way we view sexual violence.

New speakers could be brought in to inform students of the realities of sexual violence. Workshops could be established that allow students of all genders to practice avoidance and prevention techniques. A myriad of possibilities exist, all of which would help arm Blind Brook students with the tools we need to counteract the threat of sexual violence by the time we reach college.

If Blind Brook still is not convinced—if prevention aimed towards the future is not worth the time or the money—then think about this: from seventh to twelfth grade, 58% of students are victimized by sexual violence in some form, from being touched in an unwanted sexual manner to being coerced into performing a sexual act (United States Department of Justice).

The ramifications of this are immense. Survivors are known to avoid school and school-related activities, develop mental illnesses, attempt self-harm, and report issues with substance abuse.

So, does Blind Brook truly want to mold us into "ethical and responsible members of society"? If so, it is time to pair academia with a social conscience. We have a moral obligation to do so, both to ourselves and to each other, to our present and to our future.

We need awareness. We need education. We need change.

Lily Werlinich

Editor-in-Chief, Focus

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up to date on all
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"It's Just a Joke"? Senior Skylar Zakarin

I was sitting in class one day when I heard one student turn to another and ask, "Hey, have you read the Quran today?"

On paper, this question may not sound harmful at all. But it was laced with a sarcastic and demeaning tone that shocked me. I was all too aware of the fact that this "joke" was a cruel excuse for animosity towards the Islamic religion. In one single question, one kid, and ten laughing bystanders, degraded an entire religion.

This is just one small example of the pandemic disrespect for people who are different from our homogenous Blind Brook community. Whether or not these statements were facetious is irrelevant. This is not about a joke. This is not about freedom of expression. This is about empathy and common courtesy. This is about being a decent human being.

I have learned in my Criminal Law class with Ms. Curto that a comment is significant not by how it was intended, but how it is perceived. In context, she was speaking about bullying and the legal action that could be taken against remarks perceived as offensive.

But this is also applicable to the way we, as students, speak to each other. Blind Brook is seen as a "squeaky-clean" high school because of our high ranking but many of us are diseased in our mindset and blind to our offen-

And my next question for any person who has said something without considering its effect, is as follows: How would you feel if I made fun of your Torah, your Bible, your Quran, your atheism, or any of your holy materials, and

effect that they have on people. I do not practice my religion, but I respect it. I respect the culture that is so heavily engrained in its ancient religion, and I respect all of the people who live by the words written in its holy scripture.

This issue should not be taken lightly. It disgusts me that some people think they are above simple manners. Discuss your "joke" in private, where people aren't at risk of misconstruing your, frankly, bland sense of humor.

Although a change is necessary, this attitude adjustment will not come from a seminar, an assembly, an authoritative figure, or parents. This change has to come from within. And this is my call-to-action.

The Viewpoints section is the platform for opinion. I urge everyone to consider writing or speaking out against different issues in any given setting. So please, speak your mind. Don't succumb to the suffocating bubble. Don't fear what people will say.

"I was all too aware of the fact that this 'joke' was a cruel excuse for animosity towards the Islamic religion."

sive attitudes towards each other.

When I asked someone what these guys were talking about, he said it was a "sport" thing. Does the fact that these macho men are on a team validate their ignorance?

disrespected it and its words of enlightenment, culture, and holiness?

These beliefs mean the world to many people. These scriptures, whether you believe in them or not, should be respected for the

Im-Perfection Senior Lucila Goldfeld

In *THE POWER OF MYTH*, Joseph Campbell writes, "...The only way you can describe a human is by describing his imperfections." This quote resonated with me in many ways.

How could an author describe someone who is perfect? They could just say s/he is a perfect human being and leave it at that, but everyone's idea of perfection differs, and while I may think that someone is perfect, someone else may think they are a flaming hot mess.

When you are describing imperfections, however, you can go into endless, Dickensian levels of details and in those details you can describe someone exactly—those imperfections are often what you fall in love with.

I have thought about this a great deal here at Blind Brook, especially when a normal conversation last year took a disturbing turn.

My friends and I were talking about grades and I posed the question, "What's the worst that could happen if we don't get a good grade?"

A friend quietly said, "We won't get into college and get a job and have a good life."

At first I thought she was kid-

ding, acting out an ironic bit, but when she looked confused after everyone began laughing, I realized she was being serious.

I have found that this attitude is really common here at Blind Brook. People think that their life has to be perfect and follow

especially because if that's the reason they are working hard, and not because they are inspired and interested, then it is not genuine.

If this is the case, you are not learning, you're checking off items on a list you were introduced to way too young, and you

to do and how you should do it.

Moreover, with everyone trying to be so perfect all the time, and the idea of perfect being the same, you end up with a group of people that are extremely similar.

So how do you fall in love—and I don't even mean romantically—with someone who hides his or her imperfections to look like everyone else?

You don't.

I've lived in many different places around the world, and here is where I find that people have the most superficial relationships.

Their "perfect" lives have to be reflected in their "perfect" relationships, but there is no depth to perfection, so there is no depth to the relationships. And any sort of conflict is avoided because conflict is not perfect.

Conflict is ugly and chaotic, so it is easier to avoid conflict and avoid the trouble of having to confront imperfection. Imperfection, however, brings people together.

You cannot solve a puzzle with pieces that are all the same: squared and smooth.

"You're checking off items on a list you were introduced to way too young, and you do not realize that you can throw away the list and find your bliss."

the path that is laid out from second grade; that the only way to success is through good grades and a perfectly well rounded profile and that college dictates the rest of your life.

This is a view I do not share,

do not realize that you can throw away the list and find your bliss, not the one that you think is expected of you.

Truthfully, that is really hard for people when you have everyone in your life telling you what

Student Viewpoints

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

October 2015

The Bubble Senior Vanessa Numme

Blind Brook is kind of an ironic name for this school. No student, teacher, or parent in this community is blind to anything that goes on within the school's walls.

Taking a look at this school is like looking into a microscope, because how big is Blind Brook? Only four hundred and seventy students.

Blind Brook is notorious for being a small, homogenous high school. The boys and girls generally shop at the same stores and wear more or less the same style clothing. A lot of students commit to the same colleges. Of those kids, half of them join the same sorority and study abroad in the same country.

With this school being as small as it is, we happen to slip into these habits and trends almost unconsciously, just because everyone around us is doing the same thing.

I believe one of the biggest social issues in Blind Brook is the lack of diversity. Not only do we all look the same, in terms of our aesthetic, but we have also come to act the same.

With a tight-knit community, our peers can influence us easily. Over the years, we start to lose diversity in opinion as well.

I know I, myself, have fallen victim to the Blind Brook "bubble" and have been sucked into its mind tricks.

In the real world, we are going to meet different types of people. People of different races, of different ethnicities, of different viewpoints, or maybe even simply, of different tastes in music.

With the people in this community being so similar, we have

what I have come to question is whether I have learned things that will be beneficial outside of the classroom. It prompts me to ask myself, has what I've learned in this community going to help me be successful as an individual in the outside world?

from this norm of remaining within your clique until you graduate high school, because these norms provide us with a safety net.

But there is absolutely no problem with making new friends or doing things with different people. In fact, I encourage it. How do you know if you really belong with people who have been implanted for you? How will you know what kind of people you get along with if you don't explore for yourself? Having these friends outside of your "regular clique" may be looked down upon here. But who cares? Do what makes YOU happy.

Overall, in Blind Brook, and the community of Rye Brook, it is very hard to be yourself. The things you love may be looked down upon here or considered weird.

At the end of the day, you need to take a step back and see the world from outside of "the bubble." Everything is different out there. In five or ten years, you don't want to think back on your time in high school and say, "I really should have embraced who I was and not cared about what anyone else thought."

We can all learn something from having gone to Blind Brook. After all, you only have one life to live and you should live it as no one other than you.

"It prompts me to ask myself, has what I've learned in this community going to help me be successful as an individual in the outside world?"

been left unprepared to face people who are different from ourselves. This uniformity is not necessarily a negative thing—it just makes it easier to lose sight of who you really are.

But, after all is said and done,

Another social issue that is prominent in this school is the unwavering cliques. We have known each other since our days in the womb. Our "friend groups" have been established since we uttered our first word. It is hard to stray

From Private to Public in Just One Year

Freshman Catherine D'Ambrosio

Before I came to Blind Brook, I attended a small Catholic school, Saints John and Paul, in Larchmont for nine years. This meant I had to say goodbye to the life that I was used to, including most of my friends.

Everyone I met at Blind Brook was accepting and nice to me, making for an easier transition into the district. I was given the opportunity to meet new people and experience a different learning setting.

Not only was it difficult to transition in because I was going from a private to public school, but it was even harder to adjust from middle to high school. At my old school, we also had mandatory uniforms.

This year, I had to get used to choosing my outfit everyday—a task that might seem like nothing, but one that defines your style everyday. I had my style handed to me before, and now, I have that freedom of expression. Another difficult transition was changing classes, since I'm used to going to the same classes with the same people all day.

What I really enjoyed about switching schools was finding out who was in my classes and determining whom I would be closest with. I was very nervous about going into high school and being the youngest in the school, considering my late birthday. At times, I enjoy it, but it also scares me. I have learned that, although the upperclassmen can be intimidating because of the age difference, so many of them are supportive and truly look out for us freshmen.

Blind Brook is a small district, which made the transition easier since there was less of an adjustment in size. Along with that, everyone was very welcoming. Since the school is so small, word spread fast that the freshmen had new people in their grade. This made it easier to make friends because people were constantly coming up to me and introducing themselves. They were all really interested in who I was and where I had come from.

I used to have the same teacher for most subjects. However, at Blind Brook, I now have a different teacher for every subject. When I came to Blind Brook, all of the teachers were very supportive in helping me to adapt and to find my method of learning. They were also very understanding when I explained to them how I learn best.

The teachers here really connect with the students and let you know they're here to help you with whatever you need. They also emphasize the fact that they are always willing to take time to explain whatever you need or don't understand, and I really cherish this bond that I have with my teachers.

Immediately, when I came into the school, there were multiple people that stood out to me. I would say that these people that were nice to me have become some of my best friends, who I know I can always rely on. I truly believe this transition was right for me, and I am thankful for everyone who helped me along the way.

This I Believe

Senior Freddy Heller

If you have never played football on a high school level, you don't understand what football really is. Football is not a sport; it is a lifestyle.

With so many people in Rye Brook growing up to play soccer, our football team was never great, but last year was our year. After five grueling weeks, our team came to week six, Haldane. It was time to make the playoffs. Needing only one more win we had the opportunity to be in the playoffs for the second time in school history.

Twenty-eight seconds left and it was fourth down at mid-field. We were down 24-20, meaning a touchdown would give us the win. Out on the field we are an army at war, battling for our survival. Though it seemed to take an hour, the ball was finally snapped. Our quarterback rolled out to the right, broke a tackle, and found himself up against the sideline. He saw a man open downfield and set up to launch the ball, but the ref blew the whistle right before the ball left his hand. He had stepped out of bounds. Defeat for the Blind Brook football team occurred yet again.

Winning isn't everything, but it sure is something. We lost the game, but we will never lose our brotherhood. Our team is a family, and that's what keeps our heads up. Twenty years from now I won't remember

every specific win or loss, but I will remember the people who were on my team and who went to war with me. Every time I am on the field I know I always have ten brothers around me to fight.

Countless hours were spent during the preseason and it wasn't for nothing. Football isn't just about winning the game, it's about how you pick yourself up and continue to give everything you have. The silent bus rides on the way home from a loss help our team be reminded that all we have is each other, and we are the only ones to change the outcome of the game. This applies to everyday life because if something wrong were to happen, we would be able to keep our cool and deal with the issue.

Playing football has helped build character and has taught life lessons. Being on the field every day for hours has been a real dedication. I don't play for myself, yet I play for my teammates. I believe in family and the concept of brotherhood. Family will always have your back, no matter what the situation is. After any down moment, its family that helps you get back to where you need to be.

As a current senior captain, the most important message I try to leave with my teammates is that we aren't just a team; we are a family; and this isn't a sport, it's a way of life.

Changes in Physical Education Curriculum

Continued from page 1

ing and heightened knowledge of the sports played within the class. Some of the units in the class include, but are not limited to, soccer, football, basketball, speedball, volleyball and badminton. It is available for students between sophomore and senior year.

According to gym teacher Nazareth Flory, the class will take a speedier approach with fewer "skills and drills." This allows for students to immediately engage in playing games with their classmates without having to practice certain skills beforehand.

"Students seem to be enjoying the class so far. Going forward it should continue to be successful," said Flory.

"For those who enjoy major team sports such as football, soccer, softball and basketball, as well as skipping right to playing games instead of drills, it is an awesome class," said senior Jordan Sergio, a participant in the class.

With this course, Flory plans to reintroduce the popular games of speedball and floor hockey at some point toward the end of the year.

In addition, the standard physical education course offered by the school has experienced some minor changes for this year, one of which is the addition of archery to the curriculum. In general, the class will mainly

focus on the improvement of skills before beginning to play a particular sport as a team.

One of the other classes, Personal Fitness, is also going through some curricular changes. Students have now begun to learn all about how to use the various machines and equipment in the gym. The class has become more oriented towards working out and fewer simple cardiovascular exercises. Students will be able to keep up with the latest fitness trends and will also learn about nutrition and exercise physiology.

"Don't be shocked if you get a good workout in this class," said gym teacher Gina Carlone.

The expectations going into the Personal Fitness class this year are more rigorous than in prior years. Like Tactical Sports, this program is available to students between sophomore and senior year.

"I think personal fitness is a great alternative for people who prefer to stay in shape individually rather than as part of a group sport. I've really enjoyed the class this year and last year, especially because it has taught me skills that I feel like I will actually use in the future, like how to tell if I'm in my target heart rate zone and for self-defense," said senior Melissa Blum.

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Seniors Selected as Semifinalists for National Merit Scholarship

Continued from page 1

finalists and continue in the running for scholarships and awards which can be used toward their college educations.

"Honestly, I was really surprised to find out that I had been selected as a semifinalist. I did not understand much about the process before being selected but it was incredibly exciting and gratifying," said Melissa Blum.

Students become eligible for the National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in the fall of their junior year. Semifinalists are not notified of their selection until almost a year after they take the exam.

While taking the PSAT, Zarkower did not even consider the scholarship at the time. "I knew that I did well on the exam, but I did not focus on the potential honor. My focus at the time was on my course work and college applications," he said.

Many finalists have attributed the success of the school's student body to the education offered at Blind Brook.

"I think that the fact that our

school has three semifinalists this year is a real tribute to the hard work that the three of us have put into our education as well as the high quality of our school district and the teachers that we have been lucky enough to learn from," said Blum.

"I definitely think the support of my teachers at Blind Brook helped make this possible," said Jacob Zeitlin.

The current junior class took the PSAT/NMSQT on October 14 and Principal Patricia Lambert will be notified of any 2016 winners around this time next year. Lambert's advice to those looking to be selected as semifinalists next year is to "approach the test seriously, take your time, and get a good night's rest the night before."

The three semifinalists will have had to complete an application by October 7 that includes information on academic performance, extra curricular activities, and personal experiences along with an essay.

Of the 16,000 semifinalists that were selected, 15,000 of them (roughly 90%) will advance to

the next round and become finalists. From there, they will have the opportunity to compete to be one of 8,000 students who will receive Merit Scholarship awards of varying amounts of money.

"We're proud that each year people qualify for this international distinction," said Lambert. "We had a total of twelve students who met this criteria. The fact that we ended with three students despite the fact that New York has one of the highest selection indexes bodes well for our students and educators."

"If I win a scholarship I will be really excited for sure, but I also feel like there are a lot of people out there who have worked harder for this than I have and deserve it more, so I hope that they get recognized for their work as well," said Blum.

"I hope that all of the Blind Brook students do well and I am grateful to all of the teachers who gave me this foundation that made this possible," said Zarkower.

Nine other students were also named Commended Students, which means that they were among the 50,000 highest scores

out of the 1.5 million students that took the 2014 PSAT. These students are Brooke Ackerman, Nicole Axelrod, Jason Cristal, Leah Kratochvil, Alex Nadasi, Emily Rattner, Josh Rosson, Seth Schuster, and Lily Werlinich.

The National Merit Scholarship Program has been surrounded by controversy lately due to the argument over whether standardized testing is beneficial for students.

This is not the first time Blind Brook students have been named semifinalists for the National Merit Scholarship Program. Last year, students Stanley Vuong and Devin Sullivan were selected.

"Whether or not standardized testing accurately measures potential for success depends on the test. With something like the National Merit, it does give you a good idea of how you are performing against one and a half million of your peers. Whether or not it measures actual success in the real world, I'm not so sure. I have seen countless people who aren't good test takers become very successful based on character [and] grit," said Lambert.

The Trouble of Accommodations

By Joanna Goodman

A major issue our school needs to address is the problem with monitoring accommodations. Frequently, students, determined to have qualified disabilities take advantage of their accommodations, and as a result, their extended time no longer puts them at an even playing field with their peers but rather affords them an unfair leg up. While teachers in the district are aware of the issues of cheating with the accommodations, little is being done.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, enacted by the US Congress in 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have protected people with disabilities. Section 504 regulations require school districts to provide "free appropriate public education" to each student with a disability in the school districts jurisdiction, regardless of the severity of the disability (U.S. Department of Education).

When these laws were enacted, schools immediately implemented programs to help the disabled students, but the sudden haste to make these accommodations left many holes in the system. Within our school district, many of the children with accommodations can qualify for extended time on exams, exams in quiet places and the use of spell-checker or dictionary. But some of the students have forgotten their accommodations should not entitle them to abuse or cheat the system (Rights of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education).

In our school district, it's an unfortunate reality that students actually brag about the advantage they receive with their 504 accommodations. Some of these students often come back later in the day to use their extra time, giving them a gap between first seeing the test and finishing it. In this time, they can study material they felt weak on, ask friends for answers, or simply look up answers online. Such opportunity for abuse is upsetting. What these students should be doing is portraying to their peers their accommodations are meant to put them at an even level academically. Sadly, the students that do this are overlooked by the many more who do not.

Extended time accommodations regarding the ACT and SAT also should be considered and more rigorous criteria should be

implemented. It is known that both kids with and without accommodations would benefit from having more time on these tests, where often the challenge of the tests is time management. At one point, students had to indicate if they received extra time ("the flag"), but starting in 2004 they no longer had to. This, I believe, was a good revision of the system—when accommodations are treated appropriately.

As a result of removing "the flag", many more students applied for extra time, knowing that the colleges would have no indication that they had received accommodations. Extended time is intended to compensate the many challenges of students with disabilities who, as a result of their disabilities, are prevented from testing at their potential. The Philips criterion (1994) stated that if extra time can enhance the performance of nondisabled test-takers to the same extent, then there is no relative compensation to the test-taker with a disability and it goes against the principle of providing equal access. On the contrary, Elliot and McKevitt (2000) argued that despite accommodations benefiting both disabled and nondisabled examinees, it does not degrade the validity of the accommodation or test. And this I agree with. I understand and know that some people, simply cannot sit for three plus hours straight to take these tests. I am aware that for some students, accommodations are essential; all I suggest is a reevaluation of the system.

There will constantly be two sides to accommodation use. It is unfair for students to be put in situations where they have to be careful about discussing an exam or have to say no to a friend who asks for answers—something many students would feel uncomfortable doing and would simply give in to please their peers. Unfortunately, I have been present when a conversation exchange such as such occurs.

There needs to be increased pressure on the school board, and CollegeBoard, to revamp the criteria to help assure that these students afforded with accommodations are not given an unjust advantage. Fixing this system will help increase the integrity of our school and make it a fairer, safer environment.



Photo courtesy of Joanna Goodman

A Bad Case of Complaining

By Eleni Kohlakis

"But, why?!" "That's not fair!" "Ugh." Complaining. It's a behavior that's hard to avoid, hence the fact that it is engaged in often. But, are we complaining for the right reasons? And what effect does this complaining have health-wise?

People often complain about bad service at a restaurant or tasks that require a lot of work. This grumbling becomes unhealthy when it turns to habit. That is, this whining becomes obsessive and takes a notably negative toll on an individual's well-being. Psychology explains this phenomenon as mood congruence.

"Perpetual whining is strengthening the negative pathways in your brain. If you are in a bad mood you begin to remember all of the bad things that have happened to you as the associations are woken up, only putting you in an even worse mood. Therefore, complaining is not helpful in a mental health point of view," says AP Biology and AP Psychology teacher Ms. Hensley.

Complaining has become an intrinsic part of the Blind Brook atmosphere. Students throughout the halls can be found whining about a variety of subjects, from a heavy workload to a hard test, or an unfair grade and a massive headache. Senior Dylan Desvernine reflects on his experience: "I think complaining releases a little bit of stress but it definitely can't be overdone. If you [complain] too much it will hurt your capability to complete anything because you are making a fuss about the assignment the whole

time instead of completing the tasks you are complaining about."

Seniors can be heard grumbling about their first semester schedules and the ever-lingering anxiety of college applications. Likewise, juniors facing the academic rigor of advanced placement courses and demand of standardized test preparation are also bound to release some whines and groans.

Jake Cohen, a junior at Blind Brook High School, explains the general reasoning behind his grumbles: "I complain when I think something is unfair and unjust and when I think things need to be changed from their current state. I use it as a way to make my voice heard when I think that an unfair amount of work or commitment is being asked of me. Although I complain when I think something is unfair, when other people complain I realize how obnoxious it is when I complain. I guess I don't realize how bad my own complaining is, but I definitely am quick to get annoyed at others' fuses."

"I often times find myself complaining about homework [because] I feel that teachers overloading us with work isn't benefiting our education. I complain about workload because I simply don't think that it is fair and I want other people to know the stress that it is causing students," said sophomore Emme Gessow.

Moral of the story? Next time, before complaining aloud, fill your mind with happy thoughts. What you think is how you feel. It's simple scientific proof.

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Blind Brook Students Take Action

By Sam Gibbs

Given Blind Brook's eighty hour community service graduation requirement, it comes as no surprise that high schoolers partake in kind acts for the community. The community service facilitator, Mrs. Romm, shares her thoughts on the prevalence of community service throughout the school: "While many affluent communities mandate participation in community services for High School students, here at Blind Brook we have students who enthusiastically embrace such programs as an opportunity to build enduring supportive relationships with people outside their usual social circle."

Although some students simply choose to complete the time requirement and then stop volunteering their time, others, like Jamie Kerner a senior, Spencer Kaplan, a junior, and Isabella Lazar, a sophomore, have all gone the extra mile by establishing their own charities or developing a strong tie to a pre-existing organization. Interviews with these students revealed the following insights:

Q: What is the name of the charity? What cause does it support?

Jamie (founder): "LivRite works with the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital to raise money and awareness about diabetes."

Spencer (affiliated member): "VisionWalk raises money to support the Foundation Fighting Blindness which funds research for retinal de-

generative disease."

Isabella (founder): "The name of my charity is Blind Brook High School Girl Up Club. Our club is affiliated with the United Nations, and helps girls in developing countries all around the world....We learn about the issues and obstacles girls in the developing world face and in turn we run events to raise money to help them get a better education, improve their living conditions, and have better healthcare."

Q: What inspired you to do start/work with the charity?

Jamie: "I started the charity in October of 2013, when I was a sophomore in high school. I was inspired to do so after I watched my family friend do the same thing many years prior when she was my age."

Spencer: "A member of my family is affected by a retinal degenerative disease."

Isabella: "I started this club at school last fall. I was inspired to do so by seeing a documentary the previous year about challenges [faced by] girls in countries such as Africa....I was very moved by their stories and I wanted to help make a change in the lives of girls."

Q: Why did you pick this cause?

Jamie: "I picked this cause because I was diagnosed as pre-diabetic in sixth grade. I wanted to be able to help people who weren't as fortunate as I was to catch it so early."

Spencer: "A member of my family is affected by a retinal degenerative

disease."

Isabella: "I picked this cause because I feel it is extremely important for girls to be treated equally, to have access to education, and to be able to have the best life they could possibly live."

Q: How have you gotten the Blind Brook community involved in your charity?

Jamie: "In the past two years of LivRite's existence, LivRite has hosted three charity events in Rye Brook, as well as neighboring towns, that have been open for the public to come and support. Along with that, LivRite is a school club here at BBHS."

Spencer: "Many of my friends support me by coming to the walk-athon, which we advertise in many events throughout the year."

Isabella: "I have gotten the Blind Brook community involved in my charity by starting a Girl Up club at school."

Q: How can others get involved in your charity?

Jamie: "The easiest thing they can do is join the club here at school. They can also attend [the] fundraising and awareness events that we have. Lastly, they can donate! Also, they can like our Facebook page and follow our Instagram for more updates (@LivRite)."

Spencer: "People can donate to my team, or join my team when the fundraising efforts start up again next summer."

Isabella: "Students can get in-

involved by joining our Girl Up Club. Also, our community can get involved by supporting our fundraisers and attending our events."

Q: What are your goals for the future regarding the charity?

Jamie: "I hope to bring LivRite to college with me and have the opportunity to grow it beyond Blind Brook community, allowing me and LivRite to raise awareness about diabetes to more people."

Spencer: "I hope that one day enough money will be raised such that the research is more adequately funded and they can find a cure for retinal degenerative diseases."

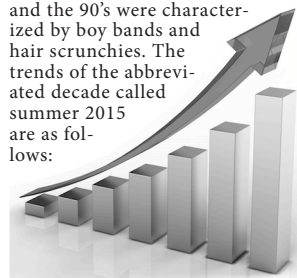
Isabella: "I started Girl Up Club last year as a freshman, so there were a lot of basic logistics to get the club going. This year we hope to have more fundraisers and expand. We hope to host speakers and community wide events. We also aspire to continue learning more about the obstacles (financial, cultural) girls in developing countries continue to face."

"Service gives students the opportunity to use a talent, a personal passion, or just to offer friendship, for even a few hours, to see a smile, and leave a lasting mark on those they touch," says Mrs. Romm, reflecting on the benefits of undertaking charitable work. "Our commitment to service learning encourages our young citizens to live a life of service; to take a look around, be inspired and take positive action that changes the world."

Cultural Trends of 2015

By Jamie Kerner

Every decade has its fad. The 50's were a time for poodle skirts and sock hops, the 70's had bell bottom jeans and disco music, and the 90's were characterized by boy bands and hair scrunchies. The trends of the abbreviated decade called summer 2015 are as follows:



1. Smorgasburg

Although it originally opened in May of 2011, the Brooklyn food festival has massively increased in popularity over the past two years. Smorgasburg is a spinoff of The Brooklyn Flea, which was founded in 2008 by Jonathan Butler and Eric Demby. Every weekend from April to November, 100+ food vendors set up shop at either the Saturday location in Williamsburg or the Sunday location in Prospect Park and sell their tasty treats. Social media has had a significant impact on

Smorgasburg's popularity. It is not uncommon to see pictures of the Brooklyn-based foods on Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat.

Senior Noah Lubin went to Smorgasburg one day last summer with his sister. "We had a lot of great food while we enjoyed our day in Brooklyn and saw the New York City skyline," Lubin explains. "All of the food was amazing, but my favorite vendors were Duck Season for their fried duck confit, and the Colombian vendor selling mangos on a stick."

2. Selfie Stick

While freshman Paige Maizes says "I am not a fan," other people around the world encourage the selfie stick phenomenon. This monopod, which is a device created to simplify selfie-taking endeavors, is most commonly used for group selfies. It provides a wider angle so that an entire crowd is included in a picture, or so sightseers can capture their entire background in one image.

Although the selfie stick is overwhelmingly endorsed in the international community, various tourist attractions have banned the device. In New York, the U.S. Open created regula-

tions against the gadget, as it obstructs the view of tennis spectators. Likewise, Disney theme parks prohibited the contraption as a threat to customers' safety.

3. Snapchat Update

On September 15, 2015, Snapchat changed the way the world "snaps." The popular social media app allows users to send a picture or video to friends for 1-10 seconds before the photo disappears into cyberspace. The application's newest update allows "snaphatters" to press and hold on their face when in selfie-mode to activate Lenses, a feature that puts a filter on the face of the person taking the snap. Every day, one lens is deleted and another one is added. Such filters range from lipstick stains and hearts to underwater animations complete with moving water and sea creatures.

Snapchat also added a replay option so customers can purchase three snap-replays for 99 cents each day. This allows the app user to reopen a photograph that they have received from a friend. Finally, Snapchat added "Trophies" to reward consumers for using the app.

4. Facebook Dislike Button

Prominent social media outlet Facebook is contemplating launching a "dislike" feature. The dislike button is in response to popular demand saying that the like button does not fit certain situations and status updates, such as a family illness or death. In a live-streamed Q&A session, Mark Zuckerberg, Founder and Chief Executive of Facebook, said "It's important to give people more options than just 'like' to help express empathy and sympathy. Not every moment is a good moment."

5. BuzzFeed

Buzzfeed is a social news and entertainment company that posts online articles, quizzes, and videos on a wide range of topics for readers of all ages. It is common to find links to BuzzFeed articles shared on Facebook and Twitter. Quizzes and videos have generated much popularity and exposure internationally for the media source. Sophomore Madison Goldberg says she likes "how BuzzFeed has so many different elements and it doesn't just ask me how well I know a show, but it also tells me about things happening in the world around me."

A Sit-Down With... English Coordinator, Mr. Ambrosio

By Lily Werlinich

Q: Of the 278 students who have responded to Focus's survey, 150, or 54%, have said that they read 0-3 books for pleasure each year. What is your reaction to this?

A: It upsets me quite a bit. When I think of BBHS, and I think of our student population, I really think that they would enjoy reading. The student body is very academic and I would just think that reading is part of their daily life, their daily routine.

Q: What do you think students are losing—educationally, intellectually, emotionally—when they do not read for pleasure?

A: I think the more you read, the more you establish a vocabulary, and the better writer you will become. I think that reading is really at the core of everything. It is not just for the purpose of English class. I think that it will help you in your social studies classes, your science classes. Even in this day and age in your math classes. I know the Common Core curriculum [for math] has a lot of word problems.

Q: You mentioned earlier that many students at Blind Brook are very academic. A lot of them want to attend top-tier universities. Do you think that lack of reading, if and when students are accepted to these institutions, will hinder their success?

A: Absolutely. Again, I think that reading is at the core of everything, the core of knowledge. And if students are not reading on their own, then they are not exploring new worlds.

Q: 134 students, or 48.2%, claimed that the reason they did not read was because they didn't have enough time to do so. Do you think this is because of increased workload or because of other distractions, like television or social media?

A: I think...more and more students are taking AP exams, so that increases their workload. I think, of course, extracurricular activities, such as sports or clubs [impact reading]. And also watching TV, or blogging, or using the Internet, I

think those are all part of the problem.

Q: Is there a way to encourage students to read more for pleasure? Some examples that students gave of what would motivate them to read more were "less work," "time to read in class," and "reading more exciting" or "interesting" books.

A: The English Department is trying to include more contemporary novels, and I think that is helping a bit.

Q: Can you give an example?

A: Well, as you know, *The Kite Runner*. We included that several years ago. But [in] ninth grade now we are including another book now called *The Other Wes Moore*, which is a great book, contemporary non-fiction. Hopefully students will really be engaged by that. But I personally think that in school you need a combination of both the classics and contemporary to really see how writing has changed and how author's views have changed over the years.

Q: Do you think that it is a student's job to find time to read on his or her own?

A: I definitely do [especially] if they want that knowledge and they want that experience. I think that everyone can find time to read.

Q: Has the Common Core curriculum had any impact on the way that students are taught English in our school?

A: Yes. There is a shift. The Common Core [modules] really looks at excerpts. There are four main modules for the Common Core...one is reading closely for detail and for information. It is really looking at specific portions of text and doing close reads, really looking at the text almost word-for-word, sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph. Really pulling it [the text] apart. We are trying to move the curriculum in that direction to the best of our ability...we [the English teachers] are all trying to merge it [the Common Core curriculum] with our own philosophy of teaching.

Library Media Specialist, Ms. Follansbee

By Lily Werlinich

Q: What is the general trend in reading habits that you have observed over the past five years?

A: Specifically in the high school, there are a number of students who clearly read...but I think that the vast majority, unfortunately, of high schoolers don't make time for reading. They have many more commitments that are wonderful [but] that take away time from other pursuits, and one of those other pursuits is reading.

That is not happening just here. There is research that shows that reading diminishes as a school-aged child gets older. Kids are learning to read in kindergarten and first and second grade...then somewhere between first and second grade, maybe fourth...kids are not learning to read so much as they are reading to learn...And then in fourth and fifth grade a good amount of reading takes place. Not as much as in years gone by, but I see it...But then in eighth grade and when kids get into high school there's so much schoolwork and the reading is for school, not for pleasure. That, in my opinion, is unfortunate.

Q: Do you find that students are using the library more as a study hall, a reference site, or a place to check out books? In other words, what has the main function of our school's library become?

A: I think the main function of the library for high schoolers is a place to be that is moderately quiet, that is maybe a little more pleasant than the commons. There are some high school students who do check out books, but I see such a big dip in that from middle school to

high school that that it cannot be the primary reason that kids come to the library.

Q: What value do you place on reading? Do you think students place the same value on reading now as they may have ten or twenty years ago?

A: Personally, separate from being the librarian, I place an incredibly high value on reading... My family read. We had a stupendous public library where I grew up, much like the Greenwich Public Library, and we went every week as a family to borrow books.

I think that culturally, reading has taken a backseat to other endeavors, and I think that technology has been a part of that. But technology has its pluses when you can download a Kindle book and instantaneously get a book.

I think that people in general are reading differently... Kids do not have the same practice building up their reading stamina like you would build [it] up when you were biking, or running, or doing something cardiovascular. So they don't have that stamina to maintain their reading.

I think that is unfortunate because that in-depth reading gives you information, particularly when the news is a sound bite. And if all you do is get your information from a sound bite, you are not getting enough information to make a rational decision about your own health care, politics, electing and voting on someone. So how we acquire information is typically through reading, but now it is more sound bites and video clips, and the human mind has not—in my opinion adapted yet to this.

Q: As of October 1, about 43% of stu-

dents claimed they had 10-15 minutes to read on average, while 55% stated they read 0-3 books per year. What is your reaction to this?

A: I am not surprised, but I think that is sad. I think that it is appalling, but I also get how our society is operating and it does not surprise me. People, students, family members, adults have to make time to read. There are those that do and there are those that do not.

You have to develop that love of reading and that love of reading for pleasure as a young child, starting with having a parent reading to a child that sits in their lap or cuddles with them on the side. (We call that "lap reading.") And if families do not do that and do not value reading, then their kids do not value reading and it goes away.

I read a book every day, and I feel lucky to be a librarian because I can read a book and it's my job. But I read for myself every day, as well.

Q: Many students responded that if the school let them choose books or assigned more "interesting" books, this would get them to read more. How do you think the school should address this? Do you agree that giving students more choice would increase their amount of reading?

A: Well, the research does show that students given a choice are more likely to read a book and maybe not do SparkNotes (laughs). I think that there is a balance, quite frankly, because the books that are assigned are not only for a literary purpose, but often have a cultural purpose, as well.

Our body of literature in...all civilizations helps educate the younger generations about what exists, what ex-

isted in the past, and impacts how the cultural develops. So there are certain books or texts that challenge a student to think—along with the plot and the characters and all that goes on with the literary criticism. And there are literary allusions that students miss if they do not have a minimal exposure to some of these.

That goes down into kindergarten... When I was in kindergarten, nursery rhymes and songs were part of learning the language, but also learning about the culture at that time period.

I was an elementary school librarian before I came here and I looked at what elementary school teachers were teaching and they weren't teaching nursery rhymes. And I only learned that because I had a book that alluded to all of these nursery rhymes, all these sort of fairy tale things, and I thought it was hysterically funny. I was talking about play-on-words with all of these fourth and fifth graders and they had no frame of reference.

There is a balance there [between required and choice reading]. Some of the literature provides a frame of reference for our culture and there's a balance that an English curriculum has to find that says, "Oh, we must read *The Great Gatsby*" because that was part of our history in the 1920s. That is helpful in understanding the culture at that time, versus reading a book that is more popular currently...that has less literary merit, too.

I think that the fact that this summer, in the high school, there was a long list of books to choose from rather than the assigned reading, is a step in that direction.

So, we'll see.



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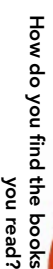
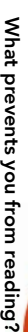
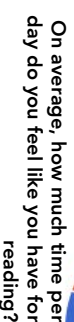
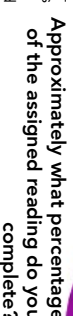
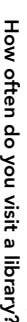
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A word cloud of terms related to reading and learning. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with some words appearing more frequently than others. The words include: education, forward, learn, school, brain, themes, resources, symbol, fluency, growth, read, inspiring, characters, knowledge, performance, flash, plot, curiosity, setting, students, smart thinking, accessible, pleasure, books, flashback, titles, success, information, creativity, education, forward, learn, school, brain, themes, resources, symbol, fluency, growth, read, inspiring, characters, knowledge, performance, flash, plot, curiosity, setting, students, smart thinking, accessible, pleasure, books, flashback, titles, success, information, creativity.



The majority of high school students are not reading as much as they were decades ago. A study by Common Sense Media shows that as students age, they spend less and less time reading, with 45% of seventeen-year-olds reporting that they read by choice only once or twice per year.

showed that the students that scored in the 90th percentile read up to five times more than those who scored in the 50th percentile. As a result, researchers concluded that, "among all the ways children spent their time, reading books was the best predictor of measures of reading achievement, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling."

One of the most common explanations is that students are inundated with technological distractions. A survey put forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute discovered that 71.75% of American teenagers are exceeding the average screen-time limit of two hours. And though this time spent with a television, phone, or computer can have severe ramifications on their health, from the development of sleep disorders to childhood obesity, it is also siphoning time away from reading, especially for pleasure.

Ever-increasing workloads and extracurricular obligations are other factors that limit the time available for high school students to read for pleasure. The same information put forth by Common Sense Media showed that 53% of nine-year-olds say that they read for "fun" everyday while the same can be said for only 19% of seventeen-year-olds.

This data is supported by the survey that Focus conducted with 278 high school students here at Blind Brook. Of that number, 119 students (42.8%) felt that had only 10–15 minutes per night for pleasured reading, with 138 (48.2%) claiming that their main obstacle to sure reading was lack of time.

The dearth of reading for pleasure can often adversely impact students' education. Free reading has been positively correlated with vocabulary growth, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and the absorption of general knowledge (Research Journal of the American Association of School Librarians). Students that do not read independently score lower on achievement tests in all areas. One reading test

Our task becomes making reading for pleasure worth the time. And this task is not just for our educators. It's our job as an educational community, as families, as students to make reading important—because it is. And it's not just important for a grade on an achievement test. Reading is valuable because it makes us better people, to ourselves and to each other. And that is as crucial now as it has always been.

complete

Can Trump Make America Great Again?

YES

By Max Goldfarb

No matter what Donald Trump says, he doesn't want to be the president. I wholeheartedly believe he is a media grandstander. Don't be mistaken, though: this is a man with massive potential.

When President Obama took office after the election of 2008, there was a widespread belief that he had already begun, and would continue, to change the landscape of politics.

Many believed that he would end divisive political partisanship, bringing cohesion and unification among ethnic, religious, and social groups. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Our country remains as greatly divided as it has been since the Civil Rights Movement.

After years of disappointment, Donald Trump—an aging, egotistic billionaire—has finally emerged as our hope for change.

Trump's greatest asset is his fearless dismantling of the modern epidemic of "political correctness." His fortune has given him the freedom to say whatever he wants, without having to contend with or cater to donors or super-PACs like his opponents.

This freedom has given Trump immense power, which he uses to extract the truth from the traditional grandstanding of his fellow politicians. Unlike his opponents, who are fearful of losing a single penny from their donors, Donald Trump has nothing to lose.

As a result, he has completely changed the landscape of politics in a matter of months. It is nothing less than extraordinary.

Before Trump's emergence on the national stage, the media fully dictated the political conversation in America. Now, Trump controls that conversation.

A single Trump sound bite can become viral in an instant, yielding dozens of op-eds and roundtable discussions. His divisive personality has, ironically, united both parties in conversation—something not even the Iranian nuclear crisis could.

Of course, as with any politician that is as controversial and confrontational as Donald Trump, there has been significant backlash.

One of the most aggressive policies Trump has announced is his immigration plan. He wants to deport over eleven million illegal immigrants and revoke the citizenship of their children born in America, prompting many to slap him with a laundry list of negative labels, with bigot, racist, and supremacist at the very top.

Undoubtedly, Trump's plan is a hostile solution to a very sensitive issue, but we must realize that the answers other politicians have offered are either ineffective or unsustainable. As a country that has nearly doubled its debt under President Obama, providing for these people is not feasible.

Trump is the only one that recognizes that it is time for America to dismiss the belief that it can spend and financially act without consequences. It is time to be pragmatic.

Considering that the Iowa Caucus does not take place until February of next year, candidates are reluctant to release policy specifications until that date looms closer. It is my guess that Trump, like his opponents, will not take the time to delve into policy proposals.

Unlike his opponents, however, his reluctance to do so is not because he is trying to save votes or maintain anticipation. His crusade to "Make American Great Again" does not revolve around an immigration plan, a tax strategy, or his stance on relations with foreign countries.

Instead, his campaign seeks to bring truth to this phrase by igniting the millennial generation. And so far, he has been victorious in his endeavor. Millennials have begun to shape society around their philosophies and beliefs. This transformation can be seen with the ever-increasing struggles of establishment politicians such as Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton.

On the other hand, both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders are resonating with large audiences, especially of the younger demographic, even though these men appear too uncharacteristically radical to be so successfully competitive in a traditional presidential election.

But this is not a traditional presidential election and these men are not traditional presidential candidates. These men—especially Donald Trump—are at last offering what Americans are starving for: genuine hope for change.

NO

By Sammy Landino

Donald Trump, with his baffling blend of empty rhetoric and malarkey, is simultaneously the eternal plight of the conservative party and early Christmas for liberals.

Against all odds—for really, how many faults can one man have?—he has managed to be legitimate in the face of his sexism, egotism, and illogicality.

Trump's genius stems from his ability to disguise these failings beneath his Batman-like façade. He is the rich, arrogant billionaire by day and empathetic, heart-string-tapping public avenger by night.

Trump offends people of all sexes, ethnicities and religious background, yet it is precisely this arrogant scapegoating which is so appealing to the average American.

Let's examine the first public address of Trump's presidential campaign. He is on record saying, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best... They're bringing people that have lots of problems... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

To fully analyze the fallacies in Trump's statement, we need to ignore (for now) his rampant racism and classism.

Men that are born in the United States are "incarcerated at a rate over two-and-a-half times greater than that of foreign-born men," according to the Public Policy Institute of California. Data from the United States Census support this, stating:

"For every ethnic group without exception, incarceration rates among young men are lowest for immigrants, even those who are the least educated. This holds true especially for the Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans, who make up the bulk of the undocumented population."

This is a classic example of Trump using his bombast to equate being repetitive and loud with being right, and the American people buy it!

The depressing part is that Donald Trump was supported with, at one point, 30% of the Republican vote. This is representative of fellow Republicans who think the same way, believe the same hoaxes, and buy into the same lies that Trump spews.

It is because of this very ignorance that Trump is able to get away with so many of his ridiculous proposals, the foremost of which is to build a 1,954-mile long wall, from Tijuana to the Gulf, in order to curb immigration.

This would cost our country an estimated 6.8 billion dollars – not to mention that the main way that illegals get into our country is by plane!

But the buck does not stop there. Trump demands the deportation of over eleven million illegal immigrants, despite the exorbitant cost of doing so—218 billion dollars, according to PEW Researchers—and the vacuum of cheap labor that would be created.

The other policy plan that Trump has made public is his tax plan – a plan so viscerally concocted, and so infuriatingly stupid that even Grover Norquist was in favor of it. He intends to remove corporate tax and lower the top rate of income tax from 43% to 15% (Market Watch).

If all of these cuts, coupled with a 20% tariff tax increase, had been in place in 2012, the national deficit would have tripled from \$360 billion to nearly \$1.5 trillion.

That's exactly what the American economy needs, right?

Trump's absurdity extends even into his public statements. On television, Trump has said that a woman would "be a good picture on her knees." He has also called mothers who breast-feed "disgusting."

After being asked by Megyn Kelly in the first GOP debate to explain such derogatory attitude towards women, Trump insinuated that her question was a result of being on her period ("blood coming out of her wherever").

He has also claimed that Senator John McCain is not a war hero and has failed to deny deny that President Barack Obama is a Muslim?

But the most disappointing part of all of this—excluding the fortification of Trump's insatiable ego—is that none of these insane and inappropriate comments have seemed to phase his top-tier polling.

H.L. Menken once said that "no one ever lost any money underestimating the intelligence" of the American people. I'd like to raise Menken one and assert that no one has—and no one ever will—lose a cent underestimating the deplorably hypocritical machine that is the infamous Donald John Trump.



Images courtesy of teapartyorg.ning and gannett-cdn.com



Political Fact Sheet

By Kellie Franzblau

There are many controversial and confusing political topics flooding the headlines right now. Focus wanted to determine which of these topics perplexed Blind Brook students the most. Thirty-one students were asked to rate their understanding of seven different political topics. The survey showed that of all the topics, three emerged as the most perplexing: the Keystone Pipeline (0.7%), the Patriot Act (1.6%), and the Iran Deal (4.3%). Below are some basic facts to shed light on these issues.

The Patriot Act

What is it?

The Patriot Act was a piece of legislation passed by Congress and signed by former President George W. Bush six weeks after the September 11 attacks. The new law gave the government a significant amount of additional power to pursue terrorists, primarily by expanding the government's authority to spy on United States citizens.

Who is impacted?

This law has the potential to impact every American citizen. Many civil rights activists believe that the law actually went too far and infringed upon many people's constitutional rights. It is believed that this law gives the executive branch of government too much power, which disrupts our system of checks and balances.

Why should we care?

This issue is extremely significant because of the possibility for the violation of privacy rights. This contradicts the very morals that our nation was founded upon. After the terms of the law expired this past summer, many of its capabilities were retained by the passing of the USA Freedom Act on June 2.

The Keystone Pipeline

What is it?

The Keystone Pipeline is an oil delivery system that would run from Alberta, Canada to oil refineries in Illinois and Texas and oil tank farms in Oklahoma. Whether or not to complete this pipeline has caused controversy in our country.

Who is impacted?

All U.S. citizens and Canadians could be impacted. Many environmentalists strongly oppose the building of this pipeline due to the probability of environmentally hazardous oil leaks and spills. Both public health and the natural landscape in many parts of the country could be at risk.

Many believe that the Keystone Pipeline would decrease our dependency on foreign oil and improve American self-sufficiency. Environmentalists argue that this could be achieved through alternative sources of power, such as solar and wind.

President Barack Obama vetoed a bill regarding the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline on February 24, but the issue is ongoing.

Why should we care?

This is especially important to the younger demographic because the building off this pipeline could have severe environmental impacts which could negatively impact our future. Spending our time and energy on sustainable energy could be a healthier way to satisfy the country's energy needs.

The Iran Deal

What is it?

The Iran Deal is an agreement between the United States, England, France, China, Russia, Germany and Iran to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear capabilities. The deal states that Iran must reduce its stockpile of uranium by 98% and its number of centrifuges. The hope is that this will prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon for at least fifteen years. In return, the six other countries have agreed to lift economic sanctions that have been imposed against Iran for the last few years.

Who is impacted?

The Iran Deal could affect many people worldwide. Proponents of the agreement believe that it will result in greater economic prosperity for the Iranian people and prevent future nuclear attacks. The deal allows for inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to continuously monitor Iran's nuclear program to ensure that it is abiding this deal.

Adversaries of the Iran Deal, like New York Senator Chuck Schumer, fear that the deal could threaten Israel's safety. Many Republicans believe the deal cannot truly stop Iran from creating a nuclear bomb.

Why should we care?

This issue is important because by preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, relative peace and stability could be assured in Israel and potentially the entire Middle East. The implications of this deal have caused tension between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Barack Obama, though the two remain allies and trade partners.



Voting Rights Going South

By Noah Lubin

Early this fall, the Republican legislature and governor of Alabama made huge budget cuts after a year of financial turbulence. These budget cuts resulted in the closing of many state-run locations, including five state parks and twenty-eight places to obtain a driver's license.

You may see this as a small consequence to keep a state government up and running. And that may well be a reason. But for the 250,000 Alabamians are already deprived of a valid photo ID, closing the institutions that make licenses available will not make obtaining state-mandated identification any easier.

On top of this, half of the twenty-eight locations are in the so-called "Black Belt" of Alabama, a predominantly African American area, with black citizens making up more than 75% of registered voters in these counties.

According to the GOP, new voter identification laws were passed to combat the "ubiquitous" problem of voter fraud by making voters present a valid state identification, the most common form of which is a driver's license.

From 2000 to 2014, there have been only thirty-one cases of voter impersonation fraud out of one billion ballots (Loyola University). For those wondering, that is a whopping 0.0000031% of ballots that were considered fraudulent.

John Archibald of The Birmingham News called it: "Not just a civil rights violation. It is not just a public relations nightmare. It is not just an invitation for worldwide scorn and an alarm bell to the Justice Department. It is an affront to the very notion of justice in a nation where one-man one vote is as precious as oxygen. It is a slap in the face to all who believe the stuff we teach the kids about how all are created equal. No matter the intent the consequence is the same."

This "affront to the...notion of justice" destroys the American principle that every citizen gets the right to vote and tarnishes our democratic conscience. How can we be perceived as the greatest democracy while preventing citizens from voting?

Residents in counties without a place to get a driver's license are now forced to travel long distances to obtain state issued identification. As a result, many constituents who are unable to travel long distances will now be denied the right to vote.

Hillary Clinton has called this "A blast from the Jim Crow past," and has issued a call for a constitutional amendment addressing this problem.

Why is my nana—who does not even have a driver's license—able to vote in New York while elderly African Americans in Alabama are not?

This is wrong, no matter where you lay on the American political spectrum. It is un-American to prohibit fellow citizens from voting in order to benefit a particular party. Unfortunately, Alabama is only a microcosm of dozens of other Republican-led state legislatures that have enacted similar voting identification laws. Seventeen states, including New Hampshire, Indiana, Virginia, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, Texas, Kansas, Michigan, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Idaho, Rhode Island, and Hawaii, all require photo ID similar to Alabama. It is true that this may all be one big unintended consequence of budget cuts. Yet I have the nagging suspicion that Republican states have created voter ID laws for the ultimate goal of limiting the number of Democratic minority voters, as African Americans are eight times as likely to vote Democrat than Republican.

In a nation where liberty, democracy, and freedom are expressed through voting, this is the ultimate irony of the American political system.

"It is un-American to prohibit fellow citizens from voting in order to benefit a particular party."

My Feud with Celebrity Feuds

By Jamie Kerner

I couldn't help but laugh as I watched host Andy Samberg poke fun at the newest celebrity trend of celebrity feuds as he attempted to start a feud with fellow comedian Amy Poehler at this year's Emmy Awards. In another television program, I broke out in laughter as actress and comedian Mindy Kaling sat in on Jimmy Kimmel Live and made a joke that she doesn't think she has made it in the business because she was not involved in some type of celebrity feud. She goes on to say that she doesn't care who she is in a feud with and "will attack anyone," leaving the audience laughing in agreement. This made me wonder, "Why are suddenly celebrity feuds become so trendy?"

There seems to be too many feuds throughout the entertainment business to keep track of. Is the feud between Taylor Swift and Katy Perry still going on? And when did Iggy Azalea's feud with Snoop Dogg end? Were any of these disputes even real?

I joined the 9.8 million other television viewers who watched Nicki Minaj call Miley Cyrus out at the VMAs for bad-mouthing her in the press, which launched a huge feud between the two celebrities. Shortly before that, at the same award show, I watched her rekindle her friendship with Taylor Swift after being in a grueling feud (Wow! Nicki Minaj seems to be very busy!). After this VMA show, Nicki's name was everywhere, leaving people to wonder that maybe her current habit of being in celebrity battles was all just for publicity.

I personally believe that these feuds are started for the purpose of creating publicity. It has been said that in entertainment and politics, there is no such thing as bad publicity. Perhaps they are even resolved just because celebrities are not getting the kind of publicity they want for their current feud. Either way, entertainers should focus more on doing their job as performers, and spend less time worrying about who said what about them.



Photo courtesy of Jamie Kerner

When was the last time someone like Nicki Minaj released new music? Though she is not currently topping the charts with hit songs, she is one of the most talked about celebrities for her recent behavior. I believe that such stars just like Nicki need to focus less on their behavior and ac-

tions, and more on doing their job, which is creating music for her fans. Tabloids are partially to blame for the sudden trendiness of feuds. They report solely on what stars are doing in their personal life and not what they are doing within their respective professions. Many stars feel the need to get themselves talked about in such magazines and may act out for the publicity. Many people are starting to complain about the lack of new music being played on the Top 100 radio stations. Maybe this is because so many artists whose music is played on these stations are too concerned with gaining publicity. It is time for entertainers to return to their jobs and continue to please their fans by releasing new content.

Television Watching Shifts With the Times

By Paul Soden

The American tradition of watching television has changed drastically over the last few decades. With the introduction of Netflix and other web-based media streaming services, television watching has been transformed into a much more individualized activity, where it was once centered around group or family viewing.

Netflix is an online service that provides subscribers with access to thousands of on-demand television shows and movies to watch at their leisure for a minimum fee of \$7.99 per month. Subscribers can access this content on most computers and smart devices, which gives Netflix the convenience and portability that regular television does not possess, making it very popular among commuters and travelers. Netflix also offers a home-delivery disk rental service that has become much less popular in the current digital age.

Netflix began in 1997 with this home-delivery disk system. Pioneered by Marc Randolph and Reed Hastings, Netflix was a success from its initial days of operation. With the introduction of its on-demand service in 2007, the company quickly gained popularity and revenues. Similar providers of this on-demand Internet streaming media are Hulu Plus, Amazon Prime, and Vudu, although Netflix has proven to be the most popular. These services all provide their members personalized accounts, which give them film and television suggestions based on those they have watched in the past. This individualistic approach truly sets these services apart from television, providing subscribers with a form of more personal and viewer-friendly entertainment.

More recently, Netflix began to introduce television shows that are limited to sub-

scribers. These programs give Netflix an exclusivity that encourages new members to sign up to view the shows, some of which are House of Cards (2013), Orange Is the New Black (2013), and Bloodline (2015).

"The best part of Netflix is that you can watch a huge variety of shows whenever you want, with no commercials," said junior Bryan Weintraub.

Unlike television-watchers, Netflix viewers are not plagued by the frequent commercial breaks that disrupt their programs every five to ten minutes. This is one of the major reasons that Netflix currently has over 66 million subscribers worldwide.

Netflix also allows its members the freedom to watch as many episodes of an entire television series at once rather than just one commercial-filled episode per week.

"I think that Netflix has become popular because it allows for people to watch their favorite television shows on their own time. With so much going on in our lives, we do not always have time to schedule out an hour on a specific day every week to watch a television show," said junior Petal Samrow.

Despite the many benefits of subscribing to Netflix, there are some drawbacks to the program. Netflix annually filters its content, replacing less popular programs with new ones. Many are upset when Netflix removes shows that they used to be able to enjoy on a regular basis. Nevertheless, the new shows that are added inspire viewers to curl up on the couch and try new programs.

"Although I get upset when my favorite shows are removed from Netflix, I always look forward to seeing what new shows are uploaded for me to watch," said Samrow.

Leader of the Pack Hits the Blind Brook Stage

By Rachel Goodman

Leader of the Pack will debut on November 20 as the Blind Brook Theater's fall musical, where it will run for two nights.

Leader of the Pack is one of the first "jukebox musicals," a type of production that uses previously released popular songs for its musical repertoire.

Jukebox musicals are becoming increasingly popular on Broadway and within the rest of the theater world, as can be seen by similar shows like Jersey Boys and Beautiful.

With music sure to be enjoyed by all generations, coupled with a predominantly female cast, Leader of the Pack has the potential to be another extraordinary Blind Brook Theater production.

The show tells life story of 1960s singer-songwriter Ellie Greenwich, whose doo-wop tunes quickly shot to the top of the charts. Because the musical is filled with songs containing many duets and trios with intricate harmonies, production is expected to have its fair share of difficulties.

"It's not just a lot of solo music; there are a lot of group numbers so I think that's going to be a challenge," said Director Christina Colangelo.

The style of music and dance is also going to be a test for some.

"The show takes place in the 1960s, so I think that the most challenging aspect would be learning how to dance in the style of the 1960s rather than in the style of musical theater, which I feel more comfortable with," said sophomore Lee Price, who plays the role of Keith, a friend of Greenwich's husband.

Although the 1960s setting may be a new and different experience for some cast members, Colangelo believes that it will greatly appeal to the older members of the community.

"I think that people's parents and grandparents are going to have a lot more of a connection to it," she said.

Seniors Jamie Epstein and Katy Comstock and Junior Danielle Goz, the show's three leading actresses, are prepared to put their full effort and energy into the production and are proud to be working with such

a talented cast.

The three have long harbored a love for theater and have developed a strong support system throughout their years performing, which should help them thrive on stage.

"I'm most excited to enter into unfamiliar territory with this part. I'm used to playing comedic roles in Blind Brook shows, so this is the first time I will be playing a romantic lead. It's an amazing opportunity with an outstanding cast, and I can't wait to see it come together in just a few short weeks," said Epstein. She will portray Greenwich in the show.

The girls are set on not letting any challenges stand in their way.

"The hardest part [for me] will be creating a character through only song, but at the same time it'll be the best part because it creates more room to have fun!" said Comstock, who plays the role of Annie Golden, one of Greenwich's best friends.

The self-determination that the cast possesses ties in perfectly with the theme of the show: overcoming obstacles and following one's dreams.

This theme helps to motivate performers in the cast to stay focused and devoted to their work in order to put on an authentic and moving show.

"She [Ellie Greenwich] at some points is discouraged by the people that love her and they want her to give up her career and move onto something more traditional, but she is very focused and really sticks true to who she is," explained Colangelo.

Many of the cast members of the show are regulars in Blind Brook performances. Over the years, they have been able to learn from one another and watch each other grow.

"Not only am I so excited to see the show come together after all of the hours of hard work and passion we will put into it, but with each Blind Brook High School show I've done, the bond between the cast becomes so strong; we become like a family...When you have a cast that is comfortable with each other, that translates onto the stage, and it will create an amazing show," said Goz, who plays narrator Darlene Love.

Teenagers' Favorite Stars Are Just a Click Away

By Gabby Applebaum and Danielle Barsky

Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook are only a few of the many social media platforms that celebrities use on almost a daily basis in order to reach out to their millions of fans.

These platforms allow teenagers to keep a constant tab on the lives of their favorite superstars and connect with them on a more intimate and personal level than ever before.

"Celebrities use social media to really grow a stronger bond with their fans," said senior Alexis Lynch.

Social media grants celebrities a massive amount of influence, especially among younger fans. While most celebrities receive positive feedback on their posts to social media, stars often face criticism for sharing controversial messages and images with their followers.

Nash Grier, a popular Vine and YouTube star amongst teenagers, has been under fire recently for including numerous misogynistic and homophobic comments in his tweets and videos.

Considering the amount of young people who idolize and look up to public figures, celebrities who make offensive and discriminatory remarks threaten to instill values of inequality and prejudice in today's youth.

Despite some celebrities sharing disrespectful posts through social media, many other famous people are working toward worldwide tolerance and equality.

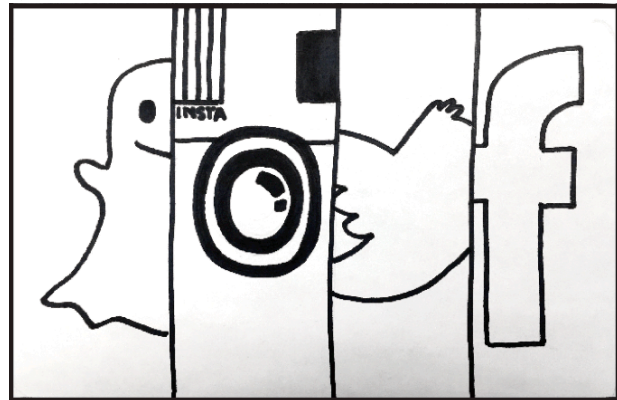


Illustration by Rachel Park

Pop artist Demi Lovato, who has openly shared her struggles with her mental health and an eating disorder, is known for her advocacy of a strong anti-bullying policy. She uses her Twitter account to share messages to her fans of acceptance and body positivity.

"Demi Lovato is one of the greatest role models for children and teenagers today. She is an amazing example of an individual who had her weaknesses, but came back into the spotlight stronger and more determined than ever. By using her social media accounts to raise awareness of causes that she feels passionate about, Demi is exposing ideas that have the potential to change the lives of millions of people," said junior Allison Gelfarb.

Music icon Beyoncé has also used her social media footprint to provide a positive message to fans.

After performing at the Global Citi-

zens Festival on September 27, Beyoncé posted numerous photos of the concert on Instagram with captions intended to educate her 47.5 million followers about world poverty, one of the main targets of the event. In one of the captions, she informs her fans that it is possible for global poverty to be eliminated by 2030 if the world works together.

Many other celebrities use their social media accounts for self-promotion and advertisement. With over 300 million users on Instagram, it is easy for a celebrity to promote a product or idea in just seconds.

Justin Bieber, arguably one of the most popular artists right now, recently turned to the online community to promote his new single "What Do You Mean?"

Every day throughout the month leading up to its release, he posted pictures of different celebrities holding up promotional posters for the song. In doing so, he was able to catch the attention of both his own fans and the fans of the stars that endorsed him.

One of his promoters, the eminent talk show host Ellen DeGeneres, has 17.3 million followers on Instagram and 48.3 million followers on Twitter. By harnessing both his own fans and DeGeneres's, Bieber was able to reach a massive amount of people.

The Kardashians, one of America's most famous families, is incredibly well known for using social media to promote their different products.

Kim Kardashian-West, the third-most

popular person on Instagram, constantly posts photos of herself wearing clothes from her fashion line. She also regularly endorses countless numbers of magazines that she appears in, as well as her different photo-shoots.

Kardashian West's half-sister, Kylie Jenner, is also notorious for her promotional social media presence. Most often, Jenner advertises the brands that she models for, such as PacSun and Balmain.

More recently, she has been posting about her new app, which features her own beauty tutorials, shopping tips, and fashion advice. The day after it was released, Jenner's app shot to number one on the iTunes chart.

"Even though I'm not one of her biggest fans, I have to admit, seeing everything on social media about it [the app] made me want to download it," said junior Allison Gelfarb.

Universal's Domination

By Jordan Kotler

The movie industry is as unpredictable as March Madness. A movie could have a bunch of A-list actors and an award-winning director, and still be a box office dud. A lot of times, the quality of the film isn't nearly as important as how the film was sold for positive box office results. This summer saw the unlikely studio of Universal come out on top and make so much more money than any other studio this summer, and maybe by the end of the year.

Universal is one of the biggest studios in Hollywood, so it was expected that it would make its money, especially for movies like Jurassic World and Furious 7. But they were not supposed to this well, and that is for one reason: no superhero movies. With studios like Disney releasing Avengers: Age of Ultron and Ant-Man and 20th Century Fox releasing Fantastic Four and Kingsman: The Secret Service, it was deemed ridiculous to think Earth's mightiest heroes would lose to dinosaurs and fast cars. Superhero movies have been this generation's Star Wars. Whether the overload of the amount of superhero movies has taken a toll on its viewers, they are still the most anticipated and popular films that comic-book nerds like me just can't get enough of. Universal does not own the property rights to any of the major superheroes, but they made the most with what they had.

Universal made smart, safe, but still interesting choices that led to their box office success. Their huge blockbuster was in the safe hands of Steven Spielberg's executive-produced Jurassic World led by the family-friendly face of Chris Pratt. Seriously though, this guy can't make enemies with anyone. He's as likeable as it gets in this movie. The typical hero role in your typical dinosaur movie. But either way, he nailed it. Universal took a chance and tapped the young, inexperienced Colin Trevorrow as director, and after the film took the domestic opening weekend record from Marvel's The Avengers with over \$208 million, he has now been chosen to direct the 3rd film in the Star Wars trilogy in 2019. The movie is nothing special in style or delivery, but it is just pure fun and entertainment for all to enjoy. Also,

Furious 7, their other box office juggernaut, is a part of an established brand that has pumped out successful Fast & Furious movie after another. Following Paul Walker's death, who was the main

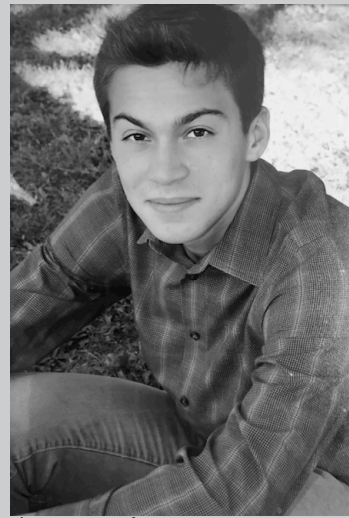


Photo courtesy of Jamie Kerner

character in the series, the studio marketed the fact that this was to be his last movie appearance. Minions and Pitch Perfect 2 are both already a part of established brands as well. Trainwreck is led by Amy Schumer, who is one of the most popular women in Hollywood, Straight

Outta Compton is based on one of the most popular rap groups in music history, and The Visit is produced by Jason Blum, who is the king of low-budget horror flicks. All of these films are obvious box office threats that Universal knew they could capitalize on if marketed correctly, and they did.

Heading into awards season, Universal is looking to build on its dominance with some big releases that could make a splash in the box office and win some prizes. They have the British gangster picture Legend, starring Tom Hardy playing a dual performance, the Angelina Jolie directed and written romance By the Sea, starring herself and husband Brad Pitt, and the much-talked-about horror Crimson Peak, starring Tom Hiddleston, Mia Wasikowska, and Jessica Chastain and directed by Guillermo del Toro on their roster. Steve Jobs is their biggest awards player since it is about such an iconic figure, and boasts a stellar cast of Kate Winslet, Seth Rogen, Jeff Daniels, and Michael Fassbender as the titular role. The film industry is in great shape, as it just had its best summer in years, and with blockbusters like the new James Bond film Spectre, The Hunger Games: Mockinjay - Part 2, Pixar's The Good Dinosaur, and all of the big Oscar movies still to come, it does not seem like it will be slowing down any time soon. Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens, premiering on December 18, is likely to take away Jurassic World's box office record, and will probably put Disney ahead of Universal in box office total income for the year. Whatever does end up happening, one cannot deny how exciting it is to be a movie fan today.

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Top 10 Halloween Movies of All-Time

By Alana Applebaum and Alexa Limb

Halloween is just around the corner, and there is no better way to get into the spirit than to sit back, grab a bowl of candy, and enjoy a good movie. Here are our top ten Halloween movies to please all audiences.

the corner, and there is no better way to get into the spirit than to sit back, grab a bowl of candy, and enjoy a good movie. Here are our top ten Halloween movies to please all audiences.

10. It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown (1966)

There is nothing as comforting as enjoying a nice, light-hearted, Charlie Brown classic with your family. Before going to Violet's Halloween party, Charlie Brown and his friends decide to go on a trick-or-treating adventure. However, their good friend, Linus, will not be joining them, as he is determined to wait for the Great Pumpkin in his local pumpkin patch. This movie directed by Bill Melendez will ensure many smiles and laughs for all audiences.

9. Fun Size (2012)

This Nickelodeon favorite starring Victoria Justice portrays a teen's worst nightmare on Halloween. Wren, a high-school senior, is excited about a Halloween party until she finds out from her mother that she has to babysit her younger brother. She reluctantly takes her brother out for a night of trick-or-treating, and all is well until he gets lost in the Halloween frenzy. Wren and her friends conduct a desperate search to find him, where they encounter many odd and hilarious situations. Directed by Josh Schwartz, this teen-oriented Halloween film is surely one to be on your list this fall season.

8. Hocus Pocus (1993)

This spooky comedy, directed by Kenny Ortega, is a Halloween essential. Starring Sarah Jessica Parker, Bette Midler, and Kathy Najimy as three witches, this movie occurs in 1693 Salem. Before being executed for witchcraft, the trio set a spell: in 300 years, when someone lights a certain candle, the witches will come back to life. Sure enough, 300 years later on that day, a clueless boy lights the candle. With the witches back in town, they are more than ready to seek retaliation, and it is up to a few people to put an end to their terror spree. Not only does this film invoke a spooky mood, but it guarantees a laugh as well.

7. Monster House (2006)

This movie is a perfect addition to this eerie time of year. A teenager named DJ believes that the house across the street is actually a monster. DJ, along with his two friends, Chowder and Jenny, quickly try to find ways to destroy this evil house before it carries out its wicked plans on Halloween night. This chilling film directed by Gil Kenan will surely not disappoint!

6. Paranormal Activity (2007)

Directed by Oren Peli, this thriller starring Katie Featherston and Micah Sloot will keep anyone at the edge of their seat. After Katie and Micah move to their new house in San Diego, they are haunted by an evil presence at night that Micah captures on his camera. Katie believes it is the return of a demon that previously haunted her. The demon becomes angrier and torments the couple further each night. Portrayed as eerie footage taken by Micah, the film appears more realistic and horrifying. The special effects are well done and result in a very scary watch.

5. Scary Movie (2000)

For those looking for a comedy this Halloween, Scary Movie spoofs classic horror movies of the 90's, including Scream and The Blair Witch Project, to entertain viewers. Directed by Keenan Ivory Wayans and starring Anna Faris and Shawn Wayans, this comedy focuses on six teenagers being stalked by a serial killer, hunting them down for an incident they caused last Halloween. The cast maintains a great sense of humor that keeps viewers laughing throughout the film.

4. The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)

This family-oriented film focuses on Halloweentown's Jack Skellington, who feels that the town's tactics of scaring people are outdated. As the plot continues, Jack leaves for Christmastown and attempts to kidnap Santa Claus to obtain control of Christmas. With brilliant animation techniques and an entertaining soundtrack, Henry Selick makes this fantasy one of Disney's most successful films. Theatrical voiceovers by Danny Elfman, Catherine O'Hara, and Chris Sarandon make for excellent viewing.

3. Scream (1996)

Scream, directed by Wes Craven, focuses on a town psychopath who stalks victims, asks them trivia questions, and then viciously murders them. It is up to Sidney Prescott and her friends to determine the identity of the killer. Viewers will be both delighted and disturbed by the compelling plot and mystery of this movie. With leads Neve Campbell and David Arquette, this film is a classic horror story that slasher film lovers will be sure to enjoy. Prepare to be spooked!

2. Halloweentown (1998)

In this Disney classic, Kimberly J. Brown plays a young girl named Marnie, who has just discovered that she, along with her ancestors, is a witch. Using her powers, she tries to stop the evil creatures that have been threatening her town. But her adventures don't stop there! There are three sequels directed by the amazingly talented Duwayne Dunham (Halloweentown II: Kalabar's Revenge, Halloweentown High, and Return to Halloweentown).

1. Teen Witch (1989)

In Dorian Walker's film Teen Witch, nerdy teenager Louise Miller discovers from her psychic, Madame Serena (played by Zelda Rubinstein), that she has magical powers, which she uses to fulfill her dream of popularity. Her antics will surely entertain high schoolers and keep them laughing throughout the movie. While Teen Witch is an older film, it still remains today a Halloween classic with fans that just cannot get enough of Louise's personality.

Goodbye to Planned Parenthood, Hello to Higher Birth Rates

By Joanna Goodman

Over the summer, the anti-abortion group Center for Medical Progress leaked secret footage that accused Planned Parenthood of harvesting fetal tissue for its illegal sale. Since then, Planned Parenthood has fallen under extreme social and political scrutiny, with state legislatures around the country focused on limiting Planned Parenthood.

Within the last three years, a record was set for the amount of legislation introduced to restrict women's health, especially concerning abortion.

While little has changed at the federal level, this issue has been at the heart of the 2016 presidential campaign as states around the country are working to limit this non-for-profit institution's funding.

Eliminating funding for Planned Parenthood has more widespread effects than the prevention of abortions. The organization has provided educated to women of all ages and helped them make informed and independent decisions concerning family planning. It also supplies men and women with necessary basic health care, such as cancer screenings, wellness exams, and birth control—all at an affordable cost.

U.S. District Courts have begun to weigh in on the measures taken

by state legislatures to limit Planned Parenthood's connection to various providers in Arizona, Indiana, Kansas and North Carolina.

For example, a U.S. District Court Judge issued a permanent injunction to prevent Governor Bill Haslam of Tennessee and his administration from cutting off HIV and syphilis prevention programs provided by Planned Parenthood, something Haslam had hoped to do.

Court rulings such as these are essential to helping Planned Parenthood prevent politicians from interfering with people's access to critical preventive care.

Former governor James Richard Perry was quoted as saying, "To be clear, my goal, and the goal of many of those joining me here today, is to make abortion, at any stage, a thing of the past."

While the famous Supreme Court Case Roe v. Wade prevents politicians from taking steps as extreme as this, it does not stop the restrictions being placed on the health care they provide for millions, especially on women in surgical and non-surgical abortions.

The variety of options offered by Planned Parenthood and similar

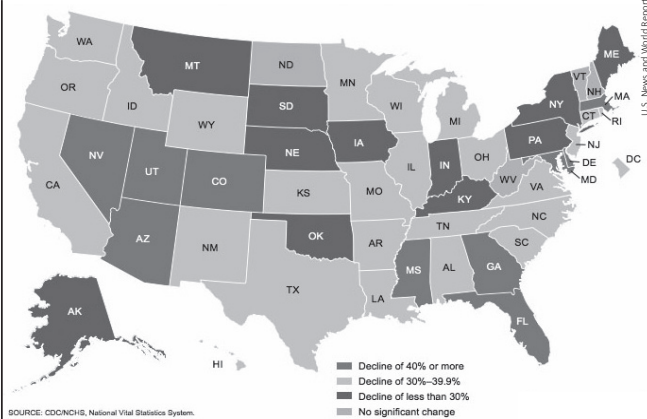


Figure 9. Percent change in the birth rate for teenagers aged 15-17, by state: United States, 2007-2012.

organization have helped increase contraceptive use in the country. More than ninety-nine percent of U.S. women aged fifteen to forty-four who have ever had sexual intercourse with a male have used at least one contraceptive method. The most commonly used form is the birth control pill, followed by tubal sterilization and then condoms.

Although teen pregnancy, birth rates and abortion rates have reached a national all-time low, the same cannot be said for states that have placed restrictions on women's healthcare. While this decline is partially due to the increased availability of contraceptive methods, it is also connected with education.

It is now believed, due to extensive research, that comprehensive sex education programs can change the behaviors that put young wom-

en at risk of unwanted pregnancy by both reducing the frequency of sex and increasing the frequency of contraceptive use. In addition, studies have shown that perhaps later childbearing is the new generational "norm."

While these national statistics show an increase in contraceptive use and a decrease in pregnancy and abortion, if legislatures continue trying to restrict not-for-profit health-care organizations such as Planned Parenthood, it is likely that soon these statistics will be replaced with increased teen pregnancy rates and decreased contraception use.

One final telling fact: the national teenage birth rate is 26.5/1000, however, in Texas and Arkansas, where some of the more extreme restrictions have been placed on health-care, it is above 40/1000.

To Clean or Not to Clean

By Eliana Rosenzweig

When people purchase cleaning products, harmful effects of the toxins found inside are mostly likely the last thing on their mind, when in fact, they really should be the first. Toxins from regular household cleaning products include 150 chemicals that are associated with birth defects, allergies, cancer, and psychological disorders. These devastating effects are most prevalent on the chronically ill, elderly, and infant population. Cleaning products only contain warning labels for ingestion of the chemicals, yet 90% of health problems from these products come directly from inhalation and absorption of the toxins.

Liquid dish soap contains formaldehyde and ammonia, two toxins that, together, make the substance the leading cause of accidental poisoning in children under the age of six. Formaldehyde is found in many cleaning products and can cause cancer, irritation, depression, vomiting, and mental confusion. Ammonia can be extremely harmful as well, with effects relating to severe asthma and chronic respiratory diseases. Metal polishes often contain petroleum distillate, a chemical that can trigger irritation in the lungs and eyes. Long-term exposure could potentially damage the nervous system, kidneys, and the skin. Disinfectants

ordinarily used in household cleaning, including Lysol and Spic-n-Span, often contain phenol or cresol. Phenol and cresol can each cause damage to the respiratory or circulatory systems of the body including heart/respiratory problems and liver, kidney, or eye damage.

According to the custodians at Blind Brook High School, green cleaning products, which are generally less toxic, are used to clean the school. Maintenance Foreman Louis Rodriguez reports that the main product used to clean floors, bathrooms, and other surfaces of the school is H2Orange2, a citrus-based cleaner used for approximately 95% of the school cleaning. H2Orange2 is biodegradable, contains low Volatile Organic Compounds, has a neutral pH, and contains absolutely no asthmagens. However, Blind Brook still has strides to take. Every Friday, the school also uses Clorox Disinfecting Wipes to wipe down the desks, doorknob handles and other dirty exteriors. The active ingredients of the wipes, Ammonium Chloride and Isopropyl Alcohol, do show moderate respiratory concern. Though, because the wipes are used after most students clear the school for the weekend, the effects of the chemicals

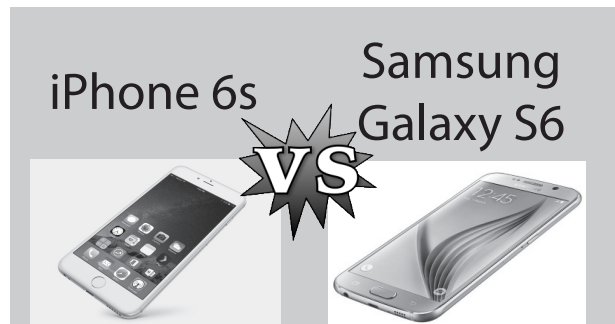
Product	Harmful Chemicals
Dish Soap	Formaldehyde Ammonia
Metal Polishes	Petroleum Distillate
Lysol	Phenol Cresol
Clorox Wipes	Ammonium Chloride Isopropyl Alcohol
Windex	Propylene Glycol

are lowered slightly. Additionally, Windex cleaner is used to clean windows, despite studies showing a high concern for acute respiratory effects and moderate concern for allergies, vision, and skin damage.

Although the Clorox and Windex products are used less frequently by the school, they are common cleaning products in households. But fortunately for many Americans, there are several organic, healthier alternatives to cleaning products to use in homes that do not contain hazardous toxins. Many household cleansers are common substances acting as non-toxic replacements for cleaning products such as olive oil, castile soap, baking soda, lemon juice and vinegar. Online there are many cleaning "recipes" available to make homemade all natural cleaning prod-

ucts that are much more beneficial for overall health. Instead of using disinfectants with toxic chemicals, simple household substances can be just as effective in cleaning. Lavender, cloves, and tea-tree oils are antiseptic solutions as well as disinfectants; they prove effective at removing unwanted germs and particles.

Awareness of toxins in cleaning products is on the rise. Many more companies are developing organic, non-toxic chemical cleaners. The Honest Company, Green Works, and Mrs. Meyer's Clean Day are just a few examples of companies that provide organic cleaning products that are safe for all ages and for household use. Increased awareness and reactions from companies such as these will make for a happier and healthier America.



By Jacob Zeitlin

In September, Apple followed its annual trend of releasing the newest version of the iPhone, which comes about five months after Samsung's release of the Galaxy S6. These two devices, which possess the top two spots in the smartphone market, are certainly very different. Let's take a closer look at their specifications and characteristics:

It is important to note that both of these devices have more expensive counterparts with more impressive specifications, however I chose to focus on these two, because of their popularity among the general public. It is also important to recognize, that although the Galaxy S6's camera has more megapixels, that is not the only measure of the quality of a camera: there are other specifications such as aperture, shutter speed, and optical image stabilization.

Feature	iPhone 6s	Samsung Galaxy S6
Operating System	iOS 9	Android 5.0, Lollipop
Rear Camera Resolution	12 megapixels	16 megapixels
Front Camera Resolution	5 megapixels	5 megapixels
Video recording	4K video (3840 by 2160) at 30 frames per second	4K video (3840 by 2160) at 30 frames per second
Battery	Up to 10 hours of Internet use on LTE, up to 14 hours of talking on 3G	Up to 12 hours of Internet use on LTE, up to 26 hours of talking on 3G
Display Size	4.7 inches	5.1 inches
Display Resolution	1334 by 750 pixels	2560 by 1440 pixels
Dimensions	Height: 5.44 inches Width: 2.64 inches Depth: 0.28 inches	Height: 5.65 in Width: 2.78 in Depth: 0.27 in
Weight	143 grams	140 grams
Sensors	Three-axis gyro, accelerometer, proximity sensor, ambient light sensor, barometer, second-gen fingerprint sensor	Accelerometer, barometer, fingerprint sensor, gyro sensor, geomagnetic sensor, hall sensor, heart rate sensor, light sensor, proximity sensor
Available Colors	Gold, silver, space gray, and rose gold	Gold platinum, black sapphire, white pearl

As shown in the table above, the two phones have several numerical similarities: their dimensions and weight are very close, they both record 4K video, their front cameras have equal resolution, and they contain many of the same sensors. Both devices also have companion smartwatches (Apple Watch and Samsung Galaxy Gear), and both devices have power saving modes to reduce battery usage.

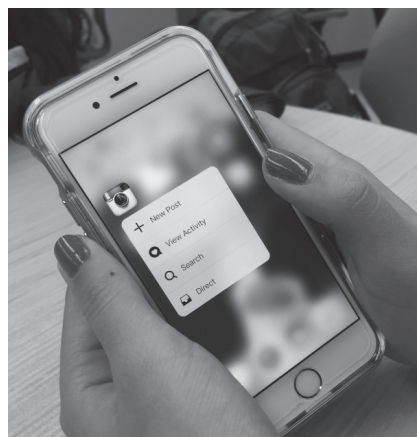
However, the two phones also have strengths in different areas. One of the advantages to having an iPhone is its widespread popularity in the United States. The fact that many people at schools and workplaces own one often makes it much more practical to share files from one iPhone to another using technology such as AirDrop. The motion coprocessor is also a unique feature that enhances the speed and battery power in the iPhone 6s.

That being said, the Galaxy S6, with its 2560-by-1440-pixel display, is definitely apt for watching videos, and its battery life is much better than that of the iPhone—although the iPhone's battery has improved greatly over the past two years. The Galaxy S6 also has a fast-charging battery, which can charge from 0% to 50% in about thirty minutes.

To conclude, I do not think you can go wrong with either of these phones. If you are much more comfortable with the iPhone, say, because you have only had iPhones before, I would not say that the specifications of the Galaxy make it worth buying.

However, if you are indifferent to the manufacturer, whether or not you have used an Android phone before, I recommend giving the Galaxy a try. I believe its advantages in both specifications and features, including a better battery life, a higher-resolution camera, a higher-resolution display, a fast-charging battery, and a heart rate sensor, give the Galaxy the upper hand in user experience.

Apple: The New Gadgets from September's Event



Photo/Rachel Brown
A student using their new iPhone 6s.

By Alex Nadasi

As September rolled around, techies impatiently awaited Apple's annual iPhone announcement event. And, on September 9, their period of waiting finally came to a close. On this day, at 10:00 am Silicon Valley time, CEO Tim Cook unveiled a plethora of new Apple products, including, not surprisingly, a new set of iPhones: the iPhone 6s and the iPhone 6s Plus. In addition, Cook revealed new Apple Watches, the new Apple TV, the iPad Pro, and the Apple Pencil.

The new set of iPhones unveiled during September's event show a stark improvement in relation to last year's iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus. First, the new iPhones are offered in two more colors than the iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus were: gold and rose gold. Additionally, the new phones have 3D Touch, a feature that enables the user to perform more actions by adjusting the amount of force used to touch the screen of the phone. The new iPhones also come with a faster processor, the A9 chip, which is a step up from last year's A8 chip. The A9 chip is 70% better at CPU tasks, and 90% better at graphics tests than the A8 chip. Moreover, the new iPhones come with pre-installed iOS 9, the newest mobile operating system for the iPhone that's packed with new features like Apple Music. The new phones also sport a higher performing camera that can even shoot video in 4K resolution. The phones are now available for purchase.

Cook also revealed a new set of Apple Watches at the keynote - including new color choices of gold and rose gold - and a partnership with Hermes that produced hand-stitched leather straps and a special watch face. For Watch users, WatchOS2, the second version of the watch's operating system, was announced and made available on September 16. This new operating system includes messenger apps like Facebook Messenger.

The announcement of the new Apple TV was a pleasant, but not entirely unsuspected, addition to the event. New features added to this version of Apple's TV include built-in Siri and a touch-capable remote. Siri can be used to rewind a show; she will do so if the user says, "What did she say?" while watching a show or movie. Users can also access both Apple Music and photos within the television's interface. Apple announced a TV operating system called tvOS, which allows third-party developers like Netflix to develop applications for the new TV. With a three-month battery life and a gyroscope for gaming, the new TV is looking to be a promising follow up to the third generation Apple TV. The new Apple TV will be available for purchase soon.

The iPad Pro was perhaps the "biggest" announcement of them all. The new iPad has a 12.9 inch screen, as well as a full-sized software keyboard. With 5.6 million total pixels, it has more pixels than a MacBook Pro with Retina display and runs on the new A9 chip. The iPad comes with a keyboard that attaches magnetically, and is widely thought to be similar to Microsoft's Surface tablet. The iPad Pro will be available for purchase in November.

Finally, to complement the iPad Pro, Apple unveiled the Apple Pencil, a stylus for the iPad Pro, which will be available for purchase in November for \$99.00. The Pencil's specialty is its sensors, which allow for precise writing or drawing with virtually no lag. The Pencil boasts a battery life of twelve hours, and charges in the Lightning port of the iPad Pro. Fifteen seconds of charge equates to 30 minutes of usage, according to Apple.

Hooked on Hookah in a Bad Way

By Nicole Axelrod

While they may not pop up often around Westchester and the suburbs, New York City and other major cities have witnessed the rise of a newer and trendier kind of bar: the hookah lounge.

A hookah, sometimes called a shish or a waterpipe, is a metal device with one or multiple extensions used to smoke vaporized tobacco. The instrument essentially works by creating smoke with hot coals, mixing the tobacco smoke with some sort of flavoring, passing it through a glass water basin, and then through a water tube which a group of people can share and pass around to smoke.

The flavors are usually fruity or sweet, which is why the hookah has gained in popularity over the less-appetizing cigarette. Like cigarettes, one must be eighteen to enter a hookah lounge or buy hookah tobacco products. At first glance, the escalating popularity of hookah among high school and college students alike makes a lot of sense: it is easy and legal to get, easy to share, doesn't taste awful, and is a way for kids to hang out in groups. But that's before the unexpectedly high health risks set in.

The ancient tradition originated in the Middle East, and has been practiced in places like Iran, India, Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia for centuries. However, the practice did not hit the United States and Canada until the

1960s and '70s. Once the hookah craze reached the United States, an indoor smoking ban was created to deter people. But hookah businesses were and are still able to avoid the bans by showing that a certain percentage of their revenue is created through tobacco and alcohol sales.

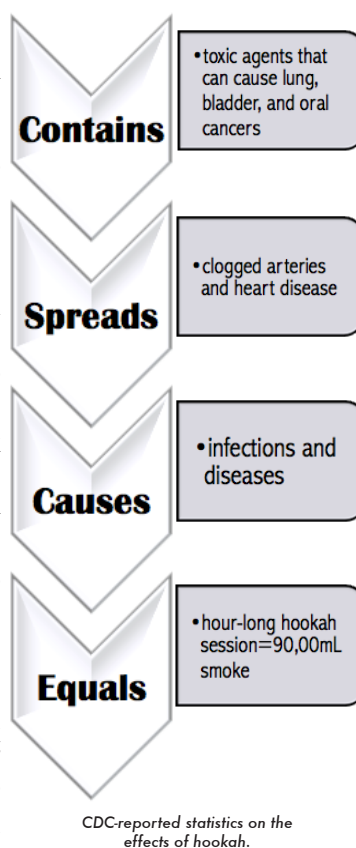
Hookah and its related products are still available at places ranging from small smoke shops to gas stations. According to the CDC, from 2000-2004, over 200 new hookah lounges were introduced in places with large Middle Eastern populations or near college campuses. While cigarette use has gone down significantly among high school and college-age students, hookah use has increased from 4.1% to 9.4% between the years of 2011 and 2014. While more than 1,178 university campuses have banned hookah and smoking on their campuses, 40.3% of college students said they had tried smoking hookah in a 2011 survey.

But those who choose to take a risk with hookah should remember this: according to the Centers for Disease Control, smoking from a hookah for one hour is the equivalent of smoking 100 cigarettes. That's five packs. That same one hour session delivers 1.7 times as much nicotine as a cigarette, meaning frequent users are likely to become addicted in the same way that cigarette addiction works.

Addicted hookah-smokers have described urges to smoke alone and can experience similar withdrawal symptoms and difficulty quitting. The carbon monoxide smoke from a hookah can bind to the brain and create carboxyhemoglobin, a toxin that makes it difficult for the brain to absorb oxygen, leading many to be hospitalized for "hookah sickness."

The smoking also impairs cardiac autonomic functioning, vascular and lung functioning, and the baroreflex control (control over our blood pressure). Furthermore, it is a major cause in the development of multiple cancers and cardiac and pulmonary diseases. Mothers who smoked hookah while pregnant have also been shown to have children with many kinds of birth defects.

The smoke found in hookah lounges was deemed "unhealthy to hazardous" by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2012 because it contained chemicals and toxins including carbon dioxide, aldehydes, PAHs, ultrafine particles, aromatic hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, nicotine, trace metals, and respirable particulate matter. Not to mention that these levels are 2-10 times higher than cigarette smoke. Plus, the sharing and passing around of the hookah spouts become the mating grounds for bacteria and germs that spread through saliva or the blood in open mouth cuts and sores.



More than Just a Man's Best Friend

By Joie Ng

Cherished for their loyalty and renowned for their steadfast love, dogs are adored all around the world. Not only do dogs serve as wonderful companions, but they also provide many physical, emotional, and social benefits.

Several studies have shown that dogs can be powerful in encouraging people to get moving, whether such activity be playing with or walking their dogs. Playing with a dog raises levels of dopamine and serotonin in the brain, two positive neurological chemicals that contribute to our feelings of happiness, self-significance and importance.

The American Heart Association claims that owning dogs can increase the likelihood of survival by as much as a year after a heart attack. The organization also suggests that dog ownership can lower cholesterol, citing the exercise that comes from dog-walking as a possible factor. Even simply petting a dog has been found to lower heart rate and blood pressure.

In addition to providing cardiac benefits, dogs help strengthen the immune system. Dogs have their own unique bacteria, which cause exposed owners to build antibodies. Therefore, owners are less prone to bacterial infections. Likewise, growing up with a dog makes children less likely to develop allergies because their bodies become more familiar with foreign substances and subsequently, their tolerance for allergens increases.

Moreover, it has been confirmed that having a dog increases the amount of oxytocin present in the brain. Oxytocin, nicknamed "the love hormone," reduces stress and promotes bonding. People with dogs can experience an up-

surge of this hormone when they are with their dog, which can help to lower depression.

Owning a dog can have social benefits as well. Dogs help people be more

social and approachable, and provide opportunities for owners to meet new people, especially other dog lovers. Whether it is going to training lessons or dog parks for a walk, these pets promote interaction and provide a common interest.

While dogs can yield wonderful benefits as pets, they also provide therapeutic treatment. For example, dogs can be used to help children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) because they allow the victims to release excess energy, teach them responsibility, and help them to keep calm. Likewise, they are often specifically trained to be Seeing Eye dogs for the visually impaired or to detect the onset of seizures.

In addition, some children with autism or learning difficulties interact better with animals than with people. For these children, bonding with dogs can be a step towards greater connection with people. According to Paws for People, having a dog to pet helps children focus better while reading,

improves literacy skills, provides a non-stressful and non-judgmental environment, increases self-confidence, and reduces self-consciousness.

People have been catching on to the enormous amount of benefits of having a dog. Dogs are now permitted at some workplaces, and Harvard Medical School's Countway Library even has a therapy dog to allow students or employees to take a break and lower their stress levels.



Photo/Rachel Penn
Spencer Gladstone cuddles with his dog.

Meet the Man Behind the Helmet: Football Coach Manganielli

By Evan Ketchabaw

Q: What age did you start playing football?

A: I started playing at the age of seven. I played for the Hartsdale Dads Club.

Q: Which NFL or college football team was your favorite as a kid? Who was your favorite player and why?

A: The San Francisco 49ers [was my favorite team] and Jerry Rice was my favorite player. Growing up, I just became a fan but no one in my family is a fan.

Q: Where did you go to High School and did you play on your school's football team?

A: I went to Stepinac High School and played football as well. I played both offense and defense line.

Q: Where did you go to college and did you play for your school's football team?

A: I went to Iona College and I did not play.

Q: Who was your biggest motivator and why?

A: My mother. She was a single mother and the hardest worker I have ever known. She fought cancer twice and won both times. She is my inspiration.

Q: What was your most memorable moment in your football career?

A: Winning the JV Championship. We won on the last play of the game. [There were] two reasons why this was so memorable: to win with my teammates, and my mother who was sick at the time drove to Long Island and in attendance.

Q: As a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? Why?

A: No matter what, I wanted to have great work ethic. No matter what career path I would choose, I would make sure that no one would work as hard as me.

Q: Why did you become a varsity football coach?

A: When I was eighteen, I started coaching at Stepinac. Right away, I knew that I wanted to be a Head Coach one day.

Q: How long have you been coaching football and for what teams?

A: I have been coaching [for] over fifteen years. I have coached at Stepinac, Rye Country Day and Blind Brook.

Q: What is your goal for coaching football?

A: To give to my players what football and my coaches gave to me. That was important.



Photo courtesy of Daniel Oppizzi
The Varsity Football Coach Manganielli.

Regular Season Varsity Sports

Football **3-4**

Volleyball **10-9**

Boys' Soccer **6-6-1**

Girls' Soccer **7-5-2**

Cross Country **0-5**

Girls' Tennis **6-6**

IMG Academy

By Alison Abrutyn

Summer is every student-athletes' off-season, a break from the demands and pressure that comes from trying to balance school and sports. But for a select few, as soon as school lets out, summer sports begin and the balancing act continues.

Three Blind Brook students attended IMG Academy this summer, a world-class sports facility and boarding school, to work on their soccer skills in order to prepare for the fall season. Two of these students, Haley Feuerman and Jake Cohen, are current members of the girls' and boys' varsity soccer teams, respectively.

IMG Academy is located on a five-hundred-acre campus in Bradenton, Florida. It has evolved into a massive sports complex that meets the needs of amateur professional athletes from around the world and offers a plethora of sports, such as baseball, football, basketball, tennis, golf, soccer, lacrosse, track and field, and cross-country. There are twenty multi-purpose fields, courts, and weight training facilities, all available at the athletes' expense. The Academy also provides housing for all eight hundred of the athletes that have the opportunity to learn and train there.

Both Feuerman and Cohen were participants in IMG's soccer program this summer. The soccer program at IMG boasts thirteen professional quality Bermuda-grass fields, video lecture halls, a ten-thousand square foot weight room, a turf training area, and the Gatorade Sports Science Institute, which provides the athletes with advanced vision training and nutrition equipment/technology. The IMG soccer program has produced several soccer stars, such as U.S. National Team players Tim Howard and DeMarcus Beasley.

IMG Academy attracts some of the most talented young athletes in the United States and prides itself on the high level and intensity that each session is executed with.

"The most beneficial part of going to IMG was the level of play. It really helped me to improve by being on the field with some of the best players I have ever seen," said Jake Cohen.

"The coaches at IMG come from some top programs and have lots of experience in developing skills and techniques to help players reach their potential," he said.

"It was a really fun experience. I've gone for three years and every time I meet so many new people. The soccer is really high quality and it helped me get in shape for preseason," said Feuerman.

For both girls and boys at Blind Brook, soccer preseason is notorious for its formula of running, running, and more running. It is vital to be both physically and mentally prepared. Feuerman and Cohen agree that IMG helped prepare for preseason due to the high level of fitness expected of the athletes training there.

Another advantage of the Academy is its Florida location. The summer heat there is intense and reflects the intensity of soccer preseason.

"It is a lot harder to play because it is so hot out but if you can survive Florida in July, Rye Brook in August is no sweat," said Feuerman.

BVS Strikes Back

By Jake Simon

With a record of 5-3-1 through the first nine games of the season, the Blind Brook boys varsity soccer team, the Trojans, has been playing its best soccer in its most recent games.

Prior to last season's defeat in the earlier stage of the sectional tournament, the Trojans had rattled off three consecutive sectional championships in the autumns of 2011, 2012 and 2013. The team's failure to achieve the rarely coveted four-peat left a feeling of emptiness amongst the Trojans, one that every player sought to avenge come the fall of 2015.

"Last year we went out in the quarter-final against one of our biggest rivals, Bronxville. The bus ride home after that was pretty depressing, so that is our main motivation for this year. We never want to experience that same feeling again," said goalie and Captain Noah Lubin.

Although the Blind Brook team has both talent and drive this season, they will be matching up against other formidable teams in Class B, such as those from Rye Neck, Bronxville, Pleasantville, and Edgemont.

During first game of the year, the Trojans took down Rye Neck, the team ranked number one during the preseason for Class B at home. Knowing that they have the ability to knock off a team of such high-caliber like Rye Neck gives the boys a confidence boost in other difficult matchups down the road.

Part of the reason that the Trojans have been able to be so successful throughout this season is due to the superb work from the defensive half. Manning the ship for the Trojans is senior and captain Andrew Farruggio.

"I think the defense works well together because we're always communicating on the field and this helps us rule out simple

mistakes. There areas where we need to improve, though, including on fast breaks and helping the offense keep up pressure on the other team's half. My role as captain has really been made easier due to the great group of guys on the team. Carrying out my responsibilities has been painless because of the overall respect everyone has for one another," said Farruggio.

Aside from Farruggio in the middle, the starting back-line is made up of junior Jake Cohen (also middle), senior Ali Namin, and junior Carlos Morales playing left and right, respectively.

In addition to the powerful defensive front, the offense has begun to sharpen in the Trojans most recent games. Arranged in a 4-2-3-1 formation during games, senior Jason Hershaf and sophomore Jake DiGiansante play in front of the defense. The two control the middle of the field, as well as the tempo of the game.

Led by junior Joao Souza at center midfield, seniors Matthew Streichler and Matthew Jaffe cover the athletic-wing positions and help to round out the speedy and athletic midfield.

Playing up top this season is junior Justin Endlich, whose knack for finding the back of the net has been invaluable for a team that struggles offensively at times. With play on both sides of the ball simultaneously firing on all cylinders, this Blind Brook team could be a nightmare matchup for just about every Class B team.

The Blind Brook Trojans have paired a new roster with a more positive and inclusive attitude. About a year ago, the team consisted of a cluster of talented individuals. This often led to problems with teamwork.

This year, the roster is packed with team-oriented players, all of whom strive for one thing: another section title.

New Season, New Rules for Varsity Cross Country

By Michael Discolo

The fall season of Varsity Cross Country at Blind Brook High School has been a turning point for the cross country program. A new team rule is now being enforced in which all female runners must be able to run a mile in under seven minutes and male runners must be able to finish the mile in six minutes and forty seconds in order to qualify for competitions.

The rule was instated as a way to increase competition at meets and to improve the team's results. The need for quality at meets will hopefully serve as an incentive for the members of the Blind Brook Cross Country Team to work there hardest and improve their times. Meets will now mainly feature the most talented and able runners that Blind Brook has to offer.

Generally, the members of the cross country team have received this new rule well.

"This is the first time these time trials have occurred, so it is still a bit new to me. However, I believe it is a good incentive for everyone on the team to run at their best, regardless of whether they make the trails or not," said senior co-captain Evan Wallace. "I don't think the rule should apply to dual meets (a race between two schools) or tri meets (a race between three schools)," said sophomore runner Edmond Kwok.

Coach Walker believes that most, if not all, of her players should be able to complete these time trials easily as she has high expectations for her talented team.

ented team.

"I think that six minutes and forty seconds (for females) and seven minutes (for males) for a single mile is a very generous parameter," said Coach Kathryn Walker.

Since this is the first year that this rule has come into effect, it may take some time for results to show. Currently the team has a 1-4 record. A main reason for this disappointing start to the season is that the team has been plagued with multiple injuries. Despite the start, the team remains optimistic for the rest of the season and playoffs.

"I have good expectations for the team in the immediate future, as we have very talented runners like Captain Leah Kratochvil, Socrates Espinal, Clay Korpi, and Matt Dubin," said sophomore runner Edmond Kwok.

Captain Evan Wallace also stated that he is extremely hopeful for the remainder of the season and playoffs. He believes that the team has done an outstanding job competing so far this season despite their current record.

"With all things considered, we don't have many upper classmen, and I believe our underclassmen have been doing an excellent job of practicing to be their best. I hope to see this continue from the underclassmen and everyone, as this could give us a shot at beating other teams in future playoff meets," he said.

"We are always excited for the post season. Hopefully we can get some of our runners healthy in time to compete," added Coach Walker.

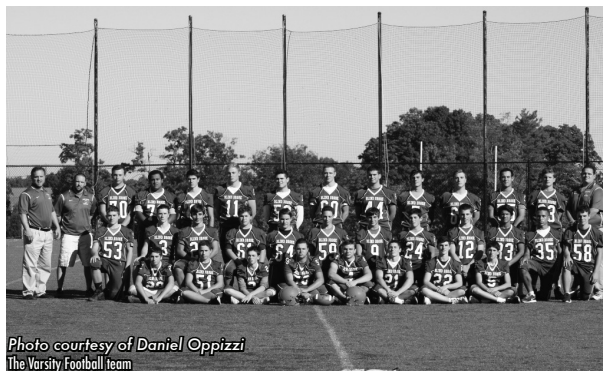


Photo courtesy of Daniel Oppizzi
The Varsity Football team



Photo/Emily Sachs
The Girls Varsity Soccer team



Photo courtesy of Emily Sachs
The Girls Varsity Tennis team



Photo courtesy of Alexa Goldstein
The Varsity Volleyball Team

Game Changers

Sarah Carmona

By Gabriella Lynch

Ever since she was a little girl, senior Sarah Carmona was interested in volleyball. Carmona's inspiration and primary reason for starting to play the sport came from her mother, who was also a volleyball player.

In seventh grade, Carmona started what would be her six-year volleyball career when she tried out for the middle school's modified team.

She considers this an important experience as it gave her insight into the type of practice and competition she could expect if she were to continue playing.

After playing her first year at the modified level, Carmona went on to pursue a spot on the Alpha Gamma volleyball team, a high performance private league team. Carmona became the team's new outside player, a position that required her to play the entire left side of the court.

In addition to playing on the Alpha Gamma volleyball team, Carmona became captain of the Girls' Junior Varsity Volleyball Team. These experiences helped her to become a more skilled and experienced player.

Junior year, Carmona made the Blind Brook Girls' Varsity Volleyball Team, where she played the

same outside position that she played for Alpha Gamma.

From the moment she stepped out on the court she felt at home and welcomed by the varsity team.

Now, as a senior, Carmona thinks the team chemistry is still very strong. "We're all really close and have been playing with each other since modified. We know how one another plays and that translates into a well-functioning team on the court," she said.

Carmona believes that one of the most important parts of being a good player is mastering the basics. No matter how good a player

one may be, Carmona feels that a person can always benefit from working on hitting.

Carmona also believes that it is key for a dominant volleyball team to practice being able to get on top of the ball and to practice many different types of game scenarios in situations, as it will help its communication and teamwork come game time.

Carmona became captain in her senior year, along with fellow seniors Alyssa Wei and Alexa Goldstein. Together, the captains stress the importance of positive energy in order to create a well-functioning

team.

"Sarah is a great leader. She always gives 110%, never gives up, and is constantly looking for ways to improve. Also, she is incredibly supportive and friendly to everyone on the team," said Goldstein.

In the previous years, the team lost valuable players such as Lindsey Kim and Gabby Accurso, with the former going on to play for the University of New Haven's Division II volleyball team.

Carmona feels that both Kim and Accurso were major contributors to the team's success and helped lead them to many victories.

"This year we will really have to fight to prove that we can be just as good as last year, even without those key players," she said.

As a senior, Carmona has many goals for her athletic future.

Looking more towards the future, Carmona is excited to continue her volleyball career. She is not looking to compete at the collegiate varsity level, but hopes to join a club team or participate in an intramurals program at the college of her choice.



Photo courtesy of Sarah Carmona.

Dean Oppizzi

By Max Chalfin

Senior Dean Oppizzi has been a key player on every Blind Brook sports team he has been a participant of since he stepped onto the field freshmen year. This is Oppizzi's fourth and final season on the Varsity Football team and this spring will mark his sixth year on Varsity Golf. Oppizzi is known not only for his skill, but also for his willingness to persevere and dedicate himself to the game.

Ever since the eighth grade, Oppizzi has been the number one seed for the Blind Brook Varsity Golf team and has always dreamed of making it to sectionals.

"His ability to stay calm and have a short memory when he hits a bad shot demonstrates to the rest of the team his leadership and mental skills out on the course...He is a great competitive player and [an] even better teammate" says sophomore Jake DiGiansante.

Oppizzi is a dedicated athlete on the football team as well as on the golf field. He is a very versatile player and plays both tailback and outside linebacker on the Varsity Football Team.

His experience gives him a clear advantage on the field, as he is able to

anticipate what the opponent will do.

"My best assets when playing are my heart and toughness," said Oppizzi.

These qualities enable him to successfully motivate the team to work hard and have earned him the title of captain for this season. Oppizzi believes that being captain has made him more conscious of his actions because he knows that the team and underclassmen are looking up to him.

"I know that I need to lead by example and always work my hardest. As a captain I can never take a play off," says Oppizzi.

In the first four games of the season, Dean averaged 103 yards, 15 carries, and 1 touchdown a game.

"Dean is a great leader, he shows up everyday and always gives one hundred percent. There is never a moment that he is hanging his head, or doesn't want to be on the field, that's what makes him a great player," said sophomore teammate Lucca Colangelo.

Although Oppizzi is excited for what looks to be like a successful season for the Trojans, his current career highlight occurred last season when the Trojan Football Team beat Pelham

High School in overtime in what was their most exciting game that season.

Oppizzi was disappointed with the overall results of last season, as the team did not make it to the playoffs. His main goal for his senior year season is to improve the team's record and turn around the Trojan's luck by making it to playoffs. The last time the team made it past the regular season was four years ago in 2011.

Throughout his time on the football team, Oppizzi has shown nothing but pride in the game he plays. As Dean enters his final season of football, he plans on leaving a legacy for the future players who come through the developing program at Blind Brook.

"The legacy I try to leave is to demonstrate to the underclassmen on my team how to work hard and play hard," said Oppizzi.

Although the Trojans have not been the most successful team, it has taught Oppizzi to never stop trying no matter the score.

Though Dean Oppizzi's sports career at Blind Brook is coming to an end, he hopes to have taught future Blind Brook athletes "to keep your head high and never show weakness."



Photo courtesy of Dean Oppizzi.