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# Welcome to... The TWILIGHT ZONE



COVER ART COURTESY OF ABIGAIL CHADWICK

## What should the eighth wonder of the world be?

### Leshna Giant Buddha: the embodiment of magic and mystery



THE LESHNA GIANT BUDDHA TODAY. (IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

It often remains a mystery how the people of ancient times had the skills and knowledge to build such astonishing structures. With only seven wonders of the world chosen out of hundreds, choosing an eighth would be no easy decision. But what exactly makes something a wonder of the world?

For something to be considered a wonder of the world, it should symbolize a chapter of human history. The Leshan

Giant Buddha, measuring 71 meters tall, is the tallest stone buddha statue in the world. Located at the Lingyun Mountain's Qifeng Peak at the junction of the Min River and Dadu River, the sculpture was carved into a cliff face of Cretaceous red bed sandstone during the Tang Dynasty in 713 AD. The idea was created by a Chinese monk named Hai Tong, who hoped the Buddha would calm the turbulent waters of the rivers. The construction was halted after Hai Tong passed away. The Leshan Giant Buddha was completely built in 803 AD after two more failed developmental attempts. Towards the beginning of the Song Dynasty, the Leshan Giant Buddha's body became covered with moss and the wooden pavilion collapsed. A large scale reconstruction occurred and large amounts of stone were

removed and dumped into the river below. The Leshan Giant Buddha did indeed fulfill Hai Tong's dream and made the rivers safe for passing ships by calming the currents, even if it was by destruction and not supernatural powers.

The Leshan Giant Buddha was built during the peak of Buddhist culture in ancient China. It is believed to depict Maitreya, a very popular bodhisattva who will appear in the future to achieve his complete enlightenment and preach the dharma when Gautama Buddha's teachings have been forgotten. Maitreya buddhas were believed to bring light and happiness into people's lives; this is why Hai Tong specifically built Maitreya in order to protect people from the rivers. Strangely, no shipwrecks have been reported in the rivers after the Buddha was built.

For a structure to be a wonder of the world, it needs to be one of a kind. The Leshan Giant Buddha is the tallest pre-modern statue in the world. Uniquely, there are 1,021 skillfully embedded buns in the buddha's coiled hair. The entire statue is made of stone except for its seven meter long ears which were crafted with clay.

A wonder of the world should be advanced. For something which existed 1,218 years ago, the ancient Chinese people did a phenomenal job establishing drainage systems into the Leshan Giant Buddha. The Buddha has numerous cleverly designed drainage passages hidden in its head and torso in order to prevent serious erosion and weathering. These systems have played a major role to ensure the Buddha still exists today.

### Hagia Sophia: at the crossroads of civilization



THE HAGIA SOPHIA TODAY.

An almost 1,500 year-old church-turned-mosque-turned-museum that epitomizes the fusion of cultures, religions, and entire civilizations, Hagia Sophia was once the pride and soul of the Byzantine Empire, a long-lived empire that kept the traditions of Western civilization alive for centuries after the fall of Rome. Two talented Greek architects - Anthemius of Tralles and Isidorus of Miletus - are the masterminds behind the Hagia Sophia. The architects of Hagia Sophia accomplished something exponentially difficult: they built a circular dome atop a rectangular basilica, which

was almost unheard of at the time. They also placed a ring of forty windows, very narrowly spaced, around the bottom of the dome. When light streams in through the windows, it obscures the dome's architectural supports, making it seem as if it is suspended from heaven itself on a "golden chain." This was the true genius of Hagia Sophia's architects; they created a building that evoked real emotion and awe in all who went into it. Standing under Hagia Sophia's "floating" dome is a mystical experience quite unlike any other.

Not only is the Hagia Sophia an architectural wonder, it is a historical one as well. Hagia Sophia is a monument of immense significance with the weight of over a thousand years of history behind it. Hagia Sophia more than deserves the coveted title of the "eighth wonder of the world." It is a beautiful building and a testament to human innovation and ambition - the desire to sail into uncharted terri-

tory, to make daring leaps rather than staying within the range of comfort. It has priceless historical value and it literally stands at the crossroads of civilization.

Hagia Sophia has suffered turbulence and it has seen violence. This may lead one to think it is nothing but a stark reminder of how humanity often clashes with itself. But the juxtaposition of Christian mosaics and Islamic inscriptions, the basilica and the minarets, the relics and the Classical Greek Ionic columns, are all physical reminders of the diverse influence different cultures have had over the same building, and the many people that have called it their own. So although Hagia Sophia may seem like a site where cultures have clashed, it can also be viewed in a different light: as a site where they have come together. It is a melting pot in the truest sense of the phrase.

Hagia Sophia was one of the 21 finalists in the New 7 Wonders of the World cam-

paign, which formulated the current list of the seven modern wonders. If it were to receive its much-deserved spot on that list, Hagia Sophia might get the global attention and resources it needs to ensure that it continues to stand for centuries to come and remains open to the public. It would also "balance out" the list, which includes a wonder from almost every continent but none from Eastern Europe. Whether it is known as Hagia Sophia or Ayasofya (the Turkish name), the building has been immensely loved by many different groups of people, all of whom have left their mark on it, leading to a unique amalgamation that would be hard to find anywhere else. From iconoclasm to the Crusades to the transition between two formidable empires, Hagia Sophia is an invaluable record of history. It is a product of the world's ever-changing story - sometimes turbulent, sometimes harmonious, sometimes somewhere in between.

The Satoma NEWSMAGAZINE

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# Washing the mystery away



A DIAGRAM OF THE PROPOSED PLANS FOR THE SWIMMING POOL. (IMAGES COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

BY: GIANNA STRAZZULLA

For decades, incoming freshmen have been told by upperclassmen to take the elevator to the fourth floor to go to the pool. John Roche vividly recalls being told this rumor when he was a freshman even though there was no elevator at the school at that time. Linda Czjakowski even recalls that one year a group of upperclassmen tried to sell admission tickets to the pool to the freshmen. Well, those stories are not entirely factual. The pool is not on the fourth floor, but instead on the roof of the Catanzaro

Gym. On April 1, 2019, the school's instagram account announced plans to build a swimming pool within the next decade for athletes and non-athletes alike. The new facility will feature ten lanes, the latest timing technology, live streaming capabilities, and spectator seating for 1,500 people. Adjacent restrooms on the top floor will be converted into locker rooms for competitors and access for spectators will be available through the Video Production studio. This will give the school the opportunity to host county and state tournaments. An onsite swimming pool also

opens up the possibility for swimming to become a part of the gym curriculum. When asked for his opinion, Physical Education teacher Scott Runkle was excited about the possibility saying, "Mr. Runkle is very excited that STA is building a pool. Mr. Runkle can't wait to teach students how much swimming is like baseball." Father Keith Cervine also shared a comment about his enthusiasm for the pool as well as the new hockey and water polo teams, the latter including horses. Both current students and alumni were buzzing with elation at the prospect of a pool. However, more questions have been raised. Will the hot tub in the janitor's office also be opened for student access or will another hot tub be built adjacent to the pool? Will future Polar Plunge events be held at the school? Will Crisis Management Team members be lifeguards for the pool? And is a water slide completely out of the question? Unfortunately, receiving answers to these questions seems highly unlikely. For construction of the pool cannot begin until the Trojan Army defeats the Greeks in the Trojan War.

## Rumor Roulette

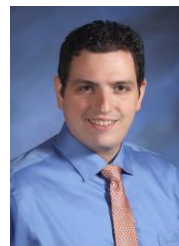
TRY TO MATCH THE TEACHER TO THEIR PUZZLING PAST.



**SCOTT BARNES**



**MICHAEL KOWALCZYK**



**PHILIP MASCARO**



**DANIEL MULVIHILL**



**JOHN ROCHE**

A. This teacher is "banned" from France for smuggling a penguin.

B. This teacher once helped the East Brunswick Police arrest a penguin.

C. This teacher owns a cherry red tesla.

D. This teacher used to moderate the swing dance club at school.

E. This teacher taught their dog how to tweet.

ANSWERS: A. MASCARO, B. BARNES, C. KOWALCZYK, D. MULVIHILL, E. ROCHE

## Justin Dews in the house

BY: RAJOSHI BASU

This past January, Justin A. Dews (BGA/STA '07) was appointed by the Biden Administration as a Deputy Associate Counsel in the White House. And indeed, why not him? After all, he is someone who has dreamed of being a lawyer since childhood, and he has wanted to serve his nation through government service. His hard work has accounted for his success. Additionally, he is also someone who has taken advantage of a range of opportunities and made friendships and connections with various people who encourage him to this day. Dews said, "I've been fortunate to have had a number of memorable experiences until this point. After graduating from Bishop Ahr, I went to Harvard for college." The Satoma staff was able to reach out to Dews and discuss his career, feelings, interests, goals, memories, and his advice for the students of STA.

**Q: How did you feel when you were selected for this role in the White House?**

A: I was honored to be chosen to serve in the Office of White House Counsel and to work with some of the most talented lawyers in the country.

**Q: How do you describe your journey from your childhood until now? Was there any major event that inspired you or changed the direction of your life?**

A: I've been fortunate to have had a number of memorable experiences until this point. After graduating from Bishop Ahr, I went to Harvard for college. After graduation, I worked on President Obama's reelection campaign and then went to Harvard Law School. I then spent a year at a law firm in Washington, D.C., followed by a year working for a federal judge in New Jersey. I then went to a Manhattan law firm, but left shortly afterward to work for Governor Phil Murphy. I left the Governor's Office last August to work on President Biden's transition team. These experiences have provided me with

opportunities and relationships that have been important to my personal and professional growth.

I can't point to a major event that changed the direction of my life. Rather, it's the effect of smaller things—encouragement from others, risks taken when it was unclear what the outcome would be, and openness to opportunities that may not have been in my original plan—that when taken together had a significant impact on my life.

**Q: When did you decide you wanted to be a lawyer? Who motivated you in this journey?**

A: I knew from a relatively young age that I wanted to be a lawyer (rather, that being a lawyer suited me). When I was a child, I would always argue to try to prove my point, and there's only one profession where arguing a point successfully is a valued skill.

It wasn't until my senior year of high school that I knew I wanted to work in government. My AP History teacher Mrs. Luzhak was into politics and government, and her class in combination with President Obama's first campaign, drew me into that world, so that by the time I graduated high school, I already knew that I wanted to major in Government (what "Political Science" is called at Harvard). I've been fortunate to have had multiple opportunities to work in places—with Governor Murphy and now with President Biden—that combine my interests in government, politics, and lawyering.

**Q: How would you describe your current role in President Biden's Administration team? What do you want to accomplish in the next four years?**

A: I'm currently Deputy Associate Counsel in the Office of White House Counsel. In this role, I am part of the judicial-nominations team, where I help make recommendations on whom the President should nominate to serve as federal judges. I also work on the team that is fo-

cused on supporting White House policies that further racial equity.

Over the next four years, I look forward to working with my team to build a federal judiciary that reflects the diversity of America and that adheres to the rule of law and the nation's constitutional principles. I also look forward to making the United States a stronger and fairer nation.

**Q: What's your favorite memory from your high school life and your college life?**

A: My favorite memory from high school is definitely the Bishop Ahr traditions that we had: singing a Sister Cyndi-led "God is a good God" and chants of "We are Bishop Ahr." From college, my favorite memory is the time spent in the freshman dining hall, where we would spend hours talking and meeting classmates from all over the world.

**Q: Do you have any advice for high school students who want to follow your path? Do you want to share any key lessons you learned over the years?**

A: There are three pieces of advice I would offer: Don't limit yourself. Oftentimes people don't pursue something because they don't believe they will get it/they aren't good enough for the position. So rather than apply for something and potentially get rejected, they don't apply at all. This is a mistake. You don't know what someone may think of your abilities or qualifications; they may think you're the most qualified person/the person best suited for the opportunity and would have offered it to you had you applied/sought it. In that case, the only reason you didn't get the opportunity is because you doubted yourself. Don't let your self-limitation be the reason why you don't pursue or achieve what may be your dream or personal goal.

Be willing to take risks: Relatedly, there will be times when you have to make a decision about the future

without full knowledge of the outcome. The options are: stay where you are and with what you know or pursue the option that, while risky because of the unknowns, offers significant reward. While it may be easier to stay on the path where you're comfortable, you may be missing an opportunity for something better if you don't take the choice without the guaranteed outcome. You may also have the regret of never knowing what could have been. Sometimes it's worth taking the chance to see whether you could or couldn't make it than to never know what would have been.

Be nice and build relationships: You should be mindful of your interactions with people and treat everyone with respect. Whether in college, business, politics, or government, relationships matter. A lot of individuals receive opportunities because of relationships they have and people being willing to recommend them. The person sitting next to you in history class could be the next CEO of Amazon or in another position where they could be helpful to you years from now; you don't want that person to have a negative impression of you. It doesn't take much effort to be nice, and beyond the moral aspect of being kind to others, the result of your niceness could be significant for you personally and professionally for years to come.



ALUM JUSTIN DEWS IS AN INSPIRATION FOR STA STUDENTS. (PHOTO COURTESY OF JUSTIN DEWS)

## Spring musical is anything but 'rotten'



NICK AND NIGEL BOTTOM TOAST TO THEIR POTENTIAL SUCCESS

BY: SAMANTHA CHRISTINE AND MARIA GIANNOTTO

This year the drama department's spectacular spring show is the musical *Something Rotten!* and despite the title, it is anything but! Set in 1595, the production follows two playwright brothers, Nick and Nigel Bottom (seniors Joseph Valenzuela and Jaren Buliyat), and their struggle for success in the theater world.

Throughout the show, the Bottom brothers face many obstacles that hinder their goal, such as struggling with money, falling in love at the wrong time, fights amongst themselves, jealousy, and perhaps the

greatest challenge of them all: trying to compete with the top playwright at the time William Shakespeare (senior Anthony Cacchione). The show also includes other seasoned theatre veterans such as senior Anna Caruso, senior Alex Goferman, junior David Irizarry, junior Patrick Ponik, junior Jennifer Rihacek, and sophomore Abigail Bera playing other starring roles. Full of cheeky and hammy humor, this is a play one certainly will not want to miss.

The Bottom brothers are not the only ones who face problems that try to halt their work- the cast themselves have their fair share of hurdles throughout production. "Theatre this year has been very challenging as a result of the pandemic," director Lea Gossett told Satoma, "specifically, trying to do a musical with masks on presented its own unique set of challenges. Not only do the actors lose the opportunity to convey their emotions with the expressions on their faces, but they also have to sing their songs while wearing their masks. Everyone worked very hard to overcome this chal-

lenge in the best way possible. I'm very proud of the entire cast and crew for handling the situation with such creativity and maturity."

It is quite admirable that the cast and crew overcame the struggles that the pandemic threw their way. Can the Bottom brothers overcome their struggles as well? While the leads may be getting most of the limelight, it is also important to remember the hardworking ensemble and crew, for they are under just as much pressure as the leads! "For me, the hardest part about the show is to remember my cues," freshman Gabriella Morelli states. Providing some insight on

behind the scenes, fellow freshman and spotlight operator Emily Smietana shares, "This musical is very heavy on spotlights, so being on time and being right is key. It is very stressful at times but, overall rehearsal is very fun. It is great to make new friends who all share the same passion. No matter if you are a crew or one of the actors, we all are completely in love with theatre."

Due to COVID protocols, the public cannot come and see the show in person. However, the show will be available via online streaming to the public. Watch the school's website for more info on when tickets are selling for this exciting show!



THE CROWD IS AN AWE AFTER SEEING WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE WALK THROUGH THE TOWN. (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

## Following in the footsteps of a saint

BY: CARISSA MATRALE

During this year, it is important to highlight all of the good in one's community. Seniors Abigail Chadwick and Melanie Mallari have really embodied this good. The two girls were nominated for and received the 2021 Diocesan Youth Award. For this, they became St. Timothy Award winners. This award honors them for having, "outstanding faith and service to their community, school, and parish." Since there was no award ceremony, Chadwick and Mallari sent in video statements discussing how their service connects them to their faith. They discussed their courage and passion for service, even during this difficult time. These two are no strangers to hard work and giving back to their community. Chadwick is a dedicated executive board member of the Christian Social Ac-

tion Club and Mallari is the president. They are both a part of Aquinas Star, Peer Leadership, and many other organizations around STA.

Chadwick has always loved service. She said "Volunteering has been such an integral part of my life for as long as I can remember. Through service, I do all I can to positively impact the lives of the people I meet, but I wholeheartedly believe that my impact on them could never measure up to the impact service has had in my life. It played such a huge role in allowing me to discover what I'm truly passionate about, and to be awarded for something like this means the absolute world, plus so much more."

When asked about her passion for helping others, Mallari said "Dedicating time to helping others is something I am very passionate about, and putting a smile on other people's faces is the gratify-

ing feeling I yearn for everyday. I want people to feel God's love and power through my actions and know that I am doing absolutely all that I can to impact their lives. So to be recognized and honored is one of the best feelings and I am extremely grateful." Both girls have exhibited "creative courage" during the pandemic and continue to impress all with their dedication and selflessness. Sister Cynthia is one such individual who has been touched by the service these girls have performed, "When I think of Abby and Melanie - the words humble and kind come to mind. Both of these young women seek no recognition for themselves, whatever they do flows directly from their heart and their willingness to give to others. They are great leaders who have a positive outlook on life, are enthusiastic and joy filled, and have a deep personal relation-

ship with God. They both lead by example! Always ready to help, always ready to serve, and always ready to respond generously, without hesitation, to the needs of others, willingly putting the needs of others before their own. As young women they have come to realize that their life's purpose is to serve God by serving others and making a difference in someone's life. They live charity as a way of life!"



SENIORS ABIGAIL CHADWICK AND MELANIE MALLARI ARE PROUD TO BE ST. TIMOTHY AWARD RECIPIENTS.

# Marvel's WandaVision excites and perplexes fans

BY: MORGAN RYAN

Marvel Studios recently thrilled fans with the release of its new series, *WandaVision*, after a delay in filming on account of COVID-19. The first two episodes of the series were released on the Disney+ streaming platform on January 15th, 2021, with one new episode arriving every Friday until the ninth and final episode on March 5th. The series follows an alternate reality created by the Marvel Cinematic Universe's Wanda Maximoff as she copes with her grief following the tragic events of *Avengers: Infinity War* and *Avengers: Endgame*.

Fans went into this exciting new show with little information, and each episode was packed with shocking twists and turns. In the series, Wanda (Elizabeth Olsen) lives as a happy housewife with magical powers alongside her synthezoid husband, Vision (Paul Bettany) in the fictional town of Westview, New Jersey. Each episode is inspired by a different decade, as well as iconic TV shows from that era. The series starts in the 1950s,

and the first two episodes are even filmed in black and white. As the picture transitions into color, the set, clothes, and cinematography correlate with the fashion of each new decade. The show takes inspiration from beloved television shows through the ages such as *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Brady Bunch*, *Family Ties*, and *Modern Family*.

The series also follows events in the MCU outside of Wanda's false reality. A group of S.W.O.R.D. agents uncover information about Wanda's world, and find that it may be more sinister than meets the eye. What seems like a wholesome sitcom quickly unravels into a suspenseful, confounding puzzle.

As complex as the series was, it was not without its simply charming elements. Fans got to jam out to fun tunes, such as the theme songs to each sitcom-format episode and hits from various decades. The show was also packed with humor, especially in the earlier episodes. Older viewers could feel nostalgia in the earnest jokes inspired by shows of the mid-twentieth century, while younger fans could

enjoy the sarcastic remarks made by their favorite characters. Viewers even banded together to fawn over minor characters like Jimmy Woo (Randall Park) on social media, in a trend very reminiscent of the Baby Yoda craze of 2019.

Wanda is speculated to be the center of attention in Phase Four of the MCU. *WandaVision* provided fans with an extensive look at her character's origin story. Various episodes provided information about her childhood, her relationship with Vision, how she got her telekinetic powers, and an explanation for the sitcom format of her fantasy world. The events of the series pave the way for upcoming Marvel movies such as *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*, and set up Wanda's role as the Scarlet Witch (her alias in the Marvel Comics).

The show's complicated nature sparked theories from Marvel fans far and wide, each more bizarre than the last. One of the main foundations of such speculation was the fake commercials played throughout several of the episodes. Each advertisement contained Easter eggs

and clever references to past Marvel films, the events of the series, and Wanda's mental state. Fans searched for explanations of past events and hints to the future in these segments, with dozens of news articles, social media posts, and video essays being written and posted about various theories and analyses of the series throughout its eight-week run. The series finished off with a very open ending, dramatically setting the stage for Marvel films of the future.



WANDAVISION HELPS THE MCU ENTER INTO PHASE FOUR.

# The Weeknd brings 'Blinding Lights' to the Super Bowl



THE WEEKND KICKED OFF HIS PERFORMANCE SURROUNDED BY BLINDING LIGHTS. (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

BY: ABIGAIL BERA

On February 7, 2021, sports fans were busy watching the Kansas City Chiefs and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers go head to head. But, the Super Bowl is not just for football fanatics. The real entertainment started during the annual Pepsi Super Bowl LV Halftime Show.

This year's performance was headlined by Canadian R&B star, The Weeknd, who is no stranger to performing. He has won three

Grammy Awards, five American Music Awards, and nine Billboard Music Awards. Several of his songs have topped the charts on the Billboard Hot 100 as well. The Weeknd made the most of this year's performance restrictions due to COVID-19. There were many restrictions due to the pandemic, but one was the lack of a guest performer. Most of the previous halftime performances included multiple performances, but this year only featured one. It was also the first time in the 55-year history of the game that the headliner would perform on a stage set up in the stands. This was to help limit The Weeknd's contact with the players and coaches. His twelve-minute show was "watched" by thousands of cardboard cutouts, who rounded out the 25,000 socially distanced fans at Florida's Raymond James Stadium.

The show began with The Weeknd emerging from a slick Mercedes car in front of a neon cityscape. Its bright lights and bold colors made a picture-perfect backdrop for his performance. The Weeknd rocked

an iconic red crystal-encrusted jacket worn over a black shirt and pants. Soon after his entrance, a choir of red-eyed automatons sang the ethereal opening notes of "Starboy" as the cityscape parted to reveal the singer in a heaven-like light. The angelic yet robotic choir was dressed in white and wore masks over their faces with glowing red eyes. Throughout the performance, they accompanied The Weeknd with their beautifully haunting voices and stationary choreography. The Weeknd then took the stage with a dazzling performance of "The Hills" as red and white lights flashed in the background and a large fog encompassed the stage.

Soon after, The Weeknd grabbed the camera and disappeared into a backstage maze filled with dazzling gold lights and mirrors. Jostled and buffeted by dancers in full facial bandages and matching outfits, he performed a dizzy and disorienting version of "Can't Feel My Face" before emerging back onto the main stage. With assistance from fireworks and special

effects, The Weeknd performed other big hits, "I Feel It Coming" and "Save Your Tears" as another round of fireworks lit up the Tampa night. The mood changed as violinists assisted the singer in a performance of "Earned It."

Then came a blast from the past, "House of Balloons," the artist's debut song from 2011. The action moved on the playing field for the big finale. The same masked dancers that were previously found in the maze were dancing on the field - but this time there were hundreds of them. With very minimal effects, they danced in uniform as The Weeknd made his way down the field. The uniformity turned into chaos as the beginning sounds of "Blinding Lights" started blaring across the stadium. The ending of this performance truly felt like the culmination of everything The Weeknd has worked for. The impressive choreography paired with the show-stopping lights and The Weeknd's unmatched vocals proved this halftime finale to be something worth watching.

# Raya is regal, resilient, and resourceful



**RAYA EAGERLY ANTICIPATES THE ADVENTURE AHEAD.**

BY: KRISTEL RAMBAUD

On March 5th, Disney's new original film *Raya and the Last Dragon* premiered. Due to an additional charge of \$30, the film went under the radar. Regardless of the obstacles, *Raya* is not a film that people should skip over.

The movie, directed by Don Hall and Carlos Lopez Estrada, tells the story of Disney's latest heroine: Raya (Kelly Marie Tan). This heroine sets out to save the fictional Kumandra and its warring tribes from an ancient evil spirit called the Druun that turns people into stone. She seeks to get the help from the last dragon-Sisu (Awkwafina), who is the only one that is capable of defeating the Druun. To help Sisu do this, Raya and her ragtag group of fellow heroes travel the vibrant world of Kumandra to collect the shattered pieces of a mystical orb.

*Raya* takes a page out of *Moana's* book, following Disney's newest

princess on a hero's journey. Thankfully, like in *Moana*, the writers allowed Raya to have more complexity and personality. She is not like the doe-eyed Disney princesses of the past; she has reservations about trust. But like in all Disney movies, she has a change of heart and learns the valuable lesson about trusting the goodness of others along the way. Raya's personal character arc, while pretty predictable, helps make her feel more fleshed out as a character. In addition, Raya's interactions with Namaari (Gemma Chan) influence her personal growth by posing tangible threats.

Additionally, *Raya* features the ragtag group of heroes that help Raya on her journey: Sisu, the dragon; Boun (Izaac Wang), a young boy who owns a shrimp restaurant; Tong (Benedict Wong), the burly, intimidating warrior; Little Noi (Thalia Tran), a toddler con artist; and Tuk Tuk (Alan Tudyk), Raya's animal companion that resembles an armadillo. Of these, Sisu stands out the most personality wise. She bonds the most with Raya and helps her on her personal character arc. The rest are all pretty one-note and are not as fleshed out as the other characters, which is understandable given the time constraints and need to develop Raya. Even so, they are all amusing in their own right and get their own moments to shine.

*Raya* does not feature

any musical numbers. While out of character for Disney, it was a wise decision. A musical number could have felt out of place and deviated from the plot. Additionally, the plot of the movie allows for plenty of fight sequences. The action choreography in this movie is spectacular and keeps viewers on the edge of their seats. However, *Raya* falls into the adventure cliché of the MacGuffin, which is an object used to further the plot. Raya and her crew traverse the various lands of Kumandra in order to find the pieces to the orb, the movie's MacGuffin. The MacGuffin trope has been repeated countless times in cinema and *Raya* does not add anything to make it interesting.

All of the lands of Kumandra are incredibly well-designed. All of the backgrounds have been meticulously designed and it paid off, creating beautiful landscapes that catch viewers' eyes. But while the scenery excelled, other design aspects underwhelmed. It cannot be understated how ridiculous Sisu's character design is. It is quite possibly one of the movie's greatest flaws. Sisu's soft blue fur and mermaid-like tail juxtaposes so much with the other designs and color palettes in the movie.

It would be remiss not to mention how Kumandra-and the entirety of the film-derives inspiration from Southeast Asian culture. The film's

writers are Qui Nguyen and Adele Lim and the cast mainly consists of Asian actors and actresses. Additionally, the directors and other staff went to Southeast Asia to draw inspiration and learn more about the cultures they were writing about. Kumandra is based on a variety of different cultures, such as those of Vietnamese and Thailand. The influence is portrayed in several forms, from the architecture to the food to articles of clothing. But because the movie took inspiration from so many cultures, it feels like Kumandra was just full of little Easter eggs of these different cultures. It is not a unified perspective and tribute like some made it out to be leading up to the movie. Still, it does not detract from the movie's quality and is still a step in the right direction. It is great to see different Asian cultures being represented in mainstream media. Hopefully one day featuring diverse cultures in the media can be the rule, not the exception.

*Raya and the Last Dragon* is not a film that should be skipped over. Yes it leans into clichés at the time but what movie does not? It is still a really enjoyable movie. While not as emotionally cathartic as other Disney films, it is still a great watch. Hopefully, with all the content on Disney+, it does not get lost in the shuffle and more people can enjoy it when it becomes free to everyone on June 4th.

# The hottest 'multiplayer murder mystery game'

BY: ASHLEY PEREZ

Throughout the last year, a new game has quickly gained popularity in the media. "Among Us" is a multiplayer murder mystery game where crewmates perform tasks in order to defeat the game. This game is created by the company InnerSloth, which is well known for their other games such as the "Henry Stickman" games and "Dig 2 China." It ranges from about four to ten players, and one can play locally or online in various continents such as North America, Asia, and Europe. Players have a lot of options when it comes to customization of their characters. There are twelve colors to choose from, and other accessories such as skins and pets that follow one's character around during the game. If one chooses to create a game, there are three maps to

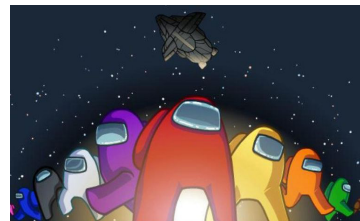
choose from, the Skeld, MIRAHO, and Polus. The Skeld is the default map, which is set on a spaceship in outer space. This was originally the only map available to players, but two more were later developed. The waiting lobby contributes to the theme of characters in space, taking place in a moving spaceship that blasts off when the game is starting. MIRAHO is the second map available and it is a facility located high in the atmosphere owned by the company MIRA. The last map available is the Polus, which is a planet that has a planetary base for the characters to thrive on.

Among these crewmates are impostors, those who pretend to partake in tasks and try to disguise themselves as innocent. They travel through the vents, sabotage tasks such as the electricity, murder fellow crewmates, and try to frame

others using the chat box. They were once ordinary crewmates, but were invaded by parasitic shape-shifters. The aim of the game is to stay alive, perform all of one's tasks and vote out the impostors. Once a body is found, individuals will debate and try to solve who is guilty. If the impostor is not voted off, everyone goes back to maintaining the ship until another body is found or until there are not enough people left to continue the game. If the impostor is voted off, the crew wins and another round starts.

This game is available as an app that one can find on any phone. The game is cross platform, meaning that it is available on iOS, Android, Nintendo Switch, and on the computer. While it is free for iOS and Android users, it is priced at \$4.99 for those who wish to play on their PC and \$5.00 for switch users. It

has amassed 41 million downloads in the United States, and over 264 million downloads worldwide. Many streamers such as Corpse Husband and US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) rack up many views when playing these games, and politician AOC has peaked as the highest individual stream in Twitch history with an overwhelming 439,000 views.



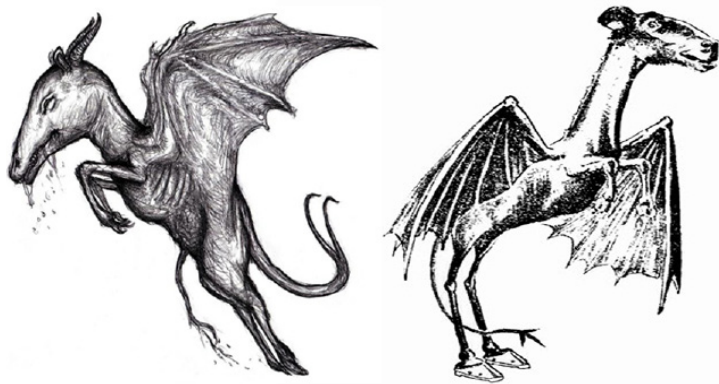
**PLAYERS PICK THE IMPOSTER OUT OF THEIR CREWMATES. (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)**

# MYSTERIES, Myths &

ARTWORK COURTESY OF ABIGAIL CHADWICK. ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES.

“There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man’s fears and the summit of his

## NJ’S MOST INFAMOUS RESIDENT



Designated in 1938 as the country’s only state demon, the Jersey Devil is described as a kangaroo-like creature with the face of a horse, the head of a dog, bat-like wings, horns and a tail. The most common belief about the origin of the Jersey Devil is that in 1735 Mrs. Leeds was distraught when she learned she was expecting for the 13th time. In disgust, she cried out, “Let it be the devil!” The tale continues that the child arrived and it was a baby devil. Countless stories have circulated describing the Devil’s escapades. At one point, as much as \$100,000 was offered for the capture of it. Belief in the Jersey Devil is quite real and based on records of concrete occurrences. To this day, people traveling down the Garden State Parkway or the Atlantic City Expressway report sightings.

In November of 1927, an unknown sniper terrorized Camden, New Jersey. Several cars and a city bus had their windows shattered by bullets that were nowhere to be found at the scene - it was like they disappeared into thin air. In every case, there were no injuries. As if the missing bullets were not enough, this phantom shooter did not stop at just Camden. His attacks spread from Collingswood to Lindenwood- they even got to Philadelphia, PA! Homes, buses, cars, and taxis were his most common targets. One witness even claimed to hear a man’s sinister laughter. Finally, in 1928, the attacks ceased. Despite many police investigations, the sniper was unable to be found.

## THE PHANTOM SNIPER



## A-BOMBS MISSING OFF A.C.



On July 28th 1957, a United States transport aircraft which departed from Delaware vanished off the coast of Atlantic City on its way to Europe. Its cargo, three nuclear bombs and a nuclear core. What should have been a routine trip was anything but that. An unknown in-flight issue required the pilots to shut two of the four engines, drop unnecessary weight, and crash land. Although the plane landed safely, the fate of the two lost nuclear bombs remains shrouded in mystery. In addition, there were no reported explosions or earthquakes around that time in the area indicating the bombs never detonated.

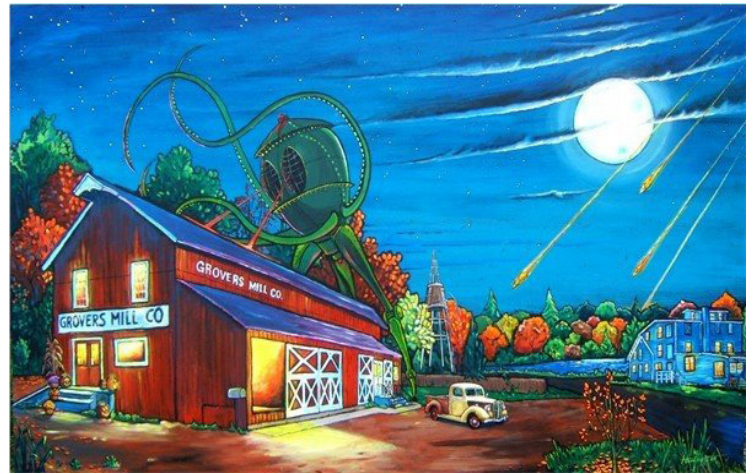


# MONSTERS... Oh my!

as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call . . ." **New Jersey.**

On Oct. 30, 1938, Orson Welles and his Mercury Theatre broadcasted their dramatic adaptation of H.G. Wells classic *The War of the Worlds* on the CBS radio network, reporting that aliens had invaded Grovers Mill, New Jersey. The next day, headlines told of mass hysteria across the nation after listeners mistook the radio drama for breaking-news coverage of a Martian attack. Although many stories of widespread panic and chaos have been debunked over the years, the broadcast did resonate with many Americans and some were legitimately afraid. The program was accused of being deceptive, leading to calls for stricter regulations to prevent similar scares from occurring in the future. But, what most do not know is that the radio program included disclaimers that many listeners missed.

## WAR OF THE WORLDS



## HAPY FRIDAY THE 13TH



Was the hit movie "Friday the 13th" really just a movie? According to this Jersey legend the movie was actually based on a true story. This was brought on by members of the cast and crew who reported strange disturbances during the filming of the movie. Missing equipment and footage have been attributed to the main villain of the movie, Jason Voorhees. The original "Friday the 13th," released in 1980, was centered around Camp No-Be-Bo-SCO in Hardwick Township, and included scenes across northern Warren County, including downtown Blairstown, Hardwick and Hope. For those looking for summer plans, the site of the film is still used as a summer camp to this day.

In 1947, a rancher named WW Mack Brazel recovered mysterious debris on his property just outside of the Roswell Army Air Field. The military gathered the debris and released a press statement saying that it was believed to be alien technology. Later the press release was retracted and the military revealed that it was a destroyed weather balloon. However, the whisperings of a cover-up abounded and Roswell has become a popular destination for extraterrestrial enthusiasts from across the country. Although the truth may never be discovered, people still occasionally claim to see UFO's around the Roswell area.

## ROSWELL, NJ?

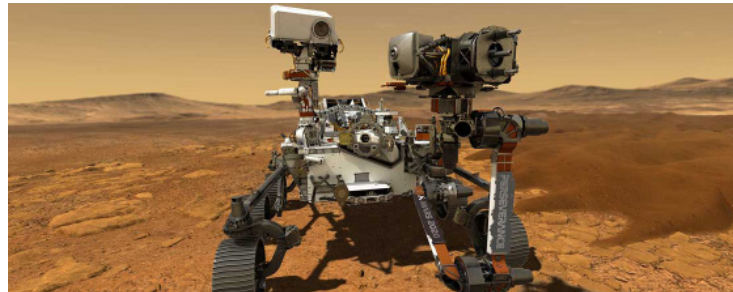


## Another rover another success

BY: RAJOSHI BASU

Humanity's on and off exploration of Mars has lived through its latest make-it-or-break-it moment. This is due to the launching of the latest Mars rover on the 18th of February. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover landed in Jezero Crater, Mars and it will stay there for at least one Martian year (about 687 Earth days). This could be the most profound first step towards understanding humanity's place in the universe and also a stepping stone towards human exploration on Mars.

The Perseverance Rover has four scientific objectives: to look for habitability, seek biosignatures, collect samples, and to prepare for future human missions. Biosignatures are substances which provide biological evidence of the past and/or present life. It will look for inhabitability by identifying past environments capable of supporting microbial life. One of these past environments include Jezero Crater. The crater held a lake and that there was enough evidence



THE MARS PERSEVERANCE ROVER MAKES ITS LANDING ON THE SURFACE TO RESEARCH DIFFERENT TYPES OF SPECIMENS.

to support the aforementioned fact. According to Ken Farley, a Perseverance Project scientist, "This is a wonderful place to live for microorganisms and it is also a wonderful place for those microorganisms to be preserved so that we can find them now" (spaceref.com). In these environments, Perseverance will look for telltale signs of possible past microbial life; the rover will especially look for special rocks that have been known to preserve evidence of past life. Perseverance will also collect core rock and "soil" samples and store them on the Martian surface so

that a future mission can pick them up. Finally, for the preparation of human missions to the red planet, the Perseverance Rover will test a method for producing oxygen from the Martian atmosphere, identifying other resources like subsurface water, improving landing techniques, and characterizing weather, dust, and other substantial conditions that would affect future astronauts living and exploring on Mars.

To accomplish its tasks, the Perseverance Rover will carry with itself seven primary instruments: the Mastcam-Z (zoomable panoramic

cameras), the Mars Environmental Dynamics Analyzer (MEDA) (weather station), the Mars Oxygen ISRU Experiment (MOXIE) (produces oxygen from the Martian CO<sub>2</sub>), the Planetary Instrument for X-ray Lithochemistry (PIXL) (X-ray spectrometer), the Radar Imager for Mars' Subsurface Experiment (RIMFAX) (subsurface radar), the Scanning Habitable Environments with Raman & Luminescence for Organics and Chemicals (SHERLOC) (ultraviolet spectrometer), and also the SuperCam (laser micro-imager). Additionally, there is a helicopter called Ingenuity strapped to the belly of Perseverance. Ingenuity is going to be tested to either prove or disprove the fact that powered flight on another planet other than Earth can take place.

Perseverance is a very important step and mission towards understanding humans' place in the universe. It also means that inhabiting Mars could be a possible option because of its proximity and similarities to Earth, allowing us to live happily ever after on the red planet.

## Olympics Postponed



THE OLYMPIC RINGS IN FRONT OF THE JAPAN NATIONAL STADIUM, THE MAIN VENUE FOR THE NOW-POSTPONED TOKYO 2020 OLYMPIC GAMES (IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

BY: ALEXANDRA SARDIS

Tokyo, Japan, is a booming city and popular tourist destination. Unfortunately, due to COVID 19, it

appears that the Summer Olympics might be put on hold, and, if it is still on, heavy precautions will be in place. The Summer Olympics of 2020 are scheduled to be held in Tokyo, from July 2021 to August 2021, though many doubt that they will still take place as scheduled because COVID cases are rising in Japan. However, Olympic officials reassured the public, insisting that the Olympics will not be canceled. Will the show go on or, will pandemic concerns shut it down?

With six months to go, the clock is ticking fast, and, with previous setbacks, many fear that the Olympics will be postponed. As of January 7, Tokyo has been placed under a state of emergency. There was also a severe surge of COVID cases amongst Japanese athletes and citizens, leading to massive amounts of cancellations. The main questions of how this will pan out includes

timeline, spectators, and how well the officials can keep things structured. Officials have already warned that spectators may not be allowed in, and, if they are, the numbers would have to be kept drastically low.

Despite all that, Japanese citizens are still unsure if they would like to have the Olympics, with, "Seventy percent of them saying they don't want the Olympics," according to News Channel 8. Well then, where would they go?

Recently, Florida officials have pitched to have the Olympics moved to the sunshine state, offering to make any accommodations needed. Florida Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis sent a letter to the Olympic committee, making several key pointers. Patronis suggested that Orlando, Tampa, and Miami are great potential cities. He even offered to "put a pool anywhere," suggesting Amalie Arena,

Raymond James Stadium, and more.

The Japanese, despite all that, continue to fight on. Not only is the cost of cancellation estimated to be in the billions, but welcoming thousands of athletes from all over the world and thousands of spectators could have deadly consequences. In a recent interview with IOC President Thomas Bach, he assured everyone that the Olympics will still go on. Bach said that they are covering every little detail, from making sure there is proper air circulation to maintaining social distancing, he says that they have it all covered. Bach adds that, "the preparation has already started."

In conclusion, it seems that the show will, go on. Japanese officials continuously reassure the public and are going the extra mile to create the safest environment. Even though many doubt and are urging for the location to be moved, there is still a considerable amount of support.

# GameStop stock soars

By: CHRISTIAN PEREZ

The American videogame retailer Gamestop (GME) has seen a meteoric rise and just as steep a fall in its stock price. It took only a week for GME to go from \$39.12 to a peak of \$468.89, a 1098% increase. Yet its decline was even quicker, shedding more than \$200 dollars in three trading days, leaving some investors to lose big. But now questions are being asked as to what led to GME rocketing to the moon and its quick decline after. Even the federal government is now involved, with key players such as Robinhood CEO Vlad Tenev and Melvin Capital manager Gabriel Plotkin being summoned by Congress to testify concerning their role in this event before the United States House Committee on Financial Services.

The most widely accepted explanation for GME's steep rise has to do with what is known as a short squeeze. A short squeeze relies on people who have "shorted" a stock, which means betting the stock price would go down. Investors short the stock by borrowing, and then buying the shares they borrowed at a profit or a loss. Before the short squeeze

occurred, GME was the most shorted stock on the market, with 123% of floats shorted reported on January 15th, (floats being the number of tradeable shares). Small-time investors, also known as retail traders, quickly found an opportunity to use this information to their advantage. Congregating in small communities such as r/wallstreetbets on Reddit, traders collectively bought GME, hoping to "pump the stock." Retail investors drove up the stock price, forcing shorters to either suffer more losses or cover their position by buying their borrowed shares. This is what happened with Melvin Capital, a major shortener of GME. On January 27th, Melvin Capital closed their short position, contributing to the \$200+ jump from January 26th to the 27th. They reported a multi-billion dollar loss, losing 53% of their entire valuation, requiring Citadel LLC, another hedge fund, to bail them out. All in all, shorters lost a collective \$70 billion in the month of January alone, amplified by GME's 1000% increase.

This volatility in the stock price drove certain brokerages to set limits on trading or restrict buying altogether. Brokerages facilitate trading by acting as a middleman between



AFTER THE RECENT "SHORT" THE GAMESTOP STOCK PRICE SKYROCKETED TO UNPRECEDENTED PRICES. (IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

buyers and sellers; giving them the ability to restrict trading at will. This was the case for TD Ameritrade, a brokerage that instituted a temporary limit on stock options they considered highly volatile on January 28th. Other brokerages followed suit, with Robinhood, WeBull, Schwab, and Interactive Brokers restricting some form of trading on the same day. This rapid limiting of GME trading is the main catalyst behind its fall, stopping almost all momentum in its tracks and scaring bearish investors to selling. This action by brokerages was met with unanimous opposition; with celebrities and politicians commenting words of approval to-

wards retail investors and condemnation against mostly Robinhood. Brokerages would later repeal their soon after or slowly phase it out, which is what Robinhood has done.

The COVID-19 pandemic coupled with easier ways to trade such as commission-free trading has prompted a new surge in Americans becoming invested in the stock market. The whole Gamestop affair reflects the renewed influence of retail investors, highlighting their increased leverage in the market at-large. Especially with fiscal stimulus and interest-rates at all times lows, there could be many GME-like situations in the future.

# Mankind is masking up

By: OLIVIA RIVERA

COVID-19 is a deadly virus that has spread around the world affecting millions of people's lives, putting them and their families at risk. With a disease such as this looming over everyone's heads, it has been hard to know who to listen to for health advice and how to keep safe through it all. Although safety guidelines continuously change along with new scientific discoveries about the virus, there has been one consistency that has helped to protect both the old and the young: masks. There are different types of masks that have different levels of protection so it can be hard to know which is the right one to wear.

Thanks to a new scientific development, there may be a mask

that is the best choice of them all. Nano Engineers at UC San Diego conducted a project that was centered around testing strips similar to pregnancy tests. They came up with a new way to repurpose the masks that people wear everyday. By attaching a testing strip to the inside of masks, people would be able to know for themselves whether they contracted the virus. Since most people wear a mask at school or at work for long periods of time in possibly exposing areas, this device would use the air particles that they breathe out to identify if there are traces of COVID-19 in their system. It is perfect for those who cannot avoid being in close quarters with others.

This would be extremely helpful for a multitude of reasons. First and foremost, the mass production

of these testing kits would be fairly cheap at around three cents per strip. Secondly, it is based on a frequently used item so that people don't have to adapt to wearing something completely different everyday. Lastly and most importantly, it provides people with extra protection. This quick, easy, and portable COVID-19 test can alert people of possible contamination which would allow for identification early on, especially for those who are asymptomatic. It would be the green light for many people to then get a real COVID-19 test to know for sure whether they have contracted the virus. The great thing about scientists creating these and other devices is that even after this pandemic is under control, ideas like these can be used as the foundation for controlling future pandemics.



MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF MASKS HAVE BEEN USED AND DEVELOPED SUCH AS THE ONES ABOVE.

## 'Fountain of youth' inside everyone



**COLLAGEN IS ACTUALLY THE SECOND MOST PREVALENT SUBSTANCE IN THE HUMAN BODY.**

BY: LAUREN MULLEN

In today's world, the health and wellness industry has been the center of society. Before the Covid - 19 pandemic and even through quarantine, vitamins and fitness crazes have been going viral. One of these trendy products is collagen, found in almost every grocery store. It has made its way to the screens of the average consumer and fitness gurus alike. Collagen is actually a protein that human bodies produce naturally. It is a protein important to the health of bones, ligaments, and muscles. But, collagen's claim to fame is what it does for hair and skin. According to

Dr. Ohara Aivaz, "Collagen is what keeps our skin from sagging, giving us that plump, youthful look." Even though it is the most abundant protein in the body, as people age their bodies produce less collagen often causing the skin to appear dull or saggy. Collagen supplements give an extra boost of the protein, combating the issues mentioned earlier. This is why collagen supplements and creams are often regarded highly as a step in one's skin care or self care routine.

*Healthline* has done copious amounts of research into the benefits of adding collagen to one's daily routine. One article mentions a study in which women took supplements that contained 2.5 - 5 grams of collagen over a period of 8 weeks. The women involved reported a reduction in skin dryness and an increase in elasticity. Another study in which women drank a collagen supplement in li-

*"Collagen is what keeps our skin from sagging, giving us that plump, youthful look."*  
~Dr. Ohara Aivaz

uid form for a 12 week period ended with those involved saying they saw an improvement in their skin's overall hydration and a reduction in wrinkles. Some scientists debate whether these supplements are as effective as people say. But many who have tried them claim to have seen a considerable improvement in their skin.

Collagen is alleged to have other benefits such as promoting hair health, nail health, gut health and even weight loss. But with all of this information about collagen circling the web, researching it can be overwhelming. In an interview with the product development team at *PlantFusion*, a company that carries collagen as part of their "Beauty Within" line, they gave some insight to how collagen is made and sold. Their collagen line is plant-based and uses plant peptides to nourish the body's natural collagen. This allows the products in their collagen beauty and collagen builder lines to build up collagen levels benefiting skin and joints.

In the same interview, a member of their product development team gave much insight into what collagen is and why it is so important. The employee said that people started noticing effects of aging that are caused by a lack of collagen because people

are not consuming collagen in their diets at as high of a rate as they did in the past. Since collagen has been around for a while and is still a huge trend in the wellness industry, one may be wondering how it has managed to stay relevant. Collagen's popularity has skyrocketed because people are seeing results. People often do not realize how important collagen is, or what a big role it plays in the body until their collagen levels start dropping. Next to water, collagen is the most prevalent substance in the body. It plays a vital role in the health of skin, organs, and joints.



**PLANTFUSION USES PLANT PEPTIDES IN THEIR SUPPLEMENTS TO NOURISH THE BODY'S NATURAL COLLAGEN.**

## Self-care in the midst of a pandemic

BY: RAJASVI PATEL

At the end of 2020, numerous people made a common New Year's resolution: to practice self-care. The Oxford dictionary defines 'self-care' as "the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress." Self-care can be as simple or complicated as a person wants it to be. But no matter what form it takes, during times like these a commitment to self-care can greatly contribute to a healthy and happy life.

A proper diet is essential for a healthy lifestyle. According to *Everyday Health*, close to forty-six percent of adults and fifty-six percent of children in the United States have an overall poor-quality diet. But dietary changes are easier than one may think. Just by drinking the recommended eight cups of water daily, one will see major improvements in their health. Calorie count-

ing has become popular among people who are trying to restrict their meal in-take. People started to feel healthier when they became aware of the amount of carbohydrates, sugar, and calories they were consuming and turned to fruits and vegetables as better food alternatives.

Fitness is an important factor of self-care. There are many variations to exercising. Early risers tend to go for a walk, jog, or run around the neighborhood. Exercises in the morning are often good energizers for the day. Since the pandemic, safety restrictions have made it difficult for gyms to operate normally. In turn, home gyms have been on the rise. They are convenient, cost effective, and generally more hygienic.

During the current times, personal mental health has been neglected. This past year has been very challenging and rough, but people have started to find some things that make them happy to change their mood. Taking time off and completing a re-

laxing activity is just the remedy that some people need. Some common refreshers tend to be taking a walk, watching a television show or movie, or doing an art activity. Consequently, thinking about something other than one's stressor benefits the mind and can cause an overall change of mood. Taking a walk and breathing in fresh air allows the mind to relax and soothes any worries or concerns.

Covid-19 restrictions have caused an unforeseen issue: social isolation. A new report by *NPR* says that three out of five Americans claim to feel socially isolated with growing feelings of loneliness. Isolation is not healthy for the human brain. And in extreme instances, it may cause anxiety or depression. To eradicate these unwanted side effects, people must continue doing what brings them joy, though it may be from afar. In today's world, interacting with other people has turned into virtual meetings. Though it might not be the most preferred option, virtual

interactions still work to relieve any type of stress. Engaging with others is vital for overall human health.

The increase of self-care in various forms has helped so many people to boost personal self-esteem and confidence. By improving mental health and staying fit, people can become healthier which leads them to live more positive lives.



**JOGGING IS A GREAT WAY TO BEGIN ONE'S SELF-CARE JOURNEY. (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)**

# Sports Spotlight

**Name:** Michael Cole



**Grade:** 12

**Nickname:** Mike

**Sport:** Bowling

**Position on team:** Anchor

**Favorite Sports Team:** NY Giants

**Favorite Movie:** *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*

**Name:** Jaquan Harris



**Grade:** 11

**Nickname:** Slick

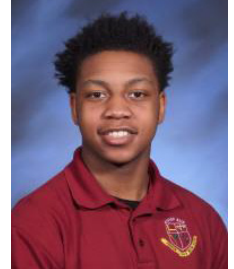
**Sport:** Basketball

**Position on team:** Point Guard

**Favorite Sports Team:** LA Lakers

**Favorite Movie:** *Creed*

**Name:** Jalen Jones



**Grade:** 12

**Nickname:** J

**Sport:** Basketball

**Position on team:** Forward

**Favorite Sports Team:** LA Lakers

**Favorite Movie:** *Ocean's 11*

**Name:** Fiorella Merriman-Mendez



**Grade:** 12

**Nickname:** Fi

**Sport:** Track

**Position on team:** Long Distance

**Favorite Sports Team:** US Womens National Soccer Team

**Favorite Movie:** *LaLaLand*

**Name:** Kaitlyn O'Neill



**Grade:** 11

**Nickname:** Kait

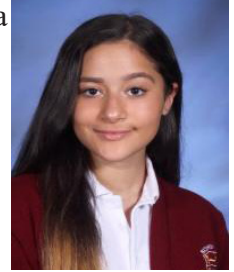
**Sport:** Softball

**Position on team:** Middle Infield/Outfield

**Favorite Sports Team:** Florida Gators

**Favorite Movie:** *Tangled*

**Name:** Yamyka Pichardo



**Grade:** 12

**Nickname:** Yam

**Sport:** Wrestling

**Position on team:** Captain

**Favorite Sports Team:** NY Giants

**Favorite Movie:** *The Game Plan*

**Name:** Daniel Rankin



**Grade:** 12

**Nickname:** Big Rank

**Sport:** Baseball

**Position on team:** Pitcher

**Favorite Sports Team:** NY Mets

**Favorite Movie:** *American Psycho*

**Name:** Donovan Rivera



**Grade:** 12

**Nickname:** GUCCI

**Sport:** Bowling

**Position on team:** Captain

**Favorite Sports Team:** Green Bay Packers

**Favorite Movie:** *Goodfellas*

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN  
BEING A PART OF

## SPORTS SPOTLIGHT

FOR THE FOURTH EDITION

EMAIL MS. AMY KATE BYRNE  
[@ABYRNE@STAHS.NET](mailto:@ABYRNE@STAHS.NET)

## DELIVERING ON PROMISES

BY: SARA ASDHIR

This season the boys basketball teams brought their all to the courts and gave us a great season! They registered more wins than losses (varsity 9/5, JV 12/1, freshman 10/1). The JV and freshman teams were county champs and the school ranked #15 for New Jersey boys basketball, and #1 for the Greater Middlesex Conference in 2021. The varsity team was named 'team of the year' for the GMC's. Despite the lack of audience support due to COVID-19, the JV and freshman teams performed very well maintained a strong relationship as teammates on the court and friends off of it which helped them connect when it came to getting in the right mindset before every game.

The team's goal this season was to blow past the difficulties of the pandemic by continuing to work hard, and having success in each game despite the score. With new players on the varsity, JV, and freshman teams, specific strategies were developed to highlight each player's strengths and bring their individual talents

to the court. Freshman Jaden Kelly commented, "I knew my job as a freshman was to play as a backup to help the team win games... my mindset was to get my teammates involved, but still look for my own shot when I had the chance." Coach Robert Turco and assistant coach Joseph Prosdocimo held the team together and motivated each player to play their level best. Sophomore Roman Santos quoted coach Robert Turco saying, "When all five players work together on the court, there's nobody who can stop us." This season the varsity team was able to give Coach Turco his 300th win despite the craziness of the pandemic, and in total the boys basketball teams won 31 out of 38 games played, winning three out of four GMC tournaments.

The team will miss their graduating seniors Jalen Jones, Jared Gardner, Josh Rivera, Tristan Jeffries, and Kyree Henry, as they graduate and move on to join the colleges of their choice. The team is especially proud of Tristian Jeffries in committing to D1 basketball at Robert Morris University. One



JUNIOR SAMAR ABDULLAH CHARGES DOWN THE COURT PAST A DEFENDER. HE TRAINS HIS EYE ON HIS TEAMMATE DOWN THE COURT AS HE PREPARES TO PASS HIM THE BALL.

(ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

of the highlights of Jeffries' game this season was beating the buzzer by seconds, taking the Trojans to victory against Hudson Catholic. His winning mindset will forever

act as a reminder for the Trojans to work hard till the very last second.

Fans can't wait to get back on the bleachers to cheer the boys on for another successful season next year!

## Swimming through challenges

BY: MISHA HERCULES

The girls and boys swimming teams had a pretty good season this year despite the complications they faced in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The girl's team consisted of 16 girls: freshmen Ann-Michelle Afere, Caithlyn Caballero, Natalie Neno, and Alexandria Rivera; sophomores Amaris Guevara, Victoria McLean, Gabriella Hamm, Jinelle Negri, and Sierra Smith; juniors Claire English, Gianna Hriczo, Grace Neno, Sarah Shao, Sydney Zeszotarski; and seniors Isabella Hamm and Brianny Dy. The boys swimming team was held down by senior Sean O'Leary. All of the teams are coached by head coach Amanda Miller.

The girl's team had a strong start to the season with a record of 3-0. In their matchup against Satyreville, the girls won 106-60 and won all 11 events. Dy won in the 500 free and the breast. N. Neno, G. Hamm, G. Neno, Smith, Zeszotarski, and English all competed on the relay team.

Following this the team had two great wins against North Brunswick High School. The final score was 85 - 69 both times.

Because of the restrictions placed on them due to the pandemic, the swimmers did not compete against

other teams in person. Instead each swimmer swam alone and raced the clock. The times from both schools were submitted to an impartial judge who informed the schools of the winner for each meet. Despite the change the swimmers rose to the challenge.



FRESHMAN NATALIE NENO TAKES A BREATH MID-LAP AS SHE DRIVES TO ACHIEVE THE FASTEST TIME SHE CAN. BECAUSE OF COVID19 RESTRICTIONS SHE SWIMS ALONE AGAINST THE CLOCK.

## Tracking progress

BY: ISABELLA DANNER

This winter track season has definitely been a rough one. Between virtual school days and the frigid weather, runners have still continued to train hard, mostly on their own.

In late January, snow covered the track and streets. This left runners inside- doing what they could between biking and running on treadmills at their own homes.

When it came to competitive meets, the only female senior runner this year was Eleni Alvarez, but she has big plans for the spring. She recently committed to run at Johns Hopkins University and is training to break the school 5k record of 18:26, which was set in 2012.

As for the boys, their team is still going strong with their new coach and alumni, Michael Mazzei, who joined in the fall. Alex Cocuzza, a sophomore, was recently named captain of the boys team and alongside him are several other sophomore boys whose futures are looking promising.

# Hitting the lanes ‘HOOPING’ AROUND

BY: KRISTEL RAMBAUD

Like all the other sports teams, the bowling teams were affected by Covid-19 restrictions. The bowling alleys remained close during the long months of the pandemic and like many other places, when they reopened, there were different rules that the teams had to abide by. Consequently, the setup during the games was different this season. Of course, all players had to wear a mask correctly during competition. There was a lane separating the teams and the amount of teams that were allowed in the alley at a time was restricted. Additionally, as opposed to rotating between three different alleys to compete in, the teams this year only competed at Majestic Lanes. The games also started slightly later, which was a relief to players who were no longer at the threat of the bowling bus leaving mere minutes after school began. To the disappointment of many players and their supporters, they were not allowed to have any spectators in the beginning of the season. Later on, they were allowed to have a few spectators if they were designated as the home teams. To compensate, the games were livestreamed so others can still watch.

Another change that the bowling teams went through that many may not know of is that there was a coaching change. The beloved coach Reilly is no longer the coach of the bowling teams. Now at the coaching helm is Mr. Maddock from Woodbridge High School, with BGA/

STA alumnus Chris Wilton acting as the assistant coach. While the teams miss coach Reilly and his deadpan remarks, they’ve adjusted well to the new coaching situation. Mr. Maddock has been very helpful in helping the players develop their skills and getting them to where they need to be as a team. Wilton has been on the coaching staff in previous years so, as per senior Michael Cole, since he has helped the team, it was a smooth transition.

The team’s hard work and dedication led to success in the record standings. The girls finished with a 3-1 GMC record, thanks to all around strong performance from the players. Sophomore Alexandra Sardis achieved a total set of 7172 this season, freshman Victoria Aldridge had a set of 5308, and Luongo had a set of 4449.

The boys team also finished with a successful season, capping off with a 7-7 record. The team was led by a strong trio of seniors: Donovan Rivera, Daniel Rankin, and Cole. Rivera helped push the team for a win in their final game of the season, scoring a 214-209-239 series; he finished the season with a total set of 6679. Rankin himself had a career season, achieving a 6960 series and a high series of 2342—all career highs. Cole finished with a 5523 total set. Also contributing to the team’s success was sophomore Patrick Regis, who had a total set of 5260.

Congratulations to the both the boys and girls team for finishing the season off on a strong note!

BY: CAROLINE DiMAGGIO

This year the St. Thomas Aquinas Girls Varsity Basketball team continues to work harder than ever. As a team, the girls continuously make progress to improve their skills on the court. Even through difficult competition, these young ladies work together to win with the determination and unity shown in their St. Thomas Aquinas High School spirit. Through the hardship faced by the global pandemic, the girls are working harder than ever to stay on top. Senior and Captain Melanie Mallari says, “This season was nothing like before, especially with it being shortened and a whole new team and coaching staff. It was definitely a rough season with all of the circumstances, but we appreciated every moment we had on the court. We started strong right in June and worked our hardest until the very last game. This season was certainly extremely special to me and one that I will always remember.” The Girls Varsity Basketball Coach, Joe Whalen, along with the Assistant Coach, Tom Sclafani, have led the team through all of their victories as coaches at St. Thomas Aquinas. Constant support from the coach, captains, and teammates is what keeps the girls team motivated to achieve great things.

Captains Melanie Mallari and Akyia Baker have enthusiastically led the team and brought them together throughout the season. When asked about their experience on the

basketball team, Melanie and Akyai shared their positive and touching experiences. Melanie says, “That most memorable part of the girls basketball team was all of the inside jokes and humor amongst the team and coaches.” Akyai says, “This past season didn’t end how I would have liked it to but I am grateful that we were able to play. My teammates and I made so many memories this season and I wish we could have made more.” The three graduating seniors will be greatly missed on next year’s team. Akyia Baker, Cianna McQuiller, and Melanie Mallari are the senior athletes who have been strong influences on the team this year and have contributed so much.



SENIOR MELANIE MALLARI PASSES THE BALL TO A TEAMMATE ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE COURT.

(ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)



DESPITE THE CHALLENGES IMPOSED UPON HIM BY THE PANDEMIC, SENIOR MICHAEL COLE EXECUTES PERFECT FORM AS HE RELEASES THE BALL DOWN THE LANE FOR A STRIKE. HE TAKES HIS RESPONSIBILITY AS THE ANCHOR OF THE TEAM SERIOUSLY.

## ON THE MAT AGAIN

BY: SAMANTHA CHRISTINE

The wrestlers are ready to pounce! On March 16th, the season officially began, and it is scheduled to run until April 25th. Despite the shorter season due to the ongoing pandemic, there’s no doubt that it’ll be as action-packed as ever. With a strong roster and a reliable coach in Nicholas Tonzola, the Trojans plan to get as many W’s as they can. The boys team has several standouts, such as Junior Owen Disbrow, Senior Jason Donnelly, and Sophomore Landon Kearns.

Expect the Girls Team to be just as tough as the boys, if not tougher.

Since the girls team was only recently added in 2018, they plan to bring their A-game to every match. Senior Captain Yamyilka Pichardo is particularly excited about the season and is looking forward to being able to compete.

The team continues to train daily in preparation for upcoming matches against challenging opponents. It is clear that they have the teams to beat this season.

All in all, both teams are hyped up and ready to go, so check out the schedule of matches on the STA website and make sure to attend some of their matches (following the health and safety guidelines set in place).

The Satoma Staff wishes you luck as you solve these puzzling mysteries!

## Tom's Riddles:

1. WHAT CAN YOU KEEP AFTER GIVING TO SOMEONE?

2. WHAT CAN RUN BUT NEVER WALKS, HAS A MOUTH BUT NEVER TALKS, HAS A HEAD BUT NEVER WEEPS, HAS A BED BUT NEVER SLEEPS?

3. WHAT CAN FILL A ROOM BUT TAKES UP NO SPACE?

4. WHAT BREAKS YET NEVER FALLS, AND WHAT FALLS YET NEVER BREAKS?

5. IF I WROTE THIS ON A WEDNESDAY, WHAT WAS I WEARING?

6. I HAVE CITIES, BUT NO HOUSES. I HAVE MOUNTAINS, BUT NO TREES. I HAVE WATER, BUT NO FISH. WHAT AM I?

7. WHAT ENGLISH WORD HAS THREE DOUBLE LETTERS?

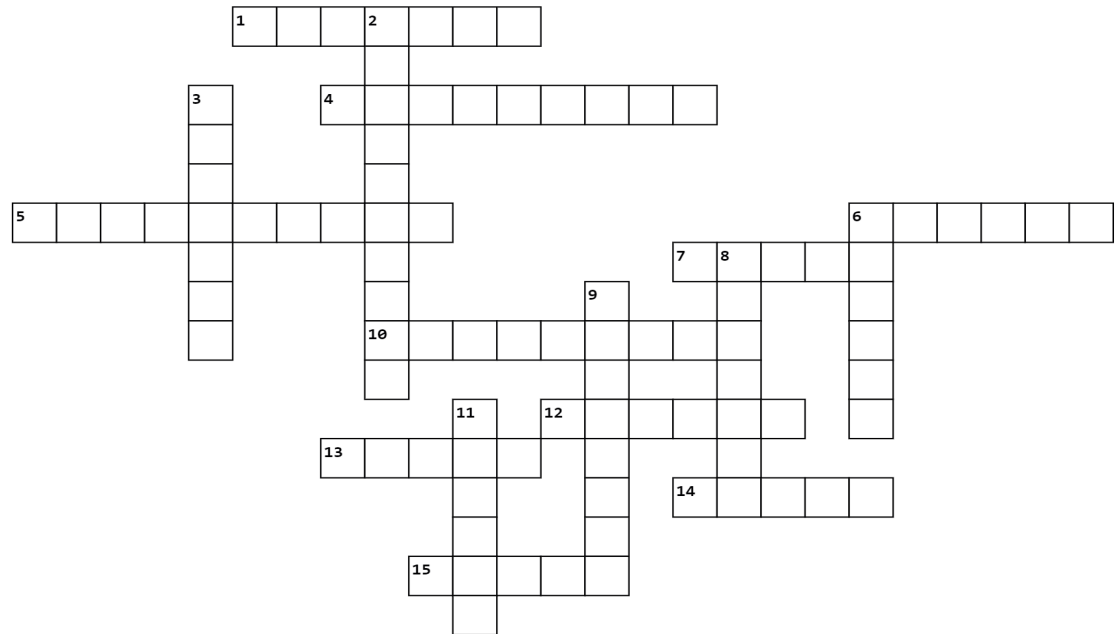
8. I COME FROM A MINE AND GET SURROUNDED BY WOOD ALWAYS, EVERYONE USES ME, WHAT AM I?

9. WHAT HAS A HEAD, A TAIL, IS BROWN, AND HAS NO LEGS?

10. CAN YOU NAME THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS WITHOUT USING THE WORDS MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, OR SUNDAY?

L	C	L	L	A	B	T	F	O	S	M	A	E	D
S	L	A	C	R	O	S	S	E	B	M	C	S	N
R	T	M	R	N	M	I	B	S	S	A	M	D	A
A	R	R	L	E	M	R	C	N	T	K	N	R	B
B	M	R	Z	I	E	G	L	E	R	E	E	I	G
A	L	Z	O	S	B	R	A	S	A	R	M	V	N
S	A	S	O	P	V	D	S	R	C	S	Z	E	I
E	R	S	R	O	A	E	S	E	K	P	C	R	H
B	C	P	R	O	M	A	A	K	O	A	M	S	C
A	H	R	S	T	O	R	E	C	D	C	M	E	R
L	O	S	E	R	T	I	I	O	A	E	U	D	A
L	I	P	O	L	A	R	P	L	U	N	G	E	M
C	R	E	R	E	S	R	D	O	N	N	A	R	P
G	G	E	A	Q	U	I	N	A	S	S	T	A	R

AQUINAS STAR  
BASEBALL  
CAREER  
CHOIR  
DRIVERS ED  
LACROSSE  
LOCKER  
MARCHING BAND  
MR. ZIEGLER  
POLAR PLUNGE  
PROM  
SATOMA  
SOFTBALL  
SR. DONNA  
STEM  
TRACK  
ZOOM



### ACROSS:

1. THIS TEACHER ONCE ROCKED OUT WITH BLUE HAIR IN A BAND IN HIGH SCHOOL
4. THE COUNTRY WHERE Ms. BYRNE WORKED FOR THE PEACE-CORPS
5. THIS TEACHER IS MOST LIKELY TO BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY AND CALL YOU TOOTS
6. "MR. \_\_\_ CAN DRIVE BECAUSE DRIVING IS LIKE BASEBALL."
7. TEACHER BY DAY, CRYSTAL SPRINGS MANAGER BY NIGHT

10. THIS INDIVIDUAL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR FAVORITE MEMES ON THE SCHOOL'S INSTAGRAM
12. THIS INDIVIDUAL MAY NOT RUN A BOOKSTORE BUT THEY ARE ONE NOBLE SCIENCE TEACHER
13. THE NAME OF MR. MASCARO'S TALENTED TWITTER INFLUENCER DOG
14. THIS FACULTY MEMBER MAY ASK "R U READY TO PRAY?"
15. THIS TEACHER'S LAST NAME JUST MAKES SENSE

### DOWN:

2. THE MATH GODDESS
3. THE NAME OF MRS. DINICOLA-TAPIA'S HORSE
6. THIS FACULTY MEMBER KNOWS (AND SINGS) A LOT ABOUT MARY
8. THE YOO-HO LOVING HEALTH TEACHER
9. THIS TEACHER'S FAVORITE DESSERT IS A BANANA SPLIT
11. THIS TEACHER IS GOOD FRIENDS WITH BUGS BUNNY

### ANSWERS:

RIDDLES: 1. YOUR WORD, 2. A RIVER, 3. LIGHT, 4. DAY AND NIGHT, 5. LIAMSON 6. RÜNKEL 7. ROCHE 10. KOWALCZYK 11. MROZEK 12. BARNES 13. HARRY 14. KEITH 15. PENNY  
ACROSS: 1. MASCARO 4. MACEDONIA 5. WILLIAMSON 6. RÜNKEL 7. ROCHE 10. KOWALCZYK  
DOWN: 2. CZAJKOWSKI 3. JUPITER 6. REILLY 8. O'KEEFE 9. MCCARTHY 9. A PENNY, 10. YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW