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Looking back at the trends of 2021

BY: ISABELLA DANNER

2021 has truly been an interesting year. With the pandemic, so many things have become the 'new normal,' but this year was anything but that. The top trends this year not only brought people together, but truly highlighted universal interests and examined where the world is heading



(ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

In January, President Joe Biden gave his inauguration speech, and 33.8 million people tuned in to watch. At the White House, though, there was one special and unforgettable guest - Senator Bernie Sanders. The former presidential candidate cozied up in a small folding chair to watch the newly-elected president step into office. Brendan Smialowski, a photographer at the event, took a snapshot of Sanders that managed to break the internet.

The picture shows him sitting with patterned brown

and white mittens and his legs criss-crossed while he watched.

The picture of him was then edited into several famous images - him sitting on the Game of Thrones Iron Throne, as the fly that appeared on Mike Pence's head during the 2020 vice presidential debate, and even in a few noteworthy *Star Wars* scenes.

Sanders had a very nonchalant reaction to the memes, but found them funny and said that he "was just sitting there trying to keep warm."



In May, Olivia Rodrigo, a Disney Channel star, proved her spot on the top music charts with her debut album *SOUR*. As an actress for *High School Musical: the Musical, the Series*, Rodrigo and fellow actor, Joshua Bassett, had a rumored relationship together for some time, but fans knew it was over with the release of "Driver's License." This song became the hit 'breakup anthem' for 2021 and was #1 on Billboard's Hot 100 and Global 200. With this single and the release of *SOUR*, Rodrigo won four MTV awards along with American Music Award for New Artist of the Year. She recently announced her 2022 tour, which sold out in every city the day-of.

In September, the hit app 'TikTok' surpassed one billion users. Formerly Musical.ly, the app was revamped in 2018 by its new parent company, ByteDance. TikTok is noted as the top downloaded app of 2021, and has 11.7 million ratings, averaging 4.7/5 stars on the Appstore. TikTok is a social media platform entirely based on videos with background sounds or music. Initially used for dances and 'transitions' between takes,

the app is now used for so much more - vlogs, news, cooking, etc. The app is so popular that its videos can be found on other rivaling platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, etc. The use of audios and different mixes of music has caused a resurgence of older songs to trend again, like "Let's Groove" by Earth, Wind & Fire, and for what used to be smaller artists, like Doja Cat, to gain exposure.



One of the most-searched words this year was the word 'cheugy', whose origin actually dates back to 2013. This word was trending not only for its confusing definition, but also for its mispronunciation. Said as "CHOOG-ee", the word describes anything that is no longer trending or in style. It typically refers to style trends in the early 2010s and with millennial trends. Some things considered cheu-

gy are fuzzy UGG boots, anything that says "live, laugh, love" (or on that spectrum of phrases), and saying things like "I did a thing".

In all, this year was definitely one to remember and puts into perspective just how quickly the world is changing. Even in times of crisis people still find ways to connect through music, memes, and social media. Here's to 2022!



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The benefits of a real tree

BY: VERA MCCOY

Every December, the Christmas spirit seems to permeate the normal living spaces of average Americans but one of the most iconic of all Christmas decorations is the tree standing in the living room. However, even at this most joyous and beneficent time of year, a fierce debate has arisen as to whether the artificial or real tree is best. Some would argue the convenience or reusability of the artificial tree makes it a clear winner, but the real pine has a few irreplaceable qualities, making it the classic choice.

The most notable difference in the overall tree experience is the setup. Going to a tree farm, lot, or natural forest provides an unforgettable experience for family and friends. Not to mention over 100,000 job opportunities arise from the Christmas tree farming industry in the US. There are currently around 350 million Christmas trees growing in US farms and an annual average of 25 to 30 million trees sold, leaving

over 320 million trees to continue absorbing CO2 and producing O2, while new trees are planted.

Another distinction is the smell; artificial trees don't have the natural pine scent of real trees. Additionally, studies from the University of Surrey show that live plants in workplaces and hospitals can produce mental health benefits, increase productivity, and reduce healing time after surgeries and illnesses.

There are significant ecological advantages to the real tree option. Some families opt for a reusable live tree option, the rooted tree. This is one of the most environmentally friendly options for Christmas tree display as trees can be planted outdoors once they are not suitable for indoor use. Cut trees may also be taken from some natural forests, reducing the risk of brush fires by cutting young pines. Even tree farms can have an ecological benefit since the trees growing there can hold ground soil together and filter air and water. These factors make the fresh or live

tree significantly more ecologically friendly than the metal and pvc plastic, non-recyclable artificial tree.

Economically speaking, live trees are cheaper to buy individually (around \$81 vs the \$104 artificial tree average) and don't require storage space in a house year-round, which can save significant money on storage in cities or highly populated areas. The US and Canadian Christmas tree growing industries also promote local economic growth in rural areas, unlike the 85% of artificial trees that are imported from China. The US Christmas tree industry is worth 2.56 billion dollars as of 2018 and the heartiness of evergreen plants allows their growth nearly anywhere in the country, making Christmas tree farming a near-universal experience across the nation.

In the end it is definitely worth considering a real tree if you are able to for the experience, atmosphere, potential health benefits, ecological advantages, and economical benefits.

Better than the real thing?

BY: SAMANTHA CHRISTINE

When someone mentions Christmas, people usually think of buying/receiving presents, spending time with family, eating a wonderful meal, and of course, holiday decor. Nearly everyone would agree that the most important Christmas decoration is the tree. It is almost always the centerpiece of Christmas decor; if the decorations were a band, the tree would be the lead singer. Some swear by the real deal, but not all good things have to be genuine; in fact, a study shows that 63% of people put up a fake tree whereas only 24% put up a real one. It's no surprise that more people are investing in artificial trees since it has many benefits compared to the real ones.

Firstly, artificial Christ-

mas trees are easier to get than real ones. Getting a real tree requires driving out to a Christmas tree farm to chop one down, which is not the most convenient method. Buying a fake one is comparatively less time-consuming by simply going to the store, or purchasing one online. Transporting a fake tree is also simpler; they can break down into separate parts, so there is no cumbersome strapping of a tree to the car. Artificial trees are also easier to care for. Real trees require daily watering. They also drop residue such as sap and pine needles that have to be cleaned up, thus creating two responsibilities that can be quite a nuisance to handle. Comparatively, fake trees can last for many years, saving money over time, which is not the case with a real one. A real tree's health can decline

fairly quickly; it can even go bad by Christmas time!

Safety is always a crucial consideration, and Christmas trees are no exception to this. A real tree can dry out, and adding Christmas lights into the mix can be a recipe for a potential fire hazard. Fake trees consist of fire-resistant material, preventing such a hazard from existing.

Overall, artificial trees possess a variety of advantages over real ones, which render them more desirable. That's not to say that real trees have no upsides because they do; it's just that fake trees make things more manageable for people around holiday time. Low-maintenance, hypoallergenic, convenient, and posing less of a threat, it's clear to see that in this case, fake trees make things easier. 'Tis the season to put up artificial trees!

CONCERT CONVEYS HOLIDAY SPIRIT

BY: DIANE YEO

730 days ago, the band and choir held their last Christmas concert before COVID struck. The students at the time had no idea that it would be so long before they were able to hold another Christmas concert within the

walls of STA. Likewise, they didn't know that they would have to adjust to rehearsing virtually in the interim, while the world tried to figure out how to deal with the pandemic. But finally, with the help of music director Joseph Cullinan and the other involved students, the 2021 annual Christmas concert became a success.

Held on December 10th through 12th, the students involved in the music department presented several songs welcoming the incoming season.

Family members, relatives, friends and teachers were present in the crowd, who sat socially distanced from each other in the main gym.

The concert choir sang a number of songs, including, "Take, O Take Me As I Am," "O Come All Ye Faithful," both sung by the Concert Choir; "A Very Merry Fa-La-La" sung by the Select Chorus; "Noel" (Concert Choir) featuring solos by junior Abigail Bera, and seniors Laylene Lugo, Jamie Metz, and Gianna Vaynberg; "O Christmas Tree," and the "White Winter Hymnal" (Select Chorus), "O Come All You Unfaithful" (concert choir) featuring solos by Seniors Tamia Burton and David Irizarry, and finishing off with "Do You Hear What I Hear" (Concert Choir). During the last song, Cullinan invited any STAHS alumni to sing together with the choir as it was an annual tra-

dition to do so.

Afterward, an intermission was inserted in order to give the audience a chance to purchase food outside in the lobby. Soon after, Act II began and both the Jazz Band and Concert Band stepped up to perform. The Jazz Band started it off with "Greensleeves," "Frosty the Snowman," and "Deck the Halls" featuring a solo by senior alto sax Eugene Tak. The next three songs were played by the Concert Band: "The Feast of Stephen," "The Christmas Truce of 1914," and "Welcome Christmas."

As that presentation came to an end, Seniors Jennifer Rihacek, Megan Kibalo, and Burton were once again called to the stage to sing "O Holy Night."

As the night came to an end, the Concert Band presented their last song, "Sleigh Ride." The music stopped and the performing students were awarded with rounds of applause and praise. They all took a bow and were once again showered with standing ovations.



THE CONCERT BAND PERFORMS A PERCUSSION BASED SONG TO COMMEMORATE THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

WINTER 'WONDER'FUL SNOWBALL

BY: EUNICE MBAWA

On December 4, 2021, the faculty and student body welcomed the holiday season with their annual Snowball dance. As the guests arrived at school that chilly Saturday night, they were greeted by Vice-principal Mark Fiore, who happily handed out Christmas-themed socks for students to wear. Various teachers were instructed to check for names and proper attire before sending the excited students into the main gym.

The school gymnasium was transformed into a winter wonderland thanks to student council moderators Michael Kowalczyk and Diane Fucci and their little helpers, the student council! In the main lobby students were greeted with the site of Ornate Christmas trees that were decorated by each grade level. The lights on the trees looked as festive as the attendees did that very evening. From 7 pm to 10:30 pm, students arrived in their best party dresses, dress pants, and Santa hats to enjoy the night with their schoolmates.

The festivities lasted throughout the 4 hour long event. Students danced along to their favorite Christ-

mas songs and took pretty pictures at the photo booth, which featured a silver backdrop laced in white balloons.

Trojans took over the dance floor as the acclaimed DJ played classics such as the "Wobble" and the "Cupid Shuffle." During the dance, glow sticks were distributed to the attendees, who were encouraged to wave and dance with them in hand. Senior Jennifer Rihacek said, "I had a great time, and it was so nice to be able to celebrate the holidays together."

"I had a great time, and it was so nice to be able to celebrate the holidays together."

- Jennifer Rihacek

There were also snacks and refreshments available in the lobby for everyone. With the help and hospitality of junior Publicity Rep. Annika Zavalla and Secretary-Treasurer Emily Wall, Snowball was a huge suc-

cess.

Despite COVID hindering the students opportunities to come together last year, everyone united to prove that fun things can go on even when the winter semi-formal isn't "normal." After hours of singing along to their favorite song, the guests ended the night on a sweet note with an exclusive goodie: the chocolate chip "Roche Cookie." A big thank you to the student council for putting together an amazing night.



(TOP): SENIORS ERIN PTACK AND GENNA ARDUINI DANCE AND SING ALONG TO A POPULAR HIT.

(ABOVE): SOPHOMORES ANNIKA SCHMIDT, JASMINE TORRES, SEAN LACKO, NICK BASCILICO, GABRIELLA MORELLI AND EM-MANUEL OWUSU FORM A DANCE CIRCLE ON THE FLOOR.

AQUINAS STAR MASS CELEBRATION



AQUINAS STAR CHAIRS MORGAN BRENNAN AND KYLIE LUCAS BRING SANTA IN TO HELP CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT THE MASS.

BY: OLIVIA RIVERA

On December 10, 2021, excitement could be felt throughout the student body. The Aquinas Star Mass, a Mass dedicated to celebrating the Aquinas stars and their families during the holidays, is a staple of the Aquinas experience.

From donating gifts to Lauren Cervone and James Fucci to creating school spirit through school songs, Aquinas Star Day is a day of spreading love and joy. Unfortunately, Lauren and her family were not able to attend the Mass. However, James and his parents were there and the compassion and overwhelming joy could be felt radiating from their smiles

which shone even through the masks.

The Mass began with a procession of students alongside Bishop James Checcio, Fr. Keith Cervine, and Fr. Michael Tabernero down the aisle, carrying gifts and Christmas angels. The Christmas decorations all around the gymnasium created feelings of cheer and hope for the coming holidays. The newly transformed gym facilitated a beautiful Mass full of choir songs including “Angels We Have Heard on High” and “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” as well as a surprise duet by counselor TJ Reilly and music director Joseph Cullinan on “Mary, Did you Know?”

After the Gospel was read, Bishop Checcio delivered his homily. He fo-

cused specifically on preparation. In summation, he said that Advent is the season of preparation for the celebration of Jesus Christ’s birth during the Christmas season, much like how the St. Thomas Aquinas community, especially the Aquinas Star Chairs Kylie Lucas and Morgan Brennan, had to prepare for weeks for the Aquinas Star Mass. Throughout the Mass, James Fucci could be seen full of excitement, crawling and walking around with a smile on his face. The gratitude from Mr. and Mrs. Fucci was also seen and felt during the Mass and during their speech thanking STA for everything they have done for them.

One of the highlights of the day was when Santa and all of his helper elves dropped off gifts for little James. The Mass ended with more Christmas songs sung by the school choir and “Big House,” one of STA’s favorite traditions. Students from all grade levels joined an ever growing procession behind Santa and his elves singing and dancing to “Big House” and contributing to what STA is known for: community. All in all, the Aquinas Star Mass was a huge success due to the amazing efforts of the Aquinas Star Board and Chairs, Sr. Cyndi, Kevin McCarthy, Fr. Keith Cervine, Fr. Michael Tab-

ernero, and Bishop James Checcio. Although COVID-19 has not gone away completely, the STA community has worked extremely hard to make sure that school traditions like the Aquinas Star Mass continue every year, shining a light on the little stars that should be celebrated every day.



AQUINAS STAR JAMES FUCCI IS DRESSED TO IMPRESS IN HIS CHRISTMAS SUSPENDERS AND KNIT SANTA HAT.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

LIGHTING UP WITH CHRISTMAS CHEER

BY: ABIGAIL BERA

After the success of last year’s Christmas Tree Lighting, the school community was so excited to gather together again. The 2nd Annual Christmas Tree Lighting took place on November 29th. Students, faculty members, and families joined in celebrating this kick-off to the holiday season.

The event was organized by the Student Council and Campus Ministry team. As guests arrived, they were treated to hot chocolate and the school-famous Roche Cookies. Music director Joseph Cullinan and the Select Choir performed classic Christmas carols such as “Do You Hear What I Hear?” “O Christmas Tree,” and “Joy to the World.” Then members of the Student Council took turns retelling the Christmas Story.

Father Keith led all in prayer as he blessed the tree. The whole community counted down until the tree was lit, signifying the beginning of the Christmas season. And, of course, Santa Claus himself made an appearance!

Student Council President senior Joey Vergel was very excited to bring back this memorable event. “I like how we were able to have the whole select chorus participate in the Tree Lighting. On top of that, more people came out, which brought a greater sense of community,” Vergel stated.

After lighting the tree, it was time to decorate some trees for the school. Volunteers from all four grades came together to decorate Christmas trees from their respective classes. Every grade decorated two trees. Each tree had its special theme, from Winter Wonderland to Candyland.

Junior Class Vice President Mor-

gan Ryan was so happy to see people volunteer to decorate the trees. “My favorite thing was really getting into the Christmas spirit with everyone who showed up to help,” Ryan said.

The Christmas trees were displayed in the Main Lobby for the school and its visitors to see. They remained there for the first few weeks of December until they were donated. The

trees were given to families in need so they could have Christmas trees for the holiday.

The Christmas Tree Lighting and Decorating were wonderful ways to ring in the holiday season with the school family. The lighting of the tree represents the idea that everyone can be a light for the world to see, especially during Christmastime.



THE SENIOR, JUNIOR, SOPHOMORE, AND FRESHMAN CLASSES DECORATE CHRISTMAS TREES TO BE DONATED TO FAMILIES IN NEED.

'Spiderman' breaks box-office records

BY: LISA MOHABEER

The highly anticipated *Spider-Man: No Way Home* premiered on Thursday, December 16. It exceeded expectations, set pandemic records, and made \$260 million in the U.S. only on opening weekend. This means it is now the second biggest debut in Hollywood history behind *Avengers: Endgame* (\$357 million). *Spider-Man: No Way Home* has become the first and only billion-dollar movie of 2021.

Warning: Spoilers Ahead!

After the events of *Spider-Man: Far From Home*, Spider-Man's identity has been revealed as Peter Parker and he has been framed for the murder of Mysterio. People begin to invade his personal life, helicopters surround his apartment, cops try to arrest him, and his friends' chances for college are at risk.

Peter goes to Dr. Strange in hopes that he can cast a spell to make everyone forget that Spider-Man is Peter Parker. As Dr. Strange is performing the spell, Peter keeps on adding more information, which tampers with the spell and unleashes the multiverse. Dr. Strange is able to contain it, but not without the arrival of a few unwanted visitors.

When villains from alternate universes start arriving, Peter is determined to help Dr. Strange capture them and return them to their own worlds. Doc Ock (Alfred Molina), The Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), and Sandman (Thomas Haden Church), all villains from Tobey Maguire's universe, were among the first to appear. Electro (Jamie Foxx)

and the Lizard (Rhys Ifans), villains from Andrew Garfield's universe, also showed up. One at a time, Peter was able to send them into containment in Dr. Strange's dungeon.

After realizing these people were victims of circumstance, a kindhearted Aunt May convinces Peter to find a way to cure them, especially after learning that sending them home would lead them to their imminent deaths. Because Norman Osborn is something of a scientist himself, he works with Peter to find a solution to unbind the tentacles from Otto's brain. However, Osborn turns into the Green Goblin and a huge fight breaks out, ending with Aunt May being fatally wounded.

Meanwhile, Ned and MJ are worried about Peter because they haven't heard from him in a while. Ned, who now has Dr. Strange's sling ring, is able to open up a portal to find Peter. Spider-Man enters through the portal and when he removes his mask, it is Garfield's Peter Parker. Ned tried again to find the Peter Parker he is familiar with, but this time Maguire's Peter steps through the portal.

The three Spider-Men are able to bond over their losses. Maguire's and Tom's versions of Peter Parker have never experienced the loss of their love interest; Garfield's Peter sadly states, "I lost Gwen. She was my MJ." He reveals that he never forgave himself for not being able to save her and he got rageful and stopped pulling his punches.

Spider-Man: No Way Home is filled with comical scenes between the three Spider-Men such as the recreation of the three Spider-Men



PETER PREPARES TO FACE DOWN ENEMIES FROM THE MULTIVERSE WHO THREATEN HIS WORLD AND HIS VERY WAY OF LIFE.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

pointing meme.

It was such a dream for Spider-Man fans to see each Spider-Man swinging off of each other and landing their own unique poses on top of the Statue of Liberty. *Spider-Man: No Way Home* gave Maguire's and Garfield's Spider-Men the redemption they needed. In *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, Garfield's Peter was unable to stop Gwen from falling to her death. In *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, Garfield's Spider-Man was given another chance as he successfully saved Holland's MJ from the same fate.

Holland's Peter is enraged with the Green Goblin for killing his aunt, but before he can give in to that rage, Maguire's Peter swiftly blocks him and talks Holland's Peter out of doing something he will regret.

At the end of the movie, Dr. Strange casts a spell to make ev-

eryone forget who Peter Parker is in order to send everyone back to their respective universes. Peter promises Ned and MJ that he will find them and explain everything, but when given the chance, he reveals nothing, deciding they will be safer without him.

No longer in Tony Stark's shadow, Peter Parker is now advancing into a new set of movies. After many years, it was surreal for fans to see Maguire and Garfield back on the big screen as Spider-Man. Many people once criticized *The Amazing Spider-Man* movies, but after *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, Garfield proved he is a good Spider-Man, and fans have started to petition for Marvel and Sony to make *The Amazing Spider-Man 3*. *Spider-Man: No Way Home* gave fans everything they had hoped for and left them wishing to watch it over and over again.

Holiday classic re-made

BY: RAJAVSI PATEL

Almost two months ago, a new movie relating to the well-known *Home Alone* series was released. It was titled *Home Sweet Home Alone*. This movie was released on Friday, November 12, 2021. It was produced by 20th Century Studios, along with the Hutch Parker Entertainment production company. *Home Sweet Home Alone* has been distributed to audiences to watch on Disney Plus.

The movie stars Ellie Kemper as Pam and Rob Delaney as Jeff, who are parents. They are sadly selling their family home since Jeff

has been unemployed. They host an open house for potential buyers. Aisling Bea as Carol, a mother, and Archie Yates as Max, her son, visit to inquire about the home to possibly buy it. Max and Jeff have a strange interaction as Jeff shows off his vintage dolls collection.

After Carol and Max leave, Jeff realizes one of the dolls in his collection is worth a lot. However, it seems to be missing, so he jumps to the conclusion that Max stole it.

As per the classic *Home Alone*, Max's family has left for a vacation. This time, everyone is off to Japan, but they "accidentally" leave

Max at home alone. Jeff and Pam go on a mission to find the "stolen doll." They promise each other that they will retrieve it at any cost. The couple finds out that Max is home alone and are on their way to confront Max. However, Max believes that Pam and Jeff want to harm him, so he plans to attack them. As their encounter occurs, everything turns into pure chaos.

Were Pam and Jeff able to find the doll? Did Max even steal the doll in the first place? The basic plot of the story is so captivating, so it is definitely a "must-watch" to see the ending!



MAX MISCHIEVOUSLY ASKS HIS NEIGHBOR TO KEEP EVERYTHING HE DID QUIET.

Re-recorded album a success with fans

BY: DAVID IRIZARRY

On November 12, 2021, Taylor Swift released her highly anticipated album, *Red (Taylor's Version)*. This was the second entry in her project to re-record her first six albums to gain full legal ownership over them. The original release of *Red* was on October 22, 2012, and it met with great acclaim from both fans and critics. The album included hits such as "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together," "22," and, "I Knew You Were Trouble."

In an Instagram post, Swift claimed that "Musically and lyrically, *Red* resembled a heartbroken person. It was all over the place, a fractured mosaic of feelings that somehow all fit together in the end."

"Musically and lyrically Red resembled a heartbroken person."

-Taylor Swift

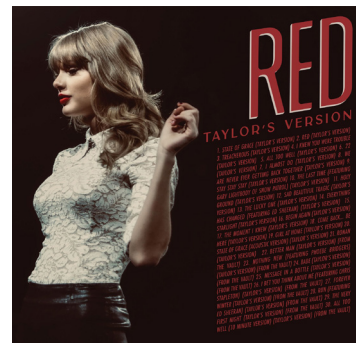
The juxtaposition between love and tragedy created on *Red* resonated with many people. Even though she was writing about personal experiences, the emotion conveyed in the lyrics rang true with so many, regardless of their situation.

The album was also well received for its experimental production. For the first half of her career, Swift's image as a country artist put her inside a box; restricting her from bending genres. However, on *Red*, she incorporates influences from country, pop, rock, and even EDM. This combination of excellent lyricism and exciting production put *Red* as an instant classic, making fans very excited for its re-recorded release.

In general, it's hard to spot the difference between the original and new versions of the album. The production remained consistent and the lyrics were not changed. However, many took note of Swift's improved vocal technique. Her voice is noticeably more mature and confident, providing fans with an even better listening experience.

Along with the re-recorded classics from *Red*, Swift has included a "vault" of unreleased songs that got cut in the process of making *Red*. The crown jewel is the original version of the fan-favorite breakup song, "All too Well." The song clocks in at an impressive 10 minutes, giving the full musical story of what was intended to be on the album. Upon release, the 10-minute version of "All Too Well" shot up the music charts and set records as one of the longest songs to ever reach number 1. The song was accompanied by a short film, directed by Swift herself. The film starred Swift, actor Dylan O' Bryan, and *Stranger Things* star Sadie Sink.

Other vault standouts include a collaboration with indie rock musician Phoebe Bridgers on the song "Nothing New." The song covers Swift's insecurities in the music industry, expressing her fears of the public becoming bored with her. Country artist Chris Stapleton appeared on the song, "I Bet You Think About Me," accompanied by a music



TAYLOR SWIFT RE-RECORDS HER ALBUM TO GAIN FULL LEGAL OWNERSHIP OVER IT.

video directed by Blake Lively.

Even though *Red* is almost ten years old, it is amazing to see how it resonates with audiences today. The album has also made fans even more excited for the rest of her re-recorded albums. With the success of *Red (Taylor's Version)*, Swift has not only gained legal ownership over her work but also solidified herself as an undeniable force in the music industry.

Marvel universe expands



THE ETERNALS ARRIVE ON EARTH TO ACT AS ITS PROTECTORS AGAINST THE DANGEROUS DEVIANTS THAT HAVE EMERGED.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

BY: SAHIB SINGH

On November 5, 2021 the movie *Eternals* was released in theaters. This movie is the second movie of the Marvel's Cinematic Universe's phase 4, following *Shang-Chi and the Legends of the Ten Rings*. This movie was a massive action spectacle, and while many critics seemed to have some poor reviews the audience seemed to have a different thought.

Eternals is about an ancient alien race, who are immortal and each have their own superpowers, and have been living on Earth in secret for thousands of years. Following

the events of *Avengers: Endgame*, an unexpected tragedy forces the group out of the shadows to reunite against mankind's most ancient enemy, The Deviants. This movie was incredibly long with a run time of about 2 hours and 37 minutes. Since audiences were introduced to a variety of characters, the plot was difficult to follow at times, which left some audience members confused.

However, when it comes to acting there was a pretty solid cast. One character of note was Angelina Jolie who played the ferocious warrior Thena, who suffers from mental illness, which was an unexpected twist. The cast was also incredibly diverse.

It incorporated actors of many diverse ethnicities, and even a deaf actor. *Eternals* has been considered the most diverse Marvel movie to date. With actor Salma Hayek considering it to be a very important step in getting representation for all people within the cinematic community.

Though this movie is groundbreaking in the casting sense, does this make up for the poor critic reviews? Well, it seems that critics are not right on this as audience members loved this movie. There is praise for director Chloe Zhao on how she introduced all the characters within the story. It seems as though a large majority of audience members were able to remember the characters within it, which is remarkable considering the fact that the large cast size must have made this extremely difficult.











The movie itself is darker than what audiences had come to expect of previous Marvel movies. There were dark aspects in terms of mental health, which is far more progressive than what has been seen in the other phases of the MCU. All the characters had their key moments; they had

their time to shine. But these moments were far beyond showcasing their abilities. Character developments and realizations took place throughout the movie which really tied the whole movie together and showed the "light" of a Marvel movie, something that has been shown in other films. However, due to the time constraints, not all of the Eternals showcased their true abilities, such as Makkari's incredible speed and Ikaris' immense strength.

The movie was honestly well put together and gave the viewers something different to look forward to in phase 4. Elements in the movie reflect the new changes within the 21st century. With the dark elements and the theme of not being okay in a mental capacity, which was thoroughly explored in the movie and not just brushed upon for a couple minutes as in other MCU films, fans look forward to more realistic super hero flaws. Honestly this movie is great and it truly makes audiences look forward to what is next for the Eternals. That suspense will leave them on the edge of their seats; and it is truly worth watching.

A new year, a new you!

THE SATOMA STAFF ASKED FACULTY AND STUDENTS TO SEND IN THEIR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS IN THE HOPES OF INSPIRING OTHERS TO FIND A WAY TO IMPROVE THEMSELVES DURING 2022.

 <p>Ms. Lily's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read more. 2. Clean out closets, garage and attic of unnecessary junk. 3. Be more consistent in doing cardio and yoga exercises. 	 <p>Sr. Cyndi's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To take time to be more SILENT so that I can hear and see the voice of God more clearly. 2. And of course - eat more healthy foods!!! 	 <p>Ms. Czajkowski's New Year's Resolution:</p> <p>To get rid of all of the piles of junk that are all over my classroom and my apartment. I feel like I have boxes and pictures and old worksheets and clothes everywhere!</p>	 <p>Mr. Fette's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read at least one book per month 2. Increase my lifting numbers 3. Travel more (if possible)
<p>Ms. Hamill's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eat more vegetables 2. Teach myself to play guitar 3. Plant a garden 	 <p>Mrs. McCall's New Year's Resolutions: (one serious and one silly)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To read at least 52 books in 2022 2. To eat more chocolate! 	<p>Ms. Rashid's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To keep in touch with long-distance friends 2. To spend more time at the swimming pool! 	<p>Sr. Donna's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To pray each day for the strength and wisdom to face the challenges of each day. 2. To watch every "Law and Order" episode that I can. 
 <p>Freshman Julianne Perez's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eat healthier 2. Read more 	 <p>Senior Vera McCoy's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Start jogging more often. 2.) Learn German & Japanese 	 <p>Senior Deandra Vernet's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Get in shape. 2.) Try on more clothes. 	 <p>Sophomore Jasmine Torres's New Year's Resolutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve my vocabulary 2. Bring up my math grade <p><i>(PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)</i></p>

THE TRADITION OF NEW YEAR'S: A HISTORY

BY: SAMANTHA CHRISTINE

New Year's Eve is one of the most beloved holidays, and although it is all about looking forward to the future and starting fresh, it's good to look back at its history. Just how long has the holiday existed?

The holiday has been celebrated as early as ancient Babylonian times, with the first new moon of the spring

equinox officially marking the beginning of the new year. A religious festival called Akitu would then take place. Its name stemmed from the Sumerian word for barley, a crop grown during spring. This festival also celebrated mythical sky god Marduk and his success in defeating the wicked sea goddess Tiamat, and a new king usually found himself crowned around this time. The day

is celebrated in January because an astronomer named Sosigenes told Julius Caesar that he and the rest of the Romans should follow the solar cycle instead of the lunar cycle, which started the new year in March. So if it hadn't been for Sosigenes, we might've been celebrating New Year alongside St. Patrick's Day!

Aside from a champagne toast, the Times Square ball drop is one of



THE FIRST BALL IS PREPPED IN NEW YORK IN 1907.

the holiday's most iconic traditions. This event first started in 1907, and the purpose of this custom was to signify a new beginning. Young metalworker Jacob Starr built the first ball, which weighed 700 pounds and consisted of wood, iron, and 100 25 watt light bulbs. His company, Art-Kraft Strauss, lowered it for most of the 20th century. In 1920, a replacement for Starr's ball entered

the picture. This new ball was made out of wrought iron and weighed 400 pounds. A green stem and red light bulbs were later added onto the ball in the 1980s. Today, the ball's a whopping 11,875 pounds and is covered with approximately 2,688 differently sized triangles. Very grandiose indeed, which is fitting for a holiday as jubilant as New Year's Eve! Cheers!



CROWDS CELEBRATE WITH SPARKLERS AND CHAMPAGNE. (PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

Diplomatic boycott of 2022 Olympic Games

BY: MORGAN RYAN

The United States government has joined a diplomatic boycott against the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, China.

The country makes this decision along with other countries such as Britain and Australia amidst widespread allegations of human rights violations committed by the Chinese government. Diplomatic officials will not travel to Beijing for the event, but United States athletes will still attend and compete, and have the support of their government to do so. Several western countries and human rights activist groups have urged the International Olympic Committee to reconsider the location, but members of the IOC claimed China is an acceptable host, and that politics are not a factor in selecting a host for the Games.

Committee member Dick Pound explained that China was chosen because of its capacity to organize and host the Games as a sporting nation. At this late stage, with the games approaching, a relocation is impossible regardless of pleas for change.

China has been accused of many atrocities over the years. The treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang

has become a particularly hot topic recently. U.S. President Joe Biden, among other politicians, has criticized China's actions and accused its government of genocide against minority groups. China denied such human rights violations and called President Biden's allegations "political manipulation." The IOC has assured that athletes competing at the Beijing Olympics will enjoy the protection of freedom of speech. They are not, however, allowed to organize protests during the Games, either at medal ceremonies or during sporting events themselves.

The tensions between China and other countries and humanitarian groups have been especially high since Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai's suspicious disappearance. She disappeared from public view after accusing a Chinese government official of sexual assault. Though the Chinese government has claimed that she is at home and well, dismissing concerns about her well-being as mere speculation, worries remain amongst outsiders. This incident highlighted a human rights issue that affected not only the political world, but the sporting community as well. Athletes around the world were disturbed by Peng Shuai's accusations

and many stood in support of her. The situation has led to an intense crackdown on political freedom in Hong Kong, which has made opposing groups and countries even more hostile. Athletes, politicians, and activists alike hope to work toward freedom of expression for all people, especially suffering minority groups in China.

The boycotting of major international sporting events is not a new concept. In 2018, several countries boycotted the World Cup in Russia to protest the Novichok poisonings in Salisbury. There were also boycotts against the 1980 and the 1984

Games, due to tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, it is hard to determine whether the 2022 boycott will effectively do anything more than make a political statement. Many nations have already stated that they will be participating in the Olympic Games, hoping to use the event as an invitation to a dialogue with China about international issues.

The 2022 Olympic Games will not truly be threatened unless it suffers the loss of corporate sponsors and broadcasters, or athletes to participate. The Games will commence on February 4th, 2022.



PROTESTORS STAND OUTSIDE THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE IN BEIJING.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

Border control during the pandemic



TRAVELERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES CRAWL THROUGH THE TEDIOUS PROCESS OF ACCESSING THEIR FLIGHTS AMIDST STRICT COVID-19 REGULATIONS.

BY: RAJOSHI BASU

Over the last two years, COVID-19 has spread throughout the world and has prohibited the various day-to-day interactions and holidays of the different ethnic communities around the world.

In December of last year, once vaccines were being mass produced and distributed, countries started to open the borders to travelers who had one (or both) of their doses.

However, the Delta Variant, which caused a lot of cases between April and June, caused countries to again close their borders to foreign travelers from high-risk locations such as India and the United States.

After that surge in cases, circumstances have normalized so far and countries are opening their borders again. However, in the almost two years, the United States has just recently, on November 8, 2021, opened its borders to vaccinated tourists. In fact, the northern and southern bor-

ders of the country had been closed for a long time to non-essential travel by people who were neither U.S. citizens nor permanent residents of this country. Additionally, on August 6, 2021, the United States lifted a Level 4 global health travel advisory (this advisory advised citizens to avoid all international travel). Regarding the announcement made last month, unvaccinated tourists coming to the United States had to test for COVID-19 with one day of entry to the country whereas vaccinated travelers coming here would be allowed three days. Unvaccinated travelers would also have to test a second time after arriving.

However, all of this lasted for only three weeks because on November 26, 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) identified the Omicron variant as a variant of concern and on November 30, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) also identified this as a variant of concern. On November 29, 2021, the Omicron variant was detected

in one tourist in California who had come from South Africa. The CDC beseeched, after the new surge in cases in this country, that all people try to get the vaccine and the booster (only for 18+ people) as soon as possible. This rise in infections has also caused the country to impose some restrictions on international travel again; starting from December 6, all air passengers, regardless of whether they are vaccinated or not, will have to show a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 1 day before travel to the United States; all air passengers will also have to provide contact information to airlines before boarding their flights to the United States so that they can be contacted easily if someone on the flight happens to have tested for COVID-19 later on after they come in to the United States.

This travel ban is most likely going to continue for the rest of the winter. However, people are optimistic that the ban will be lifted once spring arrives.

Water shortage ravages Haiti

BY: SHIVALI VORA

The thoughts that typically come to mind in connection to the phrase, “impoverished developing country,” are bloodshed on the streets and debilitating wars. But there is a more pressing problem that severely affects the quality of life for so many people around the world, and it has to do with the substance that no human can go without for more than three days: water.

Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, with the lowest life expectancy and highest infant mortality rate (ten times that of the U.S.). Four-fifths of the population subsists on less than \$2 a day. It has always been a struggling country that lags in development, but in past months multiple catastrophes coming together in a perfect storm have battered it.

The assassination of president Jovenel Moise in July triggered even more political instability than usual. Then, in August, history repeated itself. Mirroring the horrifying 2010 7.0 magnitude earthquake, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake, the deadliest natural disaster of 2021 so far, killed over 2,000 Haitians, injured over 12,000, and internally displaced 650,000. Not even a week later, Tropical Storm Grace further rattled Haiti and pushed teetering homes over the edge.

Earthquakes and the other disasters (heavy monsoons, droughts, landslides) that routinely ravage Haiti damage water infrastructure that is already scarce, to begin with. Water shortages lead to desperation,



DOZENS OF PEOPLE WAIT IN LINES TO FILL BUCKETS OF WATER FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

and people drinking from unsafe sources. And desperation almost always leads to outbreaks of preventable but fatal waterborne illnesses like typhoid, cholera, and hepatitis. These are painful ways to die, and they are the culprits behind more than half of Haiti’s yearly deaths, especially deaths of children.

According to the United Nations Environmental Programme, “Over half of the world’s hospital beds are occupied with people suffering from illnesses linked with contaminated water, and more people die as a result of polluted water than are killed by all forms of violence including wars.” Only half of Haiti’s population has direct access to potable water, and only 55.2% have access to any improved water sources. An improved water source is unlikely to be significantly contaminated because of human intervention. Though small amounts of chemicals may remain,

the water is considered free of major health hazards and safe to drink. The UN considers water sanitation to be the quickest route to a reduction of the global disease burden.

“...more people die as a result of polluted water than are killed by all forms of violence, including wars.”

-UN Environmental Programme

Here in the U.S., where water is, for the most part, readily accessible, it is hard to imagine the situation in Haiti, where millions resort to drinking from the same rivers they bathe in or placing cisterns outside to collect rainwater. Only 24% of Haiti’s population has access to a toilet, so it is common for sewage to make its way into drinking water. With limited and unreliable public water systems, especially in rural areas, and a lack of central government funding to operate and maintain the pipes and pumps that do exist, Haitians often do not know where their next glass of water is coming from. There is no official system of testing, monitoring, and regulating the water supply; every man is for himself. In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, these conditions caused an epidemic of cholera, a disease that was thought to have been eradicated. Today’s situation eerily resembles that one, causing fears of another massive hu-

manitarian and public health crisis.

Haiti’s tragic downfall from the richest New World colony to destitute poverty often prompts comparison to its relatively well-off neighbor, the Dominican Republic, with whom it shares its Caribbean island. The disparity is attributed to numerous factors, including differences in colonial and postcolonial histories, foreign relations, languages, and political regimes. Though the two have had a rocky relationship at some points, the Dominican Republic is often one of the first to reach out when Haiti is in dire need, as it is right now.

Haiti’s top donor continues to be the U.S., which has deployed tens of millions in monetary aid and rescue teams in response to the summer calamities. The most durable long term relief is likely not foreign assistance, but domestic mobilization. The Haitian people have already shown great promise and innovation in combating their formidable challenges. In the city of Les Cayes, solar farms generate power for chlorination and desalination processes, both of which decontaminate water. However, there is still a long way to go, especially after recent setbacks.

So, how can the rest of the world help? The biggest thing that can be done is for people to donate to organizations that implement WASH programs (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) in Haitian communities like Water.org, the Water Project, International Action, and Hope for Haiti. People can participate in efforts to bring clean water to all Haitians and ensure, one day, that no one dies from a lack of it.



A HAITIAN FILLS WATER JUGS FROM A NEARBY STREAM TO BRING BACK HOME.

Origin story dazzles audiences



THE CAST POINTS OUT A STORM THAT APPROACHES ON THE HORIZON.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

BY: TAMIA BURTON

Over the weekend of November 19th, the Drama Department performed *Peter and the Starcatcher*, a story theater play directed by drama department head Lea Gossett.

This coming of age adventure is the prequel to *Peter Pan* and tells the story of Peter and his friend's magical adventure. At the beginning of the play, Boy (sophomore Michael Corradino), a nameless, friendless orphan, is inspired by Molly Aster (junior Abigail Bera), a courageous and passionate girl who is a natural-

born leader. By the end of the play, Boy has taken the name of Peter Pan and is the celebrated hero everyone knows and loves.

Aboard the Neverland is Captain Bill Slank (senior Gianna Vaynberg), who is in possession of the great treasure left behind by Queen Victoria. The infamous pirate Black Stache (senior David Irizarry) and his simple-minded first mate Snee (sophomore Matthew Gluchowski) catch wind of the treasure's whereabouts and lead their band of pirates on a hunt aboard the *Wasp*. The trunk contains the widely sought-for "star-

stuff," an extraordinary power that only Starcatchers should possess. Lord Aster (junior Jackson Boomer), a devoted father and loyal subject to the queen, does everything in his power to get the trunk back. There are three lost boys aboard the ship, Ted (senior Nicholas Lieggi), Prentiss (senior Joshua Pereira), and Peter, who have faced the abuse of their schoolmaster Gremplin (sophomore Jasmine Torres). Ted is a food obsessed witty boy who is hungry for companionship. Prentiss is a logical boy who strives to be a leader. Molly recruits the boys on a mission to retrieve the lost treasure, and they find themselves in various situations throughout the play. Molly was raised to believe she could do anything males can; her fearless and curious attributes were instilled in her by her nanny Mrs. Bumbrake (senior Jennifer Rihacek). Mrs. Bumbrake's no-nonsense attitude is clouded by her love for Alf (senior Patrick Ponik), an old seadog searching for a damsel.

The opening of Act 2 brought an abundance of laughter throughout the theatre, as the audience was welcomed back with mermaids on stage. The search for the trunk continued,

and Peter stumbled upon Teacher (senior Jamie Metz), while sitting in the dissolved starstuff. This inevitably caused Peter to never grow up; he decided to stay on the island with Ted and Prentiss. The play closes with a heartfelt goodbye between Molly and Peter. And there begins the story of Peter Pan and his adventures through Neverland.

When asked what was the most rewarding part of performing in *Peter and the Starcatcher*, Bera responded, "I liked how challenging the show was because it kept me on my toes and really taught me about having a good work ethic. The most rewarding part was when the run was done. Despite all the bumps in the road, we managed to pull off another fantastic show and I was very proud of that."



BLACK STACHE IS INSPIRED WHILE HIS MEN WAIT ON HIM.

Two very different types of games

BY: ELIZABETH BERA

On Friday, November 12, 2021, the cast members of *All In One* performed a collection of one-act plays. The show consisted of two plays directed by Amy Kate Byrne and Lea Gossett.

The first one-act, "A Game," took the audience through an experiment conducted by scientist Dr. Henning (sophomore Annika Schmidt). She brought in three people to test the experiment: Carter (junior Morgan Ryan), Edson (senior Ella Young), and Baker (senior Alexandra Dela-



CHARACTERS IN "A GAME" FIGHT OVER A CHAIR

bar). Dr. Henning divided up the room into three equally sized, taped-off sections, one containing a chair. Dr. Henning gave each player a card with a phrase on it that read, "This is my land. It is mine. It is beautiful, and it is mine." During the experiment, a light at the front of the stage signaled the players when to recite this phrase. But the main rule of the game was that the players had to stay in their assigned section of the room.

Things started to go wrong when Carter, Edson, and Baker quickly turned on each other. They battled for each other's land, testing one another's limits. After Baker and Edson stole Carter's chair, a fight broke out and Dr. Henning returned to see Baker, Edson, and Carter fighting. She tried to stop the madness, repeatedly yelling, "It's only a game!" But they circled around her in the center of the room, and recited their phrase one last time. Just as Carter hoisted up a chair to strike a fatal blow the lights blacked out and Dr. Henning's scream echoed in the darkness.

After a brief intermission, it was

time for the next one-act, "Once Upon A Playground." It told the story of a girl with a funny nose named Jill (sophomore Carlie Kolomyetz). She enjoyed playing at the playground but was always subjected to bullying by the same group of girls. They made fun of her nose, which she is very ashamed of because it's different. But little did Jill know that all of the other girls have their own insecurities too.

The group of girls saw Jill at the playground and wouldn't let her join in any of their games. She knew she didn't fit in but wished she did. Jill dreamt that somewhere, there was a boy named Johnny (freshman Jack Ryan) with a funny nose just like hers. As each of the characters played games at the playground, they tried to convince themselves that they were not different. Jill thought she might be included when Georgie (sophomore Sean Lacko) appeared, but it wasn't meant to be. After pushing Jill to the ground, they played one final game. Unfortunately, it ended with Jill standing

in the middle of the playground all alone, holding a paper bag. Suddenly, in came Johnny, the boy she was dreaming of. He was holding a paper bag too. They introduced themselves to each other, and Johnny was eager to walk Jill home. She hesitantly accepts, and they both agree that they have a nose just like each other's - funny!

The night of heartwarming and intense one-acts left the audience on the edge of their seats.



A GROUP OF BULLIES ON A PLAYGROUND GANG UP TO PICK ON A GIRL WITH A FUNNY NOSE.

Sports Spotlight

Name:

Morgan
Brennan



Nickname:

More Bren

Grade: 12

Sport: Cheerleading

Favorite holiday movie:

Elf

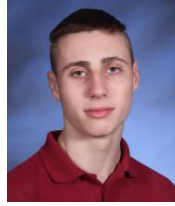
Favorite pre-game snack:

Chocolate chip Cliff bar

Lucky number: 3

Name:

Owen
Disbrow



Nickname:

Odiz

Grade: 12

Sport: Wrestling

Favorite holiday movie:

Home Alone

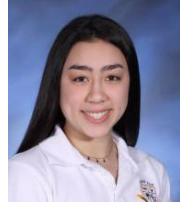
Favorite pre-game snack:

Bagel with cream cheese

Lucky number: 1

Name:

Grace
Neno



Nickname:

Nemo

Grade: 12

Sport: Swimming

Favorite holiday movie:

Home Alone 2

Favorite pre-game snack:

Apple-strawberry Go-Go Squeeze

Lucky number: 6

Name:

Adam
Silas



Nickname:

A1

Grade: 12

Sport: Basketball

Favorite holiday movie:

This Christmas

Favorite pre-game snack:

Chocolate-chip cliff bar &
Mike and Ike's

Lucky number: 555

Name:

Hailey
Thompson



Nickname:

Hailey

Grade: 12

Sport: Basketball

Favorite holiday movie:

Home Alone

Favorite pre-game snack:

Rice Crispy treats

Lucky number: 10

Name:

Alexandra
Sardis



Nickname:

Alex

Grade: 11

Sport: Bowling

Favorite holiday movie:

Dr. Seuss' The Grinch

Favorite pre-game snack:

Cliff bars

Lucky number: 14

Diving into an exciting season

BY: KAYLA FOLEY

The Varsity and JV swim teams are off to a great season so far. Under the leadership of Coach Amanda Miller and their 5 seniors - Grace Neno, Sydney Zeszotarski, Claire English, Sarah Shao, and Gianna Hriczo, they started the season strong with a 95-74 victory against Piscataway for their first win of the year.

The team's leading relay team, who last year won GMC's in the 200 freestyle and 200 medley relays, is comprised of team members sophomore Natalie Neno, junior Sierra Smith, and seniors G. Neno and S. Zeszotarski. "This is the largest team we've had in the past 4 years and I'm so proud of how far we've come. I'm honored to be one of the captains of an amazing and hard-working team and can't wait to see

"I'm honored to be one of the captains of an amazing and hard-working team."

- Grace Neno

what else the season brings" said Senior Captain G. Neno.

Fellow senior captain S. Zeszotarski added to this saying, "I'm really proud of everyone on the team that is swimming for the first time and everyone who is returning. I be-

lieve we have a really good shot at winning GMCs. I can't wait for the final meets of the season!" While the team bonds at their 5:50 AM early morning practices, they also bond at events outside of practice. They had

a team Friendsgiving in late November and are having a team pasta party before GMC's, which are scheduled for the end of January. They hope to continue their success into the rest of the 2021-2022 season.



FRESHMAN HAILEY ZESZOTARSKI SPRINTS DOWN THE LANE IN HER BUTTERFLY LAP.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

Lady Trojans: shooting for the top

BY: SAMANTHA CHRISTINE

The girls basketball team has had an exceptional beginning to their season, which kicked off on December 17th with a home game against Monroe High School.

The team triumphed, boasting 83 points over the latter's 45, with special mention going to Freshman Gianna Chuffo's 19 points, Junior Jessica Cooper's 18 rebounds, and 4 steals from Senior Hailey Thompson. They then went off to face the high schools of Edison, South Brunswick, and Old Bridge, playing high-scor-

ing games and earning themselves another three wins. Afterward, they squared off against East Brunswick and Moore Catholic High, picking up three more wins and continuing to display phenomenal performances on the court.

The only loss they have suffered was a close 55-41 against Monroe on the 20th. However, on the 22nd, they faced off against Perth Amboy and earned themselves yet another victory in a rather one-sided affair, winning 89-29. They continued with a 63-21 win over Piscataway on the 24th.

As of January 24th, Cooper leads the team in most points and rebounds per game, having 151 and 109 in those respective categories. Senior Kayla Perez has the most steals per game, amassing a total of 23. Freshman Leah Crosby follows behind Cooper with 78 rebounds and Sophomore Amarilis Shubick has made strong contributions with 114 points scored and 31 assists.

The girls are looking forward to the rest of their season. "We're ecstatic," senior guard/forward Antonia Polvere says, "We've been working hard and playing hard, and it's

great to see that it's paying off. I'm proud to be a part of the team."

Overall, the girls and their coach, Joe Whalen, have been proving that putting in the right amount of work will take them far.

In February the girls will take on new opponents in Ranney, Rumson-Fair Haven, and Watchung Hills, as well as facing off against several of the teams they have already seen. With a record of 9-1 as of January 24th, it wouldn't be crazy to predict that they'll have a shot at the finals. Be sure to come out and support the girls at future games!

Leaving everything on the mat

BY: LAUREN MULLEN

The Trojan wrestlers are known for their fighting spirit both on and off the mat. This year's team certainly upholds this tradition. They have all overcome the countless challenges thrown at them by a global situation well beyond their control, and have continued to work immensely hard to prepare for the season, despite facing delays due to COVID once again.

To get an inside perspective of what being on the team is like, the staff reached out to junior Augustus

Samuel who is a new addition to the program. When asked what it's like to be a Trojan wrestler he spoke about the team's unity saying, "I'm rather new to the team but the athletes and coaches run as a very tight unit, it's a great thing to be a part of. I can't wait to get more into the season, and I couldn't ask for better teammates and coaches."

With the season having just begun they have already displayed several standout performances. The boys team emerged victorious from their match against ALJ, starting their season off with pins from Chris For-

garile, Landon Kearns, Liam Zeh, Brian Mohabeer, Owen Disbrow, Kenny Caghan, Aidan Sim, Dom Paulino, and Brian Moyer Jr.

The girls team kicked off their season placing 13th out of 40 teams at the Queen of the East tournament, with an impressive performance from MaKayla Decker who placed third in her highschool debut. Both teams are expected to be very successful this year as they look to the rest of their season.

In February, the team will be facing South Plainfield, Rahway, and Hopewell Valley, among others.



FRESHMAN LIAM ZEH TAKES DOWN HIS OPPONENT IN A HEADLOCK.

Boys dominate on the court

BY: WILLIAM OWENS

The varsity boys basketball team has had an extremely successful start to the season. Currently sitting at the top of the Greater Middlesex County (GMC) White Division, this team has managed to go undefeated at this point in the season, as they are at an astounding 9-0.

Every player is especially keen on trying to improve on last season's standings and achievements as they ended with a 9-5 record in the 2020-2021 season. However, none of the team's success would be possible without the wisdom, guidance, and leadership of Bob Turco, the experienced head coach of the team, who previously led the way for teams in Notre Dame High School and Monroe High School.

This group of young and promising players is well led by seniors Adam Silas, Jaquan Harris, Samar Abdullah, and Tyler Kadi. The juniors on the team include: Kamal Lee, Sherief Guinyard, Jayden Young, Jayden Defense, Chris Santner, Jalen Pichardo, and Terrell Pitts. The sophomores on the team are Jaden Kelly, Davon Grant, and Phillip Unangst. Silas (G, 6'3) currently has the most points on the varsity team this season, as he accumulated an astounding 251 PTS so far, and will increase that number by miles as the season goes on.

The first game of the season was a blowout victory against JFK High School, 94-16, with Pitts leading the way, racking up 20 PTS, 4 REB, 5 AST, and 3 STL. Most of the games that have been played this season have been won by a large mar-

gin, such as the 88-24 blowout win against Archbishop John Carroll High School.

Guinyard currently leads the team in rebounds, with 91 as of January 25th, and Lee leads in steals with 38. Pitts doesn't sit far behind Silas with 210 PTS so far this season.

Although coaching and in-game skill is of paramount importance, the support, roars, and cheers of the Trojan Army electrifies the court every time the players step out on it, and this motivates them greatly to play the most genuine and high quality basketball that they possibly can. Many of the games are accompanied with themes in order to create a more fun and lively atmosphere for players and spectators alike.

As the season progresses, the team is striving to stay undefeated and to secure more wins for the Trojans.



SENIOR SAMAR ABDULLAH GOES UP FOR A LAY-UP AFTER HIS DRIVE DOWN THE COURT.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

Bowlers strike down the competition

BY: ANNIKA ZAVALLA



SOPHOMORE ANTHONY CAMPORA FOLLOWS THROUGH AND WATCHES HIS BALL CAREEN DOWN THE LANE.

The bowling team this year has had an amazing season, led by seniors Phillip Halecki and Thomas Ferris. The team not only works hard, but plays hard. Their record, as of January 25th, is 7-5 but they have been using this year to grow as a team. This hardworking team is brought together and encouraged by their coach Richard Maddock. One of the best parts about bowling is the team works hard together, pushing each other and supporting each other. Life as a student athlete is not always easy, but having teammates

makes it worth the while. The team says that some favorite moments are the bus rides to the alley as they blast music in the back of the bus. The seniors say it's bittersweet knowing that high school is only four years, but moments like those hit harder knowing it's their last season.

Some stand out performances include junior Miguel Rodriguez's 227 against Cateret and junior Michael Jurina's 196 against Edison. Senior, Phillip Halecki's most memorable match was getting his personal best of 269, a perfect closed game that consisted of 11 strikes, 2 spares, and 0 opens. Halecki said of his fresh-

man year, "Scoring a 100 was the best feeling in the world and every year you put the bar higher and set new goals." But he emphasized that bowling is a team sport. Everyone on the team strives for their individual goals, but in the end they are a team that works together for the win.

Jurina said that "with a lot of hard work and determination, we knock out the competition together as a team; with a lot of fun."

The juniors on the team are excited to build upon the skills they built this year and take on the responsibility of leading the bowling team to another successful season next year.

Sprinting into a new season

BY: TAMIA BURTON

As the temperature drops, many people are staying inside and keeping warm. As for the winter track and field team, they continue to persevere with their rigorous training. This sport takes a tremendous amount of tenacity and the athletes always rise to the occasion. The team is preparing for upcoming meets throughout the season, and are honing their skills for the sprinting, and long distance events. The sprinters

work on their form and speed on the track, while the long distance runners maintain their endurance off the track on long distance runs. The athletes put in a great amount of time and effort in order to make the season the best that it can be.

The winter track team consists of 14 athletes. Among the 14 are 6 senior athletes; Lia Acosta, Nicholas Leung, Elizabeth Pepe, Whitney Pepe, Valery Romero, and Shane Samuelson. When asked what she is looking forward to this season, se-

nior Romero responded, "Since we were able to get closer as teammates and friends during cross country, I am looking forward to getting even closer these next few weeks. We like to hang out after practice and go out to eat a lot. We have made really good memories so far and I am looking forward to making many more!"

Under the guidance of Coach Timothy Miller, and Coach Ronald Hush, the team will continue to make great strides to success. This sport is very demanding and although they

are practicing in freezing temperatures the athletes still manage to be persistent. "I'm going to miss my teammates the most, the memories we have created these past four years have been amazing. My teammates are like a second family to me so the memories that we have created I will cherish forever." said senior co-captain Acosta. Through diligence and determination the winter track and field is on pace for an outstanding season. The team looks forward to future meets.