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Feast your eyes...On PIE!

BY: AVERY BOOMER

As the first half of the year came to a close, the perfect time came for a new holiday tradition: the 2023 Pie Making Contest! Each pie was judged on presentation, originality, texture, and flavor, and any student was welcome to share their own pie and recipe! They all competed for the grand prize of a fifty dollar Amazon gift card. A total of nine pies were created.

The first pie, made by Barbara Quiroz '26, was a "Kentucky Derby Pie," a recipe that favored chocolate and walnuts, brought together in a pie crust. The judges praised this pie for its flavor and originality, along with its clever name.

Next, a chocolate cream pie made by Justin Moscaritolo '24, was a combination of ground chocolate powder and cream filling. The judges mentioned they enjoyed the chocolate flavor combined with the texture of the pie itself.

The next pie was a traditional apple, made by Ca-

dence Wertz '26. A true classic which included a beautiful lattice crust, which received high praise from the judges based on its looks.

After that, Sean Lacko '24 contributed with his Blueberry Peach Pie. This pie used the complimenting flavors of the berry and fruit which the judges found to be a clever combination. One judge commented, "As someone who doesn't really like peaches or blueberries, that was pretty good."

The next was another pie with a fruit combination, made by Isioma Odum '27: a pear and apple pie, which was praised for its flavor and originality, utilizing an array of fruits to deliver a solid final taste.

A key lime pie, made by Oliva Alicante '24 was another cream filled pie, but with the twist of the sweetening flavor of limes, and a sprinkled crust around the edges, making this pie a solid contender by maintaining flavor and presentation and was praised as such by the judges.



MR. GIOFFRE AND MR. TURCO HAVE A FIERCE DEBATE OVER WHICH PIE IS THE MOST DELICIOUS. (ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

After this, a classic blueberry pie made by Esai Pagan '27 was presented to the judges. This pie pays homage to a classic pie, the judges enjoyed this pie thoroughly.

The second to last pie was an apple crumble, jointly created by seniors Sandra Abrantes, Victoria Aldridge, Caithlyn Caballero, and Marissa Nieves. This pie took the base idea of an apple pie, but used cinnamon crumb on the top to create a flavor packed treat that the judges praised for its styling and presentation. This same group sub-

mitted the final pie: a unique s'mores creation. The pie took the already perfect concept of a melting chocolatey s'more to produce a pie similar in consistency and flavor. It gained much applause for its originality and presentation, making use of a marshmallow covered edge filled with chocolate and graham crackers in the center to top the pie.

This unique and clever idea ultimately won the girls the grand prize. The students judges, look forward to this contest continuing next year.

Christmas tree lobby takeover



reflect the different styles of Christmas, from the timeless classics to modern and whimsical decorations.

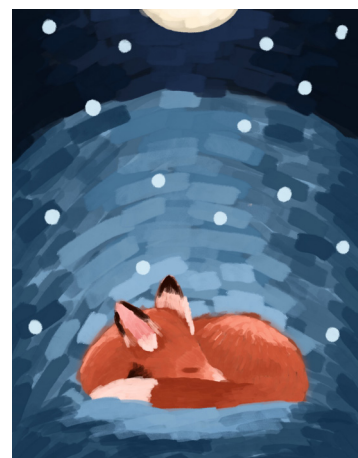
The freshmen chose two timeless themes, the "Candy" tree and the "Whoville" tree. The first tree was decorated with all sorts of candy, mostly candy canes, and the second tree was decorated with a lot of quintessential themes from the Grinch, tied together with two arms sticking out the sides and a Grinch face to top it off.

The sophomores had a unique spin on their first tree, the "Facul-tree," decorating it with pictures of the faculty and an Aquinas varsity letter. Their other tree was in a similar vein to the freshmen's tree: a "Grinch" tree, with green baubles and Grinch themed lanyards all around.

The juniors decorated their trees in two similar Christ-

mas themes, a classical and blue Christmas theme. The first tree was adorned with light gold baubles with red interspersed, gold and silver tinsel, topped with an elegant white snowflake. The blue tree was embellished with blue and silver tinsel, blue and white baubles, and yet another elegant silver snowflake topper.

Finally, the seniors came up with clever wordplay to describe their trees, naming them "'24 Karat Magic" and the "Money" tree, respectively. Their first tree was representative of their graduation to come in 2024, and was decked out in thick and bright gold tinsel, and faux gold leaves with a glittery star topper. Their second tree, the Money Tree, was decorated with gold beads, gold and green baubles, and of course, fake "money."



THERE WAS A CONTEST HELD FOR THE COVER ART OF THE SECOND ISSUE AND THERE WERE TWO SELECTIONS THAT WERE NECK IN NECK. CONGRATULATIONS TO SENIOR MADDIE ROGALA FOR THIS WONDERFUL SUBMISSION!

STUDENTS DECORATE CHRISTMAS TREES TO ADORN THE LOBBY

BY: SAHAANA SINGHAL

Each class was tasked with decorating two trees to show their spirit and to later donate to families in need.

Displayed in the lobby, these eight trees are all unique in their own way and

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Phone: (732)-549-1108

Email: abyrne@stahs.net

Web: www.stahs.net/satoma.jsp



From humbug to humble

When asked to give an example of a character who went from bad to good, there is one universal answer. One character who is the epitome of redemption, and it's Ebenezer Scrooge from "A Christmas Carol."

Scrooge was a money-obsessed man who had no care for his employees or anyone around him. He wouldn't let his poor clerk Bob Cratchit go home early on Christmas Eve, much less pay him a decent wage. Each ghost that visits Scrooge does work to convince him to see the error of his ways as the book progresses. The Ghost of Christmas Past reminds him of the goodness he used to have and that his fiancée left him due to his prioritization of money.

The Ghost of Christmas Present appears next, showing him how the Christmas spirit prevails even through poverty. The final ghost, the Ghost of Christmas Future, shows Scrooge the death of his clerk's sickly son and his own grave. The death of Tiny Tim changes his view of the poor as the expendable population and makes him aware of his social responsibility to help them. The sight of Scrooge's grave forces him to grapple with the fact that if he does not change his ways, no one will miss him when he dies. After seeing all of these visions, Scrooge begs the ghost for mercy, swearing that he will make a change. Which he does!

While the Grinch is a notable Christmas character, his development is not that impressive. In the original book, the Grinch hates Christmas solely because his heart is three sizes too small. The live-action film adaptation with Jim Carrey provides

more context, showing that The Whos rejected him due to his looks. This makes his hatred of The Whos and their traditions more justifiable, but he was simply a hater in the original book.

The Grinch stopped being that way because he saw the spirit of Christmas prevail despite his stealing all of its physical components, while Scrooge's reason for change is far more complex and meaningful.

Scrooge starts as a much worse person than the Grinch and thus has a more drastic change.

And this only after he faces his reality and the tragic consequences of his actions, while the Grinch just stopped being a hater because The Whos started singing. Plus, he can't top "bah humbug" as a catchphrase.

Overall, Scrooge is a more complex character who had better character development, making him the superior Christmas villain redeemed.

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE OUR HEARTS

While Charles Dickens is an incredibly famous and accomplished author, compared to the likes of the equally accomplished Dr. Seuss, Dickens lacks the charm and rhyme Seuss provides in every novel. Their individual stories "A Christmas Carol" and "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" are comparable in regards to their protagonists, Ebenezer Scrooge and The Grinch. However, there is a vast difference between the two; one depicts a miserly rich old man, upset with the life he created, and the other, a tale depicting social constructs and overcoming the setbacks life throws at them.

In "A Christmas Carol," Dickens depicts the character of Scrooge, a man whose life was brought to seclusion after he experienced hardships that led him to become a hermit. However, this man was self-made, everyone around him offering nothing but support and kind words towards him. It is clear from what we see of

Scrooge that his life of isolation was self-inflicted, while on the other hand, The Grinch was segregated and cast away from society since birth, per the live-action film starring Jim Carrey. While this rendition of the story is an extension of the original book, the moral is still the same; the Grinch's heart grew three sizes, even after the extreme prejudice he faced his entire life, while Scrooge "embraced the Christmas spirit" only after witnessing his own death and tragic life. To say that Scrooge is a weaker character than the Grinch would be unfair, however, the circumstances of the argument yield such a strong statement. When the Grinch stole Christmas from the Whos in Whoville, he realized the error of his ways, despite having a reason to despise Christmas and everyone around him. Scrooge was unwilling to amend his views for the entirety of the story, up until the third and final ghost visited him.

Only on Christmas morning did Scrooge decide he was going to change his outlook on his life and the spirit of the holiday, his turnaround rather anticlimactic and predictable. While on the other hand, the Grinch unexpectedly changes himself for the likes of Cindy Lou Who, as well as for the purpose of self-growth, which was not warranted per the incredibly traumatic life he led.

To wrap the gift of the only accurate argument, The Grinch went further in self-discovery and character development than Scrooge. "How the Grinch stole Christmas" is a heartwarming tale of newfound love and joy, while "A Christmas Carol" is a drawn out story of regrets with a dissatisfying end.



L.I.T. RETREAT

BY: SAVANAH MCGUIRE

On Friday, December 1st, students began arriving at 6pm for the 2023 Advent Retreat: “LIT: Living In Togetherness”.

Once everyone arrived, a packet serving as a mini journal was given out. Once student’s belongings were in their assigned rooms, they gathered in The Commons for ice-breaker’s and to wait for the first of the speakers, who included: Campus ministers Fr. Mike Taberner, Mike Lewon, and Vincent Gioffre Sr. All of them agreed that the retreat’s purpose was, “to bring everyone closer together, and show God is loving to all and will always be with you.”

The first speech was given by Lewon, focusing on the light in the world and within each person. He also mentioned the importance of why everyone should let God’s light in. Once he concluded his speech, groups were formed to answer questions based on what was said.

After this was done, students headed downstairs for dinner, which consisted of pizza from Benny’s, juice, water and chips. Once dinner was finished, it was time for the next lecture. Gioffre’s speech focused on light in the darkness. He talked about what the darkness can

be defined as. For example, addiction, yearning for something more, etc. He also discussed how students may not realize that they’re living in the darkness, that it has become such a common place for some that it’s not clear it exists. Along with this, he also discussed different forms of light, with only one always being lit and guiding everyone, God. This lecture concluded with students praying the “Our Father” and questioning how they too can go into the light. Students were put in groups to reflect on this speech as well.

When speeches were done, students gathered into the Chapel for Adoration. Lewon brought forth The Tabernacle while soothing hymns played in the background. Meanwhile, in the commons, Fr. Mike opened up confessions. This time of the retreat was described as very emotional by multiple students.

Once the confessions were completed, students gathered in the cafeteria to play games, watch movies, and spend time with friends. The gym was also opened for those who wished to play basketball or other sports during free time. Free time lasted for an hour and half, before students began making their way up for bed.

As a wake up alarm, the teach-



CAMPUS MINISTER MIKE LEWON LEADS THE STUDENTS ATTENDING THE RETREAT IN A DISCUSSION ABOUT ‘LIGHT IN THE WORLD’ IN THE COMMONS.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

ers blasted, “Thunderstruck” by AC/DC. Once everyone was awake and dressed, students were called to the Chapel for morning Mass. As the conclusion of the retreat approached, students made little notes to their friends which were able to be put in ornaments to be hung on their trees at home. Then, students created over 500 wooden ornaments to be hung on the lockers of everyone at school.

When some of the retreat team members were asked why they decided to do this, they responded

with, “We wanted a fun activity that would improve others’ days. Just this little act of kindness will make others smile and laugh. Plus, it adds a little touch of Christmas Spirit to the halls.”

The retreat as a whole was a huge success. Students left with smiles on their faces, new memories, and stories to tell to those who didn’t attend. This overnight retreat is highly recommended for those who want to make new connections and be “L.I.T.”

GRAMMAR SCHOOL SHOWS



CULLINAN EXPLAINS HOW THE CONCERT CHOIR SONGS ARE CHOSEN.

BY: ELIZABETH BERA

Four times a year, students from local Catholic grammar schools come to visit and take a look at some of the high quality productions of the performing arts department. These performances include the Christmas and Spring Concerts; the Fall Play/Musical, and the Spring Musical. Grammar school students are given

the chance to see what the school is all about, from the music to the drama. They get a closer look at what it takes to pull off these astounding performances, but also a look at all of the students and teachers that come together to create them. Sometimes they even get the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about Drama and Music.

When it comes to the concerts, students who play instruments or sing in the choir at their middle schools are welcomed to watch music director Joseph Cullinan and the Concert Choir, Select Choir, Concert Band, and Jazz Band. Questions the students normally ask have to do with how the music is selected, how long it takes to rehearse, and what the music department has to offer. Current student members of the groups stay and answer these questions, which really makes the experience special

for the younger students.

For the drama aspect of the grammar school shows, students fill the Little Theatre with excitement as they settle to enjoy a morning of entertainment. Questions for this portion include things like what the next show is, how the costumes are created, and how much work goes into putting together the set. Not only are the students impressed with what they have seen, but the teachers and administrators who accompany the children express their amazement at what the students are able to accomplish in such a short time.

On November 16, these students arrived to watch the school’s production of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Students loved watching the endless musical numbers, powerful scenes, and riveting special effects. One effect that left them all in shock was the barber

chair, which sent several actors sliding through a trap door at the moment of their untimely deaths in the show.

During the talkback after the show, many questions were asked regarding the special effects and scenic design. With the vision of director and Fine Arts department chair Lea Gossett, and the work of volunteer master carpenter Steve Restaino, students were amazed by the attention to detail on the set. They were even given a chance to get up and walk around the set to see how everything worked.

The purpose of these grammar school shows are to introduce students to what the school has to offer, and what sets the school apart from other high schools. Our Drama and Music Departments are unique and special, and always leave students coming back to see more.

AQUINAS STAR MASS

BY: ELIZABETH BERA

One of the most anticipated traditions of the Christmas season is the annual Aquinas Star Mass, which took place on Friday, December 15, in the main gym.

Students look forward to the Mass every year because it allows them to focus their attention of the two Aquinas Stars and their families. This year's Stars are Jack Heilich and Dominic Horbacz. While Dominic himself was, unfortunately, in the hospital and unable to attend, his aunt and grandmother attended to show their support and appreciation. All of the students gave both families a warm welcome when they were introduced by Director of Catholic Identity Fr. Mike Tabernero. The entire school took a brief moment to pray for Dominic before the Mass began.

As per tradition, the Mass was presided over by Bishop James F. Checchio, along with interim president Fr. Keith Cervine, Fr. David Keyes, and Fr. Tabernero. During his Homily, Bishop Checchio spoke about the importance of the Advent season and how sometimes it is difficult to wait, but he emphasized that Jesus, and the message he brings to all, is always worth waiting for.

The liturgical band and choir set the tone for the Mass with songs such as, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," "O Sacrum Convivium," and "O Holy Night." The last was sung as the Communion medita-



BISHOP CHECCHIO PRESIDES AT THE AQUINAS STAR MASS ALONG WITH FR. DAVID KEYES, FR. MIKE TABERNERO, AND INTERIM PRESIDENT FR. KEITH CERVINE.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

tion by senior Celeste Popola, who delivered a powerful yet poignant performance of the piece. The recessional song was, "Joy to the World," which lifted the spirits of all in attendance.

Once the Mass was concluded Bishop Checchio gifted all of the students with a day off (to be determined by the administration) for the 2023-2024 school year. The gift giving continued as the band burst into Bruce Springstein's rendition of "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" and the jolly man himself, Santa Claus, arrived, along with several members of the student council, to present gifts to the Aquinas Stars and their families. Some of the gifts included: tickets to a Devil's game for the Heilich family, LuLuLemon backpacks for the sisters, and an electric, ride-

in, blue lamborghini for Dominic. The look on Jack's face was enough to express how excited he was to receive such thoughtful gifts.

The Stars then went to room 119 where the Aquinas Star board, the student council, Fr. Cervine, Fr. Keyes, Fr. Tabernero, Principal Harry Ziegler, Director of Alumni Development Deb Chippendale, and Bishop Checchio were waiting to share a delicious brunch with the families. They were able to enjoy an assortment of bagels, donuts, and fruit salad. Fr. Tabernero said of the day, "I was very happy for the day; although we were all saddened that Dominic couldn't be there in person, it was wonderful that we were able to come together as a community to celebrate and pray for these two wonderful young men."

"I was very happy for the day; although we were all saddened that Dominic couldn't be there in person, it was wonderful that we were able to come together as a community to celebrate and pray for these two wonderful young men."

- Fr. Tabernero



SANTA CLAUS SHOWS UP TO LIGHT THE SCHOOL'S TREE AT THE END OF THE AQUINAS STAR MASS.

As the Aquinas Stars excited the gym, Santa returned once more as Director of Communications Mike Kowalczyk announced the annual Christmas Tree lighting ceremony was about to begin. The entire study body counted down from 10 as the lights in the gym slowly flicked out. Finally, as the last light in the gym went out to the count of "1" Santa plugged in the tree and its glow lit the gym as students and faculty alike burst into applause.

To continue in the Christmas spirit, the band, singers, and students joined together to sing several Christmas carols, such as "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and "Frosty the Snowman" before finally heading back to classes for the rest of the day.

Passionate about the prequel



LUCY GRAY BAIRD ENTERS THE CAPITOL FOR THE FIRST TIME ACCOMPANIED BY A YOUNG CORIOLANUS SNOW.

BY: NICOLE CASAS

Longtime fans of “The Hunger Games” have long awaited the prequel film to the immensely popular series, which starred Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, and Liam Hemsworth, “The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes” is based on the 2020 novel of the same name, and is written by “Hunger Games” author Suzanne Collins.

Released on November 17, 2023, by Lionsgate Films, the movie has exceeded expectations by already grossing over 137.2 million.

Taking place 64 years before the events of “The Hunger Games,” “Songbirds and Snakes” is set during the 10th annual Hunger Games. The Hunger Games is a form of punishment cast on the 12 districts of Panem by the Capitol, the utopian city where the nation’s most wealthy and powerful citizens reside, in

which one boy and one girl from each district are randomly selected to fight to death until there is only one survivor.

Lucy Gray Baird is introduced as the film’s protagonist, a character only briefly mentioned in the other books. Lucy Gray (Rachel Zegler) is the female tribute from District 12 and is first introduced at the reaping, wearing a ruffled rainbow dress and slipping a snake down a girl’s dress. Zegler is best known for her role as Maria in the 2021 musical film *West Side Story*, adapted by Steven Spielberg. This is another role in which her vocal abilities are displayed, as Lucy Gray is in a performing group called the Covey, in which she sings alongside other family members. She is quick to make a lasting impression on viewers and instantly becomes a fan-favorite character through her liveliness.

Lucy Gray is mentored by a character not unfamiliar to audiences and an unexpected protagonist - a young Coriolanus Snow (Tom Blythe). Director Francis Lawrence crafts a nuanced narrative, providing in-

sight into Snow’s complex character. Snow, aggravated that his hometown is now destroyed due to the outer districts, is now planning a sort of revenge. The movie paints a picture of Snow’s early life, allowing the audience to see him in a whole new light. It tells the tale of ambition, power, and survival, subtly showing Snow’s transformation from a young man whose goal is to protect his family’s honor to an antagonist and a strategist who will do anything to win.

Lawrence said in an interview with *SlashFilm*, “Because audiences are so aware of how stories work, we keep on waiting for Snow to have that redemption moment. But it never comes. The movie is a slow reveal that we’ve spent time with a monster, and felt affection for a monster.”

The movie expertly weaves political intrigue, societal commentary, and the brutal spectacle of the Hunger Games. The movie does an incredible job of bringing back a nostalgic memory to the people who watched the first films in theaters while also introducing younger people to the world.

Mixed reviews for ‘Wonka’ prequel

BY: ANNA MARTINS

On December 15th, “Wonka” made its grand appearance in theaters. The musical fantasy film was directed by Paddington King and co-written with Simon Farnaby. The cast includes Timothee Chalamet, Keegan-Michael Key, Rowan Atkinson, Sally Hawkins, Olivia Colman, Jim Carter, Matt Lucas, Natasha Rothwell, Tom Davis, Mathew Baynton, Simon Farnaby, and many many more.

The plot was quite the mystery for awhile, but what was known was the musical would give watchers a look into the chocolatier’s origins before he became the famous chocolatier. It follows Willy Wonka (Chalamet) as he fights to open his very first chocolate shop. The musical reveals how Wonka met the Oompa Loompas and how his candy passion came about. It takes watchers through Wonka’s life before he grows into the legendary chocolatier that has been depicted by Ronald Dahl.

It all started with a 1964 children’s novel, *Charlie and the Chocolate*

Factory, a children’s novel written by Dahl. In the book, readers followed Charlie Bucket as he and his grandfather, Grandpa Joe, visited Willy Wonka’s Chocolate Factory. The story quickly became a classic and paved the way for various films, including those starring Gene Wilder, Johnny Depp, and even a “Tom and Jerry” interpretation.

Willy Wonka was first brought to life by Gene Wilder in the 1971 adaptation and later in 2005 by Johnny Depp. Wonka is an odd yet creative genius. He is a candy maker, constantly thinking outside the box in order to build his brand. However, something left unexplained to watchers was his past. That is how the 2023 film came to light.

The young Wonka arrives in pre-war Europe with a hat full of dreams and a briefcase full of his creations. He plans on making his own shop however, as he is chasing his dream he is tricked into servitude in a laundry, meets an orphan named Noodle, has a run-in with the chocolate cartel, has numerous encounters with Lofy the Oompa Loompa, and so on.

In an interview with *Vogue*, Chalamet shared his reasoning for wanting to take on this role for the younger audience. “To work on something that will have an uncynical young audience, that was just a big joy. That’s why I was drawn to it. In a time and climate of intense political rhetoric, when there’s so much bad news all the time, this is hopefully

going to be a piece of chocolate.”

Chalamet’s take on the chocolatier was quite positive and quirky, but it lacks the mystery and cruelty of Gene Wilder’s Willy Wonka. The shift makes Wonka more relatable but distances him from the spikiness of Dahl’s writing. Nonetheless, the movie was gold as it warms the hearts of children and adults alike.



A YOUNG WILLY WONKA TIPS HIS HAT WITH A MISCHIEVOUS GRIN AS THE CROWD BEHIND HIM LOOKS UP IN WONDER AT SOME OF HIS UNIQUE CREATIONS.

'Invincible' returns for 2nd season

BY: ANGEL FIGUEROA

After a years' hiatus, the critically acclaimed TV show "Invincible" is back with season two. The four episode release already has audiences ready and waiting for more.

Season two kicks off with a seam-

less blend of character development and intense action sequences, capturing the essence of what made the first season an instant hit. The show follows main character Mark Grayson, played by Steven Yuen, as he navigates both life as a college student and a full-time superhero. After

the events of the first season, Mark questions where he fits into the human world. The audience is able to follow Mark and his allies as they try to rebuild the world that was shattered by the actions of Mark's father Omni-Man in season one.

Season two also expands the cast, with 15 new voice actors to fill this super-powered world. The animation quality remains top-notch, with vibrant visuals that elevate the superhero TV show to new heights. From epic battles to intimate character moments, the animation team excels in conveying the emotions and intensity of each scene. The meticulous attention to detail extends to the costume designs and world-building, immersing viewers in a visually stunning and captivating universe.

As this new season goes on, the show delves into darker and more mature themes, challenging both its characters and audience. The moral dilemmas faced by Mark become

more intricate, forcing the audience and the main character to question what it means to be a hero, and how far is too far when it comes to the greater good.

Season two maintains a delicate balance between heart-wrenching moments and humor, ensuring that the audience experiences a roller-coaster of emotions. The character dynamics continue to evolve, creating a compelling narrative that keeps viewers eagerly anticipating each new episode.

Without delving into spoilers, it's safe to say that "Invincible" season two not only lives up to the expectations set by its predecessor but also manages to surpass them. The show continues to redefine the superhero genre, offering a gripping narrative, complex characters, and unparalleled animation. As fans eagerly await the next chapter, "Invincible" remains an unstoppable force in the world of superhero storytelling.



MARK GRAYSON FACES OFF AGAINST AN UNEXPECTED ENEMY.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

Beyonce behind the scenes blockbuster

BY: TARA GUPTA

Renaissance: A Film by Beyonce, directed and produced by singer-songwriter and businesswoman Beyonce, was released in all theaters internationally on December 1. The movie/documentary is based on all the behind-the-scenes and the different issues that occurred while Beyonce was on her international tour, "The Renaissance Tour."

To start the movie, viewers watch as Beyonce sings a few starter songs, before showing all the behind-the-scenes that showed the reality of what her tour really looked like. Fans got to see what it was like to set up certain elements of the show, including the stage arrangement, and how the lighting and sound set for the whole show, along with a clip from her Phoenix show where the sound cut out, and how the backstage crew were able to fix the issue in under five minutes. Also, when dealing with the sound cut-out, instead of having to have a ten minute pause, and then resume everything like nothing happened, Beyonce and her crew came up with the plan of being able to do a quick-change to "Alien Superstar," which fans went crazy over.

Even though she showed as much preparation as possible, Beyonce still shocked her fans with surprise guests appearances, including Megan Thee Stallion, who helped her sing her song "Savage," Kendrick Lamar, who assisted her by singing "America Has a Problem," and Diana Ross, who surprised Beyonce herself by singing "Happy Birthday" to the star, as she was turning forty-two years old.

Beyonce sang many songs from her 2022 Renaissance album, including "Break My Soul," "Cuff It," and "I'm That Girl," while also squeezing in some of her older music, including "Run the World (Girls)," "Diva," and "Formation." With all these hits and more, the crowds at the show and in the theater were definitely hyped.

However, the musical and backstage elements were not the only part of her movie. Beyonce also included her family in the movie, who consist of her husband and rapper, Jay-Z, and their three children; her oldest daughter Blue Ivy (11 years old), her twins Rumi and Sir (6 years old), and her mother Tina Knowles. With her daughter Blue, Beyonce tells the process of how Blue showed interest in performing with Beyonce, and with the help of her choreographer

and co-dance captain Amari Marshall, how Blue's dream was able to turn into a reality. As that was said, the audience was able to see how Blue was dedicated to her words, and how finally, she was able to perform alongside her mother during two numbers, "My Power" and "Black Parade."

However, Beyonce also paid tribute to her Uncle Johnny, who her mother revealed stepped in to help raise Beyonce, and her younger sister, Solange, and also would design outfits for Destiny's Child, the girl group Beyonce was in alongside Kelly Rowland, Michelle Williams, LeToya Luckett, and LaTavia Roberson. The last thing she made was something to tribute to her past girl group, Destiny's Child, in which she created her own girl group called Pure Honey, consisting of Kay Mancee, Natalie Imani, Taylor Green, and Tiffany Monique Ryan. These girls served the purpose of being her background singers and vocalists.

Overall, the purpose of this movie was that this was showing her tour, which was her "rebirth" tour, and that the film was dedicated to her fans, also known as the "Beyhive." It was also about how she was able to be in demand on everything for the show, despite not feeling heard since

she is a black woman. Yet she was still able to do it; according to her choreography/director Fatima Robinson, "Beyonce is the director of this show," as she refers to her being able to pull it off.

So regardless of any obstacles trying to stop her, Beyonce only shows that she still knows what she's doing, and fans have only loved her even more for that.



BEYONCE PERFORMS IN A GLITTERY BODY SUITE DURING ONE OF THE PROMINENT SCENES OF HER BEHIND THE SCENES DOCUMENTARY.

STUDENTS WERE SURVEYED TO DISCOVER



TOP 3 HOLIDAY DRINKS:

1. HOT CHOCOLATE
2. APPLE CIDER
3. EGGNOG



TOP 3 HOLIDAY MEALS:

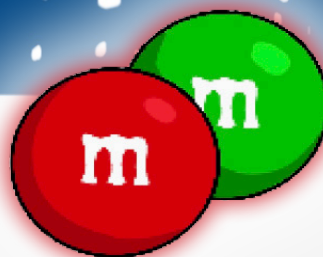
1. MAC AND CHEESE
2. MASHED POTATOES
3. HAM



OUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY FOODS AND DRINKS



TOP 3 HOLIDAY COOKIES:
1. CHOCOLATE CHIP
2. SUGAR
3. SNICKERDOODLE



TOP 3 HOLIDAY CANDIES:
1. CHRISTMAS M&MS
2. CANDY CANES
3. PEPPERMINT BARK

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2024

By: SUDITI GOCHER

With the recent passing of Election Day on November 7th, the topic of presidential elections has resurfaced on many young minds. Whether being allowed to vote or not, the option to keep an eye on politics is open to all. The most ominous election of the western hemisphere is only a year away. Incumbent president Biden has the most support from the Democratic Party, but there are two other Democratic candidates who have slight chances of being chosen as the Democratic party's candidate. They are Speaker and author Marianne Williamson and Congressman

Dean Phillips.

However, the star of the show for primaries this year is the Republican primary candidates. The Republican party primaries start by weeding out candidates by determining how many delegates they receive in smaller states, such as New Hampshire and Iowa.

A state's number of delegates is calculated by the state's electoral college and that party's strength in the state. Super Tuesday, held in March, is when sixteen states hold their primaries and one third of the total delegates are pledged. For a candidate to receive delegates, they must get at least 15% of the votes.

From there, the delegates are proportionally split between candidates that have over 15% of the votes. During the primaries, many candidates step down due to poor performance and lack of delegates. The nominee with the most delegates is officially chosen at the Republican party national convention, and the nominee declares the vice president that they will run with.

The focus of the upcoming presidential election is almost completely on the Republican primaries, with former President Trump having the most support thus far. The main candidates include Trump, Nikki Haley, Vivek Ramaswamy, Ron DeSantis, Ryan Binkley, Asa Hutchinson, Chris Christie, and Doug Burgum. Ramaswamy received criticism for his lack of political experience. Former governor of New Jersey Christie said to Ramaswamy in a debate "he sounds like ChatGPT," a dig at Ramaswamy's age and experience. However, both Ramaswamy and Christie have less than 10% of the popularity in the polls. A whopping 60% popularity in the polls went to Trump, while second in the lead DeSantis has merely 13%.

Earlier in the year, DeSantis and Haley often switched roles as Trump's main competitor. Currently, it seems as if Trump is far ahead, and

will stay far ahead. However, it is difficult to tell what the outcome of the primaries will be this early on in the year. Taking an educated guess and looking at his previous track record, it seems obvious that Trump will most likely prevail as the Republican party candidate.

Around this time next year, many will be tracking the electoral college map. A presidential candidate must receive 270 electoral votes to win the presidency, with 538 votes in all. When voters are voting for their choice of president, they are actually voting for their state's electors. These electors will then truly vote for the future president on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in November. Since a state's number of electoral votes is dependent on the state's population, popular vote can differ. In 2016, Trump only had 46% of the popular vote but won the election with 303 electoral votes. About a month later, the new president and vice president get inaugurated.

No matter the result of the upcoming presidential election, the thrill of watching each step rivals the greatest sporting competitions. The importance of pertaining politics as a point of unity instead of division is more important than ever during election season, no matter the type of election.



REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AT THE PRIMARY DEBATE INTERACT DURING A COMMERCIAL BREAK.

41 RESCUED FROM COLLAPSED TUNNEL

By: MADISON PACCIANO

41 workers have been saved, after being trapped for 17 days inside a tunnel in Uttarakhand state. The workers got trapped inside the tunnel on November 12 and were rescued on the evening of November 28. The tunnel is part of Modi's Char Dham Highway route, located under the Himalayas. The tunnel collapsed due to a landslide on November 12, and the workers only exit was blocked with more than 200 feet of broken rock, concrete and twisted metal.

While trapped inside the workers received food, water and oxygen through a 173 foot pipe that was inserted through the debris and rubble. Authorities said the workers remained in good health whilst trapped. Doctors came on site to lend their help by communicating with the trapped workers, ensuring that they were remaining in good health and condition. They also provided

tips on how to remain positive and calm throughout this travesty. The workers' families also gathered at the tunnel exit to pray for their loved ones trapped inside to have a safe and speedy exit.

After more than 2 weeks of the workers being trapped, the rescue operations team finally reached a long awaited breakthrough. The recovery team had to drill an escape route through the mountain, where they faced many setbacks and technical problems. The engineers on the team first executed their plan by using heavy machinery to drill through the debris. Unfortunately, just meters before reaching their goal, the drill broke down. This unforeseen bump in the road forced workers to take a riskier approach and use their hands to dig through the remaining meters of debris. Rescuers also created a backup plan in case the initial one did not work, so, as the men were digging, another team was simultaneously drilling downward into the

mountain terrain as another way to reach the trapped workers. However, in the end the initial plan proved successful. With the drilling completed, rescuers then pushed a large pipe through a part of the exit shaft, where the men were then brought to safety.

The excursion of the last of the 41 men brought a sense of relief upon the nation. The area was filled with praise and jubilation from their

colleagues and loved ones who had been waiting and praying for their arrival out of the tunnel.

Many of the family members thanked and praised the rescue operations team members for bringing their loved ones out safely.

The 41 rescued workers will each be given checks of 100,000 rupees (\$1,200) and paid time off for up to a month to spend at home with their families.



CHIEF MINISTER (RIGHT) GREETING A RESCUED WORKER (LEFT) AS OTHERS CELEBRATE AROUND THEM.

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

BY: OLIVIA LOCANDRO

Although the conflict in the Middle East rages on, new developments leave a small ray of hope.

There was a cease-fire announced on November 24th, starting at 7 a.m. local time, (12 a.m. EST), in which hostages taken by Hamas and prisoners taken by Israel would be released. According to Hamas officials, the exact number of hostages taken is unknown, with it being estimated to be around 240, but as of right now, for every hostage released by Hamas, Israel is releasing around three prisoners, with both groups releasing mostly women and children, which was expressed in the terms of the cease-fire. On behalf of Hamas, 110 hostages were released, and an estimated 127 still remain missing and presumed to be in captivity. Israel publicly released two lists consisting of 350 Palestinian prisoners who were

eligible to be released during the cease-fire, and 240 of them were released, leaving 110 in captivity. An assumed ten American citizens were taken into captivity, with two having been released, but the details on the remaining are still unknown.

The cease-fire was initially planned to last for four days, but was extended to seven days. Talks were in effect to extend the ceasefire for an eighth day, but almost immediately after the week-long cease-fire, fighting resumed. Both sides blame the other for the ending of the cease-fire, with either violations of the captive release terms, or events of fighting occurring. With the fighting resuming, more of Gaza is being evacuated, with one of the largest cities in Gaza, Khan Younis, being on the top of that list.

According to the United Nations, around three quarters of the 2.2 million people residing in Gaza have been displaced in

some way due to the conflict, with that number undoubtedly rising. Although the horrors of war have unfortunately resumed,

the occurrence of the cease-fire and the release of numerous hostages invoke a feeling of hope for all those affected by the war.



PROTESTERS ACT IN SUPPORT OF A CEASE-FIRE AGAINST THE PALESTINAINS IN GAZA

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

CONFLICT IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

BY: AMEILA YUEN

The South China Sea, a critical maritime region, has become a focal point of international tension, particularly involving China and several other countries with competing territorial claims. These waters are a major shipping route as well as a repository of rich natural resources, which adds to their strategic and economic significance.

China's extensive territorial claims, articulated through the "nine-dash line," have been a central cause of

dispute. This line, first appearing on Chinese maps in 1947, encompasses almost the entirety of the South China Sea, extending hundreds of miles south and east from China's Hainan province. Despite historical assertions, critics argue that China's claims lack specificity and clarity. The contested areas include the Paracel and Spratly Islands, both believed to harbor significant natural resources. Competing claims also include Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan also assert territorial rights in the South China Sea. Vietnam claims historical control over the Paracels and Spratlys, citing active governance since the 17th century. The Philippines' claims are based on geographical proximity to the Spratly Islands, and both the Philippines and China claim the Scarborough Shoal. Malaysia and Brunei have staked claims within their respective economic exclu-

sion zones as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The dispute has been marked by several confrontations and stand-offs. In response to China's assertive territorial claims and land reclamation efforts, the United States has conducted Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) to challenge China and support Southeast Asian partners. Japan has also provided military support to countries like the Philippines and Vietnam. The U.S. emphasizes the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation and securing Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), crucial for global trade and naval movement. The Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, in a 2016 ruling on a claim brought by the Philippines against China under UNCLOS, largely favored the Philippines. However, China, a signatory to UNCLOS, refuses

to recognize the court's authority. This disregard for international legal mechanisms has raised concerns about the effectiveness of diplomatic resolution and the potential for military escalation in the region. Recent developments have seen fluctuating tensions. While China has cooled its relations with the Philippines and Vietnam, it continues to bolster its military presence in the region. The United States has also increased its military activities in the region, reinforcing its commitment to freedom of navigation.

In summary, the South China Sea dispute is a complex and multifaceted geopolitical issue involving historical claims, national pride, strategic interests, and the contest for natural resources. The ongoing tensions highlight the challenges of international diplomacy and the risks of military confrontation in a globally significant maritime region.



SEVERAL COUNTRIES HAVE CLAIMS OVER THE AREA.

'ATTEND THE TALE OF SWEENEY TODD'

BY: SIDNEY REIMAN

On November 17th-19th, audiences attended the tale of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, a musical detailing the story of a murderous barber with his heart set on revenge.

The show opens with the entire ensemble surrounding the coffin of Sweeney Todd (Michael Corradino '24). He bursts from the coffin, and the show begins. Anthony Hope (Sean Lacko '24) returns with Todd to London, after sailing for months. Todd returns to Fleet Street and is greeted by Mrs. Lovett (Viviana Rodriguez '24), a crazy widow who runs the pie shop below his previous barber shop. Lovett tells how Judge Turpin (Matthew Gluchowski '24) had a man named Benjamin Barker wrongfully banished and assaulted Barker's wife. The wife poisoned herself after, and Turpin raised her daughter as his. Todd reveals himself to be Barker, escaped from prison. Becoming a barber again, he vows

to avenge his wife and kill Turpin.

Anthony spots a beautiful young woman, but is warned by an insane beggar woman (Amanda Ponik '24) to stay away from the girl, who is Judge Turpin's ward. Falling instantly in love, he speaks to Johanna (Elizabeth Bera '25) anyway, before the couple is interrupted by Turpin. Beadle Bamford (Matt Andrei Guipio '24) warns Anthony that harm will come if he should continue to see Johanna. Turpin declares his intent to marry her himself, and Anthony makes plans to elope with Johanna. Todd agrees to hide her in his shop, eager to see his daughter.

Adolfo Pirelli (Gabriella Morelli '24) and his young assistant, Toby, (Francesca Smullen-Dempsey '26) visit Todd, and Pirelli attempts to blackmail him with knowledge of his past. Instead of submitting, he kills Pirelli. Todd and Lovett decide to bake Pirelli into a meat pie to hide the evidence Toby works at the shop and garners suspicion for Todd. In

response, Lovett locks Toby in the bakehouse to distract him. Todd installs a special chair in his barber shop that allows corpses to be sent to the bakehouse of the pie shop. When Beadle Bamford visits, Todd kills him, sending him down the chute. Terrified, Toby flees and hides.

Anthony visits Johanna in the asylum run by Jonas Fogg (Jasmine Torres '24). After a treacherous escape, Johanna and Anthony make it out. The beggar woman enters, looking for the Beadle. In a fury, Todd kills her, knowing the Judge is on his way.

Turpin enters, but is quickly silenced with a razor. Todd then rushes to the bakehouse. He recognizes the beggar woman as his wife, Lucy. Overcome with grief and rage, Todd throws Lovett into the fires. Toby returns, using the razor to kill Todd. He begins to make the pies, repeating nursery rhymes to himself. The ensemble returns for a final haunting number.

Both cast and crew went to see



SWEENEY RELISHES REVENGE AS LOVETT FAWNS OVER HIM.

the current Broadway show on October 25 to prepare for their exciting debut. Smullen-Dempsey said "It was definitely exciting to see the professional performance... (It) was excellent, but it was underwhelming compared to our production."

Many audience members came back to view the show several times over the course of its run. The combination of stunning vocals, talented actors, a stellar score, amazing costumes, an impressive set, and a passionate team of adults, *Sweeney Todd* left audiences saying "God, that's good!"

Christmas concert dazzles crowd

BY: LIAM LUGAY

On December 8th and 9th, director Joseph Cullinan and the music department held the 26th Annual Christmas Concert in the school's main gym.

Both the choir and band groups have been preparing for this event

since the beginning of the school year. The concert was a magnificent display of the talent present in the music department and the festivities of the Christmas season. Many iconic Christmas songs were put on for the crowds each night.

The night began with the Concert

Choir group taking the stage, opening the show with a rendition of *Joy to the World* followed by *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* and a haunting rendition of *Midwinter's Chill*. The Select Choir impressed everyone with their performances of mostly a capella numbers. A real show-stopping number for them was the Christmas novelty *Fruitcake*, which included various ingredients being added to a mixing bowl, such as flour, cinnamon, lemon peels, and an egg that was eventually cracked on senior Celeste Popola's head. Cullinan ended the choir portion of the concert with a rendition of *Do You Hear What I Hear?* inviting Alumni to come up and sing with the choir. This number is traditionally the song that ends the choir portion of the Christmas concerts.

The Jazz Band opened the second act of the concert. They performed songs such as *Baby, It's Cold Outside* and *You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch* with vocal accompaniment from senior Sean Lacko. After the Jazz Band finished their set, the Concert Band

joined in on the festivities, playing memorable Christmas tunes like *Fanfare to the Faithful* and *A Bellis-tic Christmas*. The penultimate song of the Christmas Concert each year is a rendition of *O Holy Night*. This year, it was sung by senior Popola. The song that closed the concert was *Sleigh Ride*. Similar to *Do You Hear What I Hear?* and *O Holy Night*, this song is a staple for all of the Christmas concerts. Much like the ending of the choir portion, Cullinan invited Alumni to be a part of the fun.

The Christmas Concert was a major success. Both the students involved and the audience members who attended had a great deal of fun. Cullinan expressed his pride in all of the hard work the students had put into the concert. The three months of preparation had paid off in the end. Though this exciting chapter has come to an end, the Saint Thomas Aquinas Music Department will continue to perform. The band groups and choir groups intend to return for their Spring Concert Without A Theme in the Spring of 2024.



THE ENTIRE CONCERT BAND PERFORMS "SLEIGH RIDE" AS THE FINAL PIECE OF THE CHRISTMAS CONCERT

(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

SPORTS SPOTLIGHT

Name:
Zacai Manigo



Nickname:
C3

Sport:
Basketball

Favorite Holiday Movie:
Home Alone

Favorite Cookie:
Sugar cookies

Name:
Devon Grant



Nickname:
DGrant

Sport:
Basketball

Favorite Holiday Movie:
The Night Before

Favorite Cookie:
Chocolate chip

Name:
Rinelson Dilone



Nickname:
Rin

Sport:
Basketball

Favorite Holiday Movie:
Home Alone

Favorite Cookie:
Oreo

Name:
Steven Cohan



Nickname:
Steve

Sport:
Wrestling

Favorite Holiday Movie:
Home Alone

Favorite Cookie:
Chocolate Chip

Name:
Mariana De La Hoz



Nickname:
Mar, Mari

Sport:
Wrestling

Favorite Holiday Movie:
How The Grinch Stole Christmas

Favorite Cookie:
Macaron

Name:
Nazareth Pina



Nickname:
Naz

Sport:
Wrestling

Favorite Holiday Movie:
Home Alone

Favorite Cookie:
Snickers doodle

Name:
Jayden Escobar



Nickname:
Esco

Sport:
Basketball

Favorite Holiday Movie:
Home Alone

Favorite Cookie:
Oreo

Name:
Matthew Gluchowski



Nickname:
Matt Glu

Sport:
Bowling

Favorite Holiday Movie:
Elf

Favorite Cookie:
Chocolate chip

Name:
Paris Papadatos



Nickname:
Pap

Sport:
Basketball

Favorite Holiday Movie:
Home Alone

Favorite Cookie:
Oreo

THE COURT HEATS UP



GAVIN SANSONE GOES FOR A 3 AT THE BUZZER.

BY: WILLIAM OWENS

As basketball season begins with a fresh start, the team is extremely optimistic about its chances of securing big victories in this upcoming season and defining the simple fact that for these young men, the sky's the limit.

Every bit of success from last season has seamlessly transitioned into this season and can be attributed to hard work and dedication on all fronts. Even prior to the season, when not on the court, these players were giving it their all by pumping iron and doing cardio in the weight room.

It is worth noting that although these players put in unmatched ef-

fort, they would not see the full potential of what they could do without coaches and coordinators who work to their full extent to provide the best opportunities and best chances for them to succeed. Head coach and Vice Principal, Robert Turco, epitomizes this perfectly. Although these players are known for their overflowing talent, all credit goes to him for organizing this talent and utilizing it where it is necessary on the team.

The efforts of the individuals behind the scenes are also important to note as a major role in this team's past successes and its auspicious future. From the rehabilitation team to even custodians who keep the court in tip-top shape, when all wheels are rolling, this team is unstoppable.

The first official game was on December 14th against J.P. Stevens. The hard work and talent of these players were on full display throughout the entirety of this game. And in the end the boys pulled out the win. They will continue their hard work throughout the entire season, no matter how daunting the upcoming schedule may seem.

Can these young men secure another consecutive GMC title this season? Stay tuned to find out and you will see what these young men are truly capable of!

Let's 'dive' in

BY: NICOLE CASAS

The swim team is heading towards a great season with a short schedule because they swim in the Red Division. The season opens on December 20th, against South Brunswick, and the GMC Championship will be held on January 27, 2024.

Although a smaller team compared to the other teams in the division they will be going up against, they have been working harder than ever to ensure great success. The team is coached by Amanda Cleveland-Miller and led by captains Kaitlin Hall ('25) and Hailey Zeszotarski ('25). They all work towards making the team feel more like a family than a team with their consistent holiday celebrations, which help to create a bond beyond the pool.

The team practices three times a week from 5:50 a.m. to 7 a.m. at Wardlaw-Hartridge School in Edison, as well as doing weight room twice a week. Coach Cleveland-Miller said: "I am exceptionally proud of what our captains have already put in to build a team that is willing to put a lot of hard work in and out of the pool. 5:50 a.m. practices are not easy, but I have had the most consistent attendance in the history of my coaching. The team is



BRIELLE CUBALA BACK-STROKES TO THE FINISH.

ready for the season."

The leaders of the team shared their goals for the season along with coach Cleveland-Miller saying: "The team is hoping to hold its own in the exceptionally strong Red Division of the GMC. All are returning GMC All-Conference swimmers. I expect to return to the Meet of Champions with Individual event qualifier Samantha Villacis ('26) and relay qualifiers, Villacis, Hall, and Gianna Socio ('27)." The captains shared that their main goal this season is to "place in the top 3 in GMCs and make it to states".

With their hard work and dedication, the team is ready for their 2023-2024 meet season to begin.

This season's 'breakdown'



BENIAMINO DiCocco READY TO TAKE HIS OPPONENT.
(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF STA PUBLICATIONS)

BY: CATHERINE FROST

This season the wrestling team will be one to watch! With many returners as well as a handful of new talent, the team is gearing up to have an amazing season.

With practices just starting, the team is in full gear preparing for this

upcoming season. The boy's wrestling coaches are Nicholas Tonzola ('88), Vincent Gioffre, and Gabriel Roman. The girls wrestling team is also coached by Roman.

The team's first match was on December 15th against Arthur L. Johnson High School. It was certainly a memorable match. This year's

boys team has three returning state qualifiers: Jahir Aguilar ('25), Steven Cohan ('24), and Beniamino DiCocco ('24). When asked about the upcoming season, DiCocco said: "I'm looking forward to the season. We have a bunch of great, talented

"I'm looking forward to the season. We have a bunch of great, talented guys on the team that I believe can get us our first GMC title"

- Beniamino DiCocco

guys on the team that I believe can get us our first GMC title".

The girls team includes returning state qualifiers Saniyah Queen ('25) and MaKayla Decker ('25).

The team is still looking to go far this season, despite losing quality seniors, as well as looking forward to earning its sixth consecutive division championship.

When asked about the girls' season, Alessandra Socio ('25) said: "I am excited for this upcoming season because there are a lot of new girls, who have all adapted and fit in very well on the team." Coach Roman added: "I am excited to see how far our team will be able to go this season. We are looking to win a division title this year and for 5 of our athletes to qualify for the state tournament."

The very talented team has many newcomers. This program is a place where people who are experienced or novices are welcome. This gives everyone the opportunity to try the sport and see if it's for them. All are looking forward to what this upcoming season will bring. For now they are still working very hard at practice to prepare for their future matches!

Hoping for victory



VICTORIA ALDRIDGE AIMS DOWN THE ALLEY FOR A STRIKE.

BY: MATTHEW GLUCHOWSKI

The girls and boys bowling teams are striking the winter sports season with a great start!

Led by coaches Richard Maddock and Chris Wilton ('16), these teams have worked hard and are ready for an incredible season. The girls team is led by Victoria Aldridge ('24), who has been on the team since her freshman year and is ready to lead the girls team all the way her final

year.

Aldridge won a 3-1 victory over J.P. Stevens, and shared her hopes for the season: "I look forward to enhancing and building upon the skills of the new bowlers that joined, as well as winning another state sectional championship as the captain of the team."

"I look forward to enhancing and building upon the skills of the new bowlers that joined, as well as winning another state sectional championship as the captain of the team."

- Victoria Aldridge

The boys team is led by Matthew Gluchowski ('24), who's been a member of the team since his sophomore year and Anthony Campora ('24), who's been a member of the team since his freshman year.

All of these members are ready to have a lot of fun bowling their senior year, and have big plans to lead their respective teams to victory this season.

'Shooting' for the stars



GIANNA CHUFFO SHOOTS OVER THE HEAD OF A DEFENDER.

BY ISABELLA DEPASQUALE

The girls basketball team is looking forward to having a promising season. They have been working hard and diligently every day. Coach Tim Corrigan said: "I am very excited for the season to start. We've got a lot of really good players coming back and a lot of really good players coming in either as transfers or freshmen. We have a lot of talent and hard workers. We expect to have a very successful and fun season."

Leading the team are captains Gianna Chuffo ('25) and Adrianna Summersett ('25), who have been

working together to help improve and understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. The team has been putting in a lot of time and effort into their practices. Chuffo said: "I think that our practices started off a little shaky, but with the more practices we have we should be fine throughout the season." The team had their first scrimmage on December 4th.

This season the girls are looking forward to playing a lot of different teams. They had their first game on December 14th against North Brunswick High School and their first home game against Old Bridge will be on December 21st. They faced off against Cherokee on December 17th and will be playing against Ocean Township on February 3rd. Summersett shared that most of the teams they will be playing this year are teams that are definitely beatable. "I am excited for our out of league games, because those are really tough teams, like Cherokee and Ocean Township. I think that these will be good games to test our abilities to play."

The team continues to set goals to achieve, as Chuffo says: "I think we are going to win our 5th GMC and grow as a group. Hopefully we will win our Non-public A bracket for States next year."

'Bracing' themselves for success



BRIANNA TRENERY CHEERS FOR HER CLASSMATES AT A RIVAL BASKETBALL GAME.

BY: ASHLEY WALL

As the sideline season comes to a close, the cheerleading team is back and better than ever this winter, and is ready for a busy, but successful season.

Things look a bit different for the team this year. For the first time in a long time, the team consists of two separate competitive teams, one

being the Game Day Competition Team. This team has a heavy focus on clean motions, classic stunts, good technique, and high energy. They've already had a successful start to their season, as they placed 4th at GMC's on October 22nd, and 2nd place at their most recent competition. The girls take the mat next on January 7, 2024 at the Barons XTreme Competition at Woodbridge, where the other competition team, The All Music Performance Team, is excited to debut its routine for the first time. The routine has a focus on fun, exciting new stunts, choreography, jumps, and tumbling.

Both competitive teams are excited for their upcoming seasons, and have been working hard both on and off the mat to perfect their skills and techniques. At the end of their seasons, both teams will compete at states on February 24th and 25th of 2024 at Brookdale Community College, attempting to take the title

home as state champions. This year, the team is led by head coach, Charlotte Caporrino ('13), assistant coach Julia Fedor ('17), and captains, Ava Edge ('24), Elizabeth Negron ('25) and Tabitha Apollon ('25). The leaders of the team have been supporting, encouraging and challenging the team to be the best they can be. Apollon shared her thoughts about the upcoming competition season: "I have a very good feeling about this season because, despite several injuries, we still manage to re-work the routine. I am very excited to compete so we can show not only STA, but everyone else competing that we are an amazing team. I can't wait to show everyone that we are a great group of girls, and I'm super blessed to be able to work with all my girls."

Along with putting a lot of effort into competition routines, they brought school spirit and pride at the Winter Pep Rally on December 14th, where the girls cheered on their fel-

low teams and athletes, as they also began their season.

Coach Caporrino ('13) shared her excitement for this season: "We are excited to compete in two divisions this competition season. Our two routines are fun and challenging. We have a great lineup of local competitions and hope to see some Trojan fans in the stands!"

"We are excited to compete in two divisions this competition season... We have a great lineup of local competitions and hope to see some Trojan fans in the stands!"

- Coach Caporrino

The team has a lot to prove this season, and is determined to be on top, and build off its success.

HOME-MADE HOLIDAY RECIPES

Mrs. Karabin's Sweet Potato Pie:

- PREHEAT OVEN 450 DEGREES

INGREDIENTS:

- GRAHAM CRACKER CRUST PIE SHELL
- 2 CUPS OF MASHED SWEET POTATO (5-6 POTATOES)
- 1 STICK OF BUTTER
- 1 TBSP OF FLOUR
- 1 TSP OF VANILLA
- 1/2 TSP OF CINNAMON
- 1/2 TSP OF NUTMEG
- 1/2 OF AN 8OZ CREAM CHEESE

DIRECTIONS:

- SUGAR (MEASURE WITH YOUR HEART)
- MIX WELL AND POUR IN PIE SHELL
- LOWER OVEN TEMPERATURE TO 350 DEGREES AND BAKE FOR 35-40 MINUTES

ANNA MARTINS' '24 FILHÓS:

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 (15) OZ CAN OF PUMPKIN PUREE (NOT WITH SPICES)
- 5 CUPS OF FLOUR
- 1 OZ OF WHISKEY
- 4 TSPS OF ACTIVE DRY YEAST
- 3/4 CUP OF ORANGE JUICE
- 1/2 CUP OF SUGAR
- 3 TSPS OF GRATED ORANGE ZEST
- 3 EGGS
- 1 TSP OF SALT
- OIL FOR FRYING (VEGETABLE OR CANOLA)

DIRECTIONS:

- DISSOLVE THE YEAST IN THE ORANGE JUICE & MIX WITH THE PUMPKIN IN A BOWL
- ADD THE EGGS, WHISKEY, SUGAR, SALT & ORANGE ZEST & MIX WELL WITH THE MIXER

- ADD THE FLOUR & KNEAD UNTIL A SOFT DOUGH FORMS
- COVER WITH A PLASTIC WRAP & LET IT SIT IN A WARM PLACE FOR 2 HOURS
- SPOON OUT A LARGE TBSP OF DOUGH INTO THE OIL AND FRY UNTIL BROWN, TURNING OVER AS THEY FRY
- PLACE ONTO PAPER TOWELS TO ABSORB EXCESS OIL & COAT WITH SUGAR AND CINNAMON



FILHOS FINISHED PRODUCT.
(ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES)

Ms. Byrne's Hot Buttered Cider:

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 GALLON APPLE CIDER
- 1 STICK OF UNSALTED BUTTER
- 1 TSP OF GROUND CLOVES
- 1 TSP OF SALT
- 2 TBSP OF CINNAMON SUGAR
- 2 TBSP OF BROWN SUGAR
- 3 CINNAMON STICKS

DIRECTIONS:

- HEAT APPLE CIDER IN A LARGE POT OVER MEDIUM HEAT WITH CINNAMON STICKS
- ONCE IT IS STEAMING, ADD BUTTER IN A LITTLE AT A TIME AND STIR UNTIL MELTED IN
- ADD IN CLOVES, SALT, CINNAMON SUGAR, AND BROWN SUGAR UNTIL THOROUGHLY BLENDED

FACULTY AND STUDENT WINTER TRADITIONS



"WE GO TO MY AUNT GINA'S HOUSE IN STATEN ISLAND AND SEE ALL OF MY GREAT AUNTS AND COUSINS. WE HAVE BEEN DOING THIS EVERY YEAR SINCE MY MOM AND HER SISTEER WERE KIDS IN OUR FAMILY. SINCE WE ARE ITALIAN, WE HAVE THE FEAST OF THE 7 FISHES AND WE GET 7 TYPES OF FISHES SUCH AS CLAMS OREGANATA, CLAMS CASINO, CRAB CAKES, BACCALA FISH, AND MORE. WE HAVE A GIANT KIDS TABLE AND A GIANT ADULT TABLE AND MY FAMILY LIKES TO JOKE AROUND ABOUT WHAT FISH THEY EAT IN ORDER TO MAKE A PERFECT 7, ALL IN ONE MEAL"

- MADISON JACKSON '26



WE PLAY BOARD GAMES AND WATCH CHRISTMAS MOVIES AFTER WE DECORATE THE TREE TOGETHER AND HANG THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN THE HOUSE. WE ORDER CHINESE (IT'S USUALLY THE SATURDAY AFTER THANKSGIVING) AND THEN HAVE A BIG BREAKFAST ON SUNDAY BECAUSE EVERYONE SLEPT HOME SATURDAY"

- Ms. ALLAN



"WE SET UP THE HOUSE AS IF SANTA AND HIS REINDEER HAD COME. AS ONE OF THE OLDER KIDS NOW, CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER, AND REUNITING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY ARE MY FAVORITE TRADITIONS."

- SOPHIA LLAGUNO '24"