

The

SpongeBob

Musical



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(COVER ART COURTESY OF SANDRA ABRANTES)

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Representing school and state

Junior Melody Cadet and Senior Gabbie Szulc are set to compete in the 2022 Miss New Jersey Teen USA Pageant. The Satoma had the honor of interviewing them to find out what being a pageant candidate truly means.



|| MELODY CADET

Q: What inspired you to compete?

Melody: When I was a little girl I always wanted to be a princess. For 3 years straight I dressed up as Tiana from *Princess and the Frog* for Halloween. I looked up to her because she didn't take anything from anyone. Tiana focused on her goals. As a young girl she inspired me to pursue mine as well.

Gabbie: I was inspired to compete in this upcoming pageant because of all of the opportunities that would come after. After competing in a pageant you can join charities, get scholarships and grants for college, and meet amazing friends.

Q: Who is your biggest role model?

M: My biggest role model is my mother because she is the strongest person I know. My mother grew up in Haiti most of her life and has experienced a lot throughout her lifetime. When she was my age, 16 years old, her father passed away due to a gunshot wound through the side of his head. It had happened in her home and she had witnessed it. My mom was very young and just about to begin her way up into adulthood when this had happened. She was able to pick herself up and ask herself, what would my father

want me to do? She continued her education, and when she graduated she moved to the US for college. She worked for a corporate office for about 16 years and got into doing her own business as a social media coach while also balancing her day job. Currently, she is working as a social media coach and also a college professor at Caldwell University, Middlesex College, and Kean University. What makes it very special to her, is that her father was a professor as well. So it really means a lot to her that she is following in his footsteps. I am honored to say that I got to see my mom grow because seeing her go through the ups and downs of life really showed me that life isn't sunshine and rainbows. There are hardships, and going through them is a way of growing.

G: My biggest role model is my friend Lovina. She has been through so much in life and done pageants through it all. She had to do the Miss Arizona 2021 Pageant a week after her grandfather's passing and last minute changed her charity to the cancer she lost him to. She ended up winning and dedicated the crown to him.

Q: What would you say is your best quality?

M: My best quality is that I try my best not to hurt anyone. If I think that I hurt someone unintentionally I will be the first one to apologize. I always respect people and try not to hurt them even if they hurt me. I also find it very difficult to say no, when someone asks for my help. I am always there for everyone no matter what, and I don't shut others down.

G: I think my best quality is my outgoing personality. I easily make friends and have always been good at talking

to people so I hope this will help me out during the pageant.

Q: Favorite part of the competition?

M: My favorite part of the competition is the on stage presence we make. This is my favorite because I get to show off my confidence and my personality. I am a very outgoing person and I love having fun so this is a great opportunity to show it off. The idea of walking down the stage seems so exhilarating to me. Everyone cheering you on and you walking like you own the stage seems like such a great feeling. At that moment you forget all your fears and you act like no one's watching. When I think about going on stage and walking in front of a crowd, I think of myself being in my room by myself walking to my mirror and back. Having fun, acting like no one's watching, and not thinking so much is key to getting through walking on stage.

G: I'm looking forward to making friends and meeting new people with the same ambitions and goals as me.

Q: What do you think the most common misconception about pageants is?

M: I think one big misconception is that girls don't learn anything when doing pageantry. This is very false, girls learn to be well-spoken, learn confidence, and poise. They learn how to go through interviews well, learning that being yourself is your best bet, time management, etc. Girls also learn that with this comes failure. It is my first time competing in a pageant so I have no experience at all, and if I end up failing throughout the process I won't feel ashamed or put myself down because I know



|| GABBIE SZULC

that it is my first time. When it comes to the girls' futures out into the world, they are one step ahead by getting a first look at what it is like to get prepped for something life changing.

G: The most common misconception about pageants is that it's only about beauty. A huge part of pageantry is the community service and charity work that goes into it.

Q: How would you define success?

M: I define success as being someone who gets a task, not only done, but getting it done well. Being able to make a goal and reaching after it no matter how hard it may be to get there. For me, my goal is to get my bachelor's and my master's in college but in order for me to get there, I need to start now instead of later. The process needed for me to get there is by maintaining good grades and growing my resume. I believe that starting now instead of later is the best way to reach success because in the long run, it's all going to be worth it in the end.

G: I would tell someone who would like to compete in a pageant not to be intimidated. A lot of times people will think pageant girls can be stuck up and rude but so many of them are the nicest people I have ever met!

The Satoma NEWSMAGAZINE

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Dystopian novel reflects real-world issues

The Hunger Games is easily one of the most influential franchises of the last 10 years. Not only did the trilogy achieve great success, but it has also completely revolutionized the young adult genre. An important part of the *Hunger Games*' influence was its popularization of a plot surrounding a dystopian future. *The Maze Runner*, *Red Queen*, and *Divergent* are only a few examples of the many popular book franchises inspired by this concept.

The interesting thing about a dystopian novel targeted towards teenagers is that it can explain very complicated, real world problems through an exciting and understandable lens. The main theme in *The Hunger Games* is class division and how it influences society. The 12 main districts of the series vary in both wealth and support from the Capitol. Because of this, certain districts are far better prepared for *The Hunger Games* than others. This concept reflects how, in the real world, certain classes of people have the social and economic power to set the odds of life in their favor. Normally, one would

think that an idea like that is difficult to display in a young adult novel. However, *The Hunger Games* is able to do it through its dynamic world-building and thoughtful storytelling.

The Hunger Games furthers the theme of class inequality through the portrayal of an abundant upper class, who are characterized by their extravagant and almost absurd appearance. These displays of wealth harken back to the time of French Aristocracy and Marie Antoinette, where people would use their excess money to show off how far they could go with their extravagant lifestyles. The intense portrayal of upper class luxury in the Capital is a strong contrast to the destitute lives of Katniss and the other members of her district. This juxtaposition makes an almost haunting comparison to the class divide seen in the modern world.

Another theme found very often in the *Hunger Games* Trilogy is violence. From the perspective of the Capital, *The Hunger Games* is merely a reality TV show. However, in all truth, it is a gruesome

display of the very worst of human nature. For a young adult novel, *The Hunger Games* manages to portray very real feelings in a completely fictional world.

Aside from a well developed world and complex themes, *The Hunger Games* also has incredibly well developed characters in the protagonist Katniss Everdeen and her eventual love interest Peeta. In the first book, Katniss volunteers to join the games in order to protect her younger sister, Prim. Then she continues to aid the other districts in the revolution against the Capital. Peeta emerges as an important figure in Katniss' life and becomes a support system for her. In a way, Peeta represents the innocence that Katniss must hold onto in order to keep going.

It's unfortunate that some people only remember *The Hunger Games* as a teen movie since the trilogy is very well written and fun to read. It emphasizes the importance of questioning the system you were born into and standing up for what you believe is right. It's a concept that rings true to this day.

Magical fantasy charms over dystopian intrigue

When people reflect on some of the recent cultural crazes, they will definitely remember *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling, two of history's most unforgettable book collections. Both of these stories have reached wide audiences with their magical fantasy charm or future dystopian intrigue. But which one is better than the other? Well...definitely the *Harry Potter* series. In the National Public Radio's poll of the top 100 teen novels, the *Harry Potter* series beat *The Hunger Games* and won the poll. But in fact there are some other things in *Harry Potter* which have made the series so popular all around.

It is important to realize that the *Harry Potter* series was the set of books which

made the creation of other long works intended for children and teenagers, such as *The Hunger Games*, possible. Prior to *Harry Potter*, it was accepted that children did not have the required attention span to read long books. But after *Harry Potter* was released in 1997, it became an unstoppable cultural force that led people to realize that children are capable of understanding the motivation and themes behind longer books. This cultural force led to the development of other series such as *The Hunger Games*. So, it can be said that *Harry Potter* is the series that started it all.

Additionally, the *Harry Potter* world, which is full of wizards, witches, magic, Death Eaters, and so on, is much more entertaining to

read about than a story which might soon turn into reality. Books which are for teenagers are for entertainment and they should not really be addressing real-life problems like corruption and so on: they are supposed to spread positive vibes. This is what the Potter series does really well: in fact, that is why Harry is the hero in the series and the cold-hearted Voldemort is not, even though Voldemort is the learned one out of the two.

In short, the *Harry Potter* series, in comparison to the *Hunger Games* books, has a lot of imaginary concepts involved, but at the same time a lot of good feelings which make readers naturally fall in love with it more. And thus, in the end, magic is always better than the Games.

Hooray for Heart Heroes



STUDENTS WATCH IN AWE AS HISTORY TEACHER DUNCAN MERRIMAN-MENDEZ SINKS THE HALF-COURT SHOT DURING THE BREAK BEFORE THE FINAL GAME.

BY: TAMIA BURTON

leyball Tournament on Wednesday, February 2. The community joined together for the fourteenth year and raised \$4,000 in total. The event was a huge success!

In support of the American Heart Association, students and faculty competed in the Heart Heroes Vol-

The tournament featured 14 teams, consisting of both students and faculty/staff, who were eager and ready to leave it all on the court. The stands were packed with spectators who cheered on their favorite teams. As the games went on the scores were neck and neck. Hearts were pounding with excitement and anticipation as the top two teams made their way onto the court. Team #3 captained by senior Etinosa Igbor, and Team #8 captained by junior Esperanza Mojica fought a hard game and in the end Team #3 walked away with a victory. Team #3 was not the only group to walk away winners. This year spectators were given the opportunity to vote for the team with the most spirit. Team #11, led by Ms. Penny won the Team Spirit Award. The members of this team consisted of Ms. Byrne, Mr. Cullinan, Mr. Dama, Ms. DiBetta, Mrs. Gossett, Mr. McCarthy, Ms. Penny, and Mr. Vigilante. They captivated what being a “heart hero,” is all about as they were all decked out in their super hero outfits, in line with the theme

of the event.

While this year, the event switched from a basketball game to volleyball, the community still kept up the tradition of the half court shot made at every Hoops for Heart event. Thirty people signed up for the half-court shot, and of the thirty only two were successful. There was an uproar in the gym when both Mr. Merriman-Mendez and senior Prince Swain made their shots.

When asked what her thoughts were about the fundraiser, senior Genna Arduini responded, “This event was so important for both the STA community and the American Heart Association. It’s great to see the school come together and raise awareness, while also cheering on our classmates and teachers. This event was important because it allowed the players and even the spectators to learn about heart disease and show our support while having fun.” The Heart Heroes Volleyball Tournament was an outstanding event, and the STA community was happy to be a part of such an important cause.

Students honored for outstanding service

BY: SAHIB SINGH

ment in the school community and their values of being leaders and disciples of Christ.

Arduini and Zafian were nominated because of the way they inhabit the values of people who show great leadership qualities within the school, their involvement in acts of charity and community service, and how they positively impact the next generation of students. These

On Wednesday, January 26, 2022, seniors Genna Arduini and Erin Zafian, and junior Brianna Herrera, received the prestigious St. Timothy Award. Held in the St. Francis Cathedral and observed by members of the Diocese of Metuchen, the girls were commended for their involve-

qualities are befitting of the seniors and can inspire the underclassmen about what it means to be role models. Herrera was nominated for this prestigious award by her parish, Saint Mary’s in South Amboy. She has shown her parish that she knows the values of what each disciple of Christ should strive for and how to better the lives of others through her acts of kindness. The characteristics of all three of these girls show just how befitting this award is to them.

Upon receiving the Saint Timothy Award, each of these girls shared their sentiments on what it was like to receive this honor. “Receiving this award was such an honor and I can’t thank STA enough for helping me become the volunteer and leader I am today,” Arduini stated. “This further motivates me to continue service in college.”

Zafian said she felt, “very honored to have received the Saint Timothy award. It is a privilege to be recognized by so many other young adults who have done so much to benefit the community through

acts of service. It is a very fulfilling achievement for my service and leadership to be recognized.”

As for Herrera, she stated: “It was great that we came together as a community to receive this award. It’s amazing to see what my peers are capable of, which inspires me to continue helping others and do my best.” It is clear to see why she was nominated by her parish. She focuses on the whole community and shows what it’s like to be a child of the Catholic Church.

All three of these girls make this student body proud. They have received such high praise from the Diocese and give a good name not only to themselves but the entire Aquinas community that has helped to shape these young girls into being faith-filled community leaders. They had the honor of receiving the award from Bishop James F. Checchio, who had celebrated the liturgy.

The school community is proud of these three girls. It is clear that these fine students will become strong leaders in society.



GENNA ARDUINI, ERIN ZAFIAN, & BRIANNA HERRERA CELEBRATE WITH BISHOP CHECCIO, PRINCIPAL HARRY ZIEGLER, FATHER KEITH, FATHER MIKE, AND KEVIN MCCARTHY.

Juniors celebrate milestone



JUNIOR ELLA FEDERICO RECEIVES HER CLASS RING FROM VICE PRINCIPAL MARK FIORE.

BY: ALEXANDRA SARDIS & TAMIA BURTON

On Tuesday, February 22, 2022, the Class of 2023 celebrated their Ring Day ceremony themed “We’re All in this Together.” The theme was chosen because of all the ups and downs that the Class of 2023

has had to face over the past three years.

As the students arrived they were given a classroom to place their belongings in, organized by homeroom. Students roamed the halls, visited their friends and socialized while they anxiously awaited the moment when they would receive

their long awaited class rings. Teachers handed out boutonnieres for each attendee to attach to their outfits for the evening. The boutonnieres perfectly represented the school colors; the men received plain white carnations and the ladies got the same thing decorated in a red bow. After a long-awaited announcement, the juniors were called down to the main gym in alphabetical order.

Family members welcomed the juniors into the gym. The evening proceeded with a beautiful Mass, with a moving Homily from Father Keith about the journey the juniors are on. The class symbols were placed at the front, near the altar and described by members of the student body. These symbols included a large replica of the school ring, to represent every student’s connection to the school; the friendship chain that was created when the Class of 2023 were fresh-

men, to represent the connection between classmates; a Varsity letter, music notes, and drama masks, to represent the diversity of talent present within the entire class; and a large hourglass, to represent the passage of time and the importance of making the most of the time that the Class of 2023 has left in high school.

Once all of the symbols had been discussed, Principal Harry Ziegler and Vice Principal Mark Fiore came forward to present the rings to the students. Moderator Amy Kate Byrne called the students up one at a time and their photos were taken as they were presented with their ring. The ring had the school symbol on it, as well as a garnet in the middle. Each junior also had the option of customizing it with their initials.

The ceremony was a wonderful experience and marked a milestone in the Class of 2023’s high school journey.

Freezing for a reason

BY: ELIZABETH BERA

On Saturday, March 5, 2022, 75 students, 10 faculty members, and countless families came out to Sea Bright Beach to participate in the annual Polar Plunge. Each student was eager to jump into the water in the frigid temperatures, knowing that they were supporting the athletic department. From the participants to the supporters, the day was filled with joy and snacks, as 56 students courageously took the plunge to support all of the athletic programs. Everyone came dressed warmly, representing in their athletic and school apparel that showed their school spirit.

Freshman, Catie Frost, who participates in track and softball, attended the event and was excited to share her reason to take the plunge: “I wanted to take the plunge because I thought it was a good way of raising money to help our athletic programs. Since I participate in the athletic programs here at school, it helped me and my team, which was another reason I wanted to do it.” Freshman wrestler, Anthony Pasquale, was also ready to participate saying, “I participated in the

polar plunge because it was for a great cause, and it was a fun way to earn service hours while enjoying it the whole time!” Whether students were in the water swimming or on the sand supporting, it was a fun experience for all!

When the students were asked about how they felt after jumping in the water, the responses were amazing, and all had one thing in common; the water was freezing cold! “The water was definitely cold, but it was worth it. As I said, because I participate in athletics, I really felt the need to help raise money for them,” said Frost. Pasquale added, “The water was so cold that I was numb! But after I jumped in, it was great to know that I was helping the athletic programs at school. Being a wrestler, I felt like I needed to do the polar plunge to do my part, and contribute my time and support.”

“...it was great to know that I was helping the athletic programs at school...”

- Anthony Pasquale



STUDENTS FROM ALL GRADE LEVELS GATHER TOGETHER AS THEY PREPARE TO RUN INTO THE FRIGID WATER BEHIND THEM.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

Both Frost and Pasquale were very enthusiastic about supporting not only their sports but all of the wonderful sports that STA has to offer. With the help of the school community, they were able to raise \$11,500 for the athletic programs!

STA would like to say thank you to the students, families, faculty, and staff for contributing to such a fun event, that is going to help make a difference in the athletic programs. Thank you to everyone who came out to support, and took the plunge!

Hollywood legend remembered

BY: KAYLA FOLEY

With the Guinness World Record for ‘Longest TV Career for an Entertainer and a lifetime of nearly a century, Betty White’s legacy will live on for ages. She recently died 17 days short of her 100th birthday. Her career ended with 5 Emmy Awards, a Daytime Emmy, a Grammy Award, and two Screen Actors Guild Awards. She started her career in entertainment in 1939, where she acted on various radio shows, but her breakout was in 1949 when she acted in Hollywood on Television as “Girl

Friday.” A few years later, in 1952, she co-founded Bandy Productions alongside writer George Tibbles and executive producer Don Fedderson. Later that same year, *Life with Elizabeth*, starring Betty White premiered. In 1973, White began making appearances on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, a sitcom set in a television newsroom where White portrayed Sue Ann Nivens, the host of the news station’s “Happy Homemaker” segment. For her work, White received 3 Emmy Award nominations for ‘Outstanding Continuing Performance by a Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series, winning this award in 1975 and 1976.

Although she has starred in many television shows over the years, her most iconic role will always be Rose Nylund in the classic sitcom *The Golden Girls*. The show focused on the lives of four older women who had all been divorced/widowed and are now roommates in a house in Miami. Starring alongside Betty White was Bea Arthur, Rue McClanahan, and Estelle Getty, it was a huge success, earning White seven Emmy nominations for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series and winning once in 1986. White continued playing Rose Nylund in the spin-off

series *The Golden Palace*, which ran for one season after *The Golden Girls* ended in 1992. She continued to act on television and won another Emmy in 1996 for her appearance on *The John Larroquette Show*.

In 2010 she starred in the humorous Snickers Super Bowl commercial in which she was discussed during a football game. Following this, fans launched a social media campaign for the next host of Saturday Night Live. The show producers listened to the campaigns, and in May, she became the show’s oldest host earning herself yet another Emmy.

While White was most famous for her television acting, she was also an animal rights activist. She was committed to helping animals in need, as she promoted animal rights in her entertainment career, and adopted many rescue animals for herself. She actively helped the Morris Animal Foundation, and they even created the Betty White Wildlife Rapid Response Fund after her! This fund continues to fund research and help wildlife disasters. White once said, “I’m the luckiest person in the world. My life is divided in absolute half: half animals, half show business, I have to stay in show business to pay for my animal work!”



“I’m the luckiest person in the world. My life is divided in absolute half: half animals, half show business...”

- Betty White

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

Betty White lived a wonderfully fulfilling life, and the world will never forget her or the legacy she left behind!



BETTY WHITE DURING HER GOLDEN GIRLS ERA.

Celebrating Black History Month

BY: LISA MOHABEER

Black History Month was very eventful and the most significant month for the African American Heritage Club. To start the month, the African American Heritage Club shared their views about diversity

and what it means to them on social media. In addition, the club shared facts during the morning announcements each Friday about how Black History Month came to be. There is a reason February was chosen for Black History Month. It was originally the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. President Lincoln paved the way for the abolition of slavery with his Emancipation Proclamation, and Douglass was an escaped slave turned activist and author. Douglass was also a prominent leader in the abolitionist movement to end slavery. Extraordinarily, Black History Month is celebrated differently around the world. In the United States and Canada, it is celebrated in February, and in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the Netherlands, it is celebrated in October. Throughout Black History Month,

the African American Heritage Club met every Wednesday. On February 9, guest speaker Jessica Boakye (BGA ‘18 alumna) discussed entrepreneurship. During high school, Jessica was the President of the African American Heritage Club and changed the club for the better. As President, Jessica took the time to create apparel to represent the club displaying its motto, “For the Culture.” Due to popular feedback on the apparel, she then took a further step to turn it into her very own business at <https://www.jessfortheculture.com/>. As Jessica’s business continues to expand, many notable buyers support her business, such as *The Fosters* actor Tom Williamson and Zaire Wade. Students who attended the presentation learned about running a business and Jessica’s journey to becoming an entrepreneur. On February 16, Michael Cow-

herd, the brother of the current President of the African American Heritage Club, Malaysia Cowherd ‘24, and Anthony Brooks, a BGA alumni parent, were both invited to speak on their HBCU college experiences. Both graduates of Morehouse College reflected on the college from then to now. These two men had wonderful advice to share relating to college life. Those who attended took the opportunity to ask questions to learn more about Cowherd’s and Brooks’ experiences and their outcomes on college.

To wrap up Black History Month, on February 23, the African American Heritage Club played a Black Trivia game to learn more about well-known African Americans and their impact on society. It was a fun and informative way to end Black History Month and reflect on all that African Americans have contributed throughout history.



POSTERS LIKE THIS ONE DECORATED THE HALLS.

'ENCANTO' ENCHANTS AUDIENCES

BY: ABIGAIL BERA

On November 3, 2021, Disney premiered its newest full-length animated feature film, *Encanto*. Following its premiere, *Encanto* debuted in theaters across the country. After its success in theaters, the film became available to stream on Disney+ on December 24, 2021.

Encanto tells the tale of an extraordinary family, the Madrigals, who live in the mountains of Colombia in a magical house in a vibrant town in a wondrous charming place called an Encanto. The family is blessed with a miracle that gives each member special gifts, ranging from shape-shifting to super hearing. All of the Madrigals have a unique gift, except for Mirabel, the film's protagonist. Although Mirabel loves her family, she can't help but feel insecure due to her lack of a gift. When the house begins to crack, and her relatives' gifts seem to be disappearing, Mirabel decides to take matters into her own hands. She resolves to save the miracle and make her fam-

ily proud.

Many things stand out about *Encanto*, one of which is the impressive animation in the film. The animators had the challenge of creating twelve distinctive characters to make up the family Madrigal. They wanted Mirabel to be different from any other Disney heroine. *Encanto* was the first Disney Animation film to have choreographers involved in the development process from start to finish. The choreographer helped create the rhythmic movements of the characters. The animators traveled to Colombia to gather inspiration from the scenery and wildlife they found there.

Another aspect of the film that stood out to audiences was the score. Lin Manuel-Miranda of *Hamilton* and *Moana* fame helped compose and create the film's engaging soundtrack and story. Thanks to the pairing of Miranda and Germaine Franco, audiences were able to immerse themselves in the enchanting sounds of Colombia. The soundtrack was an immense success and gained



THE MADRIGAL FAMILY FINISHES THE OPENING NUMBER OF THE MOVIE WITH A FLOURISH.

widespread popularity after the movie's release on Disney+. An audience favorite, "We Don't Talk About Bruno" became the second number one song for Disney in the U.S., with the first being Aladdin's "A Whole New World." The album topped the Billboard 200 chart for four weeks. *Encanto* became the first animated film to generate multiple top-10 Hot 100 entries.

During this year's awards season, *Encanto* received several awards and accolades. At the 79th Annual

Golden Globe Awards, it had three nominations and won the award for Best Animated Feature Film. *Encanto* received three Oscar nominations at the 94th Academy Awards: Best Animated Feature, Best Original Score, and "Dos Origuitas" for Best Original Song.

Overall, *Encanto* takes the family dynamic to a new level. It is a creative and fresh take on a story more than the stereotypical fairytale. Its message can resonate with all kinds of people.

'THE BATMAN' COMES CLOSEST TO THE COMIC

BY: LISA MOHABEER

After being delayed multiple times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, *The Batman*, starring Robert Pattinson, is finally here. On opening weekend, it produced approximately \$128.5 million in the domestic box office

and \$248.5 million in the global box office, giving it the second highest opening of the pandemic behind *Spider-Man: No Way Home*.

Unlike other Batman movies, *The Batman* does not provide the origin story that we have heard millions of times. Instead, the movie starts a couple years into Batman's career.

He has completely left Bruce Wayne behind and focused all his energy on being a vigilante. *The Batman* takes on a darker side to the Caped Crusader and shows just how much people fear him. As the masked crusader says, "When that light hits the sky it's not just a call; it's a warning."

Pattinson's portrayal of Batman is the most comic-accurate Batman to date. Gotham City has a very specific tone. The sun rarely shines, and it is a rain-swept nightmare. Gotham's corruption was played much closer to the comics than it ever has in any movie or TV show. The movie's plot heavily ties into the behind-the-scenes corruption in the city. It is a murder mystery thriller in which the Riddler, the main antagonist, sends Batman on a hunt to reveal the deep dark secrets of Gotham's elites, including Batman's own past. In *The Batman*, Penguin is exactly as he is in the comics, a well-connected gangster who uses his position in the underworld to arrange deals between criminals and the city's upper class. On top of this, he runs the Iceberg Lounge as a front for it all.

Director Matt Reeves has done a phenomenal job to let us experience

Batman's POV in order to see how the world perceives him. As Batman enters the multiple crime scenes, the audience is able to feel how each and every police officer views him as a menace and disapproves of his presence; that is, every officer but Gordon, who ends up being a close partner to Batman to solve the mystery.

Catwoman, played by Zoë Kravitz, has found herself working with Batman to solve the riddle, meanwhile being romantically involved with him. Although Catwoman is fierce, she is very tender and vulnerable and does whatever she can to survive.

From the first scene in *The Batman*, it is clear how much thought, effort, and creativity has been put into making the movie a success. The movie will scare you, indulge you, and excite you while telling the dark tale of the corruption in Gotham. This was perhaps the least amount of talking done by Batman in any of the Batman movies. Even so, Robert Pattinson is able to display emotions so well through his body language and expressions; he brings the emotional depth to the character who is under a mask for nearly all three hours of the film.



THE BATMAN AND CATWOMAN TALK AS THEY STARE OUT AT GOTHAM CITY.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

Delving deeper in

The Word On Everybody's Lips

If you've been keeping up with the news, chances are you've heard of something called the metaverse, which is a 3D universe made up of many virtual spaces. In the metaverse, users create an avatar and can socialise with others as well as partake in activities such as shopping, attending classes, and working: all in the comfort of their own homes.

Although it's not fully released yet, it's predicted to be the future of the technology. The topic of the digital realm has been hotter than a day in the Sahara Desert, and the term seems to be everywhere you look these days. Just what is up with all of the hype? Is the metaverse the next big thing, or is it all a fad that'll eventually be swept under the rug?



THE METAVERSE ALLOWS USERS TO INTERACT WITH A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT AS WELL AS WITH EACH OTHER.

(ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

The Metaverse's Origins and Predecessors

Although the word "metaverse" only became a commonplace term in recent years, the idea of a virtual world has existed for a while now. Sci-Fi author Neal Stephenson first coined the term in his 1992 sci-fi novel *Snow Crash* where it's described as an inner-city setting that surrounds a pitch-black planet. Then, in 2003, technology company Linden Lab released *Second Life*, an online game whose mechanics were identical to the metaverse.

Other games such as *Minecraft* and *IMVU* offer those mechanics as well. In 2011, the novel (and later movie) *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline came out. The story, set in 2045, revolved around people using a virtual world called "The Oasis" to escape problems that the real world had. To enter the world, users wore visors and gloves, the latter allowing them to interact with the digital environment. The idea has also been in several movies, most famously in *The Matrix* and *Ready Player One*. This helped bring the idea of a virtual world into the limelight. Other movies such as *The Matrix* and *Tron* also focused on the possibility of a virtual world. All of these pieces of fiction paved the way for the metaverse to come to light, and it'll take these ideas one step further.



LEFT: THE TERM "METAVERSE" WAS FIRST COINED IN THE NOVEL *SNOW CRASH*

RIGHT: GAMES SUCH AS "SECOND LIFE" HAVE SIMILAR MECHANICS TO THE METAVERSE'S

Virtual & Augmented Reality

Comparisons between the metaverse and other technology have arisen, most notably with Virtual Reality (VR), which lets users enter an artificial environment via a headset, and Augmented Reality (AR), which allows users to see virtual items in the real world. While the latter two have some loose ties with the metaverse, they're not the same. AR and VR programs don't require contact with others, but the whole purpose of the metaverse is social interaction.

The metaverse isn't intending to compete with either platform: rather, it builds upon them. VR headsets and AR glasses are expected to be used for full immersion in the metaverse. In fact, a new pair of AR glasses called "Nazaré" is currently under development. Despite having the appearance of ordinary glasses, they grant the user the ability to see others as 3D avatars and communicate with them in real time.



LEFT: VIRTUAL REALITY GOGGLES WILL ALLOW USERS TO BECOME FULLY IMMERSSED IN THE METAVERSE

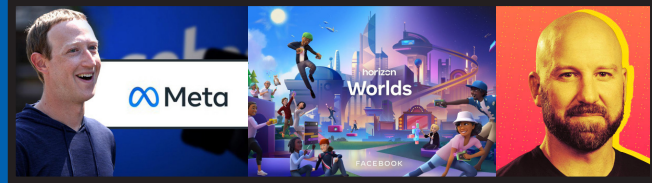
RIGHT: AUGMENTED REALITY GOGGLES WILL HELP USERS VISUALIZE THE METAVERSE

nto the Metaverse

The Formation of the Metaverse

Media magnate Mark Zuckerberg has played a big part in constructing the metaverse and is very passionate about the concept. He has rebranded Facebook as “Meta”, dubbed the metaverse as “the successor to the mobile internet” at a keynote speech and alongside the Meta team, is responsible for the aforementioned Nazare glasses. In addition, the team developed software program Horizon Worlds, which was their first attempt at bringing their metaverse plans to fruition. Released in December 2021, Horizon gives users a chance to interact with friends, make games and build their own worlds. “This isn’t about spending more times in screens,” Zuckerberg states. “It’s about making the time we already spend better.”

Another key figure on the Meta team is technology executive Andrew Bosworth. A former Harvard student alongside Zuckerberg, Bosworth heads the Reality Labs section, which leads Meta’s VR/AR equipment. He was recently named as the company’s Chief Technology Officer.



LEFT: MARK ZUCKERBERG REBRANDS FACEBOOK AS “META”

MIDDLE: HORIZON WORLDS IS ZUCKERBERG’S FIRST SHOT AT THE METAVERSE

RIGHT: ANDREW BOSWORTH, META’S CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

Making an Avatar

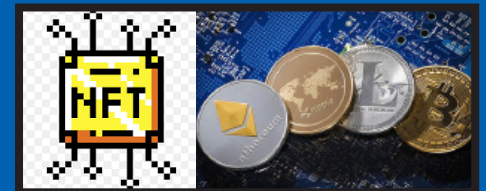
Avatars are used to represent users in the virtual world. In terms of creating one, users are given total freedom on how the avatar looks. They will have a vast amount of customization options to choose from and they can either be a likeness of oneself, or they can look as outlandish as possible. They play a very crucial role in the metaverse: without them, the digital world wouldn’t be able to exist. The metaverse needs the manifestations of people to inhabit it and they integrate with its elements. What makes metaverse avatars special is that they’re designed to be very realistic and life-like, which Meta plans to achieve with the use of artificial intelligence. The model will predict body movement by sensing where the controller and headset is.



SOME METAVERSE AVATARS POTENTIALLY LOOK LIKE THIS.

NFTs and Cryptocurrency

Cryptocurrency and NFTs (Non-Fungible-Tokens) are correlated with the metaverse. NFTs are unique tokens that come in the form of GIFs, music, artwork, video clips, etc. Cryptocurrency is a type of currency that can exist either digitally or physically. It’s kept safe with cryptography, which is the process of hiding important information. In the metaverse, these can be used to purchase things such as virtual land, different accessories for avatars and types of collectibles.



NFT TOKENS AND CRYPTOCURRENCY ARE THE “MONEY” OF THE METAVERSE.

When Will The Metaverse’s Features Fully Come Out?

As of right now, there is no set date for the metaverse’s release. However, we can expect to see the metaverse slowly taking flight in the next several years. Microsoft founder Bill Gates stated that he sees office meetings being held in the metaverse in the next 2-3 years. Zuckerberg hopes to have at least a billion users to the metaverse by 2031. A soft launch in about five years is likely our best bet. Overall, the metaverse is yet another way of showing how much technology has marched on. The whole concept could change the way we interact as we know it.



MICROSOFT FOUNDER BILL GATES PREDICTS THAT WORK MEETINGS WILL BE HELD IN THE METAVERSE IN THE NEXT 2-3 YEARS.

Ukraine under attack



SOLDIERS IN UKRAINE WORK TIRELESSLY TO EVACUATE CITIZENS FROM AREAS THAT HAVE BEEN ENDURING HEAVY FIRE.

Times). The Ukrainian government called it “a full-scale attack from multiple directions.” “This would be the most significant European war in almost 80 years,” said David Leonhardt.

According to the United Nations, over 3 million desperate migrants have fled their homes to their neighboring NATO member countries— Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. The government has launched a “home for Ukrainians scheme,” that enables people in the UK to host refugees in their homes. Countries bordering Ukraine have reception centers where refugees can stay. They are provided with food, medical care and information about their onward travel. The Polish government has received the highest number of refugees and requires more money to host more Ukrainians.

The United States is Ukraine's largest donor; they have provided nearly \$54 million in assistance to those affected by Russia's attacks. On March 8, 2022, President Joe Biden took steps to scale back on Russian energy. Biden banned all imports of Russian oil and natural gas effective immediately. The energy price shock hit the European economy hard,

since Russia is a major supplier of the world's oil. Their reliance on exports is so high, Western economists thought twice about targeting its exports. Nevertheless, Russia sustained their invasion so the United States was left to ban exports from Russia even though it would hurt American and European consumers. President Biden stated, “I said I would level with the American people from the beginning, and when I first spoke to this, I said defending freedom is going to cost us as well in the United States.”

Russia's war in Ukraine has entered its fifth week, and there is little sign of an end to the conflict. Russia is said to have bombed a theater in Besieged Mariupol, which sheltered hundreds of people; US officials said that the word “children,” was seen to be written outside the building. Biden has labeled Putin “a war criminal,” and has promised that the US will support Kyiv to defend Zelenskyy and his country against Russian aggression. While the US fully supports Ukraine, they still tread carefully in fear of an escalation in a larger European conflict. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warns that World War III “may have already started.”

BY: TAMIA BURTON

holds the belief that the Ukraine and Ukrainians are part of Russia's history and are “one people.” According to the Washington Post, Vladimir Putin maintains that Western support for Ukraine is a deliberate effort to undermine their unity.

On the morning of February 24, Russian troops poured over the border with planes and missile launchers attacking Ukrainian cities and airports. The war has displaced more than 2.5 million civilians, mainly women, and children (*The New York*

On February 24, 2022, the world watched Russia begin its invasion of Ukraine; now the fate of millions of lives remains uncertain.

Early in 2021, President Zelenskyy of Ukraine cracked down on pro-Russian oligarchs in their country. In turn, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia deployed a mass number of troops along the Ukrainian border. Russia demands that Ukraine not join NATO. Putin

2022 Winter Olympics wraps up

BY: RAJAVSI PATEL

the use of it was the highlight of the Olympics for many civilians in the Beijing area.

The mascot of the Winter Olympics Games 2022 was a giant panda named “Bing Dwen Dwen.” The word “Bing” is defined as ice and symbolizes purity and strength. “Dwen Dwen” represents children. It was said that the words “Bing Dwen Dwen” mean “ice hulu.” The panda as a mascot was made to show the focus and determination of the participants to increase the Olympic spirit.

The emphasis of gender equality was major for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics Games. It was known as the most balanced Olympic Winter Games in terms of gender. Forty-five percent of the athletes were women, and fifty-five percent of the athletes were men. The 2022 Winter Olympics hosted the largest amount of sport events for women athletes. Fifty-three percent of the events pre-

sented female athletes, which was more than ever before.

In conclusion, despite the initial controversy and several countries

initiating diplomatic boycotts, the Olympics were a success for the people in China as well as the athletes from the represented countries.



TEAM USA ENTER THE STADIUM DURING THE CLOSING CEREMONY.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

The 2022 Winter Olympics took place in Beijing, the capital of China. The sport events were hosted over the span of February 4, 2022 to February 20, 2022. Throughout the days of the Olympics, seventeen existing Olympic records were broken and two world records were broken.

Overall, there were fifteen disciplines across seven sports in total. The seven sports included ice hockey, luge, curling, bobsleigh, skiing, biathlon, and skating. Two thousand eight hundred ninety-seven athletes participated worldwide in this year's Winter Olympics. There were one hundred nine events hosted for the medal prizes.

The climate of Beijing was not ideal for the Winter Olympics since snow is needed for many of the disciplines. However, artificial man-made snow was generated and

SpaceX program makes promising advances



THE SPACEX FALCON 9 ROCKET LAUNCHES FROM THE CAPE CANAVERAL SPACE FORCE STATION IN FLORIDA.

BY: SANDRA ABRANTES

Founded in early 2002, and led by CEO Elon Musk, SpaceX has not only discovered numerous break-

throughs regarding space travel, but has led the country into new territories with better aerospace understanding. Due to their advancements with technology and numerous news

headings respecting their work, SpaceX could possibly be one of the most respected and promising space companies thus far.

On Monday February 21, 2022, SpaceX landed the returning rocket Falcon 9 from their Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. The launch was one of many, as SpaceX's plans for 2022 are already in full gear. They started on January 6, 2022 and plan to continue launching throughout all months of the year, and if all goes according to plan, they will have a number of 50-52 flights by the end of the year, which is more than any other commercial space company has ever accomplished in a year. The Falcon 9 rocket contained a total of 46 Starlink satellites with it, and effectively sent them into orbit.

Gathering data, experimenting, and discovering is the mission SpaceX is accomplishing. Sending satellites, rockets, and spacecrafts into the solar system as a means of broadening the country's under-

standing of space, since its debut in 2002 SpaceX has been on a mission to broaden the understanding of space. The future is looking bright as news of Elon Musk's Starship, a fully reusable transport system that could potentially carry up to 100 people to Mars is being planned and tested. Researching what it would take for humanity to be able to visit and colonize on Mars seems so out of reach, but now the future foretells a visit to the Red Planet may be in order.

With the newest launches, planned launches, and teams working tirelessly to make it to Mars, the future of space travel does not disappoint. New problems and solutions are being discovered everyday, and a promise to reach Mars has kept humanity on its toes as anticipation for these missions grows unbearable. SpaceX has done little to disappoint, and it can be expected that their continued efforts and endeavors will significantly benefit the entire country and the time ahead.

New Jersey mask mandate rescinded

BY: OLIVIA RIVERA

Masks have become a new normal for people all around the world in schools and the workplace. While it has taken some time to adjust, wearing masks is not as much of an inconvenience as it used to be. For many children and teens, masks have become a part of the everyday uniform. However, it seems like things might change once again.

Governor Philip D. Murphy of New Jersey recently announced that masks may become a thing of the past in NJ schools. On March 7, 2022, around the second anniversary of the coronavirus, a new policy was put in place for all NJ school districts that allowed teachers and students to stop wearing masks if they chose. Projections show that the current decline in new Covid cases will continue to decrease as the number of vaccinations, especially in school-aged children and teens, increases.

While this is great news for those tired of wearing masks every day, this signals something much bigger than the eventual end of uncomfortable masks. Governor Murphy has been known for instituting strict mask mandates to keep the people

of NJ safe. Because this new policy breaks the trend of his past coronavirus guidelines, this communicates a message to the public that Covid is a new normal that people should learn to live with, not fight against. For those who are uneasy about not wearing masks, it is important to note that this new mask policy provides teachers and students with the option of not wearing them. It does not require anyone to do anything that makes them uncomfortable.

Regardless of people's personal beliefs concerning the pandemic, it became clear to government officials that change needed to happen in order to move forward and begin to return to some semblance of normalcy. Tensions have been growing over the idea that there is no end in sight for the virus and many officials recognized the need to normalize its presence in society so that the fear can dissipate.

When talking about the new management strategies for the coronavirus, Governor Murphy said, "The overwhelming sentiment on both sides of the aisle is [that] we want to get to a place where we can live with this thing in as normal a fashion as possible."



GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY HOLDS A PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE THE LIFTING OF THE MASK MANDATE.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

"...we want to get to a place where we can live with this thing in as normal a fashion as possible."

- Governor Phil Murphy

Much like the flu, Covid will never completely go away. However, comparisons of society today and society during the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 show that things will eventually improve. Scientific and technological advancements will continue to make better vaccines and Covid detection devices until the trauma of living through a pandemic becomes a distant memory. The hope of moving on continues to grow.

'Squarely' spectacular show

BY: MORGAN RYAN

Last weekend, the Drama Department opened to rave reviews of their 2022 spring production, *The SpongeBob Musical*. This award-winning show, which opened on Broadway in 2018, takes all the beloved characters from the long-running Nickelodeon cartoon *SpongeBob Squarepants* and tells their thrilling new story through the fantastical lens of musical theatre.

In *The SpongeBob Musical*, the audience follows SpongeBob (junior Abigail Bera) through a typical day in the underwater town of Bikini Bottom. Just like in the TV show, he has fun with his best friend Patrick (senior Jennifer Rihacek), endlessly tortures his grouchy neighbor Squidward (senior David Irizarry), and faithfully fulfills his duty as a fry cook at the Krusty Krab. SpongeBob's beautiful Bikini Bottom day is interrupted, however, when news of a deadly volcano threatens to destroy the town. SpongeBob teams up with his genius squirrel friend Sandy (senior Tamia Burton) and tries to find a way to save Bikini Bottom. He is discouraged by his boss, Mr. Krabs (senior Patrick Ponick), who insists he is just a simple sponge who could never save the town. SpongeBob stays optimistic, however, even as the sinister Plankton (sophomore Michael Corradino) and his computer wife Karen (senior Gianna Vaynberg) scheme to sabotage him from



PATCHY THE PIRATE (MUSIC DIRECTOR JOSEPH CULLINAN) TAKES A 'SHELL-FIE' WITH THE CAST AS THEY PERFORM A CONCERT AT THE END OF THE SHOW.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN METZ)

saving the day. Tensions grow between the citizens of Bikini Bottom as the doomsday clock ticks down. Other iconic characters from the TV show, such as Larry the Lobster (senior Nicholas Lieggi), Mrs. Puff (sophomore Gabriella Morelli), Old Man Jenkins (senior Joshua Pereira), and Pearl Krabs (sophomore Celeste Popola) also pop up throughout the show as they attempt to cope with the calamity. While the town tears each other apart, SpongeBob and his friends are determined to save the

day and will stop at nothing to rescue the town they love before time runs out.

The score of *The SpongeBob Musical* is unique because, instead of the entire soundtrack being written by one person or small group, it features songs written by over a dozen different unique artists. "(Just A) Simple Sponge", SpongeBob's power ballad, was written by Panic! at the Disco's Brendon Urie. "Bikini Bottom Boogie," a rocking concert number, was composed by Steven Tyler and Joe Perry of Aerosmith. A wide range of different genres is featured throughout. Plankton raps a song written by T.I. while a team of backup fish performs complex hip-hop moves. Squidward's wildest performing dreams come true as he tap-dances and plays his clarinet along to a dazzling Broadway show tune. There is certainly something for everyone in this action-packed musical!

SpongeBob is one of the most iconic TV characters of all time, so Bera had some big shoes to fill when she took on the role. "Even though SpongeBob is a cartoon character, he demonstrates real human emotions throughout the show," she said. "I wanted to use these emotions to turn a two-dimensional character into a multi-dimensional personality." When asked about her favorite part of the show Bera responded, "My

favorite part of the production is its message, that the power of optimism can change the world; it shows that despite the hardships we may face, we just have to stick together, keep going, and hope that tomorrow will be better."

"...despite the hardships we may face, we just have to stick together, keep going, and hope that tomorrow will be better."

- Abigail Bera

This was the drama department's first spring musical open to the public since their 2019 production of *Spamalot*. After the successes of this year's fall plays, *Julius Caesar* and *Peter and the Starcatcher*, the cast and crew of *The SpongeBob Musical* were thrilled to have a live audience experience the iconic underwater world of Bikini Bottom. The show closes this weekend, so get tickets before it's too late to see this fabulous production!

Friday, April 1st @ 8pm
Saturday, April 2nd @ 8pm
Sunday, April 3rd @ 3pm



A GROUP OF FANATICAL SARDINES CONVINCE PATRICK THAT HE IS THEIR SAVIOR AND PERFORM A GOSPEL INSPIRED NUMBER CALLED, "SUPER SEA-STAR SAVIOR" TO CELEBRATE FINDING THE ONE WHO WILL SAVE THEM.

Sports Spotlight

Name:

Anne Marie
Chiricolo



Nickname:

Anne Ma

Grade: 12

Sport: Volleyball & Lacrosse

Favorite warm-up song:

"The Show Goes On" by
Lupe Fiasco

Favorite pre-game snack:

Peanut M&Ms

Lucky number: 13

Name:

Brian
Moyer



Nickname:

Moyer

Grade: 12

Sport: Football & Wrestling

Favorite warm-up song:

"The Motto" by Drake

Favorite pre-game snack:

Cliff bar

Lucky number: 56

Name:

Claire
English



Nickname:

Clairebear

Grade: 12

Sport: Lacrosse

Favorite warm-up song:

"Stronger" by Kelly Clarkson

Favorite pre-game snack:

Apples

Lucky number: 15

Name:

Jonathan
Wyatt



Nickname:

Jon

Grade: 12

Sport: Football & Track

Favorite warm-up song:

"Green light" by Lil Druk

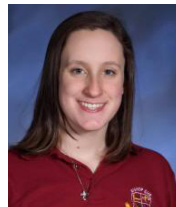
Favorite pre-game snack:

Egg & cheese sandwich
on a bagel with water and
Gatorade

Lucky number: 2

Name:

Sydney
Zeszotarski



Nickname:

Syd

Grade: 12

Sport: Swimming

Favorite warm-up song:

"Five More Hours" by Chris
Brown

Favorite pre-game snack:

Cheez-its

Lucky number: 222

Name:

Tyler
Kadi



Nickname:

TK

Grade: 12

Sport: Baseball

Favorite warm-up song:

"Like a G6" by Far East
Movement

Favorite pre-game snack:

PB&J with a Celsius

Lucky number: 11

LADY TROJANS GIVE IT THEIR ALL

BY: EMMA FLYNN

The Lady Trojans had a great basketball season this year. The team was led by captains Amarilis Shubick (sophomore) and Hailey Thompson (senior). They played a total of 26 regular season games, going 22-4 and 15-1 in the GMC. This year's Senior Night was held in the Main Gym on February 11th, where the girls beat J.P. Stevens 90-46. Congratulations to our seniors Antonia Polvere, Kayla Perez, and Hailey Thompson!

Many fans and players agree that one of the most exciting games of the season was their GMC Tournament Championship, held at Monroe High School against the South Brunswick Vikings. The stands were packed with fans and the girls took home the win, 64-58, making them GMCT Champions for the third year in a row. Freshman Leah Crosby had an excellent game that night, being

named player of the game and putting up 21 points and 14 rebounds.

Outstanding players of the season also include sophomore Amarilis Shubick and junior Jessica Cooper, who both made the GMC 2nd-Team and All-Conference, and senior Kayla Perez who made the GMC 1st-Team and All-Conference. Perez was the top scorer with 389 points and 74 steals while Cooper locked down under the basket with the most rebounds of 237.

It was clear from their success on the court that the girls had tremendous chemistry and respect for one another both on and off the court. Many of the girls cited their friendships to be a major contributing factor to their success. Thompson had the following to say about the camaraderie of the girls on the team: "I couldn't be prouder of our team. The camaraderie and work ethic we all had was phenomenal. I'll definitely miss both of those aspects when I

graduate."

"...I couldn't be prouder of our team. The camaraderie and work ethic we all had was phenomenal. I'll definitely miss both of those aspects when I graduate."

-Hailey Thimpson

The girls closed their season in a tough loss in the NJSIAA Quarterfinals against Camden Catholic, but are overall satisfied with their season. Since they are a relatively young team, it can only be assumed that they will continue to improve and dominate on the court next season.



JUNIOR JESSICA COOPER GOES FOR A LAYUP
(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

Leaving it on the mat

BY: SAMANTHA CHRISTINE

The wrestling teams had a phenomenal season! Led by Coach Tonzola, the boys team managed wins against schools such as Metuchen, Irvington, Rahway, South Plainfield, and Pingry, culminating in a 17-8 record. The team also leads the GMC Blue Division 7-0 and made school history by placing 3rd, which is the highest they have ever ranked in the GMC Tournament. Some standouts include Senior Owen Disbrow, who finished his high school wrestling career with a remarkable record of

34 wins and 5 losses, a championship at the aforementioned GMC tournament and a 7th place ranking at the NJISAA Wrestling Tournament. Fellow senior Kenny Cohan and junior Landon Kearns were also named champions at the GMCs. "It's amazing," Disbrow stated. "We've put in so much work throughout the season and to make a new school record is incredible." The girls wrestling team didn't slack off either: they placed nicely in the NJISAA Tournament. Standouts include Senior Captain Isabella Garcia and Junior Apryl Coffman. Great job guys!

Diving into success

BY: SYDNEY ZESZOTARSKI

The women's swim team ended their season with new records, all-conference, and all-division champions. This year, the Trojan swim team had team veterans, along with junior varsity swimmers who are new to the sport and ready to train. The size of the team nearly doubled compared to their 2020-21 season.

One highlight of the season was their win against East Brunswick, with a score of 88-82. The lady Trojans racked up first-place finishes in many relays and individual events, including Sierra Smith in the 200 free and 100 fly, Natalie Neno in the 200 IM and 100 breast, Kaitlin Hall in the 500 free, and Sydney Zeszotarski in the 100 back.

As a team, the lady Trojans finished second in the greater Middlesex conference championship. Senior captains Claire English, Grace Neno, and Sydney Zeszotarski are incredibly proud of the team. The girls competed in the New Jersey state tournament and were defeated by Our Lady of Mercy.

At the state tournament, sophomore Natalie Neno broke the 100 breaststroke school record, with

a time of 1:05.91. After outstanding results throughout the season, swimmers Kaitlin Hall, Grace Neno, Natalie Neno, and Sierra Smith have been named all-division and all-conference champions. In addition, Coach Amanda Miller was named greater Middlesex county's coach of the year. Congratulations to all the swimmers and best of luck next winter season!



SENIOR GRACE NENO CHARGES DOWN THE LANE WITH THE BREASTSTROKE.



SOPHOMORE CAROLINE CITRO ATTEMPTS TO HOLD HER OPPONENT IN A PIN MANEUVER.

STRIKES AND SPARES

BY: MARISSA NIEVES

The Girls bowling team had an amazing season. Led by coaches Richard Maddock and Chris Wilton as well as captain Alexandra Sardis they broke record after record. For the first time in STA history, the team won the North 2 Group 1 State Sectional Championship, bringing home gold. The team consists of senior Madison Luongo, juniors Alex Sardis and Alyssa Ingram, as well as sophomores Victoria Aldridge and Gio Luminello, and Freshmen Julianne Perez and Gabby Ettore.

Both Sardis and Aldridge performed exceptionally well, qualifying for state individual finals. Aldridge also placed second in GMCs with a high score of 230. Finishing off her bowling career with a bang Luongo was instrumental in helping her team make it to GMC and state finals. Gio Luminello attributes the team's groundbreaking season to their hard work and dedication, and the impact of their coaches. According to them, the team became more of a family which contributed to the strong sense of community and their overall confidence. Each of them is proud to be a part of a team that made history.



JUNIOR ALEXANDRA SARDIS SENDS THE BALL GLIDING DOWN THE LANE, HOPING FOR A STRIKE TO CLOSE OUT THE SET.

Growing potential

BY: ISABELLA DANNER

The Trojans successfully finished up their winter season this year in February, with all runners ready and amped up for the spring season. The small but determined team put the work in on the track and in the weight room this season as they packed on the miles.

Coach Tim and Coach Hush helped the distance runners get back into the groove after a successful and long Cross Country season this past fall. Since November, runners have been hitting the streets after school, through snow, ice, and rain, to stay conditioned. Not much racing took place this past season, especially due to complications with the Toms River Bubble that was damaged after a snow storm and needed time for repair. GMCs were held off a few weeks while the facility was repaired but teams were back and ready to compete in no time.

STA put up only two runners this season for the GMCs: seniors Nick Leung, who ran the 800m, and Lia Acosta, who ran the 1600m. Freshman Gabby Politi threw shotput and placed 8th in the finals, extremely impressive for her first season and showing much potential as she trains

for the spring.

The girls were led by captains Acosta and junior Emily Wall and this year's other seniors are: the Pepe twins Liz and Whitney, and Valery Romero. Each of these seniors have participated in Cross Country and both Winter and Spring Track for the past four years of high school, each putting up great times and excellent seasons.

The captains of the boys team are juniors Alex Cocuzza and Neal Choksi. They have big expectations for the spring season, hoping to put up some strong times; Choksi has plans to smash his mile time and finally break the 5-minute barrier while Cocuzza hopes to bring his 2-mile down well below 11 minutes. This year's senior boys include: Nick Leung and Shane Samuelson, who also have big plans for the spring. The boys hope to pull together a 4xMile relay team in time for GMC Relays this May.

After a solid season of training and preparation, the boys and girls are looking forward to the spring season and the chance to improve their individual and team scores. Both the boys and the girls teams will be looking to their upper classmen leadership in the spring.

Dominant team secures GMC championship

BY: WILLIAM OWENS

The boys varsity basketball team had a season that will most certainly go down in school history. Led by coach Bob Turco, the boys Adam Silas, Kamal Lee, Jaquan Harris, Samar Abdullah, Jaden Kelly, Sherief Guinyard, Jayden Young, Jayden Defense, Davon Grant, Chris Santner, Philip Unangst, Jalen Pichardo, Tyler Jadi, and Terrell Pitts went on a 27-2 record. The seniors on their team, Adam Silas, Jaquan Harris, Samar Abdullah. And Tyler Kadi are especially proud of their success considering that it was their last season of playing basketball to represent the Trojans. Looking back over the season, Adam Silas (G), led the team in total points scored with 532, and in steals with 65. Meanwhile Jalen Pichardo (G/F) led the team in total rebounds with 193. In terms of high scoring games, the

biggest blowout win of the season was against John F. Kennedy Memorial High School with a breathtaking final score of 94-16.

The well established and dominant team paved the way to a Greater Middlesex County (GMC) championship for the second time in three years with Silas as their Finals MVP, being on top of the White Division, and their conference overall. Unfortunately, when the boys went to compete for a state championship, they lost in the semifinals against Rutgers Prep in a 68-59 game. Nonetheless, the team still put up an amazing basketball exhibition in the 2021-2022 season.

Similar to the varsity team, the JV boys also won a GMC championship along with the undefeated freshman boys. All three teams had exceptional seasons that are not to be forgotten. As the off-season goes on, the boys continue to master their

craft and improve their skills. Although they've had an eye-opening performance this season, the players would like to go even further than

they already have next season. The SATOMA staff hopes that next season is even more successful than this one.



SENIOR ADAM SILAS DODGES BETWEEN OPPONENTS AS HE DRIVES DOWN THE COURT.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

THE SATOMA STAFF WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE WHO SUBMITTED CREATIVE WRITING/ARTWORK. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT A PIECE FOR THE FINAL ISSUE PLEASE EMAIL MS. BYRNE (ABYRNE@STAHS.NET)

Finally, our two worlds collide

BY: HANNAH GRACE

The Sun had never met the Moon, at least not formally. They had seen each other in passing glances when the one was rising and the other was setting. Sometimes they would even try to yell a few words to each other, but that wasn't enough for either of them. They both knew they wouldn't be complete until they finally met.

The Earth, friends with both the Sun and the Moon, tried to help the two of them. It started with just the Earth telling them little details about the other when asked. The Earth told them about their personalities, how the two contrasted each other in every way. He would tell stories about the other and the Sun and the Moon were fascinated by this person they could never meet.

Eventually, on a day where the Sun was more upset than usual about being forbidden by the universe from talking to his potential friend, the Earth sprouted an idea. The Earth became the middle man in the Sun and Moon's conversation. He would pass along what the Sun wanted to say to the Moon and then would bring back the Moon's responses after the Sun had risen again.

It upset the Earth that his two friends could not speak to each other in person, but maybe this could be enough for them.

It wasn't. The Sun would grow restless from waiting for the Moon's responses and hearing about the Sun's brazen and witty banter would become the best part of the Moon's day. The two would beg the Universe to just let them have one day to meet. To see each other in person.

All they needed was 5 minutes to get to know each other.

The Universe watched the Sun and Moon wish to them about their dreams of meeting. The Universe felt sorrow for keeping them apart, so they decided they wouldn't anymore.

While it couldn't be permanent, the Moon still needed to pull the ocean's tide and the Sun needed to keep the Earth's creations warm, the Universe decided that they could give them a little time.

And instead of 5 minutes, the Universe granted the Sun and Moon 7.

It surprised the Sun when the Moon began to rise earlier than normal, it seemed that the Earth was just as confused. The Moon was never early, filling the Sun's spot on time every single day. What was different today?

The Sun panicked. Was he supposed to descend early? To retire his position before he was meant to? The Moon was messing up the perfectly kept schedule they abided by each and every day.

The Sun remained still though, he remained in his position in the sky as it was still day. It was not time to leave yet, surely the Moon knew this.

The Moon grew closer with every passing second, the Universe watched with glee. Finally, their two greatest beings could meet.

The Earth just watched in shock, as did the creations that inhabited him. They had never experienced this phenomenon before, the sky had never gone dark in the middle of the day.

While the Earth went black, the Moon was greeted with light. Finally, after a dramatically prolonged time, the Moon met the Sun.

The Sun was at a loss for words, so

the Moon decided to fill the void. "Um, hello, I'm the Moon" The Moon played with fingers and his eyes shot around, looking at everything but the Sun's face.

This snapped the Sun out of his trance and he fell into a laughing fit, "I know who you are! We've talked through the Earth, I can't believe we're actually meeting!"

The worry the Moon felt about meeting the Sun dissipated, the Earth had been right about the Sun's ability to make a person feel welcomed. "The Universe spoke to me, they said I should rise early today."

"You spoke to the Universe?!" The Sun gasped, "Well how lucky are you to meet the all-knowing being."

The Moon chuckled, "They didn't say so much, or well anything, it was more like a feeling that I should rise early today," The Sun's smile morphed into a grin, a playful glint shined in his eyes.

"So you didn't speak to the Universe! How could you lie about something like that?!" The Moon let out an exasperated noise and spluttered.

"I, I didn't lie! You've never talked to the Universe so how would you know what it's like to speak to them?"

The Sun laughed at this, "Well it seems like you've never talked to the Universe either!"

The Moon let out a sigh while the Sun shined with a satisfactory grin. The Sun's smile soon fell though, and the Moon missed it immediately. Just being around the Sun made the Moon feel warm, something he could never seem to achieve by himself.

"This isn't going to last, is it?" The Sun asked and the Moon frowned, they

both knew the answer to this question.

"No, we both have our jobs, we have to keep the Earth in check," The Moon spoke sorrowfully, he wanted to mourn the loss of what was right in front of him.

"Sometimes, I wish that we could just be, y'know?" The Moon did know so he nodded, there were times when the Earth would rest and he would be by himself. On those nights, he wished to the Universe something different, that he could be just a creation on his friend's planet and not a celestial being. The Sun did the same.

"You know you're exactly how the Earth described," The Moon watched fondly as the lively smile appeared back on the Sun's face.

The two boys went back and forth until their metaphorical timer ran up. They talked about nothing important, they didn't need to. All the two wanted was to be next to each other, to feel complete even if it were for only a short period of time.

As the Moon was starting to be pulled down and the Sun was starting to shine again on the Earth's creations, the two let themselves feel sorrow. They shouldn't have to be without each other, it was cruel.

"When will I see you again?" The Sun attempted to blink back tears but he knew they would inevitably fall.

"The Universe is kind, we will meet when it is meant to be," The Moon shouted as he sunk into rest until it was time for him to light up the night.

Indeed, the Sun knew that the Universe was kind but why did it feel as though he would be without the Moon forever?



ABOVE: ARTWORK COURTESY OF JUNIOR YASH VAKIL
RIGHT: ARTWORK COURTESY OF JUNIOR MACKENZIE CRUZ



RIGHT: ARTWORK COURTESY OF JUNIOR MACKENZIE CRUZ