



Wave of recent car accidents raises concerns over student safety

by **Nathalie Bencie**
News Editor

With the recent wave of accidents occurring on the intersections of U.S. 41 and Bay Street, as well as U.S. 41 and Blackburn Point Road, Pine View faculty have raised concerns regarding student safety when arriving to and departing from campus. In an attempt to prevent school-related accidents, teachers are teaming up with administration to discuss their worries and further inform students of basic driving safety.

In past years, the number of accidents on the turn onto Bay Street and Blackburn Point Road has never been severe. But, according to School Resource Officer Deputy Chris Hudson, the frequency of accidents has been on the rise.

“There have always been accidents on those intersections,” Hudson said. “Making the left turns [onto Bay Street and Blackburn Point Road] has always been dangerous.”

Many are attributing the sudden increase in the number of accidents to two factors that have developed within the past few years: cell phone usage and flashing yellow traffic lights.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly a quarter of all automobile accidents in 2012 were the result of driver distraction caused by cell phone usage. In 2015, it was estimated that approximately 660,000 drivers use their cell phones while driving during daylight hours. Principal Dr. Stephen Covert said, “When I’m directing traffic after school, I frequently see students on their phones ... you just can’t multitask. You’re not giving all of your attention to the road.”

Teachers have also stressed their apprehension regarding the flashing yellow light implemented on the intersection of U.S. 41 and Bay Street at the start of 2017. As compared to the previous red arrow, the flashing yellow arrow allows drivers to turn into oncoming traffic based on their own judgement.

“Besides the accidents that have occurred at this intersection, I’ve been witness to

some near-misses that have left me cringing at what could have happened,” ESE Resources teacher David Delaney said.

Although the flashing light has caused concerns, not all faculty agree that the recent accident rates are directly related to it. When pressed on whether most students were able to judge if it was safe to turn on a flashing light, Hudson responded, “You’re supposed to yield at left turns like that... If students aren’t able to judge whether or not to turn, they shouldn’t have a driver’s license.”

Many accidents caused by students do not only have to do with distractions or the flashing yellow light. Often times, according to Hudson, students involved in morning accidents are often rushing to get to school on time.

In response to concerns, Covert and Assistant Principal Tricia Allen are currently contacting the Sarasota County Transportation Staff as well as the Sarasota County School District Planning Department to see what adjustments can be made to improve the safety of students. “[They have] been very responsive in receiving concerns, coordinating efforts, making improvements and taking appropriate steps to help keep the public safe on our roads, sidewalks and campuses,” Covert said.

Based on statistics provided by administration, over 350 students requested shell-lot parking spots throughout the 2016-2017 school year. This means that nearly 43 percent of high school students at Pine View own a drivers license and drive through Bay Road and Blackburn Point Road on a daily basis.

This year, according to Hudson, more than three student-related accidents have already occurred on Bay Street and Blackburn Point Road. Fortunately, all involved students have avoided severe injuries.

Until further action prevents the frequency of accidents during the before- and after-school rush hours, Covert suggests that teachers and parents continue to remind students of the importance of driving safely and defensively at all times, and to not rush if running late to school.

“Students need to take a moment and realize that it’s your life we’re talking about,” Hudson said.

GRAPHIC BY SUZANNE BROWN

Going beyond the myth with Social Black Belt

by **Ben Nicholson**
Web Section Editor

Over the course of his career, Dr. Christopher Cortman has dealt with a massive array of clients, from elderly patients confronting a lifetime of depression to young adults dealing with the stress of overwork. In total, he has invested over 70,000 hours into psychotherapy. “I have had the kind of career in which it’s remarkable in retrospect,” Cortman said. “My whole adult life has been one long psychotherapy session.”

His work in psychology was the inspiration for his book, “Your Mind: An Owner’s Manual.” This book is the basis of the social and emotional learning program that will soon arrive at Pine View School next semester: The Social Black Belt Program.

After hours and hours of treating emotionally troubled patients, Cortman realized many of the people who came to see him had a similar problem — they had never been educated in the basic principles of modern psychology. “I thought about how in high school no one taught me how to read a map or balance a checkbook, or some other things that

would’ve been useful,” he said.

In response to this realization, Cortman wrote his acclaimed book “Your Mind” and developed what he decided to call “The Social Black Belt Program.”

“I called it the Social Black Belt because there’s a concept in the book that says, ‘If you’re comfortable in your skin, you don’t care what other people think, say, and do,’” he said. The program, originally intended for adults, seeks to dispel common psychological myths like the belief that time alone can heal all wounds or emotions are uncontrollable visitors that leave you helpless. Eventually, Cortman decided to take his program into high schools.

The program was first brought to Venice High School in 2010. Cortman facilitated the program with the intention of decreasing student anxiety by finding its root causes and increasing amiable relations between students.

Because of its success, the program was brought to other elementary, middle and high schools throughout Sarasota County. This year will be the first one in which the costs of the program will be included in the school budget, with enough funding to reach about 13,000 students.

“If you’re comfortable in your own skin, you don’t care what other people think, say and do.”
Dr. Christopher Cortman, psychologist

please see page 2

“Students need to take a moment and realize it’s your life we’re talking about.”
Chris Hudson, School Resource Officer



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index

- 1 News
- 6 Sci & Tech
- 7 Entertainment
- Features Pullout
- 9 Sports
- 12 Humor
- 14 Opinion
- 16 Focus

Entertainment, p. 8



Circus siblings
Brother and sister are a circus duo

Sports, p. 9



Girls volleyball wins title
Pine View wins county championship

Opinion, p. 14



A questionable corporation
Company exploits less-fortunate countries

New program aims to dispel psychological misconceptions

continued from page 1

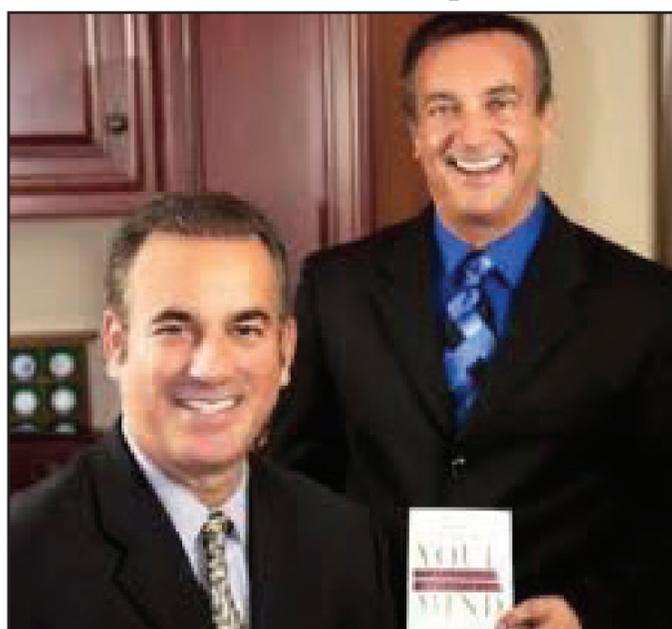
by Ben Nicholson
Web Section Editor

Pine View was one of the first schools to reach out to Cortman and request that Social Black Belt be brought to its ninth- and tenth-graders. At the beginning of the school year, Cortman debuted the program to 10 ninth-grade classes at Pine View and was stunned by his observations. "One of the things I learned in my two

“That’s why I did the program, so I could help [my students] find truths that help them deal with stress.”
Roma Jagdish, social studies teacher

days with freshmen is that they’re all so invested in their studies that they’re off-the-charts anxious,” he said.

When Social Black Belt arrives at Pine View, it will be taught not by Cortman, but by teachers trained in the ideals of the program. The selected teachers will meet with students every other week and cover different topics of



Dr. Christopher Cortman (right), author of “Your Mind: An Owner’s Manual,” poses with co-author Harold Shinitzky (left) for a photo. Cortman is the founder of the Social Black Belt Program.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHRISTOPHER CORTMAN

how to deal with social and emotional struggles. Cortman’s list of selected teachers includes English teachers Christopher Pauling and Megan O’Mahony, and history teachers Jim Froelich and Roma Jagdish. On why he selected those teachers, Cortman said, “They’re superstar teachers that connect with their students. I want teachers who are passionate about help-

ing their kids and connecting with their kids.”

Ninth-grade teacher Roma Jagdish said she has also observed exceptional levels of stress in the classes she teaches. “Sometimes I feel so helpless [with the stress my kids experience],” she said. “That’s why I did the program, so I could help them find truths and help them deal with stress.”

Twelfth-grader wins Miss Pine View 2017 title



Twelfth-grader Sophie Goodwin (center) gives her thank-you speech Nov. 3 after being crowned Miss Pine View 2017. Goodwin was a finalist in the pageant along with twelfth-graders Antonia Ginsberg-Klemmt, Madison Hannon and Christina Florendo.

PHOTO BY NATHALIE BENCIE

IN BRIEF

Gates installed on campus to enforce single-point entry

by Leo Gordon
Match Layout Artist

The Pine View perimeter has been recently upgraded with new gates, installed as a result of the Sarasota County School District’s single-point-of-entry program. All school campuses throughout Sarasota County are expected to have a single-point-of-entry design installed to ensure that everybody on campus is safe. No changes were implemented on the interior of the campus, with gating limited to perimeter areas and access points.

Contrary to popular belief, the gates were not meant to be completed by the beginning of this school year. An extensive amount of electrical work had to be done underground, with construction being completed at the end of October.

As a safety precaution, “Students and visitors will always be able to exit the campus via push-bars for emergencies, and the gates will be open during the opening times of school,” Principal Dr. Stephen Covert said.

The official opening and closing times for the gates is still being

discussed by administration. Even after the gates are closed, admittance to the parking lot by Building 16 will be accessible by coding in at a key pad at the end of the parent loop on the left side of the driveway. A second key pad is also located by the Student Union, which will be accessible in the future for entry. The code to access these pads will be given to the students and staff by administration once installation is complete.

The gates will be open and unlocked after school due to a large number of after school activities and Pine View’s recognition as a Sarasota County Parks and Recreation site, meaning the general public must have accessibility to campus at night and on weekends.

“I think the gate is a good idea,” ninth-grader Keleigh Koeniger said. “[Students] safety should be a priority.”

One of the major changes the new gating will bring is the visitors’ entrance. After school begins, students and visitors will be expected to enter campus through the new main entrance attached to the administration building.

Pine View dominates at KnightMUN

by Ryan Wasserman
Web Section Editor

The Pine View Model United Nations (MUN) team competed at KnightMUN, a yearly event hosted by the University of Central Florida, Oct. 20 to 22. The event is in its sixteenth year, and 76 Pine View team members, grades 9 through 12, attended.

Pine View dominated at the event, winning the Best Large Delegation award and having more than a quarter of attendees winning individual awards. Twelfth-grader Alex Anacki, president of MUN, was impressed by the success that occurred. “I think it went really well,” Anacki said. “This is the largest team we’ve ever brought, and the largest amount

of awards our team has ever brought home in our twenty-year history.”

The attendees who won the prestigious Best Delegate award and their respective events included twelfth-grader Allie Odishelidze (Council of the European Union), eleventh-graders Sachit Gali (International Atomic Energy Agency), Shelly Barber (United Nations Human Rights Council) and Park Dietz (ADHOC), tenth-grader Stephanie Wald (Doctors Without Borders), and tenth-grader Alex Douglas (Red Stars)

“I think that this year’s success shows that our team is continuing to grow and improve,” Anacki said. “I’m so excited to see how it bodes for our next five conferences.”

Speech and Debate takes part in annual Blue Key tournament

by Josh Gulyansky
Web Section Editor

Every year, Pine View Speech and Debate competes at the Blue Key Invitational held at the University of Florida. Eight students from Pine View’s team advanced to finals, semi-finals, quarter-finals or other rounds during the event, held Oct. 27.

This is the 34th year that the Blue Key Event has been running, one of the only student-run tournaments in the country. There were 35 competitors from Pine View and over 1,000 other participants from all over the nation. Tournaments like Blue Key bring like-minded kids together to work hard and compete together. Pine View participated in various Speech and Debate events at Blue Key, including Public Forum Debate, Congressional Debate, Original Oratory and more.

Tenth-grader Michael Gutierrez made it to quarter-finals in the Humorous Interpretation category. Eleventh-grader James Kim and twelfth-grader, and Speech and Debate vice president, Arooj Khan both were octo-finalists in the International Extemporaneous Speaking category. Twelfth-grader Sana Rahman was a quarter-finalist in International Extemporaneous Speaking. Eleventh-grader Edward Brunicaudi was a semi-finalist and twelfth-grader Rachel Kalmanovich was a finalist in Congressional Debate. In Original Oratory, eleventh-grader Rainy Lifton octo-finaled and twelfth-grader Harris Lichenstein got sixth place out of over 100 competitors in the event.

“I think competitions like Blue Key are a great way to expand the knowledge of students,” Khan said. “It’s always amazing to spend time with such great competitors.”

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JIM'S Small Batch BAKERY

Art department experiences smaller enrollment numbers



Art teacher Louis Miller presents the objectives for the day in his eighth-grade art class. The department is dealing with a decrease of students enrolling in art courses. PHOTO BY ELIZABETH HOPKINS

by Elizabeth Hopkins
Asst. Match Editor

In recent years, it can be said that the art department has faced its fair share of setbacks. After multiple teacher adjustments, enrollment numbers dropped, placing administration in a tough space.

Before the school year began in 2016, longtime high-school art teacher Retsy Lauer left Pine View to retire after 15 years of teaching. After a couple of weeks without a replacement, Tammy Zeitler, an artist with over 30 years of commercial and teaching experience, filled her position in the art department.

Zeitler, however, left after just a couple of weeks. As a result, there was a series of short-term substitute teachers until Lisa Wentz joined the department

in October of last year. Shannon Fidler, who taught two sections of middle school art and three sections of high school art last year at Pine View, now teaches all high school art classes, including AP Art History. Wentz's position was eliminated due to the projected decline in enrollment for this year.

Subsequent to these unexpected departures, a number of students chose to drop out of the art program entirely due to the department's instability at the time. Although the number of students enrolled in art has been steadily decreasing over the years—the number of students in 2013-2014 almost doubles the number now—from the 2017-2018 school year alone, excluding digital media classes, the number of students in high school art dropped even more

significantly, from 152 to 115, a difference of 37 students. One of these students is twelfth-grader Hunter Kessous, who left the art program at the end of last year, before it was clear whether Wentz would continue to teach at Pine View. "There was some misinformation because Zietler and most of the subs hadn't taught AP before," Kessous said.

Taking AP 2D Studio Art, Kessous ended up having to switch her concentration in the class for her AP portfolio during second quarter, shifting the theme which 12 out of 24 of her pieces already revolved around. She had been told by Zeitler that the theme she selected was allowed. Really, her chosen topic had not actually been approved by College Board at all. Kessous did not go to administration about this issue, but considered writing letters in order to prompt some change in the way the art department was run. However, Kessous is currently optimistic about the future of art at Pine View. "I've visited the art room, and it's much more organized, and everybody seems to be working diligently," Kessous said. "I've heard nothing but great things about Ms. Fidler. I'm glad it has improved since last year."

On the other side of this issue, another contributing factor in the drop in enrollment simply goes back to scheduling. In previous years, high school art classes were largely free-flowing, with students pursuing their own projects independently. Now, rather than offering several courses occurring within the the same period, the art

department has opted for a more specified approach. High-school art classes are more structured than ever before. "A lot of kids weren't able to fit art in their schedule this year," said Fidler. "I think that as the years continue, you're going to see the enrollment numbers go way back up there again."

Twelfth-grader Suzanne Brown, a staff member on The Torch, experienced this dilemma first-hand. Having taken art alongside journalism for several years, the uncertainty within the art department pushed her away, as she was already set to experience a heavy course-load senior year. "Having seen the way things were run, I just didn't want to deal with the hassle," Brown said.

After this transition period, the art department has put more influence on specific instruction, placing consistency at the forefront. According to Fidler, the art department has also seen more communication between administration and the department, as now, all teachers, from elementary to high school, have been a part of the Pine View community for, at the very least, a few years.

Principal Dr. Stephen Covert stressed the essential nature of art in one's education. "It's a part of the

brain and development that has to be explored," Covert said. Describing the teaching situation last year as "unenviable," he also noted that the recruitment process will inevitably take time. "The quality of the instructor is always a priority," Covert said.

In addition, it is no secret that at an academically-focused school like Pine View, STEM programs tend to receive more focus. Now, it is extremely common for middle- and high-school students to elect to get ahead in math and science, taking courses over the summer to replace time spent in the classroom. However, twelfth-grade Pablo Gonzalez stresses that art at Pine View must be put on the same playing field as any other field of study, calling the teaching situation last year with the art department "ridiculous and unfair."

Lauer, although expressing disappointment with the impacts the department unpredictability had on those involved in art, does not blame administration. "It was just the way things went down," Lauer said. Lauer also endorses Pine View's current high school art teacher. "Fidler is doing a great job," Later said. "The kids really like her."

Despite the situation last year, many art students are pleased with how the art department is functioning currently. "Honestly, it feels so strong right now," Gonzalez said. "This could be attributed to the mutual relationship between the students, the teachers and the administration."

“I think that as the years continue, you’re going to see the enrollment numbers go way back up there again.”

Shannon Fidler, art teacher

SWAT works to pass county legislation

Anti-tobacco club makes progress on laws that target smoking



SWAT poses for a group photo after one of their club meetings. Last May, SWAT assisted in the process of passing a law that banned smoking on all Sarasota County school campuses. PHOTO BY MADISON HOLMES

by Madison Holmes
Web Section Editor

Smoking: one thing the world is simultaneously conditioned to start and to stop. One of Pine View's most steady clubs, Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), is helping raise awareness of the dangers of tobacco in our schools, community, state and country. While raising awareness, SWAT has been taking even bigger steps towards stopping tobacco through proposing laws and organizing petitions.

SWAT is a student-run club on campus devoted to raising awareness and stopping the spreading of cigarettes, tobacco propaganda and more. According to co-president, eleventh-grader Nabil Shariff, SWAT's official mission statement is "Florida's statewide youth organization working to mobilize, educate and equip Florida's youth to revolt against and de-glamorize Big Tobacco." Thanks to SWAT and its hard work and dedication to making our

community a healthier place, Pine View is one step closer to the club's ideal future—tobacco-free.

Last May, SWAT was able to help pass a law that has been years in the making—making all Sarasota County school campuses tobacco-free. Before this law was enforced, Sarasota County schools allowed students and teachers who met the age requirement to smoke on some school campuses. The club considered passing this law one of its greatest achievements.

After this accomplishment, SWAT has decided to shift its focus to the issue of second-hand smoking. Many states like Arkan-

sas, California and Maine have already stated that smoking in a vehicle with a child under a certain age is illegal. Florida has yet to make this serious offense illegal, and Pine View's SWAT club has hopped on the topic.

The club recently started a petition at the Pine View Fair and acquired over 80 signatures from parents, students and administrators who felt strongly about the issue. Next spring SWAT hopes to meet with state-level representatives Ray Pilon and Julio Gonzales, with whom they have previously worked, in Tallahassee in order to move Florida in the right direction when it comes to tobacco laws.

Another one of the club's future aspirations is to ban the use of mentholated cigarettes in Sarasota. Mentholated cigarettes are flavored cigarettes that are becoming more popular with youth. "America's big tobacco companies like to target the poor and weak of our society in order to make any profit they can," eleventh-grader and vice president Sachit Gali said.

As this endeavor may take years, SWAT's main focus this year is to educate the community about this harmful product.

S W A T has proven to our school and community that change is possible through teamwork, dedication and perseverance. The club is currently looking for new members who can help achieve their aspirations of helping better our community, schools and health. SWAT club meets in room 116, on Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

“America’s big tobacco companies like to target the poor and weak of our society to make any profit they can.”

Sachit Gali, grade 11

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Fundraiser begins for Puerto Rico

Class collects donations for U.S. territory in the aftermath of hurricanes

by **William Khabbaz**
Features Editor

After experiencing the devastating effects of hurricanes Irma and Maria, Puerto Rico is facing desperate conditions and remains in need of outside help. Pine View social studies teacher Scott Wolfinger and his students are answering that call for help, creating the fundraiser “PV 4 PR” to help the families affected by these hurricanes.

The effort was started after

a discussion Wolfinger had with a group of eleventh graders—Nathalie Bencie, Adrianna Troche and Zoe Gavette. With the help of the rest of their class, they put their efforts into creating a support system for Puerto Rico.

“With family members of some of the students living in Puerto Rico, we thought it would be a great idea to help,” Troche said. Both Troche and Bencie had family affected by the hurricanes, so they felt the need to

help because of their ties with the territory.

Their first plan of action was to collect donations and materials from students to ship overseas to Puerto Rico. The fundraising group placed boxes within each social studies class, and students were encouraged to donate certain supplies most needed by the families in Puerto Rico. These necessities included baby food, diapers, batteries and pet food.

“We felt an obligation to help others in need. Adrianna and I are Puerto Rican, so helping them down there is super important to us,” Bencie said.

The fundraiser also raised money through a booth at the Pine View Fair, primarily run by Gavette. The booth consisted of a donations box, where students collected both

supplies to send and money to pay for shipping costs. The group raised over \$400, and with this money the group was finally able to start shipping off boxes to Puerto Rico.

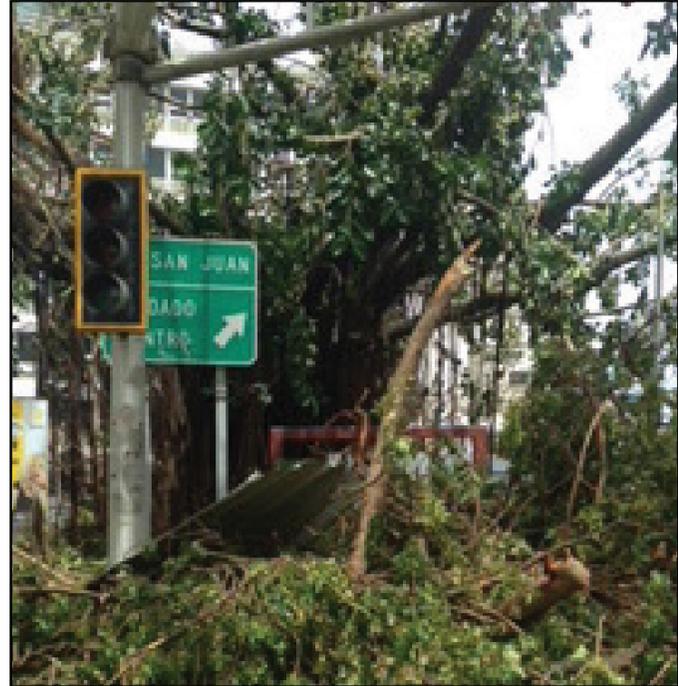
The process to ship the 11 boxes that the group set up starts with the family members in the territory. Wolfinger and his students were planning on shipping them to Troche’s uncle who lives in Carolina, Puerto Rico, but because of transportation issues, PV 4 PR’s first load of supplies was sent through a private institution called Puerto Rico Hold On.

After dropping off the supplies at Puerto Rico Hold On’s outpost in Tampa, the supplies were sorted and then placed on an airplane headed for Puerto Rico. From there, the donations were distributed among towns on the island.

“Bringing aid to Puerto Rico is a responsibility for all Americans, especially since Puerto Rico has never been the wealthiest place, nor has it ever had the best infrastructure, hence why the hurricanes had such a devastating effect,” Bencie said.

The club is now putting their efforts into collecting more supplies and donations from the staff and students. They will be holding more fundraisers and events to hopefully send even more supplies to Puerto Rico.

“The sole reason as to why they’re able to survive is thanks to our help from the mainland, which is why we must continue to aid Puerto Rico until the territory is back on her feet again,” Bencie said. “This is the perfect opportunity for students to experience first-hand what unifying really means.”



TOP: Eleventh-graders Adrianna Troche (left) and Nathalie Bencie (right) smile for the camera in front of their boxed donations for Puerto Rico. BOTTOM: Fallen trees crowd the streets in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of hurricanes Maria and Irma. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SCOTT WOLFINGER

“With family members of some of the students living in Puerto Rico, we thought it would be a great idea to help.”
Adrianna Troche, grade 11

[an infographic]



Wi-Fi outages set back campus learning

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Academic Olympics teams face temporary halt

Competition undergoes county-wide pause after sponsor ends funding

by **Cate Alvaro**
Sports Editor

After 38 years of holding the Academic Olympics at Pine View, the program was almost extinguished in Sarasota County altogether. However, after searching for new ways to fund and coordinate the program, the entire county was able to find a way to keep the Academic Olympics alive.

A county-wide program that allows students from different schools to compete against one another in a competition pertaining to academic abilities. In recent years, the program was funded by the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, utilizing a grant from the Dart Foundation.

This year the Dart Foundation decided to move away from the event in terms of funding and coordination. Without this, the

district was faced with ending the program permanently. However, at a meeting that took place Oct. 30 at the Sarasota County School Board, the Executive Director of High Schools for Sarasota County Steve Cantees committed to pursue a path for funding that will ensure the future of this valuable program. Pine View's own Academic Olympics coach, English teacher Blake Wiley volunteered to take over coordination in an effort to save the program.

Wiley began his sponsorship of the Pine View Academic Olympics team during his second year of teaching at Pine View. Former principal, Steven Largo, recognized that Wiley's history as a college Academic Olympiad was a perfect fit for Pine View. Wiley and English teacher Dr. Paul Dean have co-coached in recent years to lead Pine View to excellence in the event. The two created a team model consisting of "a large team with a lot of camaraderie," Wiley said. This model is in con-

trast to many other schools in the area who present smaller teams for competition. This is sometimes due to a lack of student interest in the activity by students.

Pine View's team in the past several years consisted of 12 to 14 Olympiads who practice and compete throughout the year. Competitions typically include three rounds of four players each, which means that not all students compete in every match, and typically players do not play in all three rounds of competition. Moderators ask the students questions ranging from math, science, language arts and history. The depth and voracity of Pine View's team has contributed to its rich winning history with a record 34 of 37 championship trophies.

According to Wiley, winning is not always the focus for Pine View coaches and players. In the past, Pine View has made their team members available to other schools, when those teams were lacking players to compete. Wiley also referenced instances when Pine View's team didn't play their top players in an effort to keep matches more competitive and fun. Other schools gain more notoriety when they beat Pine View, as Venice High did in the championships last year. Dean, who will be the primary coach for Pine View now that

“There is nothing greater than competing with the name of your school on the back of your shirt.”

Blake Wiley,
former Academic Olympics coach



The Pine View Academic Olympics Team celebrates their victory in 2015. The program nearly came to an end after 37 years. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SACHIT GALI

Wiley has assumed his new role, promises to regain the championship title this upcoming year.

Budgeting for the program is expected to be decided soon, as Cantees plans to find a niche for funding within the School Board's already established budget. A new gaming buzzer system purchased by the Education Foundation last year will remain with the program. Wiley plans to explore match and

competition options going forward as the program has a chance to redefine its parameters including game structure, match size and number of competitions per year.

Dean will be holding tryouts for the team in the near future. "I recommend Pine View students to join Academic Olympics. There is nothing greater than competing with the name of your school on the back of your shirt," Wiley said.



Twelfth-grader Minnah Stein (third from left) stands with Mayor Shelli Freeland Eddie (third from right) and FEMA officials. Stein was one of the eight Sarasota County students invited to "Black Almanac," a local WWSB ABC 7 program. PHOTO PROVIDED BY MINNAH STEIN

Twelfth-grader shares her voice on local news

by **Manny Rea**
Sci-Tech Editor

In an opportunity to voice student opinions, twelfth-grader Minnah Stein appeared on the WWSB ABC 7 program "Black Almanac" Oct. 29. Alongside other Sarasota County students and the current mayor of Sarasota, Shelli Freeland Eddie, Stein represented Pine View in an hour-long special, discussing community issues.

"Black Almanac" is a local program that showcases the African-American community in Sarasota County and is now celebrating its 45th anniversary on air. Produced and hosted by Dr. Edward James II, he is joined once a week by various regional officials and community members to talk about political issues affecting the county locally and nationally.

Stein earned the chance to be on the show following her ongoing internship with Eddie. As part of her Externship class with English teachers Lori Wiley and Jessica Hentges, Stein applied for an internship with the City of Sarasota government this year and has since been Eddie's only intern. "I really want to pursue a career in government, and I have a passion for helping other people through civil services," Stein said. As a shadow, Stein attends meetings with the mayor, including city commission meetings and

special projects.

As part of her internship, Stein was invited to speak on "Black Almanac." Eddie and James spoke to eight Sarasota County students, including some from Booker High School, Sarasota High School and McIntosh Middle School. The students addressed how the adult society affects race relations, free speech and multiple topics in regard to youth. Stein provided input on what she sees within the Pine View community, such as the benefits of being surrounded by the same teachers and colleagues throughout one's educational path. She also discussed the lack of diversity compared to other schools in the county. "I think that diversity should be celebrated, especially at this school where everything is related to higher levels of thinking and different types of education," Stein said while on the program. Mayor Eddie finished the

show with remarks about how the student body works diligently on its own to encourage diversity and to respect other cultures and beliefs.

Stein's commission meetings entail different discussions about issues or policies that need to be addressed in

“I really want to pursue a career in government, and I have a passion for helping other people through civil services.”

Minnah Stein,
grade 12

Sarasota, including financial and pension plans as well as other topics. "I learned a lot working with Mayor Eddie," Stein said. "Running city government is just as crazily important as running national government, and there are many topics that I never thought about before." As for special projects, Stein has contributed to Hurricane Irma relief efforts. Shortly after the storm, she helped distribute flyers advertising relief efforts from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in Sarasota County. Currently, Stein is working with Eddie on the construction of a new park off of Lockwood Ridge.

State-wide teacher shortage affects Sarasota County schools

Recruitment difficulties hinder teacher employment

by **Elizabeth Hopkins**
Asst. Match Editor

Public school districts all across west Florida are facing a shortage of teachers, and Sarasota County is no exception.

Back in June, the Sarasota County School District posted over 150 instructional vacancies on its website. But in the last days of summer, Sarasota County was still hiring, having various school district jobs left to fill. This trend is consistent with several other surrounding districts. As of August, Hillsborough County had 205 openings, the most out of any county left to fill. Pasco County needed 128 teachers and Polk County was in need of more than

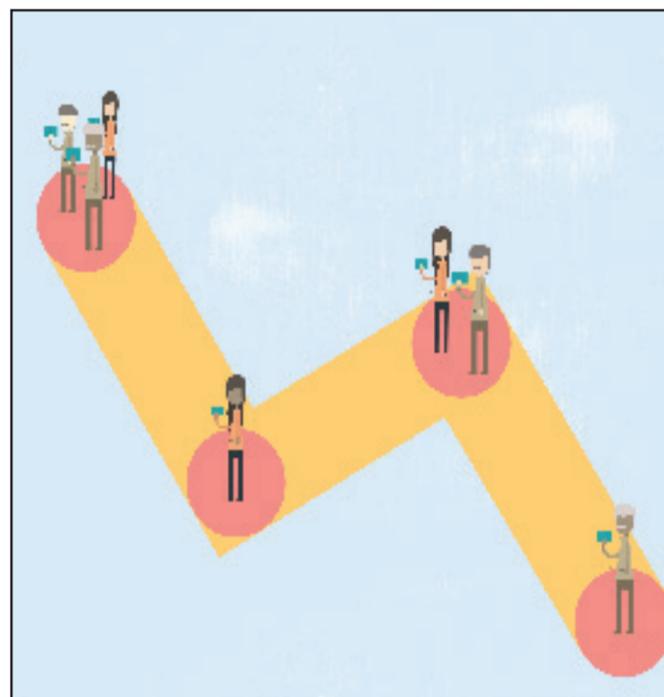
110 teachers.

Although teaching positions in general have been difficult to fill in recent years, substitute teaching roles have been extremely problematic as well. The district attempted to combat this issue in December 2016 by reducing screening requirements for potential substitute teachers. Now, substitutes are not even required to have a Florida teaching certificate, as former Sarasota County Superintendent Lori White waived this district rule last year. In effect, substitutes need to only have a Bachelor of Arts degree to apply to work for district schools.

According to the Orlando Sentinel, the number of people in

Florida pursuing careers as teachers is decreasing, with state universities graduating fewer and fewer students with education degrees. "You have 67 public school districts in Florida, so we're all competing for that same small group of students that are graduating from Florida universities and colleges," Teddra Porteous, an assistant superintendent in Polk County, told WFTS.

Like the rest of the state, the Sarasota County School District experiences difficulties in recruiting; thus, the pool of working substitutes thins. This, in turn, has repercussions for Pine View, as the ability of the district to assign substitutes becomes unpredictable.



GRAPHIC BY MADISON HOLMES

Pine View tech support gives back internationally

by **Tricia Saputera**
Asst. Match Editor

Hugo Guardado-Henriquez, one of the two technology support personnel (TSP) here at Pine View, has been very involved in giving back to the community.

Henriquez joined the Pine View staff this past March from the IT department of Huntington High School in New York, where he worked for 18 years. Henriquez is an alumnus of Huntington High School and after graduating, attended Farmingdale State College in New York where he received a bachelor's degree.

When he was younger, Henriquez wanted to become an art teacher but at the end of his freshman year in college he realized he wanted to pursue a career in computers, as he saw the field of technology begin to expand.

Henriquez's job involves a lot of spontaneity, as his daily schedule is not consistent. He and Joel Fuentes, the other TSP here at Pine View, respond to the urgent help tickets that teachers submit when they have a technology problem, troubleshoot computers and install software. "I believe Pine View is way ahead of the game with technology and sup-

port. Here, we have two full-time TSPs because we try to solve the tickets within 24 hours, so I think the technology here is amazing," Henriquez said.

Back in New York, Henriquez and his childhood friend Milton Ramirez donated old school computers to four schools in El Salvador. Similar to Sarasota, in New York,

"I never forgot about the town and the places around where I came from, all of their needs."

Hugo Guardado-Henriquez, technology support

school computers are replaced every four years. In New York, these computers are available for sale to the public at a lower price before being disposed of. Despite the computers

being labeled as older models, the computers were still in very good shape, so Henriquez decided to purchase them and buy and download programs needed for education, such as the Microsoft Office programs, but in Spanish. "I never forgot about the town and the places around where I came from, all of their needs. One of the things they need the most are computers, among so many other things. But education over there is so different. I know places where kids at the age of 16 don't even know what a computer looks like. So that made me think about donating computers," Henriquez said.

Henriquez and Ramirez, assisted by some students, did this for four years, and each year, they donated to a different school. First on the list was Metalio School in Acajutla, a municipality in Sonsonate Department, El Salvador. Like Huntington High School, Henriquez also has a special connection with it; he attended this school before moving to the United States.

Over the four years, he and Ramirez donated about 50 computers in total. The first two years' transportation of the computers was paid by the Rotary Club of New York, as the price for transporting goods can



Guardado-Henriquez visited Acajutla, El Salvador to help build a community clinic in Caserio El Mora.
PHOTO PROVIDED BY HUGO GUARDADO-HENRIQUEZ

be quite expensive. The third and fourth year, however, Henriquez and Ramirez visited El Salvador two to three times a year, each time bringing about five computers.

In addition to donating computers, Henriquez and Ramirez raised about \$11,000, combined with another \$11,000 donated from the Rotary Club of El Salvador, to build a clinic in Caserio El Mora. Huntington High School allowed Henriquez and Ramirez to set up fundraisers at the school including car washes. Although a doctor is only able to visit the clinic once a month, countless number of people have been treated.

Outside of school, Henriquez has coached rowing for almost 20 years now, from Chaminade High School in New York to Sarasota

Crew. "There are a lot of kids from Pine View [at Sarasota Crew]. I enjoy seeing them at practices and it's good that at the same time, I get to see them at school," Henriquez said.

Henriquez has not yet discovered where old school computers go in Sarasota County. In the future, Henriquez hopes to perhaps work with a group of students to do a similar project as those he has done. "Now that I know how the system works here at Pine View, my goal is to help Dr. Covert, the teachers and the students. I'm definitely staying on top of cyber security," Henriquez said. "My idea was donating computers, but I know that there's so many other things that other countries need, not just El Salvador. But it takes a group of people to make it happen."

[app review] Hopscotch Coding



PHOTO PROVIDED BY EDUCATIONALAPPSTORE.COM

by **Noelle Bencie**
Asst. Sports Editor

Many students on the Pine View campus have become involved in coding clubs and activities, but the Hopscotch app allows everyone, regardless of skill level, to make their own mini games and share them with users across the world. Although it is only available on the Apple App Store, Apple owners are offered the brand-new app for only \$7.99 a month.

With over 10 million downloads already, Hopscotch is a great way for all to express their creativity through creating or recreating games. When opening the app, there are two options: "Create" or "Play." Under "Create," users can make their own games, and under "Play," users have the opportunity to enjoy the amusements that other programmers have created.

The program offers over 40 challenges that can help users improve their newly-acquired coding

skills. With a variety of easy-to-follow tutorial videos, people of all ages can contribute to the world of game-making. The tutorials give step-by-step instructions and allow watchers to pause and play the video at their own pace. Users can work with basic codes and commands that make their characters jump, slide or flip without having to learn advanced programming rules. Though the process is easy, users will still be able to think like programmers by implementing codes and troubleshooting any problems.

The app is available in two versions—free and upgraded. Hopscotch players are given the opportunity to try the app for free for a week with all upgraded features. When updated, the app opens multiple amenities that can only be found with the purchased version. This includes unlimited access to all tutorials that are renewed each month and the ability to upload art and images from the camera roll.

The app provides an easy-to-use atmosphere that encourages an entertaining experience for students, teachers and even seasoned programmers. Hopscotch adds a new way to perceive the computer programming world and benefits users who look to enter the field.

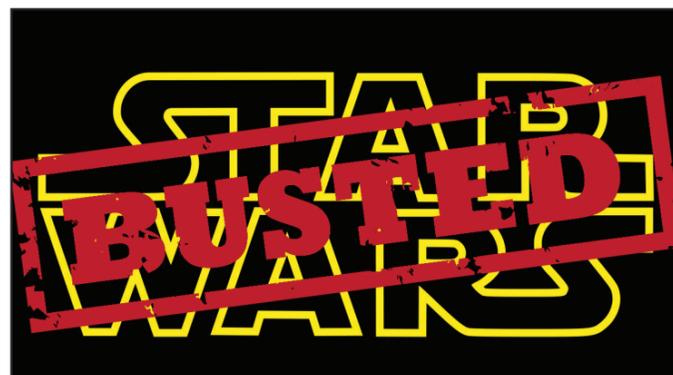
Rating (Free):
4/5 Torches



Rating (Premium):
5/5 Torches



The Torch Debunks: Star Wars



GRAPHIC BY BRIANNA NELSON

by **Nathalie Bencie**
News Editor

"Star Wars" is one of the ultimate science fiction franchises in the world, notorious for its abundance of blasting lasers, battling spaceships and co-existing alien species. Although an admirable depiction of intergalactic affairs, the science surrounding the series is not entirely accurate. Following the basic concepts surrounding physics, chemistry and astrophysics, The Torch has constructed a list of scientific inaccuracies in the canonized films to bring you the scientifically-proven "Star Wars": Debunked.

Sounds and explosions in space:

Sound waves move by vibrating a medium's molecules, such as those of solids, liquids and gases. If there is no medium to travel through, then no sound can be emitted. In space, there is no medium for sound waves to travel through. Therefore, the zaps of lasers, whooshes of spaceships and blasts of explosions you

heard during the Battle of Yavin, the Battle of Endor or even the Battle of Scarif are not accurate. In reality, these space battles would be silent. And, fire requires oxygen to burn, which is the opposite as to what is seen in the Star Wars saga. In space, there is no oxygen to ignite a spaceship's explosion for as long as seen in the movies. Although the spaceships do have a limited amount of oxygen for their occupants to breathe, the amount of available oxygen would be used up almost instantly during an explosion, and the ignited fireball would dispatch almost immediately. In reality, instead of a bright ball of fire, a spaceship explosion would consist of merely a brief flash followed by ship debris flying off in multiple directions.

Lightsabers:

If Leia's hand blasters should not go pew pew, then Luke's lightsaber definitely should not hum. However, this "elegant weapon for a more civilized age" has been wrongly conceived all these years. Lightsabers cannot be made up of light as their

name implies. Light does not have mass and thus cannot cut through matter, especially Anakin Skywalker's legs or Kylo Ren's father.

In the "Star Wars" universe, lightsabers are built by combining a power source and light emitter focused by a Kyber crystal within a containment field. A negatively-charged fissure inside the hilt causes the emitted light beam to arc back into itself, creating the blade. Light could be configured into a laser to create a visible beam capable of cutting, but lasers do not bend and the machine needed to achieve this energy would be far too big to carry in one's hand.

Hyperspace:

Based on the franchise, Hyperspace travel is a method of transportation that uses an alternate dimension to reach different planets in the same or different solar systems. These planets are sometimes trillions of miles away from each other, so using Hyperspace allows ships to travel as fast or faster than the speed of light by skipping through dimensions.

In reality, this is impossible. For starters, the amount of energy needed for a moving object to accelerate to light speed is nearly impossible for a single ship's engine to generate, using a hyperdrive or not. Moving between planets, nonetheless solar systems, would also take years, not minutes, regardless of whether a ship is traveling at light speed.

Despite these scientific flaws, there is much to love about a galaxy far, far away. "Star Wars" is sure to continue to enthrall audiences of future generations and installments.

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ARIES
March 21 - April 19



Hey, fire sign! Your burning enthusiasm is easily transferred to others by empowering them to be their best.

GEMINI
May 21 - June 20



Use those strong opinions of yours to stand out from the crowd. Try a bold, new recipe and surprise your family members this Thanksgiving.

LEO
July 23 - August 22



You have a fun-loving orientation that radiates to others in your presence. Do not let the stress of the end of first semester bring you down!

LIBRA
September 23 - October 22



With the end of first semester around the corner, use these next few weeks to clarify your academic values and end the quarter with a bang.

SAGITTARIUS
November 22 - December 21



Take more time for yourself, Sagittarius. Make health and wellness the focal point of your psyche to ease stress.

PISCES
February 19 - March 20



Pisces is a mystical sign, thriving on creativity and courage. Be more creative this season by planning crafty outfits revolving around the chilly, fall forecast.

TAURUS
April 20 - May 20



Generosity is your middle name, Taurus. Channel that trait into your Thanksgiving this year by helping family members prepare for the holiday.

CANCER
June 21 - July 22



Cancer, you are an emotional sign. Get rid of jealousy by taking time to appreciate all that you have by unveiling your truly amazing characteristics.

VIRGO
August 23 - September 22



Slow down this season and gain greater awareness to connections with friends and family. Take some time to refocus yourself and your mind.

SCORPIO
October 23 - November 21



Happy birth month Scorpio! Start off your new year by pursuing the activities and recipes you have always wanted to try.

CAPRICORN
December 22 - January 19



You love to cook and entertain, Capricorn. Channel your ambition and assist friends and family this fall season.

HOROSCOPES BY MACKENZIE DYRDA AND ANNA LABINER. GRAPHIC BY ZACH BRIGHT

'Rest' assured: This violinist is 'sharp'



Twelfth-grader Nicholas Blake performs an instrumental version of Aladdin's "A Whole New World" during Mr. Pine View. Blake started playing the violin at the age of 4. PHOTO BY SUZANNE BROWN

by Sarah Mihm
Managing Editor

Walking out for his Mr. Pine View performance, twelfth-grader Nicholas Blake revealed to many his talent—playing the violin. This was not his first performance, but was in fact his solo debut on the Pine View stage. Many were previously unaware of Blake's musical talent, but the loud cheering and clapping following his performance showed their newfound appreciation. Blake played a nostalgic tune from Aladdin, displaying not only his talent but also his adoration of music.

Blake began playing the violin when he was 4 years old and living in Chicago, and continued

playing when he moved down to Florida at the age of 7. His inspiration was his older brother and Pine View alumnus, Christopher Blake; both brothers have played and practiced together for the majority of their childhood.

"My favorite part about playing the violin is being able to do a thing a lot of people cannot do," Blake said. Not only does he enjoy playing, but also the benefits of playing. "I feel like I am more

creative because of playing the violin," Blake said.

The first musical group Blake joined was the Sarasota Youth Symphony, which he had to audition for. After playing for them for three years, Blake moved up to the higher level, the Sarasota Youth Philharmonic Orchestra—a more selective orchestra. He has been playing as a second violinist for the Philharmonic Orchestra for the past two years and enjoys the challenge. Not only does Blake play with the orchestra once a week, but he also takes music theory lessons from the Sarasota Music Conservatory.

Blake's proudest moment was learning his favorite piece, Bach Partida No. 3. He mainly plays classical music with the orchestra, however, at Mr. Pine View, Blake strayed away from the usual and played a more contemporary genre. Blake said, "I had a lot of fun at Mr. Pine View because I usually do not like playing in front of people. But, with the support of my friends, it was good."

Learning a musical instrument is a challenge that not everyone is able to conquer. To Blake, there are several difficult parts to playing the violin.

"I learned to play by ear because of my brother, so sight reading is difficult to me," Blake said. In regard to what advice he would

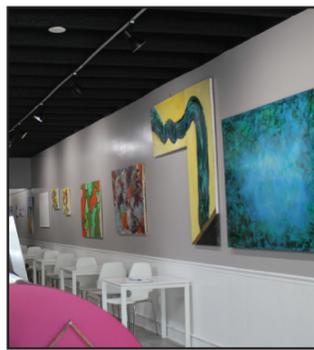
give, Blake said, "The hardest thing about playing the violin is not quitting, so stick with it."

Blake plans on playing the violin throughout his life, including college. "I do not want to make a career out of it, but I want to keep doing it," Blake said. "I want to try new genres."

"I feel like I am more creative because of playing the violin."
Nicholas Blake, grade 12

Sweet Spot serves up a tasty treat

Greek-inspired cafe serves fresh donuts and coffee



TOP: The walls of Louie's and Kat's Sweet Spot are lined with work from local artists. The bakery opened this summer in downtown Sarasota. BOTTOM: The Reese's Pieces donut, showcasing the infamous peanut butter and chocolate combination, is a customer favorite.

PHOTOS BY MELISSA SANTOYO

by Melissa Santoyo
Opinion Editor

A quiet locale bursting with color and a flair unique only to Sarasota, Louie's & Kat's Sweet Spot is a bakery that is sure to allure customers for years to come.

First opening its doors in May, the Sweet Spot is run by husband and wife duo Louie Milonas and Kathy Rodas. The pair moved from the chilly New Hampshire landscape to jumpstart their culinary venture in the sunnier city of Sarasota.

Sweet Spot's decor and ambiance are a portrait of downtown life, complete with a quiet environment for any customer who wishes to grind through a day's work while

enjoying a danish. The walls are lined with works from local artists, giving the environment a pop of color and a dynamic vibe. The menu, which Milonas is eager to expand, reflects this modern, colorful theme. It combines a wide variety of donuts with a plethora of pastries, such as homemade Italian cookies.

These goodies, coupled with a selection of organic teas and classic cold-brew coffee yield an excellent variety that is sure to satisfy any sweet tooth.

The Reese's Pieces donut is a customer favorite that combines the creaminess of peanut butter and the rich flavor of chocolate. The Maple Bacon donut, as well, is a unique treat that local visitors have taken quite a liking to.

As for sleepy high schoolers seeking a new coffee shop to discover, Sweet Spot offers the perfect wake-up call in the form of cold-brew coffee. This is an intense drink on its own, however customers can sweeten the beverage using liquid syrups; the standalone bitter taste may only satisfy a select few brave customers.

Milonas is also seeking to include sandwiches in his current menu, as well as to develop a catering menu in order to further meet the needs of a growing clientele.

Coming in with affordable prices and fantastic products, Louie's and Kat's Sweet Spot is sure to remain a timeless staple among the Sarasota culinary scene, especially with such a cordial staff.

"I love the people. So far everyone has been incredibly nice, even though I just opened and it's been a little bit of a tough start. I just love being here. The people have been incredible," Milonas said.

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Siblings are 'in tents' about sailor circus

Ninth- and eleventh-grade siblings have performed in Sailor Circus for five years

by **Leo Gordon**

Match Layout Artist

Eleventh- and ninth-grade siblings Grace and Tommy Johnson have been captivating crowds with the Sailor Circus Academy for the past five years, dedicating countless hours to the artistic sport after participating at a summer camp held at the academy in 2013.

The Sailor Circus Academy is America's oldest youth circus program.

After being founded in 1949, The Sailor Circus Academy has seen thousands of students complete their program.

The academy's goal is to help children

learn to develop life management skills, gain self-discipline and bolster a commitment to achievement, all in a circus atmosphere.

Grace will graduate from the program next school year, and Tommy will follow two years later.

The Johnsons practice five days per week, with a total of 15 hours of weekly practice. In an average practice, the siblings take part in activities such as unicycling,

the Swinging Cradle and the teeterboard.

Teeterboard is an activity where a board is placed on a raised support so that a person standing on one end of the board is thrown into the air when another person jumps on the opposite end.

As all circus performers do, the Johnsons favor certain acts over others.

"The lyra is my favorite act because although I regularly get bruises, burns and rips, I am able to do the most beautiful things on the simplest equipment imaginable. Even though it's painful and I

often have to limp around school the day after, I feel so empowered when I can sit back and say, 'I can do that,' no matter the circumstances needed to accomplish it," Grace said.

The lyra, also known as the aerial hoop, is a circular steel apparatus suspended from the ceiling on which circus artists perform aerobic acts.

Tommy describes his fa-

vorite to be the Swinging Cradle, an act where a performer swings on a large rectangular frame with their knees, singing, tossing and catching other performers. "The Swinging Cradle is my favorite act because it makes me feel like I've achieved something amazing, since it is so difficult," Tommy said.

This past summer, the siblings participated in a trip to Washington D.C., where they performed at the National Mall for ten days. Grace and Tommy were chosen as two of the 20 Sailor Circus students asked to perform at the event, participating in daily events for the entire span of the trip. "I got to make friends with so many other kids from other circuses, and it was really incredible to see and work with them on the equipment while sharing tricks with them. All together, it was incredible. It was like I was living a dream," Grace said.

Tommy said there have been many benefits to being a part of the circus. "My favorite thing about circus is that it teaches you so many different things that are extremely important, such as strong public speaking skills, conquering stage fright, hand-eye coordination and strength, all put together," Tommy said. Grace could not decide on one favorite thing about circus, narrowing it down to the circus community feeling and performing for the audience.

"Grace and Tommy are obviously very dedicated to circus and are amazing athletes. Their dedication and drive is certainly



TOP: Ninth-graders Tommy Johnson (middle) and Jenna Wynne (right) perform Swinging Cradle at the National Mall. **LEFT:** Tommy bases a single-toe trick in acrobatic rollerskating in the Sailor Circus Arena. **RIGHT:** Eleventh-grader Grace Johnson opens the Sailor Circus Holiday Spectacular with an announcement from a lyra. Grace and Tommy practice with the Sailor Circus for 15 hours per week. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CLIFF ROLES

something to look up to. The Johnsons are definitely a valuable asset to the circus," Anna Labiner, a fellow Sailor Circus athlete and Pine View student, said.

In the future, Grace plans to continue her circus career, hope-

fully owning, directing and performing in her own circus. Tommy also hopes to continue circus throughout high school and possibly as a career. For now, Tommy and Grace plan on enjoying their time at the Sailor Circus before they graduate.

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Lady Pythons win the County Championships

The Pine View girls volleyball team claims county title



TOP: The Lady Pythons celebrate after their semifinal win. **BOTTOM:** The Lady Pythons pose with their trophy after winning the Sarasota County Middle School Volleyball Championships. PHOTOS BY NOELLE BENCIE

by **Noelle Bencie**
Asst. Sports Editor

The Pine View Lady Pythons volleyball team “set” into first place at the Sarasota County Middle School Volleyball Championships, Monday, Oct. 30. This is the Lady Pythons’ sixth consecutive year attending the County Championships and with their hard work and dedication, the girls won the

county title.

The Lady Pythons prepared for this event by devoting a lot of time and hard work in and out of the gym. The girls practiced every Tuesday and Friday, around their scheduled games every Monday and Wednesday. The Lady Pythons also went to the gym the day before the championships to review and prepare themselves mentally. “I

had to tell myself that it was going to be hard but nothing to be worried about,” eighth-grader Carmen Hvideberg said.

Taking place at Venice High School, the championships are held at a neutral gym every year to provide an equal opportunity for each team participating in the competition. Although they were not at their home gym, the Lady Pythons brushed the competitive atmosphere off their shoulders and kept their heads in the game. “It was different than just practicing in a middle school gym because it was so much bigger, and there were so many more people, and it made the games so much more excited,” eighth-grader and Lady Python member, McKenna Flaherty said. Flaherty and her teammates took on the Woodland Cougars and the Venice Crusaders at the playoffs.

The Venice High School gym was separated into two smaller courts for the semifinal games, in which Pine View played Woodland and Venice played Sarasota. When each set of teams competed, the winner of each event was moved into the final championship. The court was then set up for the the Lady Pythons to compete against the Lady Crusaders.

In their first game of the semifinals, the Pine View Lady Pythons took on the Woodland Lady Cougars’ volleyball team. The Lady Pythons dominated with a serious of sets, blocks and spikes. The Pythons stole the match with a final score of 25 to 14

in the first match.

Eighth-grader Ansley Morris said, “We work well as a team, and over all I think we played our strengths.”

The Lady Pythons beat the Lady Cougars in the second game of the semifinals, with a score of 25 to 15. This kicked the Woodland Cougars out of the competition and placed the Pine View Pythons in the championship game.

In the final game, the Lady Pythons took on the Venice Crusaders for the first time since the season concluded. With Flaherty providing the first serve of the championships, the game started with a strong lead in favor of the Lady Pythons. The girls outscored the Venice Crusaders with an astonishing lead of 25 to 12. In the last game of the season, the Lady Pythons claimed their county title with a score of 25 to 17.

Eighth-grader Alex Roumi said, “My favorite part of the game was the exhilaration when it was game point in the finals and game point in the semifinals.”

Joe Digiaco, coach of the Lady Pythons for approximately 18 years, explained his strategy to The Torch: “We attacked the left, back, number five spot because the pass from the number five to the setter is so long, that in middle school, they can’t execute the play,” Digiaco said.

The Lady Pythons volleyball team ended their season on a strong win and plans to continue their training to hold their title.



PHOTO BY NOELLE BENCIE

Tenth-grader keeps his head in the game



Tenth-grader Gabriel Monzon poses with his father after winning an AAU national tournament. PHOTO PROVIDED BY MICHAEL MONZON

by **Naina Chauhan**
Match Layout Artist

Following in his father’s footsteps, tenth-grader Gabriel Monzon has played basketball for over five years. Monzon currently plays as a member of Riverview High School’s junior varsity basketball team.

Monzon was first introduced to the sport by his father, who has played basketball since high school. Monzon’s father has also coached him both at home and on the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) team, The Kings Basketball Organization. This organization is a local part of the national AAU team. “My father is my role model in basketball because he is always there for me every step of the way,” Monzon said.

His father, Michael Monzon, said, “The growth I have witnessed in Gabriel as a student athlete and a young man has brought great joy to my heart. Being able to watch him learn, grow and execute in all areas of his life has been so awesome. I can’t wait to watch him on the basketball court this season

to see the fruits of his labor.”

Gabriel Monzon has played for several teams over the last five years. Some of the teams he has played for include The Kings Basketball Organization and the Riverview junior varsity basketball team.

In ninth grade, Monzon competed to be a member of the junior varsity basketball team at Riverview and was successful. According to Monzon, the transition from middle school to high school basketball proved to be a hard challenge that he had to overcome. “The pace was definitely the biggest difference between middle school and high school basketball. You can’t afford to fall behind — you’ll be left in the dust. Luckily, that was something I was good at,” Monzon said.

As one of the tallest players on his team, Monzon plays forward or center, “big man,” meaning he predominantly plays under the basket. During practices, he concentrates on perfecting a multitude of techniques, including his outside shot, making him a versatile player on his team. He takes pride in not only being able to play under the hoop as a forward or center — rebounding, blocking shots and even dunking — but also being able to knock down shots from the 3-point line.

During Monzon’s first year on the Riverview junior varsity basketball team, his team won the district championships. This inspired Monzon to improve his skills and gave him the confidence to be as valuable of a player as the leaders of the team that year.

His junior varsity coach, Rudy Fraraccio, said, “Monzon is taller, bigger and stronger than he was last season. I’m looking forward to watching him develop as a student athlete while he competes in our basketball program.”

According to Monzon, his main goal this year is to play on the Riverview High School varsity basketball team as a forward or center. During the off season, he plans to try out for an elite travel team to gain recognition from colleges.



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7th Graders

- [Ashley Reynolds](#)
- [Daria Tiubin](#)
- [Ava Epstein](#)

GRAPHIC BY BRIANNA NELSON

Ninth-grader dribbles and kicks to the forefront

Student competes on the U17 Girls Team with The West Florida Flames



Ninth-grader Kareena Legare scores a goal at her first Advanced Futbol Experience (AFX) tournament. Legare has been playing soccer for 11 years. PHOTO PROVIDED BY KAREENA LEGARE

by Manny Rea
Sci-Tech Editor

With an affinity for the game, ninth-grader Kareena Legare plays left forward for The West Florida Flames soccer team. Legare has been reaching her "goals" in soccer for the past 11 years.

Starting soccer at the age of 3, Legare's father initially signed her up for the sport as an outlet for her lively energy as a child. Since

then, she has played for three competitive soccer teams and has shown her worth on the field as an individual and a team player.

Legare began playing as a member of the Football Club (FC) Sarasota program at Tatum Ridge Soccer Complex when she was 7 years old. There, she played competitively for the FC Sarasota Boys until she was 12 years old as the only girl on the team. "There were no girls teams in that club for my age group," Legare said. "So I

just tried out for the boys team and made it on."

Legare then moved on to play for the Cape Coral Soccer Association as a part of the U15 Girls Black team, a team in which all of the players were under the age of 15. According to Legare, she transferred to this team for better coaching and competition.

On the U15 Girls Black team, Legare helped to win and to place first in their division at the 2016 Capital Area Soccer League (CASL) Girls Showcase national tournament, held in Raleigh, N.C. Despite suffering a sprained ankle in the CASL, she was still able to play half of the games and score six goals. And, at the Florida State Premier League (FSPL) from Aug. 26, 2016 to March 11, 2017, Legare's team competed against 11 other teams and won first place. This win was preceded by pre-season training and technical work that helped the team succeed.

"As an individual player, Kareena is a hard worker and very skilled. As a team player, she motivates her teammates and is a leader," Tomas Travnicek, a teammate of Legare from FC Sarasota, said.

Legare has also delved into various tournament teams, which are teams comprised of scouted players from Florida. When she was in sixth grade playing for FC Sarasota, Legare was recruited by the Soccer Academy of Excellence, which would later become AFX Soccer Team, based out of the Tampa Bay area. On the Soccer Academy

of Excellence's team, she played over 25 tournaments against other specialty teams and lost only two games, her team coming in second place for both.

This school year, Legare will be playing for the U17 Girls Team with The West Florida Flames in the U.S. Development Academy (USDA) league that has teams from across the country. Legare participated in pre-tryouts at the JC Handy Sports Complex in Brandon, Fla., where she was scouted by the head coach of this team to play for the upcoming soccer season. She took this opportunity, as it is the highest league available for her to play in.

"Soccer is a way to get away from everything else in life. You can be as aggressive and competitive as you want and you don't have to worry about anything else," Legare said.

According to Legare, she intends to play soccer throughout her high school and college careers, and hopes to make the national team.

Last year, Legare began her journey in searching for college recruitments. She was contacted by Vanderbilt University, who invited her to their college ID camp; ID camps are meant to paint a

picture for aspiring college players who may be interested in playing for certain colleges in the future.

Although too young to be contacted for definitive recruitment, this is one step towards a future in soccer for Legare.

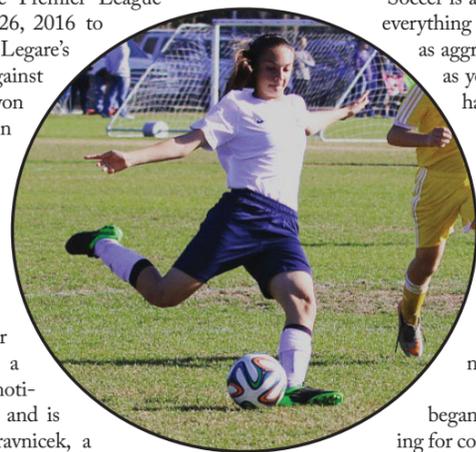


PHOTO PROVIDED BY KAREENA LEGARE

Student aims to be pitch perfect

by Anna Labiner

Asst. Entertainment Editor

Forcing out the competition with dedication and a fierce competitive spirit, ninth-grader Kassie Cross dominates the softball field. Cross started playing softball at the age of 4, and still participates in the sport a decade later.

Cross was initially inspired to play softball because her father played baseball in his youth — he wanted to share his passion with his daughter and ensure that she had the opportunity to play the sport after high school, if she chose to do so.

Starting off playing for the Desoto Bulldogs, Cross later switched teams to play for the Florida Impact softball team. She has been playing for this team for one year now, where she pitches and plays first base.

Like any sport, softball takes a lot of time and practice to master. Cross plays the sport Monday through Friday with times ranging from 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., with most practices staying within two hour intervals. Cross mainly focuses on pitching, which she practices every day, but she also attends team practices two days a week. Cross works on team practices and individual improvements, but in both emphasizes pitching technique.

It can be hard to find time for school work with a schedule as busy as Cross's. But, according to Cross, even though softball is a large time commitment, the feeling of reward that she receives when she plays the sport makes the time and dedication worthwhile. "The busy schedule can push things to the last minute, and you have to squeeze things into a small time frame, but in the long run it's worth it," Cross said.

According to Cross, one of her inspirations for softball is her pitching coach, Monica Triner. Triner coaches Cross regularly and assists



Ninth-grader Kassie Cross pitches the ball at a game in Clearwater. PHOTO PROVIDED BY KASSIE CROSS

in the training and preparation for her upcoming tournaments.

Recently, Cross has taken part in many college exposure tournaments. These tournaments allow college coaches to watch the different players they are interested in play softball. This past summer, Cross's team traveled to Chattanooga, Tenn., for a two-day college exposure tournament. "We drove a few hours away, and went team bonding with white water rafting, and it was a lot of fun. We learned more about each other and got closer as a team," Cross said.

Cross's love for softball is evident, and her future in the sport is promising. "I really like the competition. It helps release tension, and it's very relaxing," Cross said.

She plans to continue her softball career throughout high school and hopes to play in college.

The Torch Tries: Pinterest Water Challenge

by Haleigh Brown

Match Editor-in-Chief

From the "50 day push-up challenge" to the "14 day mental wellness challenge," Pinterest daily workout and lifestyle plans aim to keep their users fit and happy. But how helpful are they? In our newest "The Torch Tries" article, I take on the "Pinterest Water Challenge" by drinking at least eight glasses of water a day.

Day 1

Day one is complete and I have around 4 ounces left to go in my eight glasses of water. It's more of a hassle just to carry such a large bottle around with me all the time, and the only reason I didn't finish my goal is because I am busy doing other things. Tomorrow is a new day, and I plan on accomplishing all eight glasses of water. I noticed that I have become accustomed to not drinking enough water, and it has become more of a chore trying to get down all 64 ounces.

Day 2

Today was rushed, stressful and hectic — not the perfect combination when trying out a new health challenge. I barely used my water bottle in the morning and did not touch it throughout the whole school day. As my day was coming to a close, I realized that I had consumed three cups of coffee, and not a drop of water throughout the day. This happens frequently, now that I reflect back, but it is never something I have noticed in the past. As soon as I chugged my water, it was as if my body had just awoken from a long nap. My motivation was kick-started and I was able to stay up much later than I had originally expected. My ability to finish my tasks for the night skyrocketed, and it was simply because my physical well-being felt better.

Day 3

From 8 a.m. to noon, I was participating in a breast cancer awareness run. I did not want to carry around a water bottle so I waited to drink my water until after the marathon—I was parched. I finished off my 24-ounce water bottle in under five minutes and felt instant relief. For the rest of the day I consecutively drank my water and started to feel more awake, even after a five-mile run.

Day 4

Today, the first thing I did when I woke up was drink two large glasses of water. Before this day, drinking all my water was a hassle, another thing in my life I had to constantly remind myself of. But now, it seemed to be what I turned to instead of a cup of coffee. I sat and did my homework all day with the water bottle in sight; I got through three of them (72 ounces). I feel like I have turned a corner and I am finally started to feel some positive effects.



Day 5

Today I had to wake up particularly early for school and barely had time to take a sip of water. I noticed that I felt more dehydrated than usual; I think my body had become dependent on the influx of water after only five days of this challenge. I was able to get through my daily routine, but I noticed a large difference in my productivity without my water throughout the day. Once I had my water, I was able to finish my workout at the gym in a quicker fashion and felt more rejuvenated. Having ice cold water gave myself an instant energy boost, while the long term results replenished my body after an enduring gym session.

Day 6

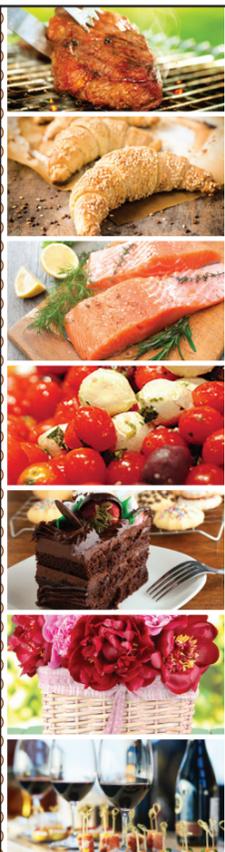
Not only is the water helping me feel more refreshed and awake, but I am staying fuller for longer periods of time. I have noticed that I barely go to the cupboard at work anymore for snacks, and that my lunch is keeping me content for hours longer than before. With my new energy, I have felt the motivation to go on a jog now, four days in a row in the cool weather. Good habits in one area of your life can affect other aspects as well.

Day 7

It is the final day of the challenge and I can honestly say I am going to miss it. Prior to the challenge, I used to be strict on ensuring I had enough water intake, but this habit slowly deteriorated right up until the first day of this experiment. This challenge has reminded myself why I loved it so much before. I feel more awake, fuller for longer, and my skin feels renewed and refreshed. I hope to continue with this habit even after this challenge comes to a close.

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Hallie Schiffman sails international waters

Twelfth-grader competes in the Laser World Sailing Championships

by Sana Rahman
Editor-in-Chief

Sailing competitively for the past seven years and receiving numerous international awards, twelfth-grader Hallie Schiffman continues to add to her list of accomplishments. Schiffman competed with the Olympic Development Team at the U21 Laser World Championships, in Belgium, and at the U19 Laser World Championships, in Netherlands, where she received 13th place.

According to Schiffman, at the age of 10, after reading "True Spirit," by Jessica Watson, a novel in which the protagonist embarks upon a solo worldwide sailing expedition, Schiffman was inspired to sail around the world. Unable to do so, she decided to do the next best thing — start learning.

When first stepping foot into competitive sailing, Schiffman was a member of the Sarasota Youth Sailing Team. After realizing she wanted to compete at a higher level, she switched to practice with the Lauderdale Yacht Club. Every weekend, Schiffman trains with the Lauderdale Yacht Club, staying in Fort Lauderdale for practices. This occurs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday. "They have better coaches, conditions and sailors, so being in that type of environment really helped me improve," Schiffman said.

Aside from training with the Lauderdale Yacht Club, Schiffman also earned her spot on several national teams. Every year, Olympic Development Camps choose 10 individuals across the nation to train with them as a precursor to the Olympic Development Team. "They have people watching results, so when I started doing better, I got asked to attend one of their camps," Schiffman said.

Seeing an improvement in her performance since getting involved with the camps in the

spring of 2016, Schiffman was then invited to be one of the three youth females on the Olympic Development Team.

As Schiffman gets older, she is starting to transition out of the Olympic Development Team and into the Senior National Team, in which she will compete with people in their 20s. On average, Schiffman attends camps for both teams once every two months.

With 36 hours of practice each week and traveling nationwide for one-week training camps, Schiffman has learned how to balance both school work and sailing. "When I get off the water, I have to do my homework and same thing when I'm flying," Schiffman said. "It's something I've worked on since I was younger because I used to be really bad with procrastination." According to Schiffman, despite the long and hard hours she has to practice, the memories

"Hallie's always been at the top of the fleet working harder than everyone else."

Lucas Sawin,
teammate

she makes with her teammates and coaches make all the stress worth it.

As a member of the Olympic Development Team, this past summer Schiffman went to Belgium for the U21 Laser World Championships and Netherlands for the U19 Laser World Championships.



At these events she raced with laser radial boats, a boat designed for lighter weight sailors, against competitors from 48 other countries.

Although not completely satisfied with her performance in Belgium, coming in 13th in Netherlands was personally a proud accomplishment of hers. "The feeling when you get your boat moving fast is really cool as you feel your boat slicing through the water, and you can focus on the wind in front of you, rather than the people behind you," Schiffman said.

However, the competitions over the summer were not her only encounters with international competition, having competed in Germany, Bermuda, Ireland and England as well. "The cool thing about sailing is that over the years I have made so many friends in other states and even other countries," Schiffman said. "Even within my team, although we all compete against each other, there's a good team dynamic and it's almost like a family."

Over the years, Schiffman has discovered what works best for her to have a strong competition mentality. "I used to be really strict with myself on these international trips thinking that I was only here



TOP LEFT: Twelfth-grader Hallie Schiffman is shown representing United States of America in the sail marked USA. **TOP RIGHT:** Schiffman is shown sailing toward the top course mark at worlds this past summer in Europe. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Schiffman changes directions, also known as tacking, to avoid sailing into the wind. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Schiffman rounds the course mark.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HALLIE SCHIFFMAN

for sailing and not sight-seeing, but then I realized that I would go to events and not do well," she said. "So, now I make sure to have fun and enjoy myself as well as compete."

Currently on the Olympic Development Team, the next step for Schiffman will be to obtain one of the three spots on the Senior National Team. On this team she will have the opportunity to compete for the one spot in the 2020

Olympics. At the time of press, Schiffman had received numerous recruitment offers from colleges where she hopes to sail and get training to aid in her Olympic aspirations.

"Hallie's always been at the top of the fleet working harder than everyone else. She always seems to be just a little bit faster than everyone else too," Lauderdale Yacht club teammate, Lucas Sawin said.

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A short drive from Pine View School

Begone snot: the tissue issue

by Zach Bright
Web Editor-in-Chief

There is a crisis at hand that is unfortunately not receiving the attention it deserves. It's not what Hurricane Mary did to Port Ricky. It's not that thing that Mickey Penn said about the gays or the football men. It's the lack of tissue boxes in classrooms here at Pine View.

You might think, "Oh wow, typical Torch kids, spouting their liberal agenda in poorly-edited articles and op-eds," but I'm here to tell you that this tissue issue affects everyone. And no, you can't use your paper as a tissue.

Recent reports have revealed that most classrooms on campus only have one tissue box, forcing students who need to blow their nose to venture all the way across the classroom to a singular location to do the deed.

"Have you ever been in class when all of a sudden you feel your nose getting runny? You turn to the left and to the right, desperately searching for a Kleenex to ease the

fluid gushing from your nose," eleventh-grader Tish Yu said. "But alas, the only tissue box is all the way across the room. You try to suck it up, but the noise produced draws silent stares from your peers as your teacher glares. The situation is hopeless."

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that this singular tissue place is most often placed on the teacher's desk, a largely inaccessible location for students, as they will have to look their superior face-to-face in the event of a runny nose. "For whatever reason, teachers seem to think that they're the only ones who get stuffy noses. What about the hundreds of snotty kids they teach?" Litty Gator, an attorney at the

American Civil Liberties Union fighting for Kleenex accessibility to minors, said.

This means that students have to walk up to the front of the class and blow their nose in front of all their peers as their teacher mockingly asks them if they are "OK."

"It's not the snot that is the

“For whatever reason, teachers seem to think that they’re the only ones who get stuffy noses.”

Litty Gator
Civil Liberties attorney



Twelfth-grader Zach Bright desperately searches for tissues within his classroom. The lack of tissues in most classrooms is a school-wide epidemic, leaving students tragically dripping in snot. PHOTO BY OLIVIA HANSEN

problem. It's the lack of awareness. No one 'nose' how big of an issue this is," ninth-grader Hank R. Chief said. Chief was forced to wipe his snot on his shirt sleeve minutes after this interview during a calculus test, leading several others in the class to snuffle in response and one kid to crack his knuckles.

A group of students has started a "Begone Snot" initiative to rid classrooms of this problem. This vigilante organization goes to the school under the cover of night, and places sacred boxes of tissues in needy classrooms.

Still, more action needs to take place. Over 2000 students suf-

fer from this one issue, and it's time to put an end to it. Petition for your teachers to take action and place tissues in easily accessible locations, with at least three boxes in each room. Have them placed near trash cans and hand sanitizer to conveniently put an end to this catastrophe.

Underclassmen host senior college forum



Underclassmen help their upperclassmen peers submit college applications. Recently, underclassmen have begun a new initiative to aid seniors in the painful application process. PHOTO BY ALLIE ODISHELIDZE

by Suzanne Brown
Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Fully knowledgeable on the college application process, a group of ninth-, tenth- and eleventh-grade students organized a senior college success forum last Thursday. Experts within their respective fields, these underclassmen leaders have committed hundreds of hours to College Confidential and Prep Scholar research ever since the start of their freshman year.

“One time on a ‘Chance Me’ subreddit, people said I had a good shot at getting into Penn, but might get waitlisted at Yale based on my stats. I felt like a failure for a while, but I’ve really grown since then. My SAT superscore went up like 90 points,” forum head and ninth-grader Hansom Dan – “Yale-Bulldogs_2025” online – said. “If I can pass down at least one piece of valuable advice to the twelfth-graders, I’ve done my job.”

Hansom Dan
grade 9

perclassmen by offering sage-like perspectives on topics ranging from application stress to preparation tips.

Speaker and tenth-grader Ivy Lee said, "I know this process is long and stressful. Believe me, I've read countless blog posts all about it. But if you really, fully dedicate your life to the Common App and ignore all basic human needs, you'll get through it."

Later, founder of two nearly non-existent clubs and inactive member of every honor society on campus, eleventh-grader Stan Forde had much to say about college conditioning. "Even if you haven't taken at least four AP's a year, starting freshman year, it doesn't mean that you're a complete failure," he said. "Sure, kiss Harvard goodbye, but there are a handful of other good schools, too," he said.

Along with a completed 20-year plan worksheet, seniors reported leaving with a false sense of hope and accomplishment.

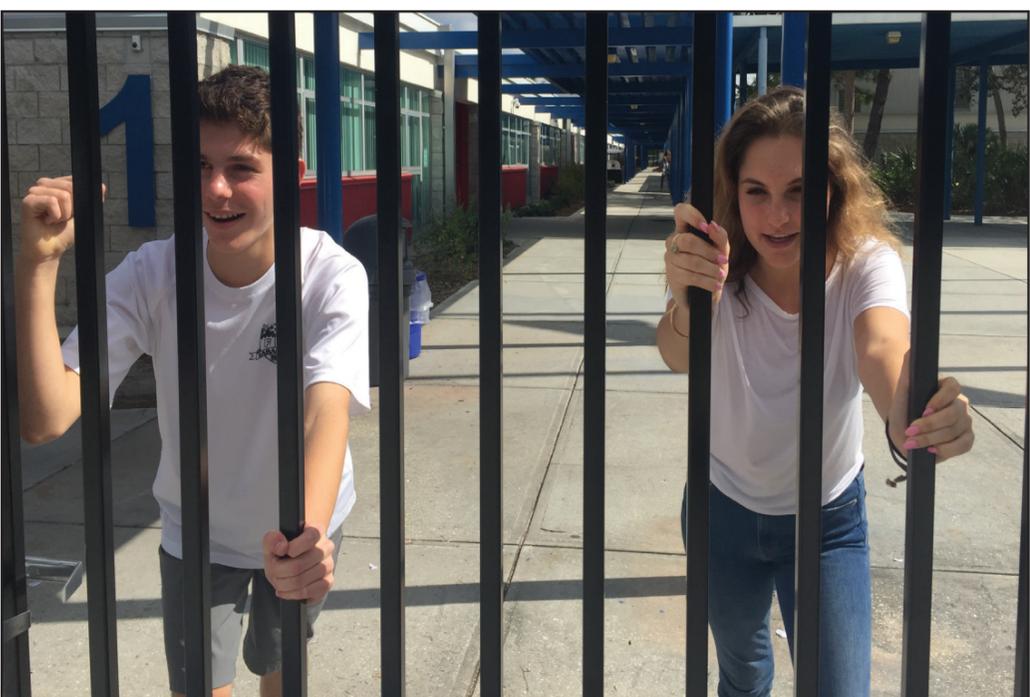
After the forum, organizers held an Ivy League merchandise sale on the steps of the auditorium, all \$65 of the proceeds going toward their sixth and newest non-profit venture.

Angry Floridian screams at the ever-persisting summer weather



Ninth-grader Vera Warm gesticulates angrily at the ever-present verdant background. Pine View students are confused and angered by the alleged presence of an "autumn." PHOTO BY ALLIE ODISHELIDZE

New changes to campus security actually implemented to keep students from escaping



Twelfth-grade students Carson Rated (left) and Smella Hecknut (right) are shocked and outraged at new school measures to retain students. New Pine View security on campus has led to exposure of a new reality: measures are to retain students rather than deter intruders. PHOTO BY OLIVIA HANSEN

[meme of the month]

When the vitamin gummies kick in



When You have lived for many years

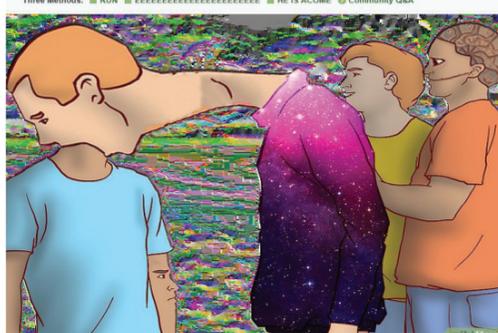


Typically this publication features popular memes, relevant at the time of authoring and endlessly relatable. These memes typically come from Twitter and spread from there. This month's meme is in fact an entire genre of meme.

Surrealist memes saw their beginnings in the golden-age of internet memes. Beginning before even rage



How to avoid getting scwhomped by the manman



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA

comics were a popular trend, surrealist memes have surpassed the time constraints the wide variety of memes see.

First seen in 2009, posted in a meme dump by a Reddit user, surrealist memes are a subgenre of Ironic Memes. The humor of these memes is drawn from the absurdity of the content.

The humor behind these memes is hard to explain — it is best to observe.

[a column]

College applications: a tale of crushing self-doubt

'Tis the season for college decisions and dreaded rejection. As a senior at Pine View I have seen my friends continue onto college — many to elite institutions. I was there the night the former Torch Editor-in-Chief and true queen, Marinna Okawa, was accepted to Harvard. Seeing their successes has made me excited and anticipatory of my own college application process.

I have submitted my first round of apps and I have one thing to say — you may be excited now, but you are not ready for the interrogation by any person you meet ever to ask about college. As soon as you reach the last year of high school, any person you meet in any situation will ask you about college plans.

This is quite possibly one of the most awkward situations possible.

Following general greeting and introduction, as soon as someone realizes you have entered the Final Stage of your high school adventure they immediately ask the stress-inducing, "So where are you going to college?"

Not only do most of the people you encounter inevitably not understand the college decision process — namely that decisions are not yet released — you also are stuck listing off the schools to which you are applying.

As someone who is applying to 11 schools, three of which are not in the United States, rattling off a list of schools is a chore. The amount of times I have repeated my list current-



Allie Odishelidze, Humor Editor

ly numbers in the hundreds. Not only does a diverse school list become a nuisance, the very action of naming a high-brow school invites an inundation of commentary on the choice.

"Wow! You're applying there? My dad went there!" and "That's your top choice? It's pretty hard to get into right?" and "Won't that bother your mom? Having you so far away?"

These questions have become the soundtrack behind my existence for the past six months.

Admittedly, this column is fully just a list of complaints. However, as someone who will not know where I am attending college until approximately April, I have one request of the general population. Please do not ask where I am attending college until after I am done facing the inevitable crushing depression of rejection. Once I know, I will proudly announce it. My Nissan Altima will have a bumper sticker. I will walk around entirely clad in merch. It will be apparent.

Please do not ask where I am attending college until after I am done facing the inevitable crushing depression of rejection.

[Tag Urself: Pine View edition]



Parking Lot

- tries to bring 11 items in a 10 items or less checkout aisle
- only shampoos once a week
- wears crocs



Surf Bench

- drinks red gatorade
- loves the beach
- actually athletic



Pine View Sign

- really stressed
- fueled by energy drinks
- thinks they're better than everyone else



Bleachers

- forgot how to run
- constantly covered in ants
- is always watching from the sidelines



Portable

- H E C K
- wears shirts backwards and inside out
- always sweaty



Community Garden

- only eats organic
- reminds everyone constantly that they're vegan
- flushes toilet once a month to save water

Gun Culture in America: two perspectives, one problem

by Riley Board
Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Let's get a few things straight: mass shootings by a single person are NOT normal, they have NOT always existed, and there are (almost) no people, regardless of political party affiliation, who are in favor of them. Every time we experience another large-scale massacre by gun in the United States, like the Las Vegas shooting in October and Texas church shooting this month, it is assumed by much of the American public that any legislation passed on the matter will be done to prevent further gun violence by tightening regulations and access to guns.

However, this is not the case. Gun regulation almost always lessens after a large shooting. A 2016 research paper produced at Harvard University found that restrictions are loosened by 75 percent in states with Republican majority legislatures, and the examples support this. Sixteen states introduced legislation that will allow people to carry concealed weapons without a permit. Georgia allowed the carry of guns in airports, Texas allowed students to carry guns on college campuses and Wisconsin removed their 48-hour waiting period for handgun purchase.

All of these measures came after the devastating attack at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Con., in which 20 first-grade children died. The event inevitably sparked discussion of restricting gun access, but the reality did not reflect this: it is now easier to acquire and carry guns across the United States.

In light of the recent Las Vegas shooting, it is important to remember that Stephen Paddock legally acquired the 23 weapons he used

to commit the shooting, as well as the 19 more found in his home. Thirty of these weapons, a majority of them semi-automatic rifles, were acquired in the 12 months before the shooting.

As a nation, we don't support massacres, but we do support the easy accessibility of the tools needed to commit them.

Following a mass shooting, self-defense is seemingly the largest push behind decreased gun regulation. However, despite the 63 percent of Americans who feel that having a gun makes them safer, the "good guy with a gun" championed by the National Rifle Association (NRA) rarely does any good. In an FBI study of 160 defending active shooter events over 13 years, just seven were civilians, and six of those were off-duty cops, making just one an actual self-defense civilian gun-carrier. Often, those carrying weapons have no experience using them, or are simply unequipped to handle a shooter situation without injuring an innocent person.

The reason doesn't matter so much as the problem: after each mass shooting, guns become easier to acquire, people consistently commit more violent and deadly murders (Pulse in Orlando, Las Vegas, Texas), restrictions are again loosened and the cycle continues. If we want to prevent more tragic events like those that have become all too common in recent years, we cannot allow these laws to continue expanding access to deadly weapons.

by Suzanne Brown
Asst. Editor-in-Chief

We live in an age of abnormality. Drowned beneath repeated headlines of acts of violence and terror, our understanding of mass shootings and their context is now more crucial than ever. In wake of the Las Vegas and Texas shootings, it is time to acknowledge the increasing frequency

of such attacks, from the realms of Pulse and beyond. For today's youngest generations, this 21st century instability is all they've ever known. If we continue to silence conversations and censor events we deem too controversial, we risk establishing a new normal.

Growing up, I was shielded from current events. Newscasts were labeled too political for consumption, so I turned a young, blind eye. For a time, I lacked the knowledge that I lived in a bubble.

Now, I frequently read the news with my younger brother. At only 10 years old, he grasps that there is a world outside of his four walls — a world, while flawed, that presents an opportunity for generations like his to find solutions for tomorrow.

Of course, there's a line to be drawn between content that is age-appropriate and content that is not. While I did not subject my brother to intense, first-person footage of Las Vegas, I did expose him to partisan facts. More than most his age, he is aware that mass shootings exist, that they occur at higher rates and that they are a problem. Armed with this understanding, he can be one of the few to provide an answer.

After 20 children were fatally shot at Sandy Hook and gun legislature had yet to be revised, an issue of ignorance and apathy surfaced. Improved U.S. gun regulation remains at a standstill, yet we can begin to fuel the future's understanding of the situation's gravity. Older generations may remain stagnant in thought, but younger generations are a clean slate for change, which starts with education and discussion.

If children are taught that there is a cycle of violence, they will be the ones to break it.



GRAPHIC BY SUZANNE BROWN

[staff editorial]

College rankings act as the catalyst for unfair enrollment

As the countdown to early decision results nears, Pine View seniors will face the inevitable dread of checking whether or not they were accepted to the school of their dreams. For many of these students, their decision to apply to a school was determined not by facilities, cost, faculty or major but by the university's placement on U.S. News and World Report rankings. Published annually since 1983, this list compiles statistics on seven main aspects of the "college experience."

While Ivy League schools and other elite institutions are great at getting students from lower socioeconomic roots into high-level occupations, they are poor representations of the total population. For instance, Princeton University, ranked number one by U.S. News and World Report, has consistently had the one percent of wealthiest Americans represent roughly 20 percent of the student body.

Moreover, schools with low-income students do not benefit from the ranking system U.S. News and World Report utilize. The aspects considered by these ranking systems can be gamed by colleges to elevate their status ultimately increasing the clout their institutions hold.

According to the American political journalism company, POLITICO, the academic reputation of undergraduate students is highly weighted, representing 22.5 percent of the decision-making process. This includes the GPAs of the undergraduate population of a school

as well as test scores — both ACT and SAT. Higher GPAs and higher scores correlate to a direct rise in U.S. News ranking. This incentivizes schools to accept only those with high test scores and GPAs, disregarding many other facets that could deem students admissible.

Making up another 22.5 percent of the criteria, the ability of a college to maintain its students and ensure their graduation from their institution is an attempt by the U.S. News and World Report system to show the success rate of students; in reality, institutions choose the most self-sufficient candidates. Students

None of the aspects considered address general student contentment, the specific success of programs on campus, or the plethora of other tenants students consider when applying to schools.

who show creativity and intelligence may be passed over in favor of students who exhibit personal autonomy.

The next 20 percent of the consideration is faculty resources. The resources a student might have access to while attending an institution are pivotal to the college selection process but cannot feasibly be compared. To try to compare a highly-STEM focused school to a school centering on arts and humanities brings up the age-old apples and oranges comparison. Rankings do not consider how these resources are helpful to a potential applicant.

Ring in at 12.5 percent is student selectivity. Schools are judged based on their willingness to accept applicants. The acceptance rates that make elite institutions well known drives a significant part of the consideration for rankings. By encouraging students to apply, institutions reduce their acceptance rates.

Schools are also judged based on their financial resources, accounting for 10 percent of the ranking consideration. Therefore, schools with lower budgets are penalized. These small schools may have fewer financial resources but make up for it in other areas — areas not considered in the rankings calculations. This goes hand in hand with the fact that the alumni giving rate is also regarded in ranking consideration. This means that schools like Duke, Harvard and Johns Hopkins maintain huge endowments which translates to a higher alumni giving rate and more advancement in the rankings.

The final 7.5 percent of the rankings is determined by graduation rate performance. None of the aspects considered address general student contentment, the specific success of programs on campus or the plethora of other tenants students consider when applying to schools.

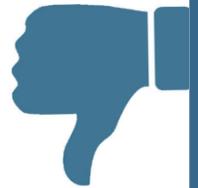
Many universities recognize the importance of these rankings and will actively rely on their submitted reports. Recently, Claremont McKenna was found to have submitted incorrect statistics on their freshman class. According to the

The Verdict



Students Working Against Tobacco: We are glad to see SWAT making waves in state legislature to pass the Menthol Act.

Single-point entry: We are sad to see our open campus come to a 'close' with the installment of the new gates.



Single-point entry: We are happy to see Pine View becoming a safer place, especially for younger students.

Art department enrollment: We are sad to see the decrease in students taking art courses.



Washington Post, the institute's admission dean sent falsely elevated SAT scores. The fact that a reputable school would lie spells out how important these lists are perceived within higher education establishments.

The college application process is the culmination of all of the work students wade through in high school, and the decisions released by "top tier" colleges undermine

the confidence of extremely qualified students. An alternative to the ranking system is one developed during the Obama administration: the College Scorecard. This site provides an unbiased comparison ranking tuition, graduation rate and median wages. After all, applying to college is about choosing the best institution for the student — not the best institution chosen by an algorithm.

The Torch

PVTorch.com

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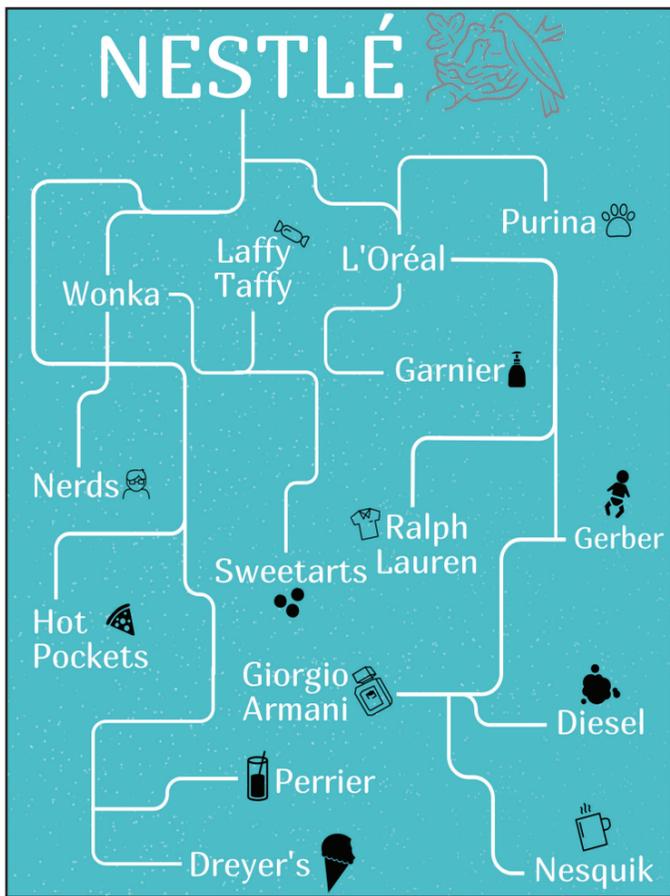
Nestlé: A company contributing to massive global health crisis

by Brianna Nelson
Asst. Opinion Editor

Equipped with an armada of products ranging from candy to dog food, Nestlé is one of the world's largest packaged food conglomerates. Due to the halt of growth in wealthier parts of the world, companies like Nestlé have begun the aggressive marketing of their products in developing nations. The direct sale of their goods in South America, Africa and Asia has shifted the natives' diets from traditional, nutritious foods to severely processed products peddled by Nestlé.

As cheap, packaged consumer goods become more popular and pervasive, obesity becomes a common issue; today, there are more obese people in the world than there are underweight. According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, the distribution of foods in these impoverished countries has caused the malnutrition and hunger from just a few decades ago to be replaced by a wave of corpulence and heart disease. Though it may seem great that people are no longer starving, replacing starvation with calorie-dense and nutrient-deficient foods is not the path to take. The extreme growth in the sales of packaged foods produced by Nestlé has created a new form of malnutrition which may be worse than regular starvation; consumers are both overweight and lack the sufficient nutrients needed to support a healthy body.

There are many factors in the international rise of obesity rates but it is difficult to deny that the epidemic is inextricably linked to the sale of packaged foods. According to a report conducted by the World Health Organization, data collected from 74 countries worldwide shows a strong correlation between sales of ultra-processed food products and market deregulation. Nestlé executives are ignoring the



GRAPHIC BY ZACH BRIGHT

fact that, although though their products alleviate hunger, they do not do so in a healthy manner.

As Nestlé pushed deeper into these developing countries, they transformed the lives of local citizens, farmers and retailers. Farmers soon abandoned sustenance crops in favor of growing cash commodities of sugar cane, corn and soybeans—the basic components of many processed goods. According to Nestlé's website, they do provide jobs for people throughout developing countries — about 21,000 — but that should not excuse their actions in terms of the dangers of their products. It also pulls local re-

tailers into replacing aisles of fresh, locally-sourced fruits, vegetables and meats with artificial products.

Worldwide, deaths from preventable diet-related illnesses are on the rise, with Nestlé and other multinational food conglomerates driving this public health epidemic. Education on the aspects of a healthy diet and holding large companies accountable for their actions in contributing to obesity are the only way to stop the spread of corpulence. If companies continue on the current path, these developing countries may never recover, eternally locked in a cycle of poverty due to chronic illness.

[a column]

Catholicism coupled with currency

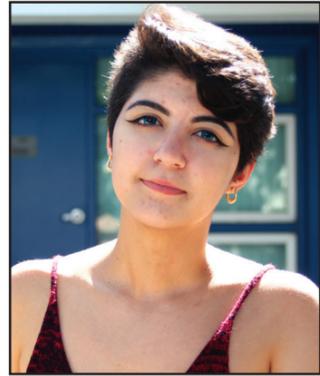
"When in Rome, do as the Romans do," but when in church, you do as the masses do. That means praying, singing, repenting and, on occasion, offering spare change into a collection plate. Innocuous as it may seem, the circulation of this plate is pivotal to religious service, which makes sense since churches are non-profit organizations. While that money is meant to do good, and in most cases does, occasionally the funds are used for less charitable purposes.

Christianity is the primary religion practiced within the states with a whopping 83 percent of Americans identifying themselves as Christian in 2017 according to an ABC News survey. With most of the nation united under the same scripture, this should foster a practice of faithful adherence to morality, with little corruption to counter.

Behind the scenes, however, the reality of religion is far different.

God is evident in our money, and the money is in the church. The financial disparity of America's institutionalized Christianity is obvious, bolstered by a lengthy timeline of corruption claims. In a 2012 case, Reverend Michael R. Moynihan of the St. Michael of Archangel Church in Connecticut was convicted for obstructing justice under allegations of misspending Church funds. Even further back, in a 2007 case that took place a mere 30 miles away from St. Michael's, Reverend Michael Jude Fay of the St. John Roman Catholic Church was convicted of embezzling \$1.3 million.

Christianity has walked hand in hand with finances since the Middle Ages, specifically in correlation to Catholicism. According to the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, the Catholic Church owned almost a third of the land in Europe from 1100 to 1300. During this period, the church organized its administration through factions, thus



Melissa Santoyo, Opinion Editor

creating secular capital for barons, bishops, merchants and entrepreneurs. This system of power assumption circulated land ownership solely between Catholics, keeping authority tied to religious affiliation. Money immediately followed suit and with the lack of regulation, bishops were free to allocate funds as they saw fit.

The profit today, however, is not easily followed. Forbes writer Walter Pavlo cites that monetary loss due to economic mismanagement from within Christian church systems worldwide amounted to \$8 billion in 2013. Additionally, he claims that a staggering 95 percent of financial mismanagement within the Catholic church is left unreported, compared to 66 percent of corporate fraud that flies under the radar.

Despite being a devout Catholic, mass is not something I attend. The financial fraudulence in some facets of the Church is too off-putting. It is not to say the solution lies in eradicating the collection plate, but a step forward starts with being informed. Christians need to be aware of where donations are allocated. When financial transactions become more transparent, then the church will once again regain its reputation.

[point-counterpoint]

Immigrants in office: the presidential problem

With ten months under President Trump, questions as to POTUS qualifications have arisen.

If a businessman is capable of running the country, why not a naturalized citizen?

For

by Zach Bright
Web Editor-in-Chief

One thing I learned from the unprecedented outcome of the 2016 election is that anyone can become president. Why can't a naturalized citizen become president if an amateur politician with no prior experience with government can?

America is a nation forged by the experiences of immigrants. Today, their population accounts for 13 percent of the U.S. Disbarring any individual from this group from running not only prevents their direct representation via presidency but also symbolically treats over one-tenth of Americans as second-class citizens.

I was born in Nanjing, China, to a Chinese mother and an American father. With the American citizenship I received at birth, I moved to the U.S. seven months later. My half-brother was born in the same city three years earlier, and after spending five years in the country, he too came to the states. Although he earned his U.S. citizenship by age 10, I can run for president while he cannot.

When it comes to our American values, there is no discernible difference. Yet the current system ultimately regards him as inferior by prohibiting his ability to run for president, disenfranchising him of the same level of citizenship as myself. The fear that his birth in China might negatively affect relations with other governments remains unsubstantiated and solely lies in speculation, only based upon slanted eyes, straight black hair and his birthplace — qualities he has no control over.

A president who obtained citizenship through the proper legal channels would not exacerbate

this issue anymore than a natural-born president. Moreover, our current president born in the U.S. has shown himself to be inept at international relations, bungling American relations by physically shoving the Prime Minister of Montenegro, aiming personal invectives toward Australia, and constantly criticizing Mexico and its people.

University of Pennsylvania law professor Theodore Ruger has noted a "rising chorus" of constitutional scholars who view the clause as "an outdated artifact that ought to be jettisoned," especially when democracies across the world function without it. For instance, in nations like Germany, the de facto leader of the European Union and the continent, there is no natural-born citizen requirement. Second to the U.S., this democracy wields much international influence but has no problem with allowing a naturalized citizen to run.

Certain individuals may posit that naturalized citizens cannot run for president with a laundry list of rulings. Yet constitutionality itself is fluid: what was once unconstitutional years ago can be constitutional today. Kevin T. McGuire and Barbara Palmer of the American Political Science Review recognize this, saying, "the members of the U.S. Supreme Court are often willing to provide authoritative answers to questions, but these rulings constantly change as the courts themselves change."

Opponents of an immigrant president still state that time must pass for global politics to reach a point of stability, but the international climate is not cooling down anytime soon. Continuing to exclude naturalized citizens from the full mobility of power through presidency — a quality that should link all Americans — undermines the very foundation of our democracy.

Against [guest editorial]

by Ali Ahmed
Grade 12

While immigration remains a vital component in shaping America's population, the eligibility for presidency must remain restricted. This is delineated by the Constitution and its legal application through the parameters outlined by consistent and abundant judicial precedent.

Advocates of a constitutional repeal may state that the clause is simply outdated. However, one may observe that courts have re-evaluated, applied and upheld the eligibility clause in an alternative

context. In the 2012 case of *Hassan vs. Federal Election Committee*, six courts denied claims that the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments should endow all citizens with the eligibility for POTUS (President of the United States) under equal protection clauses. Citing the cases of *Knauer v. U.S.*, *Baumgartner v. U.S.* and *Osborn v. Bank of the United States*, it was repeatedly determined that all citizens stand equal — except for eligibility for presidency. The claim that the Eligibility Clause violates Equal Protection Clauses which is afforded by the fundamental concepts of democracy, thereby has no constitutional basis.

The United States has evolved into a country whose expansive growth makes it a major international power, which is why

one may observe tangible repercussions of allowing immigrants to become eligible for the presidency. Beth A. Brooke, global vice chair of public policy, points out that "On the global stage of diplomacy, symbolic gestures are even more important and less forgiving."

Jackie Northam of National Public Radio reported that when Donald Trump received a congratulatory phone call from Taiwan, this single call could have major ramifications. This demonstrates that such a seemingly nominal action may be symbolically powerful. Now imagine if a Taiwanese individual were to be elected president. Even if this individual acted without any biases and spent the majority of his or her life in the United States, that symbolic weight would be omnipresent across the political spectrum.

According to Michael Auslin, a specialist on Asia at the American Enterprise Institute, China would impede on U.S. interest in response to symbolic action by increasing militarization, abandoning North Korean Sanctions and launching cyber attacks. One may also see that changing the status quo would yield no repercussions yet amending this clause of the Constitution would open the door to such harms.

I am not saying that immigrants should never be president. I am saying that due to the nature of international diplomacy, symbolic leadership defines global perspectives. The American presence in international politics stands as a pivotal interest — we must not compromise our dominant status. We should strive to shape the international political atmosphere to be constituted by a sense of cooperation and understanding where actions such as the election of an immigrant may not be seen as symbolically offensive. Hopefully then, we will be able to elect an immigrant as the leader of the free world.

Should naturalized citizens be allowed to become president just as they can serve in Congress?



Based on a survey of 194 Pine View students in grades 7-12

Would a naturalized president negatively impact relations with other countries?



Based on a survey of 181 Pine View students in grades 7-12

GRAPHIC BY ZACH BRIGHT

Alumna becomes 'Alive' beyond the pages

Class of 2004 graduate juggles the titles of lawyer, mother and writer

by Kasumi Wade
Asst. News Editor

In 2004, Chandler Baker was a graduating senior at Pine View School walking across the stage at the Van Wezel. Now, she is a practicing lawyer with five books under her name, published by both Disney Hyperion and Macmillan, and three books published under a pen name. Baker attended the University of Pennsylvania for her undergraduate degree and then moved on to law school at the University of Texas.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHANDLER BAKER

For most, writing a book can take years before it is at a place where it can be published. For Baker, the process typically takes three months to write her first draft, and after all of the back-and-forth revisions with her editor, the entire process will take about a year. Baker wrote her first three books with a company during law school.

With a husband, a child and two ongoing jobs, Baker has to be diligent. "I have gotten to a place

where I have to be time-efficient. I know how to properly use my time and balance all aspects of my life," Baker said. She works for at least 15 minutes everyday, no matter the conditions. "I don't think people realize how much we can accomplish in 15 minutes unless we are put to the test," Baker said.

From an early age, Baker grew up immersed in the world of books and literature. "I always wanted to be an author, but I didn't think that being a writer could be your occupation," Baker said. Through a dare in college, Baker decided to write a book during National Novel Writing Month, and thus began her career in writing. After this, she started researching about how books were made and how she could get into the publication process.

Over the years, Baker has written numerous books in the young adult genre, including "Alive" and "Teen Hyde: High School Horror". "There's nothing more sat-

isfying than holding a book in my hands and knowing I wrote the entire thing," Baker said.

One of her favorite parts of being a writer is having interactions with other people. She has met numerous friends throughout her writing journey and is now very close with some of them. "There were authors that I looked up to and admired, but they are now my close friends whom I talk to all of the time. I have this whole new network of people I can communicate with since I became a published writer," Baker said.

Aside from making friends in the literary community, Baker has also been able to interact with her readers. She has met with fans at book festivals, school visits and signings at bookstores. "Meeting readers is one of the best parts of the job and, even though taking the time to do those events takes away from writing time, the face-to-



TOP: Pine View class of 2004 alumna Chandler Baker signs copies of her book "Alive" at a signing hosted by BookPeople. "Alive" came out in June 2015 and was published by Disney Hyperion. PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHANDLER BAKER

interaction always motivates me to get back to the page," Baker said.

One of her favorite things about these interactions is receiving fan art from teen readers. Recently a reader created a comic book version of one of her books that was very imaginative and unique. Also with modern technology, Baker has been able to easily connect with fans through social media and email. "It's a little scary, but fun, to see those initial reactions from read-

ers about a new book of mine being released via Twitter or Instagram," Baker said.

Baker often looks back on her experiences at Pine View and how they have affected her writing journey. She was taught by former teacher Dr. Neal Schleifer, who according to Baker, was a great influence and a spectacular literature teacher who taught her a lot of things that have helped her become the writer she is today. "Also, I just felt so well-prepared coming from Pine View. It allowed me to have some capacity to try other things extracurricularly while in college," she said.

In the future, Baker plans to continue writing, with the last book in her "High School Horror" trilogy coming out in January. "I feel like I've found my calling with writing and I don't see a time in the future where I won't be working on something new," she said.

“There’s nothing more satisfying than holding a book in my hands and knowing I wrote the entire thing.”

Chandler Baker, class of 2004

Behind the scenes of Mr. and Miss Pine View 2017

by Alexa Mollod
Copy Editor

Every year, two seniors win the titles of Mr. and Miss Pine View. This year, twelfth-graders Reed Windom (Mr.) and Sophie Goodwin (Miss) took home these titles after winning their respective events. The Torch recently sat down with them to get to know them better.

How does it feel to be Mr. and Miss Pine View?

Mr.: Amazing because now I get to go to Cobalt with Sophie. Do you think she'll say yes?

Miss: I feel so humbled and honored to be Miss Pine View even though I don't want to go to Cobalt with Reed. But anyway, if I could break my crown into 15 pieces, I would pull a Cady Heron from "Mean Girls" because all of these amazing spies deserve that and so much more.

What made you want to be Mr. and Miss Pine View?

Mr.: Is this still not Mr. Cardinal Mooney?

Miss: I never wanted to be Miss Pine View — I wanted to be in Miss Pine View so I could go outside of my friend group and meet some new people. I've seen Miss Pine View every year since second grade, so I looked forward to actually being in it as a senior.

If you could change your music genre and secret agent, what would you change it to?

Mr.: Funk would've probably been better — oh wait, I was funk.

Miss: Austin Powers is me. I couldn't have chosen anything that resembles my personality better.

If you could change anything about the experience what would you change?

Mr.: I wish I started working on my



TOP: Twelfth-graders Reed Windom and Sophie Goodwin pose together on the elementary playground. The two were crowned this year's Mr. and Miss Pine View. BOTTOM: Windom and Goodwin smile after Goodwin won at Miss Pine View 2017. Miss Pine View and Mr. Pine View are annual fundraising events held at school.

TOP PHOTO BY ALEXA MOLLOD AND BOTTOM PHOTO PROVIDED BY SOPHIE GOODWIN

act sooner than the day before the show.

Miss: I would've made Sy wear higher heels.

Did anything interesting happen behind the scenes?

Mr.: While rehearsing, Harris Merrill got stung by a jellyfish and I jumped on top of it.

Miss: During rehearsals, Lindsay and I were wearing conjoined twin outfits and jumping up the stairs. We fell.

What is your best memory from the event?

Mr.: Seeing Harris Lichenstein dressed as a woman.

Miss: Right before we went on stage,

we were standing outside the auditorium and decided to start chanting. It was the first moment that I felt like our group of girls was actually good friends and we were all in it together. We were all nervous, so it was a way to just relieve the tension and have fun.

What advice would you give to future contestants?

Mr.: I know it is way more stressful than applying to college at times, but in the end it is worth it. And always remember — wear nose plugs in the dressing room at all times.

Miss: Try to incorporate as many friends in your acts as you can, and try to be in as many acts as you can, because it makes the bond between the girls stronger.

[a column]

Following your own road not taken

I have a confession to make — I have the tendency to over-react. For anyone who knows me, you've probably heard me say something along the lines of "Oh my god, everything is falling apart" at some point over the last few months. And while many of us may be feeling this way in regard to college applications, standardized tests and school in general, I have started thinking that maybe my pent-up stress has more to do with my actions out of the classroom than in school.

Being someone who constantly feels the need to be working, studying or reading in order to feel accomplished, I have seen this mentality often hamper my own potential.

If I am being completely honest with you, there is no definitive answer to that question. But if there is something that I have realized over the last four years in high school, it is that a little spontaneity can be a positive thing. Being someone who meticulously lives through her calendar, planning each test and activity out by the hour, I often fall victim to saying no to opportunities because I hadn't "planned" on them happening. But that is something I hope to change.

The thing is, spontaneity is



Sana Rahman, Editor-in-Chief

not a concept that only applies to social activities, but it is also applicable to our academic life as well. By being closed off to events and offers given to us on the spot, we put ourselves in positions where we may be missing out on key opportunities. Of course, it can be scary to stray off the path you are used to sticking to, but if you never take the leap to try something new, meet with different people or jump at a prospect thrown at you, you might find yourself missing out on memorable moments.

While I am sure you can still find me being overly dramatic over some random situation, I'll be making sure to occasionally take a deep breath, a step back and actually have fun. In the wise words of Daddy Rienhoff, "What will you be doing for fun this weekend?"