

the Torch



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Blood drive student turnout increases

by Sarah Catalano
Sci&Tech Editor

Ready to donate potentially life-saving blood, students lined up Sept. 26 and Dec. 11 to visit the mobile clinic. Alongside the emergence of a senior scholarship program under SunCoast Blood Bank (SCBB), increased awareness has caused student turnout to climb.

The blood drive, which previously went almost unannounced, was heralded this year by members of Health and Education Initiatives Club (HEI). It is estimated that the first drive this year was attended by more than twice as many students as last year — enough for the SCBB vehicle to make a second appearance on campus.

Twelfth-grader Gabriel Monzon, who participated in the blood drive, said, "I don't know why any senior wouldn't [donate blood]... It's overall a great experience, not to mention my blood could be used for someone, I could end up saving a life just sitting, eating a granola bar for an hour."

The SCBB is now offering small scholarships to seniors who donate at least three times, volunteer for SCBB a minimum of 30 hours their senior year and write an application essay. Their official website states, "[SCBB] is committed to cultivating the next generation of blood donors, and high school student supporters through its Scholarship Program."

SCBB will be returning Feb. 13 and April 15 for student donations.

"Sometimes to do a good thing, you don't need to go out of your way," Monzon said. "You can help someone right next to you... All you need to do is just do the things presented to you, and you could end up saving a life."

District rethinks guest speaker policy

by Elizabeth Hopkins and Brianna Nelson
Asst. Editor-in-Chief and Spark Editor-in-Chief

In November of 2018, a student educator from Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC) arrived at Pine View to give what should have been a typical presentation. She covered the basics of healthy relationships and consent, as she had at almost every other school in the county, facilitating student discussion as usual, and then proceeded into a short video. Little did she know the sudden and swift backlash the video would prompt.

SPARCC is a local organization dedicated to helping survivors of domestic abuse, rape and dating violence while also educating students and the community at large. Delivering regular presentations at public schools within the district is one of the responsibilities of SPARCC educators.

Typically, educators show one of the district approved videos, an animation drawing a parallel between consent and offering a cup of tea. November of 2018 at Pine View, however, the educator opted for an unapproved video, produced by Planned Parenthood featuring live-action scenarios, some with same-sex couples demonstrating consent in a more overt and directly sexual light. The presentation ran smoothly, and after that day SPARCC had planned to return the following year as they had done for the past three years.

The day following the presentation, however, SPARCC and the video they had shown became a point of contention for some Pine View parents. Parents, teachers and administrators had been unaware that the video SPARCC showed was unapproved by the district, instead their reaction was rooted in the video's unambiguous depiction of sexual interaction. The true issue that presented itself, however, was the lack of a coordinated

approval process between schools and the district.

SPARCC was suspended from all district schools while the investigation proceeded and the district spent time drafting up new guidelines and forming a new board dedicated to approval of more controversial guest speakers.

Prior to the institution of the new guidelines, the previous entity, Safe and Drug Free Schools (SADFS), worked to approve guest speakers and create social and moral education. Their process was built on a set list of approved guest speakers and organizations that schools could easily bring into the classroom. One of the organizations on this list was SPARCC who had delivered presentations across the district. SADFS worked to approve more controversial speakers with content relating to violence and substances, however, after the investigation of SPARCC, it was disbanded.

Today, the Health and Safety Curriculum Committee (HSCC) is tasked with the approval of speakers intending to discuss potentially controversial topics, which includes substance abuse, violence prevention, mental health, health education, politics and religion.

All these topics are clar-

ified on the new form where guest speakers seeking approval must check a box if they are planning on discussing any of the aforementioned topics. All speakers must still submit an approval form outlining their proposed talking points.

"We tend to air on the side of conservative. If there is a potential controversial topic, we're going to send home a permission slip and let families know, so they can opt out," Suzie Dubose, Co-Director of the HSCC, said.

This reaction highlights a shift in the importance of parental consent and knowledge initiated by responses to the SPARCC presentation.

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GRAPHIC BY BRIANNA NELSON

A B ~~C~~ D Decline in nationwide test scores

by Joanna Malvas
Asst. Spark Editor

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or the Nation's Report Card, released a report Oct. 30 of 2019 that revealed a significant decline in reading proficiency. According to the report, 34 to 35% of the nation's fourth- and eighth-graders were marked as proficient and 17 states have received scores below the national average, while the overwhelming majority of states stagnated. While Florida has sustained higher passing scores than the national standard, its average has slowly declined in past years.

Nevertheless, the NAEP's random mass sampling accounts for only 10% of schools, in which students are assessed from various so-

ciological groups. As stated by the American Institute of Research, the NAEP's tests are meant to be reflective of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), thus making its data inadequate for statewide analysis. In contrast, Florida State As-

sessments (FSA) has seen gradual progress in its ELA testing, with over half of Florida students reaching the level three benchmark since last year. In regards to Sarasota County Schools, the district has soared above the state average by 11% with a 66% proficiency rate, according to FSA statistics. This progress in literacy may be attributed to partnership with the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. The initiative is a chapter of the

national movement, as it is partnered with Manatee, Desoto and Charlotte County. With plans to ensure school readiness and success within grasping deeper ELA concepts, the Suncoast Campaign directs its focus toward third-grade benchmark achievement. "The reason why that's an important factor is that students are taught to learn from the time they're born until third grade. They're expected to be able to read to learn. If they haven't reached that important proficiency benchmark by the end of third grade, they will fall further and further behind. They won't be able to master the more complex subject matter

they'll encounter in later years. Statistically, across the country, most students who fail to reach that milestone falter in later grades, and in many cases drop out," Beth Duda, director of the Suncoast Campaign said.

Duda further explained how socio-economic status is a crucial determining factor that correlates with reading scores as well.

"The trends tend to be significant according to the socio-economic level of the school. For example, for the students from Title 1 schools... the number of students who are reading proficiently in those schools is significantly lower than schools where the socio-economic level is higher," Duda said.

With the intention of building reading skills for future achievement, the campaign created five pillars to tackle such goals. These pillars include school readiness, brain-building, school attendance, summer-learning opportunities and family and parental engagement.

Moreover, Pine View staff have invested their own time in advancing areas that show the lowest mastery. Each year, data is accumulated into a School Improvement Plan (SIP) Progress Update that highlights trends within each subject matter. From the report, the test

subsection with the lowest mastery was Integration of Knowledge, which is why this topic has been a primary focus for all language arts classes. However, over 70% of Pine View's third-, fourth-, sixth-, ninth- and tenth-graders still remain proficient in this test subsection.

GRAPHIC BY BRIANNA NELSON

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Find out which substitute you are!
How would you take attendance?

Speaker backlash prompts change

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by Elizabeth Hopkins and Brianna Nelson
Asst. Editor-in-Chief and Spark Editor-in-Chief

The HSCC replacing SADSFS was also to ensure that presentations align with curricular standards. As a district specific entity, the committee is led by Co-Directors Dubose and James Slaton as well as executive directors of curriculum. The previous entity, was instead built on community stakeholders and partners.

HSCC meets monthly to discuss proposed speakers, where an approved list is given to the Office of Community Involvement, before being sent to district principals. The new process is meant to balance the importance of curriculum and statute and community perspectives on these issues.

The overall process is now more lengthy and bureaucratic, a necessary change in the eyes of the district, administration and teachers.

Assistant Principal Tara Spielman explained the benefits to having multiple sets of eyes reviewing proposed talking points, allowing for presentations to be respectful to everyone's beliefs and experiences.

The main issue posed by the new process, according to Spielman, is the turnaround time of about a month on all HSCC applications, causing applications and content to be prepared well in advance for presentations.

Specifically, in November, as a part of environmental and marine science teacher Jason Miller's usual repertoire of relevant experts in the field of the

SPECIFIED CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS UNDER NEW POLICY	
SUBSTANCE ABUSE alcohol, drugs, tobacco, vaping, e-cigarettes	VIOLENCE PREVENTION relationships, bullying, assault, abuse
HEALTH EDUCATION diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, sex education, HIV, AIDS, STDs	MENTAL HEALTH social/emotional well-being and character education
POLITICS strongly biased organisations, campaigners, etc...	RELIGION religious institutions, preaching focused speakers

natural sciences, Miller invited Abby Tyrna from the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences to discuss micro-plastics. For speakers like Tyrna, the burden is not as extensive as for other topics which require months of work to simply get into district schools.

"Prior to [policy changes] there wasn't much of an approval process if anything at all... It's inconvenient but everyone understands the necessity ... [Guest speakers] know why that kind of accountability is important," Miller said.

For classes like Miller's, a connection between speakers and curriculum is easy to achieve. For other speakers, however, it can be a challenge to enter Pine View's classrooms.

According to State Statute, speakers and their content must be relevant to classroom curriculum. For organizations like SPARCC, this means visiting Health Opportunities through Physical Education (HOPE) or Gym classes where the topics of

relationships and sexuality are relevant. Here, Pine View contends with an issue where no classes are particularly relevant or able to make space under the pressure of standardized testing. Previously, SPARCC had visited AP Literature classes as directed by the Guidance department. Now, however, with the increased communication and coordination between the district and schools, a space for this kind of education is difficult to find.

Now, through a slate of approved content, SPARCC has returned to many schools in the district, making frequent trips to Riverview and Venice High School, speaking to their primarily freshmen HOPE classes. SPARCC is not banned at Pine View, as they have opportunity to return if a teacher or administrator requests.

"SPARCC is an amazing organization and hopefully we can rebuild our relationship... the information they share is just so important," Spielman said.

Scores trend downward in country

continued from page 1
by Joanna Malvas
Asst. Spark Editor

"For example, 99% of our students may earn a proficient score on an overall test, but when we break the data into the subsections tested, we can see that we may need to focus instructional strategies on specific skills," Assistant Principal of Curriculum Tricia Allen said.

To address the issue, teachers take part in workshops that cover literacy and discussion strategies. These statistics on standardized tests are reported to the School Advisory Council (SAC) to inform the community and evaluate methods of achieving progress. Thus, Pine View has been able to surpass not only district but also state and global averages for most of the offered AP courses. All but three Advanced Placement class averages score

well above global and state levels, including Calculus AB, Spanish Language, and German, a course taken by merely one student online.

High school students have expressed how Pine View teachers provide adequate preparation for various standardized tests.

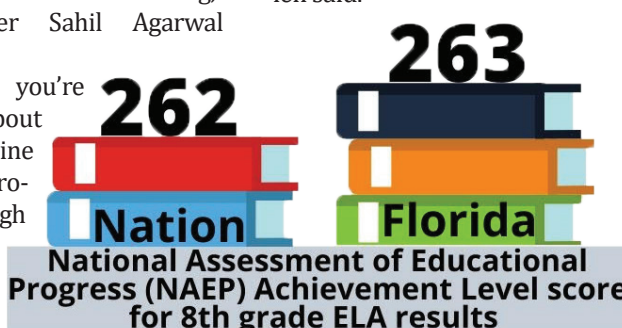
"I feel that, because of Pine View's curriculum in general, because it tends to be more advanced, it over-prepares students... Sometimes that can be negative, sometimes that can be positive, but in general, I'd say that we do fine on testing," tenth-grader Sahil Agarwal said.

"If you're talking about the FSA, [Pine View] provides enough resources... For the PSAT

and SAT, there's almost no prep for that, and I think that should be changed," eleventh-grader Zola Disz said.

Allen states how Pine View increases its success by continually setting new objectives to improve.

"Although our student proficiency scores are extremely high, we believe that there is always room for growth. Pine View staff examine each year's data thoroughly to determine where gaps in achievement exist and create goals and action steps to address the issues," Allen said.



IN BRIEF

Mu Alpha Theta wins fourth place at math competition

by Isabella Gaskill
Asst. Web Editor

After two years of being unable to attend, Pine View's Math Club, Mu Alpha Theta, won fourth place Dec. 16 at the Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) Invitational Mathematics Competition, which is hosted by the Department of Mathematics at FGCU. This year, Pine View attended with 28 students enrolled in various levels of math, from Algebra I to Calculus.

The competition started with individual rounds in the various levels of math, with the group rounds later in the day. In the group rounds, each team buzzed in to submit their answer.

The last time Mu Alpha Theta attended, president and twelfth-grader Michael Gutierrez was a freshman, and complications with the weather and a lack of members participating has hindered the club the past two years. But this year they had the opportunity to compete again.

"We were really excited," Gutierrez said. "I wasn't expecting to have so many people sign up."

In addition to securing fourth overall, a number of students also won individually.

Sixth-grader Prabhav Govindu, the only person on the Algebra 1 team, won second in the individual round and took the Algebra 1 team to fifth overall.

Their Statistics team, consisting of twelfth-graders Kris Selberg and Christiana Guan, won fourth place. The Calculus team with Gutierrez, eleventh-grader Nic Butakow and twelfth-graders Jack Gallahan and Chris Patrick won third.

"I'm really proud of everybody, and I think we did incredibly well considering our relatively small size and our limited ability to coordinate competition prep through normal math curriculum," Gutierrez said. "I think next year, with even more planning and outreach, we can bring more people and do even better."

"We never practiced, we were focused on recruiting enough students to make the trip financially viable. We are tentatively planning to attend another competition in February," club sponsor David Nezelek said. "I think with this momentum, we have a great chance to shift our focus from recruitment to practice, and we could win one of these in the near future."

The club meets Wednesdays in Portable 57 at 1 p.m.

French trip to Quebec now open to middle schoolers

by Sebastian Genelhu-Bazan
Asst. News Editor

Middle-schoolers are now able to attend the annual French trip to Quebec, Canada, an excursion that high-school students have taken part in for the past two summers. This new opportunity will allow for cultural immersion to happen at a younger age and will create a strong foundation for students in the language.

From July 5 to 25, French teacher Diana Siwicka and students will embark on a trip to Trois Rivières (Three Rivers), a city near Quebec City, Canada, where they will stay in a college dormitory as the students participate in a pre-college experience at the University of Quebec at Trois Rivières.

"What was cool about the trip is how the schedule was packed with events, afternoon activities such as laser tag, movie nights, a bowling night, and I even got to go to a Treeumph-esque type of place," twelfth-grader Maeve Barger said, who attended the trip in the summer of 2018.

The three-week trip is packed with events such as sports, interactions with French-speaking locals, a gaming cafe and much more. It also entails larger venues such as a trip to Quebec City and Montreal. These trips are aimed to encourage students to engage with native French speakers and promote interactions that will serve to expose them to the Quebecois culture.

Students will also attend French classes in the morning to strengthen their speaking skills. To further enrich their learning of cultural aspects, the students will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of workshops, like theater, cooking, photography and more.

"I organized this trip for Pine View students because I know this is the time where you learn the most, and it's an amazing boost in language capability for anyone's future. It's also great to be able to retain French over the summer as two and a half months is enough to make you forget what you've been taught," Siwicka said.



Tenth-grader Max LaForge stands with family Dec. 13 in the auditorium to receive his Make-A-Wish 'wish.' LaForge was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis when he was two years old. On Dec. 14 to 17, LaForge, accompanied by his family, traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana to watch his favorite football team, the Saints, play the Indianapolis Colts. During the trip, he met the team at a private practice and received a football autographed by the entire team. Scan the QR code to see the full story.
PHOTO BY ANNA LABINER

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County responds to mental health backlash

Pine View twelfth-graders go the extra degree in taking the initiative to better state-mandated mental health modules for Sarasota County high schoolers

by Gwyn Petersen
Managing Editor

In the past few years, mental health awareness has come under scrutiny, with efforts for better education of the topic leading to the creation of state-mandated mental health modules that have been shown in classrooms across Sarasota County. However, these videos have faced criticism from their target audience following the third module.

"I personally felt that the tone of the modules was not appropriate for the subject," twelfth-grader Garrett Hunter said. "The idea of having no personal connection removes an important emotional aspect that is vital to understanding the issue."

English teacher Wendy Hazlett first heard the discontent felt by her students through their journals, a writing project she had assigned. The students wrote about the third module, Human Trafficking and Substance Abuse, when it was first presented to them. After reading their thoughts on it, Hazlett suggested they bring their concerns to those responsible for the videos.

"They were frustrated with the modules, and I told them, 'You know, you can complain about it, or you can take action and do something about it,'" Hazlett said.

With Hazlett's help, ten students wrote letters to the school board

pointing out concerns they had with the modules.* Representatives of the county responded to the feedback with understanding, and asked if a panel of Pine View students would be willing to participate in the creation of the next module. The students involved have since met with Jody Smith, the head of the next module and an educator on suicide prevention, and Mandi Coker, a program specialist from pupil support services.

"I was really taken aback and impressed with how passionate everyone was, how much thought they put into their response to what they had seen, and how interested and willing to participate they were on making things better," Coker said. "Each time we've presented one of these modules, we've taken the feedback we've gotten and used it to make it more effective next time. When I reached

out to their teacher to see if they wanted to be a part of it and so many people jumped on board, I thought it was great."

The fourth module, titled 'Coping Strategies,' is set to be presented Jan. 27. No date has been set for the fifth module as of now, which will focus on suicide prevention. The Pine View students leading the video for the fifth module hope that with the inclusion of statistics, they can effectively educate their peers on how common and deadly mental illness is.

The goal is to present the re-



Twelfth-graders Gabriel Monzon, Garrett Hunter, Rita Rhardisse, Samantha Gentile and John Paul Fletcher gather with Jody Smith, an educator on suicide prevention. Students were tasked with scripting the question and answer portion of a mental health module to ensure that the video properly exposed students to mental health and suicide prevention. Keep a lookout for a video by Blue & Gold on PVTorch.com. PHOTO BY GWYN PETERSEN

sources available to students at their schools, the risk factors and warning signs of suicide and how to help themselves and others from struggling with thoughts of suicide. Pine View students not only wrote the scripts for the video with the help of county representatives, but will also be presenting the information in the segment. Filming for the fifth module took place Jan. 16.

"...If they really do intend to 'break the stigma' or help others, they need to listen to the voices that will benefit the most from these videos: the students," twelfth-grader Laine Chmielecki, one of the students involved, said.

While the panel and Smith are attempting to come to an understanding with the school board on the best way to approach these sensitive topics, the students involved believe that

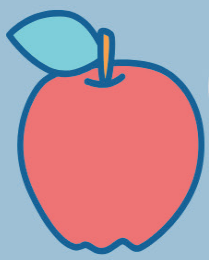
with their improvements, this video can reach a wider audience and educate students.

"Personally, I think there is much more we can do than just showing a video and having a class discussion," Chmielecki said. "I know the impact that personal stories and situations can have on people. It's imperative to prove to those who do not suffer from mental illness that it is a regular and commonly occurring issue among their classmates. For those who are struggling, it's important to not feel alone."

**The students involved with the production of the fifth module are twelfth-graders Laine Chmielecki, Garrett Hunter, Ella Peavley, Lindsay Farb, Betsy Williams, Liam Williams, Gabe Monzon, Rita Rhardisse, John Paul Fletcher and Samantha Gentile.*

BEST & BRIGHTEST UPDATES

Beginning in 2015, the FL legislature started the controversial Best and Brightest plan to honor select teachers with bonuses, based on ACT and SAT scores.



\$7,200 PRIZE

Teachers found this bonus to be unfair as many of them took the SAT and ACT so long ago that scores were no longer available.

"We are in a state of flux as it looks like our pay will drop, but we can't tell by exactly how much until June, which is a very stressful situation to be in," Social studies teacher Maureen Conditte said.

THE CURRENT PLAN



- A \$4000 one-time bonus for "newly-hired" teachers who are "content experts."
- A retention bonus of \$2500 and \$1000 for highly effective and effective teachers, respectively. Teachers have to have taught at the same school for two years and at a school which "improved an average of three percentage points or more in the percentage of total possible points achieved for determining school grades over the prior three years." This portion of the plan was not subject to collective bargaining.
- A recognition bonus of \$768 for those who are selected by the school principal and still received a highly effective or effective rating, but did not receive another bonus under the plan.

The plan has sparked a lot of controversy as only 1742 schools – fewer than half of all Florida schools – fulfilled the three point rule based on a complicated Florida A-to-F school grading formula

In Sarasota, 22 of the 40 district schools are ineligible for the retention bonus, Pine View being one of them.

D.A.R.E. program postponed

by Tricia Saputera
Assistant Editor-in-Chief

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program at Pine View is temporarily on hold, as it is not being taught to this year's fifth-graders due to a required certification. School Resource Officer John Bobianski will complete the two-week, 80-hour course this summer and D.A.R.E. will resume in the 2020-2021 school year.

Created in 1983, D.A.R.E.

was formed in Los Angeles, California, to inform elementary students about substance abuse. Since then, D.A.R.E. has become the most comprehensive drug prevention curriculum in the world. It is taught in thousands of schools not only in all 50 U.S. states, but also in more than 50 other countries, according to D.A.R.E.'s website.

A 17-week program, D.A.R.E. has also expanded to teach students about bullying, alcohol, internet safety, violence and more. D.A.R.E. is also taught by a police officer and not a teacher, establishing a connection between students and officers.

"I think we should be learning it because it's important to know about drugs and people who could be dangerous and try to give you them, so you can stay away

from it," fifth-grader Tara Stults said.

Despite its popularity, studies in the early 1990s showed no reductions in teen drug use after being educated through the D.A.R.E. program. The studies were done 10 years after D.A.R.E.'s implementation. According to the Washington Post, there were "no significant differences in illicit drug use between students who received D.A.R.E. and those who didn't." One study even concluded stu-

its not actually turned off," seventh-grader Matthew Lin said.

"I think it's important for Pine View kids especially, as we are in such a sheltered environment, to learn about the effects of drugs and alcohol on our bodies and how they can impair our performance. Especially since we all will encounter the topics in some form later in life, I think it's essential to cover it," twelfth-grader Savannah James said.

"I've seen students actually apply [D.A.R.E.] when having to make decisions for what is right and what is wrong," fifth-grade teacher James Ross said. "I think it's a great program, I think we were very fortunate over all the years to have the D.A.R.E. program, I know a lot of schools

did not have that, and it was something that all fifth-grade children looked forward to participating in."

This year, no schools in Sarasota County are using D.A.R.E., but are instead using other methods to instill similar information. Currently, there is nothing in the works of implementing another teaching method to replace D.A.R.E. for this year's fifth-graders. However, Bobianski may consult with fifth-grade teachers on presenting his own Powerpoint about an anti-drug message.



DiGS club contributes to gifted-learning book

by Ella Hechlik
Editor-in-Chief

In Diversity in Gifted Schools' (DiGS) third year as an organization, president, founder and twelfth-grader Vinay Konuru and his team were given a unique opportunity. They were asked to write an epilogue in a gifted education book for an author with over 40 years of experience in gifted education.

Earlier this school year, a townhall workshop was held through DiGS which featured multiple speakers from around the country, all speaking about diversity in gifted education. One of the featured speakers was Dr. Joy Lawson Davis, who is a nationally recognized speaker and lecturer on gifted education and is working on a book set to release in the spring of 2020 called "No More Dreams Deferred; breaking the barriers to self-advocacy for underserved gifted learners."

"On the day of the event, everyone was very moved and after the town hall was finished, she came up to me and let me know that she was writing her next book and she wanted the DiGS team to write the epilogue because it is about student advocacy in gifted schools and is a niche topic. So obviously, we were very excited about this opportunity," Konuru said.

Over the next few weeks, Konuru and members of DiGS began working on putting together what the epilogue was going to include. Knowing that it had to be close to 18 pages, the team decided to write about the steps for student advocacy, the creation of DiGS as a club and the struggles they had gone through in the beginning and how they persevered.

The epilogue was split into different parts and started with the "Who Are We" section which included information about DiGS, as well as personal experiences from team members, and how they related to diversity in gifted education as well as the history of DiGS at Pine View. The next section focused on student advocacy and was split into four different points: research, finding support, building a strong base, and implementation, which are the four steps the DiGS team brainstormed for the epilogue.

"We broke it down because we wanted to show other kids in other schools that they could do something similar to what we did," Konuru said. DiGS took on this challenge as a way to show that although the challenge may seem overwhelming, there is always something that can be done.

"Writing this was really for any kid that does not know what to do about a problem they see. Instead of brushing it under the table, they should learn how to address it," Konuru said. "DiGS is the most important thing I have done in high school, and this problem has been around for about 40 or 50 years and

I went in just knowing that I wanted to start something so that by the time I graduated, it would last, and I really hope DiGS is that thing."

According to Dr. Davis, the book is intended to help educators better understand and serve students who fail to receive the academic challenges and support needed to reach their full potential. "We have decided that the DiGS chapter will hold a prominent place in the book because we think their stories will give 'voice' to students like themselves across the nation who are gifted and originate from diverse communities, yet are often underrepresented and thus, underserved in gifted and advanced learner programs," Dr. Davis said.



Twelfth-grade DiGS members Kalia Stayford, Cara Kaminski, Hannah Varghese, Christiana Guan, Gabriel Monzon, Diego Prestamo, Dev Patel, and Vinay Konuru, and eleventh-graders Aidan Callender and Chyara Kruger stand together in front of sponsor John Schweig's portable. DiGS, a club dedicated to increasing diversity in gifted education in the county, has recently collaborated with gifted-learning author Dr. Joy Lawson Davis. PHOTO PROVIDED BY VINAY KONURU

Students form SHELF to help orphans abroad

Ray Min and Ricky Siwicki visit underserved orphan communities in Myanmar and Poland for both English immersion lessons and general education assistance

by Alyson Mizanin
Asst. News Editor

Tenth-graders Ricky Siwicki and Ray Min have found themselves inspired to help orphanages in Poland and Myanmar through the Student Health and Education Leadership Foundation (SHELF), their non-governmental organization (NGO). In hopes of uplifting the underserved orphan communities in other countries, SHELF was founded at the beginning of this school year and held its first official trip to Poland Dec. 21 to 23.

Alongside his mother, a native Pole, and various friends and family members, Siwicki carried out two days' worth of English immersion classes and general education assistance in three care facilities in the Warsaw area: Pszczółki and Słoneczna Ekpa, individual group homes, and Koło, an orphanage. Working with children ranging ages three to sixteen, Siwicki tailored his lessons to food due to its universal nature.

Depending on the age of the children, various degrees of technology were implemented into teachings about favorite foods. Older students were quizzed on their knowledge through platforms such as Quizlet and Kahoot, with the assessments created by Siwicki himself. Younger students worked with games such as Hot Potato to aid their learning.

The half-day immersion classes continued with American pancake cooking, in which the children assisted by measuring the ingredients. Before departure, the orphans were provided gifts in the form of books and various other donations from Pine View students.

"There were a few kids who stood out to me with connections — one kid was hugging my leg all the time. At [Pszczółki], one girl was trying to talk to me a lot. It was really nice to respond and talk to her in English; she actually improved a lot in English with the lesson. With the older kids, it was even easier [to connect]. There was one kid who was always around me and who wanted me to

help him with his book, and I ended up helping him for a good fifteen minutes one-on-one," Siwicki said.

Although Min was not able to attend the trip, he visited Myanmar to volunteer in communities this past May.

SHELF was created after Siwicki was inspired by Min's trip to Myanmar. Min had volunteered his time in both English immersion and HIV/AIDS prevention classes while in Myanmar. Siwicki was inspired to do the same work in Poland because of his own connections to the country, and thus the idea for SHELF was born.

"We just want to help out the kids in the orphanages and make sure that they have a better time throughout their stay so they have better opportunities once they reach adulthood. In these countries, if you're in an orphanage, you're not being open to the outside world. We want to provide them with better English education than what they're already getting because that can help them get more opportunities. Speaking English is, objectively, a really useful skill to have if you're not living in the U.K. or the U.S., and that can really help them out in their futures," Siwicki said.

Siwicki has planned another trip to Poland in June 2020 to work more with the orphans in the area. Min plans to visit Myanmar again this upcoming summer for continued work with English immersion and further volunteering opportunities, which will be definitively decided upon once the trip draws nearer.

Although currently focusing on English immersion, SHELF hopes to expand its services within the coming years.

"Really having seen people who didn't have good opportunities or educations or access to their parents makes me want to provide the experiences that I have and show them the things that they can accomplish," Min said.

You can learn more about SHELF's missions and upcoming events on their website, www.shelfvolunteerabroad.com.



Tenth-grader Ray Min dances with orphans in Myanmar this past May while volunteering his time in English immersion. Min and tenth-grader Ricky Siwicki formed the Student Health and Educational Leadership Foundation to uplift orphan communities abroad. PHOTO PROVIDED BY RAY MIN

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District takes a bite out of teacher pensions

by Felicity Chang
Web Section Editor

This school year, with over 3,500 teacher vacancies across the state in the first week of August, Florida's teacher shortage is becoming increasingly difficult to manage, and a major component of the dilemma is the United States' multi-trillion-dollar question that results from underfunded public pensions. The reason for such a large gap is that local governments have pension plans differing from the federal government, and many are not setting aside enough money to fulfill their promises for public workers to receive a defined-benefit pension, or an income based on their final salary that is paid all throughout retirement.

As an example, Sarasota County stopped offering the defined-benefit pension plan to new teachers in 2011, presenting options for investment plans instead.

Union representative and Pine View teacher Linda Lyons said, "I worked in public relations and as a marketing manager; I made money, but I didn't have any retirement. So, I went and got a master's in teaching, and a third career started... The tipping point was that I'll have benefits that I didn't have, and now those benefits are gone for any new teachers."

Along with the lack of a defined-benefit pension plan, new teachers are annual contract employees, meaning they are not guaranteed to be

employed for the following years.

Florida's education department found that approximately 40% of its new teachers leave within their first five years.

"They cared so much about education that they went to college, got a degree, got certified - and were then so disheartened by the reality of their chosen profession that they left," Orlando Sentinel's columnist Scott Maxwell said.

But, in order for teachers in the state to qualify for, at the least, a minimum pension, they cannot leave during their eight-year vesting period, or the first eight years after they start teaching.

"It takes a while, and that's incentive to stay with it because most teachers quit after five years," Lyons said. "So, if there was a pension, that long-term perspective would help."

Even if Sarasota County decided to reconsider the pension plan for teachers, it will still be difficult to maintain and allot funds for public pensions; 54% of Florida's contributions into teachers' pension plans are feeding pension debt, and the funds also need to meet the needs of other public workers.

"I know firemen and policemen have different pensions," Lyons said. "There's a lot of straws going into the same glass... with the pensions being a big glass of water, and every time you

put a straw in, there's less for everybody."

Florida also requires teachers to contribute, or incrementally set aside money, towards their own requirement benefits. As a result of the shortage of public pension funds, they must work numerous years before those benefits exceed their own contributions plus interest. These complications are resulting in progressively more teachers leaving their jobs, with only 28.1% of Florida teachers qualifying for employer-provided retirement benefits and 15% of teachers "breaking even" from the state retirement system, as estimated by Teacherpensions.org.

"The average retention time for teachers is [around] three years, and so if you're a first-year teacher, you teach three years and then after that they're like, 'I'm done. I'm burnt out. I'm not doing it anymore,' Chinese teacher Maggie Higgins said. "That's a really high turnover, and then you're always in that loop of teachers quitting and you have to get a new teacher."

To alleviate the underfunded public pensions, more contributions could be made, benefits such as pay raises and retirement funds could be cut, or local governments could acquire a higher return on current investments in the future, meaning they could rely on the U.S. stock market and returns on government bonds to build themselves back up with time.

"In a perfect world, we would have more funding for education," Higgins said.

However, politicians are reluctant to raise taxes or reduce services in order to pay for pensions.

"Our district has that extra one cent tax," Lyons said. "They could use some of that, but you have to get a governor and a legislature that values teachers."

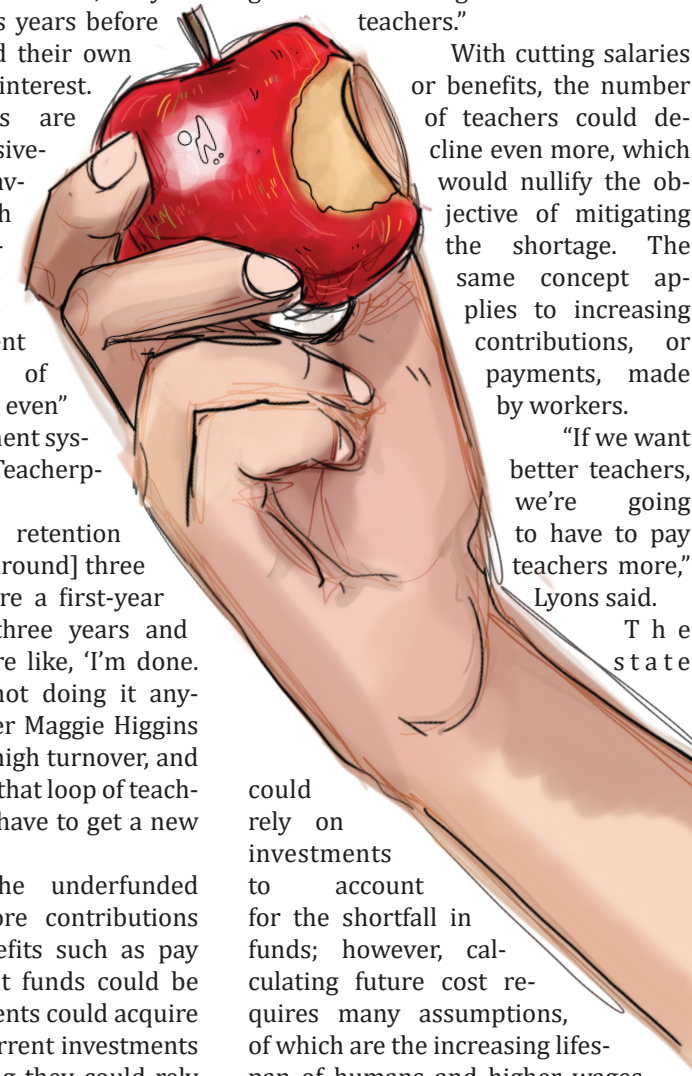
With cutting salaries or benefits, the number of teachers could decline even more, which would nullify the objective of mitigating the shortage. The same concept applies to increasing contributions, or payments, made by workers.

"If we want better teachers, we're going to have to pay teachers more," Lyons said.

Teachers could rely on investments to account for the shortfall in funds; however, calculating future cost requires many assumptions, of which are the increasing lifespan of humans and higher wages. These contingencies may deter any major raises in teacher salaries and cause retirement to become more arduous, further aggravating Florida's teacher shortage.

GRAPHIC BY ZOE MERRITT

“The average retention time for teachers is [around] three years... and then after that they’re like, ‘I’m done. I’m burnt out...’
Maggie Higgins,
Chinese Teacher



★ 2020 Presidential Primary Nominees ★

- Donald J. Trump (R)**
U.S. president
Focused on restricting immigration, arms control, climate change, withdrawing overseas American troops
- William F. Weld (R)**
Former Governor of Massachusetts, Former Federal Prosecutor
Focused on free trade and moderate immigration reform, legalizing marijuana, favors fiscal restraint
- Joe Walsh (R)**
Former Congressman from Illinois
Focused on reducing national debt, securing U.S. border, strongly against President Trump

- Michael Bennet (D)**
Colorado Senator
Focused on creating an opportunity-rich economy and integrity within the government
- Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (D)**
Former Vice President, Former Delaware Senator
Focused on improving America's global status and economic protection for low-income workers
- Michael R. Bloomberg (D)**
Former Mayor of New York City
Focused on gun control and action against climate change
- Bernie Sanders (D)**
Vermont Senator, Former Congressman
Focused on accessible Medicare and free college tuition
- John Delaney (D)**
Former Maryland Congressman
Focused on his role as bipartisan, also promotes universal health care

- Pete Buttigieg (D)**
Mayor of South Bend, Ind., Military Veteran
Focused on his generational identity (as youngest candidate at 37), climate change, and economic opportunity
- Tulsi Gabbard (D)**
Hawaii Congresswoman, Army National Guard Veteran
Focused on opposing U.S. military intervention overseas
- Amy Klobuchar (D)**
Minnesota Senator
Focused on winning swing states for the Democrats, has worked on legislation against drug addiction and the cost of prescription drugs
- Deval Patrick (D)**
Former Governor of Massachusetts
Focused on healing the country, economic development and innovation
- Tom Steyer (D)**
Billionaire former hedge fund executive
Focused on renewable energy, combating climate change, impeachment of President Trump
- Elizabeth Warren (D)**
Massachusetts Senator
Focused on income equality and righting what she calls a corrupt government and corporations
- Andrew Yang (D)**
Former tech executive who founded an economic development nonprofit
Focused on establishing a universal basic income of \$1000 per month, funded by the government, and technology issues

*These were the candidates as of Jan. 15.

Telomere tech gives a glimpse at genetic lifespan

The complexity of scientific ethics rises as the biotechnical field rapidly expands

by Sarah Hassan

Match Layout Editor

As ubiquitous and unavoidable as grains of sand on a beach, aging is a universal effect of time. Today, as cosmetic surgery and procedures become increasingly popular, fading memory and wrinkles can be a topic regarded with dread.

In recent years, however, research has shined a light onto the microscopic world of aging. Telomerase, an enzyme in the body responsible for lengthening telomeres, has been linked to how human cells age. Just barely across the threshold of known science, humanity still has much to learn when it comes to these minuscule workers.

Telomeres are non-coding segments at the end of each chromosome (more simply, they do not provide any genetic information). They serve as “caps” to the chromosomes, preventing them from sticking to each other. Additionally, and arguably most importantly, they prevent the DNA from being damaged during cell division.

Each time a cell divides, a small portion of the telomere is lost — and since billions of cells are replicated each day, this small portion quickly gains significance. Without telomeres, this damage would intrude on crucial genetic material, possibly erasing entire genes. As years pass by, all of these divisions take a toll on the telomeres, and they begin to short-

en. Telomeres have a set size, so eventually they become whittled away entirely. When this happens, the cells may lose some of their ability to divide, and their daughter cells are less likely to be healthy. However, telomerase, an enzyme which helps increase the length of telomeres, can prevent aging.

According to an online scientific paper by Snehasish Nag of Visva Bharati University, smoking and stress may be factors linked to increased rate of telomere shortening. It is also possible that telomere length is genetically inherited.

“In families that live long, if your parents live up to their 80s and 90s, a lot of times the children live in their 80s and 90s,” biology teacher Becky Kehler said.

Recent studies in mice have led scientists to find that artificially introducing telomerase into the rodent’s system decreases the effects of the age-related diseases. While this is promising for future treatments for humans, especially cancer, it is not known how it could affect the human body.

When a cell’s genetic material is damaged enough to become cancerous, cells constantly grow and replicate. While the side effects of being treated with synthetic telomerase are not known, it is possible that too much of it could aid cancer growth — and too little of it to

protect DNA may cause cancer to form in the first place.

Discrediting the common fantasy of looking young forever, a marketable telomerase product would not magically cause a person who already has visible effects of aging to look younger; however, it would theoretically slow the aging process from proceeding further and possibly work to counter the effects of age-related diseases.

And, as has so often been the case throughout history, discoveries applied too hastily may carry a slew of devastating and entirely unpredictable side effects.

“I don’t think you could find a right or wrong answer... not everyone is going to agree. For the good of the population, some people might say anything that might make us healthier and live longer is a good thing,” Kehler said. “But when you look at a population biologist, they might say anything that increases our population’s size is not going to be a good thing, because we are already overpopulating, and we have too much demand in our ecosystem.”

Of course, as with any complex topic, genetic engineering comes with many implications. With the technology of today, people have the ability to know the length of their telomeres, their likeliness to fall prey to cancer, and even a rough estimate of their life expectancy — but should they?

I would love to say we can maybe live forever with telomerase and adding to telomeres... I think there is a lot more research we have to do in regards to considering the negative effects that can also happen.”



Charlie Sutcuoglu, grade 11

It comes to a point where we would have to limit [the technology]... people have to age eventually because the population would get too big and then you can’t support anything.”



Diana Rudel, grade 10

GRAPHICS BY ZOE MERRITT

Recently formed club models living heart

by Alyson Mizanin

Asst. News Editor

In its first year, Pine View’s Biomedical Engineering Club (BMEC) is currently comprised of roughly a dozen students. Despite their small number, they have high aspirations for the coming months: creating a functional model heart. The model will demonstrate the effect of disease on the cardiovascular system, and will be entered in a national competition against one other high school on the university level.

Tenth-grader Ray Min’s increased interest in biomedical engineering last year was the genesis of the club. After searching online for possible organizations to work with, Min discovered the Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES), a college-directed operation that just opened its doors to high school enrollment this year.

Though the date for the event is still to be determined, Min planned to enter BMES’s 2020 High School Poster Presentation since last summer; the project he would lead the club in working toward, however, was unclear until his connection to Dr. Jeff Clyman sparked the idea of the heart model. Clyman graduated with a biomedical engineering degree and currently works in medical insurance alongside Min’s mother.

“Because we’re on the high school level, we have a limited set of resources we could work with while competing against university clubs. [Clyman] had ended up telling me about this project and recommended it because of its impact and relative cheapness at only \$120,” Min said.

The purpose of the model is to showcase how a disease affects the pulmonary system and

continuous flows in the cardiovascular system once introduced. The model will be powered by hydraulics and various circuits, following the contest’s criteria for a medical device.

In working with the project, the club’s members were separated into four groups in order to best work with everyone’s strengths: heart anatomy, physics, engineering and coding. Each group has individual tasks that, once completed, help all categories work together in the creation of the model.

“We want to get people interested in real-life aspects of biology and engineering because being taught the fundamentals isn’t necessarily the most interesting. By applying it, [it] can bring more people into this field and actually excite them instead of them waiting in their bio classes, waiting for it to end,” vice president and sophomore Diana Rudel said.

in the coming weeks, BMEC will continue working with the heart model. Although the disease they will work with hasn’t been chosen yet, further research into the circuits’ abilities will set extraneous information in stone. Over the coming years, the members hope to have the club hold a larger presence on campus as their involvement in competitions grows.

“Pine View is the number one STEM school in the state, so I think that once we go to more competitions, become more recognized, get known by the school better, more kids will join because of interest in STEM. When we have more members, we can create different groups based on everyone’s strengths to work together on bigger projects to make a more significant impact,” Rudel said.

Students’ interests take to the air with newly formed Drone Club

by Anna Labiner

Entertainment Editor

Pioneering an opportunity for the creative potential of STEM-interested students, the newly formed Drone Club allows members to see their creations soar high into the air or perform selective tasks, all at the press of a button. The club, sponsored by technology teacher Drew Wormington, provides an outlet for technologically inclined students to pursue new creations and programs.

The club, which was formally started this year (though there was a mini-team last year), was launched as a combined effort between Wormington and the club’s captain, eleventh-grader Ezekiel Pereira.

“It started last year when Mr. Wormington made a passing remark about a few other

schools working with drones. I later came to him and said I would like to start a drone team,” Pereira said.

Despite initial setbacks getting their program off the ground due to county restrictions, the club is now an officially recognized group on campus. The club is currently gearing up to participate in the Zika Mosquito challenge in February, run by the Technology Student Association (TSA).

The challenge entails the creation of a device that will pick up bean bags with metallic strips on them and successfully drop them in a container on the opposite side of the field. The main obstacle in this competition is that the metallic strips are not magnetic — a challenge that the club is working diligently to overcome. The Zika Mosquito

challenge will be drone club’s first, and members are looking to participate in more.

“Other than the other STEM clubs in this school, there’s nothing really like it [Drone Club] to be honest, because we are building a drone that flies, and we’re going to be flying it on campus soon,” co-captain eleventh-grader Caleb McCue said.

Drone Club currently boasts 12 members, including Pereira and McCue. Students participating in the club are allowed the opportunity to research, buy parts, program commands into a drone, practice flying a drone and tweak issues with the club’s technological innovations, among other things.

Drone Club meets in Wormington’s room on Tuesdays from 1 to 2 p.m., though times may vary.

[Cram or Crash: a graphic]

Two members of the Torch staff have perfected the art of last-minute studying — so you don't have to.

by Lora Rini
Match Layout Editor

I used a sentence generator to generate nine random sentences. Then, I used three different methods to memorize them, and after 24 hours, I wrote down what I remembered.

For one method, I read the sentences and then wrote them four times. I listened to and then spoke the second group aloud, and for the third group I used a combination of both.

Reading & Writing: One full sentence remembered
Speaking & Listening: One full sentence remembered
Combination: Various phrases from both sentences

From these results, I concluded that using a combination of cognitive functions is the most effective technique for memorizing things in a pinch.

Sleep occurs in four basic stages.

Non-REM sleep includes the first three: the transition from wakefulness to sleep, light sleep, and deep sleep, which causes feelings of being rejuvenated and well-rested.

REM (rapid eye movement) sleep is the final stage, where dreaming and memory storage occurs.

Sleep is vital to the brain’s process of organizing and storing information. A study conducted at Brigham Young University showed that students performed better on standardized tests when they slept for 7 to 7.5 hours.

GRAPHIC BY SARAH CATALANO

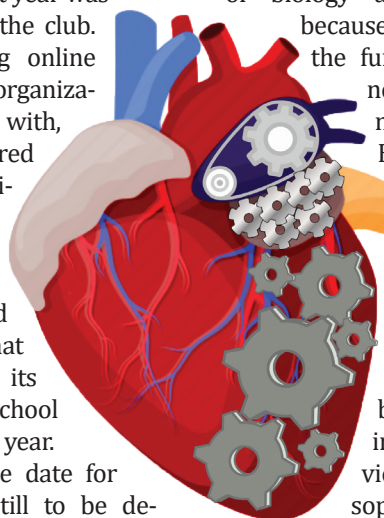
"TORCH TRIES" SLEEP AWARENESS APP

by Lucy Collins
Asst. Web Editor

The app “Sleep Cycle” analyzes the user’s sleep when activated. It monitors breathing to track the user’s stages of sleep and displays them on a graph.

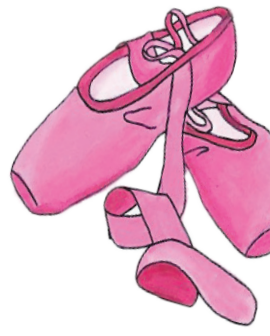
Users can be woken up at a time less likely to cause feelings of drowsiness or exhaustion (for example, during light non-REM sleep) based on the average duration of stages in their cycles. The app also provides background noise to assist in falling asleep.

For me, the alarm feature did not make a large difference. I even felt more tired in the morning using the alarm than when I did not use the wake up window. The sleep analysis was interesting, yet slightly inaccurate. Overall, I would recommend this app for awareness of your quality of sleep, but not for its other functions.



GRAPHIC BY LEO GORDON

Poetry in Motion



Emely Fernandez

by Elena D'Amato
Asst. Humor Editor

While other three-year-olds were learning to walk, eleventh-grader Emely Fernandez was learning to sashay. She fell in love with the artistry tied to a performance, as well as the athleticism required to be a successful dancer.

Even with her natural talent, Fernandez still depends on rigorous practices at Mysticals Dance Company to perfect her craft, putting in three hours on Wednesdays, two on Tuesdays and one additional hour in private lessons with her teacher. Pointe, which Fernandez often practices, is one of the hardest styles of dance to master because of the amount of strength training needed.

Fernandez plans on adding an additional two more hours of dance practice to her schedule so that she may have time to perfect being on pointe.

"I don't dance as seriously as I used to before I came to Pine View, but I plan to keep increasing the amount of hours I dance as I adjust to my junior year," Fernandez said.

There have been moments when her love of this activity has faltered due to injury and schoolwork, but Fernandez continues to keep an open mind about pursuing what she enjoys.

"I see her dancing and look up to her in a way," ninth-grader Emma Coles, a fellow student at Mysticals, said.

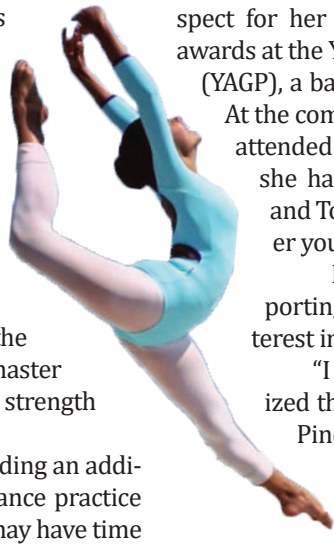


PHOTO PROVIDED BY EMELY FERNANDEZ

low student at Mysticals, said.

The long hours, rigorous training, and often times intense scorn from coaches and critics that dancers must endure is a notable aspect of the less glamorous side of ballet. This, however, has not deterred Fernandez, though she is conscious about pursuing her art form in a way that is safe and emotionally aware. This respect for her craft has won Fernandez awards at the Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP), a ballet competition in Tampa. At the competition, which Fernandez attended throughout middle school, she has won awards for Top 24 and Top 12, out of about 250 other youth competitors.

Fernandez is all about supporting others who show an interest in dance.

"I was surprised when I realized there wasn't a dance club at Pine View even though dance is a big part of many people's lives," she said.

Fernandez started Dance Club this year, because she wanted a place where dancers could come and learn how to dance freely without the stress of any judgments.

Sponsored by Chemistry Honors teacher Charmaine Strickland, the dance club is open to any high school student on Thursday from 2 to 3 p.m. in the gym.

The club is currently focusing on learning hip hop and creating combos to different popular songs, so everyone can get a little bit of what dance is all about — enjoying oneself.

Ava Weyant

by Tiffany Yu
Asst. Match Editor

Tenth-grader Ava Weyant raises the barre when it comes to her dedication to dance. Weyant has been dancing since she was three years old, and has learned many lessons in her twelve years of being a ballerina, such as how to balance dance with her schedule. Weyant's practice schedule varies from five to six days each week, with practices ranging from three to five hours a day. Although this can be difficult for most, Weyant views dance as her outlet for expression.

"When she's on the stage she really transforms, and she just becomes a character, a different person, and it's really exciting to watch certainly as a parent," Kristi Cardoni-Weyant, Ava's mother, said.

Though Weyant acknowledges the difficulties of her trade, she also recognizes the upsides that ballet has to offer, including the opportunity to form strong friendships with her teammates. The physical and mental aspects of the activity, including the vigorous training the ballerinas have to undergo, drives Weyant to perfect her abilities.

Weyant acknowledges the industry is hard to get into, with strict standards regarding body image, as she has seen some of her friends struggle with issues with their weight

and height. She personally condemns it, but continues to express her love for dance.

"Your body is going to change, and like I said, there's stigma, so try and not focus so much about everyone else, and really just make it a personal experience, because it's going to be different for everyone," Weyant said.

Weyant has learned many valuable lessons from her extensive dance career, including how to work with other people. At her studio, Gulf Coast Ballet, students predominantly focus on group-work, however, dancers are occasionally selected to do solos or duets with another dancer.

Weyant spends most of her time learning ballet; however, she occasionally dabbles in contemporary, modern and jazz. Although she does not dance competitively, each of Weyant's performances takes five to six months to choreograph and perfect, alongside just as much tireless dedication.

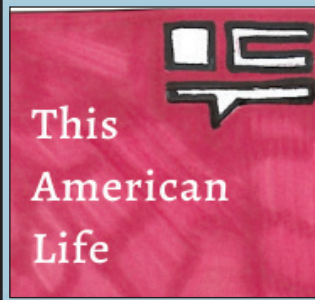
Although the art of ballet and the extensive training that it entails often hold a stigma of harsh discipline, Weyant attests that it is something that she holds dear. The goals that she manages to accomplish during the months it takes to prepare for her performance are all worth it, and even getting to perform on stage surrounded by her friends is an accomplishment within itself. Weyant plans to continue dancing in the future and eventually for a company.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY AVA WEYANT

THE TORCH'S TOP PODCASTS

THIS AMERICAN LIFE



This American Life is a popular radio program hosted by Ira Glass that fixates on a central theme for each of their installments. Episodes, which often involve storytelling and investigative journalism, can be fun and nostalgic or deeply emotional and moving, and are sure to keep you entertained on a long car ride.

THE MOTH

The Moth features speakers telling stories of events that occurred in their lives that had an impact on themselves or those around them. The stories can be quite remarkable, and are often reflective of the landscape of hate in America and how many minority groups are treated.



WITHOUT FAIL



Without Fail is a podcast hosted by Alex Blumberg, which delves into the lives of individuals who have overcome hardships, and what they have learned from it. The conversions follow the same vein of what works and what doesn't and include hard truths and heartfelt moments, all within 45 minutes.

REVISIONIST HISTORY

Revisionist History, which is hosted by Malcolm Gladwell, is a captivating podcast that aims to feature the "overlooked and the misunderstood." Gladwell approaches topics in a way that is rather unorthodox, and goes quite in-depth with his reporting.



GRAPHIC BY ANNA LABINER, LILY QUARTERMAINE, ELLA HECHLIK

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Sarasota's Art Scene

Tube Dude

by Naina Chauhan
News Editor

Tube Dude is a staple part of Sarasota's art scene, and although the business, which specializes in making smiling stick figure sculptures, has experienced tremendous success, it was never intended to be a business in the first place. The "dude" behind Tube Dude — Scott Gerber — used to be a yacht builder in Sarasota, but after the 2010 recession, Gerber no longer had a market and was forced to close his business, though his business career was actually far from over.

On July 1, 2010, Gerber needed something to hold his fishing pole the way a human would, so using simple materials, he built a stick-figure out of tubes. Three days later at Gerber's Fourth of July party, everyone was asking him who the dude on the dock was. Thus, the name Tube Dude was born. Following his initial creation, Gerber was commissioned his first Tube Dude mailbox by a neighbor who liked the one on his dock. A week later, Gerber's neighbor handed him 11 letters from people asking where they could buy similar mailboxes.

Initially just a way to incite happiness in the community, it was not until a local newspaper featured Gerber and his "dudes" on the front page that he considered his small hobby a business.

"I was in a dark place... I wanted to make others feel better as a way to make

me feel better," Gerber said.

He did this through placing four dudes that held inspirational signs around Sarasota — those four dudes have now become over 8,000 dudes that are smiling across the nation, in Europe, South Africa, and even Australia.

Gerber says that his favorite part of his job is getting to know the inner dude of all his clients.

"You get to know people at a creative and expressional level that you never would otherwise... You get to know how they want to express themselves and how they want the world to see them," Gerber said.

Currently, Tube Dude is working on a piece that will be viewed by more than 200,000 people a day in New York City, New York. This monumental piece, as Gerber puts it,

will be of a peace sign, heart, and the signature Tube Dude smile.

Though Gerber has experienced immense growth with his business, he has also experienced the downfalls of starting a personal company, and faced criticism from a local art critic who in 2010 said that Tube Dude would disappear in 6 months.

"Don't be afraid to try something new... We will be in our tenth year this July and in April we will unveil our monumental piece — I'd say that's far from disappearing," Gerber said.

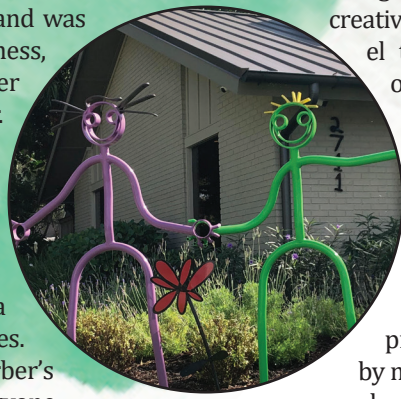


PHOTO BY ANNA LABINER

Bike Guy

by Naina Chauhan
News Editor

Anyone who has strolled through downtown Sarasota has seen the whimsical bikes covered in flamingos or draped in vines and doves. These bikes are the creation of local William Pearson, or as he prefers to be called "Dr. Nik."

Known around Sarasota as a caretaker of Florida Studio Theater, an eccentric puppeteer who performs every Saturday at the Farmers Market, and a gifted artist, Pearson is an eclectic Renaissance man whose creative impact on the community is made widespread through his small, but thoughtful projects.

A blue bicycle that Pearson scavenged from a dumpster marked the beginning of his bike-art journey. The bike had been from one of the theater's last plays and had been thrown out, so Pearson took the bike home, painted it pink, and as a final touch, attached classic plastic pink flamingos. The unique bike, which Pearson rode to work every day, drew attention from both the theater's workers and passing pedestrians.

It was the expressions of the people who saw his bike that inspired Pearson to make more of his eye-catching creations.

"One day, I watched this couple play with the bike for about five min-

utes," he said. "I thought, 'Wow, look at the joy they're getting from that. That's something,'" Pearson said in an interview with Sarasota Magazine.

Today, Pearson's bikes have a permanent home in various locations around Sarasota — there is a peace bike covered in ivy and topped off with doves, a zebra bike that pulls a wagon with an elephant playing piano, and a leopard-print bike topped with a puppet workshop. The artistic flair and creativity of the bikes are what make Pearson's creations so enjoyable to the Sarasota community.

"I have a very small ego, the goal is to make people laugh, to make people think about creativity," Pearson said in an interview with the Sarasota Herald-Tribune.

Pearson continues to spread that joy 13 years later as he boasts 36 unique bikes. What started with what was seemingly useless junk has become a staple part of downtown Sarasota street art. In extension to his artistic contribution to the community, Pearson has also hosted art openings that show off his bikes and puppets. Throughout his time creating bikes, Pearson has never accepted money, The Observer quotes, "I do it just to do it," he said. "It brings me joy. I don't care about money. I've got my dove bike, my tiger car and my kayak. I don't need much."

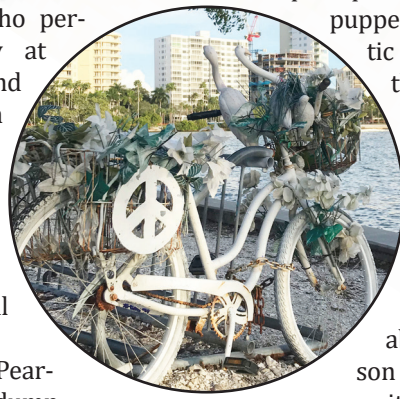


PHOTO BY NAINA CHAUHAN

Sarasota Art Museum opens its doors

by Peyton Harris
Focus Editor

Art has always played a pivotal role in Sarasota's culture, and the county is well-known for upholding a diverse and enriching cultural and artistic environment — however, before Dec. 14, Sarasota has never had a contemporary art museum. Now, not only does the county offer one, but it has been housed in a creative way.

After roughly 15 years of renovation and planning, the efforts made by certain members in the Sarasota arts community have finally paid off with the transformation of the old Sarasota High School building into Sarasota's first-ever contemporary art museum, which officially opened to the public on the morning of Saturday, Dec. 14.

The repurposing of the former high school is just one in a movement of many: all around the country, abandoned buildings have been refurbished to serve as points of cultural interest, such as art museums.

The old Sarasota High school

introduced its final set of students 23 years ago before partnering with the Ringling College of Art and Design to transform the retired learning facility into a new home for exceptional art. To continue the building's educational legacy, the college offers classes within the three-story design.

"I think the museum will have an impact in so many ways... If you're looking at the younger generation, it is absolutely wonderful to get exposed to art, which is so complex and not just visual, there's a lot more depth to it." Membership Manager Petra Gurin said.

Through the lobby and first floor, guests encounter a series of colorful displays leading into a stairwell painted with "28 colors of Sarasota" — ranging from the "Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall" purple to a deep green "Selby Gardens (after

the rain)." Also featured is a historic timeline of the location and photographs of the builders and people integral to the museum's innovations.

While this first floor decor will remain, the rest of the museum will be ever-changing and bear no permanent exhibits. Instead, exhibitions will last four or five months before shifting.

Until March, the second floor of the museum will be home to Vik Muniz's exhibition featuring his hand-drawn interpretations of iconic photos he bought at a garage sale. Muniz also specializes in creating images by arranging objects like toy soldiers or even garbage into intricate visuals like faces and animals, and is recognized in the art commu-

nity for his pieces that portray castles etched into singular grains of sand.

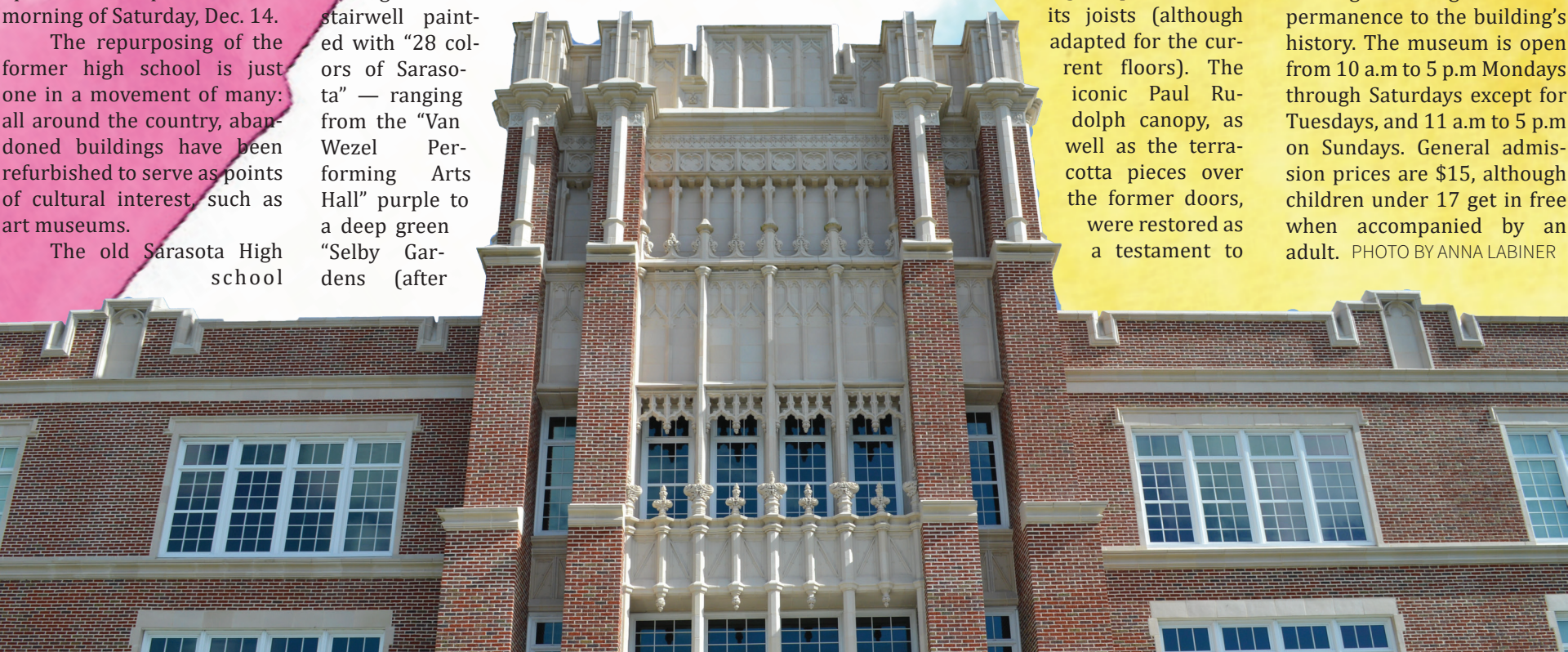
The third floor features the group exhibition of "Color: Theory & B/W" through March 31 and a site-specific piece by Sheila Hicks. The installation aims to examine the subject of color theory and how it "allows us to look at a wide range of ideas, from cognitive science to philosophy to literature, while marveling at the seductive and confounding ways in which artists wrestle with color."

Though the usage of the building may have changed, its historic and local roots remain timeless. During the restoration, the former school maintained a majority of the century-old Florida longleaf pine used in its joists (although adapted for the current floors). The iconic Paul Rudolph canopy, as well as the terracotta pieces over the former doors, were restored as a testament to

the building's historic significance.

"I am really into museums, especially art museums. They're an escape from the world and its distractions, and, honestly, really refreshing. The Sarasota Art Museum, in particular, is probably my favorite in the area now," twelfth-grader Marguerite Andrich said. "I love the building itself, and the exhibits on display right now are incredible. In particular, the section called Color Theory, which is exploratory and makes you feel like a little kid again. I also love the collages on display and the other pieces by Vik Muniz."

The new museum serves as a turning point in Sarasota's cultural atmosphere while offering a nostalgic sense of permanence to the building's history. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays except for Tuesdays, and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays. General admission prices are \$15, although children under 17 get in free when accompanied by an adult. PHOTO BY ANNA LABINER



App reviews to get the best workout

Getting in a good workout while enjoying yourself can be a difficult feat. Especially with expensive gyms and the inefficiency of time spent traveling, motivating yourself to break a sweat at home can be a daunting task. However, with these apps, working out becomes much easier. By helping you form your fitness journey and fitness goals, users simply have to follow along with the exercises provided by the app — and stick to it.

KineticCoach

by Lucy Collins
Web Section Editor

There are many methods to exercise in this era of technology, whether it be a gym, outside, a video or an app. Without a car or gym membership, getting a healthy amount of varied exercise can be difficult. The app KineticCoach offers a wide variety of options, tailored to you.

During registration, it asks what level of activity the user is at currently: beginner, intermediate or advanced. Goals are set, such as fat burning and muscle building, so the workouts provided reflect your exact criteria. After that on the home page, four options are laid out: custom workouts, daily challenge, my workouts and movement demos. The user is only allowed a certain number of custom workouts without upgrading to Premium for \$9.99 per month.

Under the tab “Build me a custom workout,” specific limitations are set. The user selects the focus (Weightlifting, Stretching, Recovery, Moderate intensity workout, and Feeling great! Bring it on!) and then the quantity of time wanted: less than five minutes, between five and 15 minutes, between 15 and 30 minutes, and over 30 minutes.

Finally, the equipment

available is selected, such as dumbbells, medicine ball, swimming pool or none. This feature is very conducive to the user and how they are feeling on a given day. On a day filled with homework and clubs and all you want to do is sleep, a quick workout sounds more appealing with the ease of KineticCoach.

The next page provides around ten workouts to complete, specific to the items you chose.

“Weightlifting, stretching, recovery,” for example, lists exercises such as side planks, shoulder taps and push ups. Each workout is different. Instructions provide a detailed explanation along with a video demonstration. Selecting “Start” begins a timer. All workouts are recorded and stored in the tab “my workouts” on the homepage. The daily challenge tab allows a standard workout. One workout, labeled “Escape from Alcatraz,” entails a 25-yard swim, ten air squats, and five pushups for ten rounds. This allows for a workout even without upgrading.

The final tab, “move-

ment demos,” offers warm-ups to prepare for the workout, along with instructions and a short video. Flexibility allows for stretching afterwards, as well. In the final section of the tab, there is a list of all the exercises given in the workouts. This gives an in-depth explanation for each and every workout available. A quality warm up and stretch afterwards is very important for you muscles, so this feature is extremely useful for beginners.

Overall, the app offers a wide variety of workout tailored to the specific time frame available. The workouts themselves function to your personal goals. Whether you want to build muscle or gain cardio endurance, KineticCoach allows for any type of physical improvements.

Rating:
5/5 Torches



Freeletics

by Tricia Saputera
Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Perfect for those looking for intensive workouts and personalized training plans, Freeletics is an easy-to-use app that pushes users to their maximum exercising potential.

When opening the app for the first time, Freeletics asks users a series of questions to get to know their current level of fitness and his or her fitness goals. Users choose one major fitness goal to focus on: get toned, get fit or lose weight. After that, users rank the following goals in order of importance: increase endurance, gain strength, improve fitness, lose weight, and relieve stress. Then, users include how fit they believe they are and their favored way of training: bodyweight, running, or barbell and weights. After all the data is collected, a specific Training Journey is recommended.

The personalized Training Journeys differ in levels of intensity in cardio and muscle as well as the intended results. While the plan named “hybrid running” includes bodyweight training and both interval runs and distance runs, its results are increasing the cardiovascular stamina of users with endurance exercises and distance runs. The plan “start smart” is intended for those easing into an active lifestyle and has full-body exercises that gradually increase in intensity. All are sure to find a plan that meets their needs and each Training Journey also has different lengths: 6, 8, or 12 weeks.

To access the Training Journeys, users must subscribe to Training or Training & Nutrition, which grants access to individualized nutrition plans in the partnered Freeletics Nutrition app. Six months of Training is \$59.99 and six months of Training & Nutrition is \$89.99. Subscribing would allow users to access all Training Journeys and a Coach that learns about the user’s abilities after each session, showing Freeletics’ commitment and dedication to making the most out of your subscription.

If the price is too high for users, there are other free ways of exercising on the app. Freeletics has a multitude of videos that demonstrate how to perform single exercises, such as archer pullups, burpee squat jumps, jackknives, and sphinx pushups. Users are timed as they complete their set of exercises, tracking their progress. The tutorials turn the difficult, intense exercises into the ones that can be easily learned and used for great improvement.

While the fitness plans do require subscribing, all in all, Freeletics provides users with many ways to improve their fitness, from single exercises to personalized Training Journeys curated by coaches.

Rating:
4/5 Torches



Adidas Training

by Gwyn Petersen
Managing Editor

From the moment you first open the Adidas Training app by Runtastic, all your troubles about finding the right workout will disappear. With the wide variety of exercise offerings the app has, there’s sure to be a perfect fit for everyone, whether you’re a fitness guru or a fresh-faced beginner.

Upon opening the app for the first time, users are faced with a short survey to get to know each individual, with questions about what one may wish to achieve, like muscle toning or weight loss, and the difficulty of the exercises you wish to attempt, from very easy to expert. From then, you’ll find yourself immersed in fitness culture.

Aside from workouts, Adidas Training offers a community of people striving towards the same goals, with blogs and progress pictures to help measure your success alongside a thousand of your closest friends.

One of the benefits of using the Adidas Training app is the customization options available for each workout through the workout creator. While some apps may offer a general workout for target areas, such as your abs and core or your upper body, Adidas Training takes it a step further, allowing you to select exercises from a list of over 180 suggested. You can also set a time for each workout depending on how long you’d like to workout, from seven minutes to 45 minutes. After

you build the workout to your preference, the app will generate a suggested plan with built-in warm-ups, rests in between exercises and recovery time.

For those overwhelmed by the prospect of drawing up their own fitness journey, Adidas Training has a few options for you. Training plans, such as the “Fit and Strong in Three Weeks” or the “Active and Energized” offer workouts pre-planned to the minute that work for any schedule. For those frightened at the prospect of new exercises they’ve never even heard of, not to worry — each workout is accompanied by a video of how to properly execute each movement so as to avoid injury.

Unfortunately, like most other workout apps, there’s a limit to how far Adidas Training can take you without a paid subscription, ranging from \$9.99 per month, \$39.99 for six months, or \$49.99 for a full year. Premium training plans and nutritional logs that accompany such subscriptions easily weave into a more complete and complex plan for your health. Despite limitations, with the easily customizable features of the app, it makes for an easy and more affordable option than a membership to a local gym.

Rating:
4.5/5 Torches



Nike Training Club

by Ben Gordon
Opinion Editor

With our audience’s health in our best interest, The Torch has put the Nike Training Club App to the test, determining its viability within the expansive world of training apps.

Right off the bat, one major benefit of Nike’s training app stands out — its affordability. The entire app is completely free. It is hard to find any in-app purchases on the app. The lack of focus on money probably means Nike doesn’t aim to profit off this app — they are just trying to make exercise easier for everyone and promote their brand.

Since the app is completely free, it not only appeals to athletes, but also regular people who feel uncomfortable at the gym or have no means of transportation to get there. People are more likely to start exercising if they do not have to spend the money to buy a gym membership or subscription to a training service — really,

there is no excuse not to give the app a try.

When you sign up for the app, it asks you a few questions about yourself: your gender, age, and how often you work out. Using this information, the app caters to beginners with easier workouts, but it begins with tougher workouts for more experienced athletes.

Easier workouts, like basic core exercises (crunches and planks) are for beginners, who eventually reach more intense workouts like endurance runs (five or more miles). This flexibility is another advantage, because anyone, no matter the age or experience, can start where they are most comfortable.

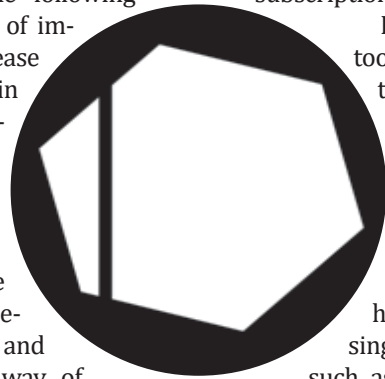
The user can try weight-training, bodyweight, or full gym workouts with just the touch of their fingertips.

The workouts themselves are greatly varied depending on experience. For beginners, the app recom-

mends body-weight exercises, like hips lifts, dynamic crunches and hurdle steps. Each workout has a video for guidance and informs the athlete of how many reps they will have to complete. As the athlete becomes more experienced, Nike will automatically increase the frequency and intensity of the workouts depending on the pre-set goals of the athlete. Goals are a great way to motivate the athlete to consistently work hard, and this app capitalizes on that. If the user wants to lose ten pounds within the year (if it is physically possible), the app can tailor their experience to make that goal a reality.

Nike’s training app, Nike Training Club, offers the best of all possible worlds when it comes to training apps: affordability, convenience and effectiveness. Depending on how motivated the user is, this app has the potential to change the way regular people think about exercise.

Rating:
5/5 Torches



Ninth grader 'lands it' in the rink

by Ella Williams
Asst. Sports Editor

Ninth-grader Maddie Yee has tried numerous sports including soccer, dance, and swimming; none of which was the right sport for her. But when Yee was five years old, she fell in love with ice skating and has been gracing the ice with her skill ever since.

According to Yee, she is glad that her parents put her in ice skating because of the many friends she's made from the sport and her growing love of the sport itself. As her parents started her in ice skating early on, she was excited to be presented with the opportunity to learn at such a young age.

Yee currently practices at Ellenton Ice and Sports Complex three days a week for an hour and a half each day. Previously, Yee had the opportunity to experience a competition at her home ice rink, Ellenton Ice, where she placed first. She has also been to other competitions such as nationals in Atlanta where she placed eighth.

According to Yee, the hard work and perseverance she puts in during her hours practicing on the rink got her to her accomplishments. In addition, Yee is also hoping to compete in the SouthWest Florida Classic next September at Ellenton Ice and Sports Complex and the South Atlantic Regional Championships next October.

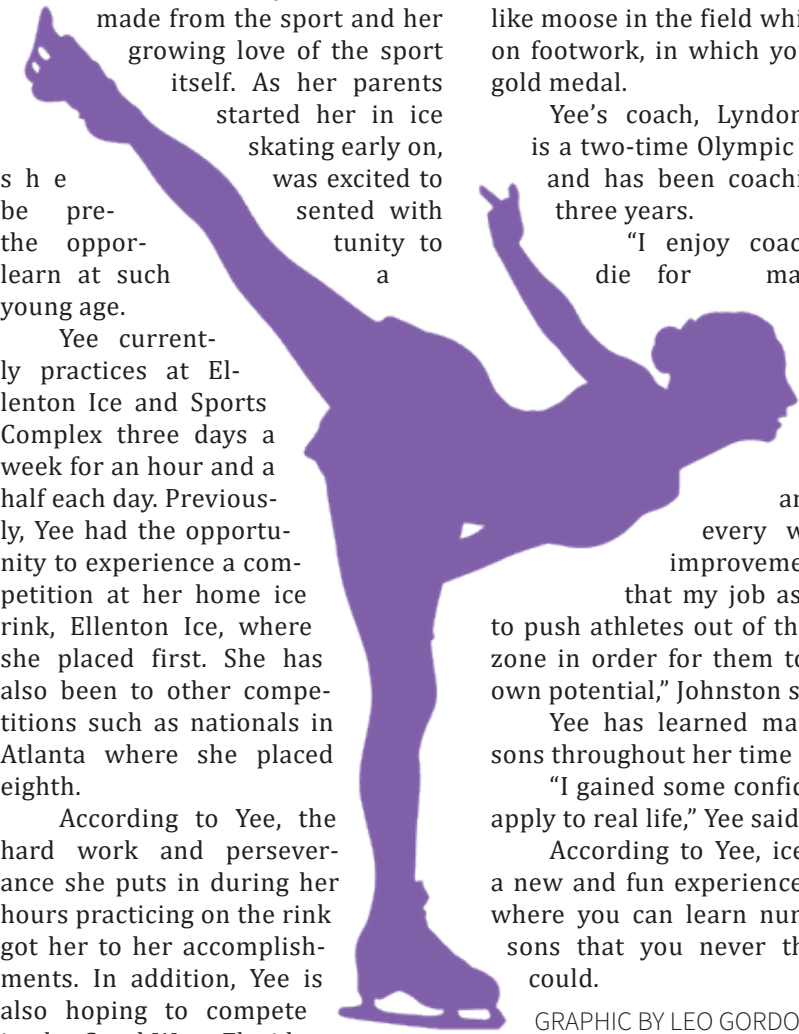
Currently, Yee is on the intermediate level, which she had to pass over 20 individual levels to get to. Her current goal in ice skating is to become a gold medalist and she is only one level away. To be a gold medalist, one has to go through several different levels with qualifications for each. In addition, there are multiple events, like moose in the field which is based on footwork, in which you can get a gold medal.

Yee's coach, Lyndon Johnston, is a two-time Olympic competitor and has been coaching Yee for three years. "I enjoy coaching Maddie for many reasons, but mostly because she makes me laugh every day, and each and every week I see improvement. I feel that my job as a coach is to push athletes out of their comfort zone in order for them to find their own potential," Johnston said.

Yee has learned many life lessons throughout her time ice skating. "I gained some confidence that I apply to real life," Yee said.

According to Yee, ice skating is a new and fun experience every day, where you can learn numerous lessons that you never thought you could.

GRAPHIC BY LEO GORDON



[an infographic]

Torch Tries: Daily Harvest

by Madi Holmes
Web Editor-in-Chief

Bringing the farm-to-table movement into the 21st century, the online delivery service Daily Harvest makes wholesome, healthy eating simple and effortless. The subscription-based company provides customers with hundreds of pre-portioned snacks, meals and drink options shipped directly to the home within days and easily renewed at the customer's fingertips.

Founded by Rachel Drori, the company has been delivering their pre-portioned meals since 2014. Feeling that there was a burning need to reduce "shop, chop, and prep time" for the busy professionals and parents of the world, Drori decided to make a healthy diet more accessible in the new day and age.

Daily Harvest takes pride in its nourishing ingredients and uses its innovative and research-backed "farm-freezing" technique to ensure maximum nutrients straight from the source. According to Daily Harvest, blueberries have 200% more vitamin C when frozen compared to fresh after three days, and cauliflower has 50% more antioxidants frozen versus fresh, making the company's frozen smoothies and meals packed with nutrients.

Using these farm-fresh ingredients, Daily Harvest offers a wide range of products from immune-boosting smoothies to energizing oat bowls. The other five types of products include their vegetable-based harvest bowls (their main lunch option with ingredients like cauliflower, pesto and spinach), protein bites, chia bowls, lattes and soups. All of their products are shipped frozen and pre-portioned into convenient on-the-go containers perfect for easing stressful mornings and late-night cravings.

The protein bites come in three unique flavors; two have more chocolate flavors and the other a strong coconut and lemon zest. All bites are no-bake and contain beneficial ingredients

such as cacao, chia, avocado, hazelnut, date, chickpea and ginger.

One of the company's newest additions, lattes, offer the perfect pick-me-up for both sweet and spicy lovers. The Chag and Chocolate latte made with coconut cream and cacao remind taste buds of a traditional hot chocolate, while the Ginger and Turmeric latte give a more spicy kick to boost immunity.

The company's staple smoothies are truly what allowed them to expand into so many products. There are over 20 smoothie options to choose from, ranging from energizing berry and chocolate blends to immunity-boosting, tangy spoonfuls. Some smoothies even contain cold brew or matcha, containing a perfect dose of caffeine to help ease early mornings.

The convenience of the smoothies makes prep super simple and easy — all you do is add a base (water, milk, coconut water, almond milk, oat milk, etc.) and blend! The smoothies' minimal and healthy ingredients also don't compromise taste at all, making the products both effortless and delicious. All of the pre-portioned cups come with a five-minute prep time; simply microwave the harvest bowls with the suggested time and enjoy.

All Daily Harvest products can be purchased in the form of renewed deliveries either weekly or monthly. Weekly plans range from six to 24 cups with the option to skip at any time, with prices ranging from \$7 to \$8 per cup. The monthly plan offers the option for one delivery of 24 cups at \$7 per cup.

GRAPHIC BY LORA RINI

Rating:
5/5 Torches



INTERVAL FITNESS

What is interval fitness?

"Interval training is a type of discontinuous physical training that involves a series of low- to high-intensity exercise workouts interspersed with rest or relief periods." (definitions.net)

"Research shows that interval training-workouts in which you alternate periods of high-intensity exercise with low-intensity recovery periods increase fitness and burn more calories over a short period of time than steady-state cardio." (Jason R. Karp, Ph.D. and Colleen Travers) *1st link*

Benefits & Risks (Mayo Clinic)

- You'll burn more calories.
- You'll be more time efficient.
- You'll improve your aerobic capacity.
- You'll keep boredom at bay.
- You don't need special equipment.

"If you have a chronic health condition or haven't been exercising regularly, consult your doctor before trying any type of interval training... Interval training doesn't have to involve high-impact exercise, ballistic or jumping movements, or heavy weights. Instead, start slowly." (Mayo Clinic Staff; 3rd link)

CARDIO

Warm up for 15 minutes. Run, bike, or row for 3 minutes at 90 to 95 percent of your maximum heart rate. Take 3 minutes active recovery (you're still moving, but at an easy pace) and repeat the 3 on 3 off pattern 3 to 4 more times. Finish with a 10-minute cooldown.

SPRINT

Warm up for 15 minutes, adding a few 20-second bursts at the end to prepare for the workout. Run, bike, or row for 30 seconds at a nearly all-out effort. Take 3 minutes active recovery and repeat the 30 on 3 off pattern 5 or 6 more times. Finish with a 10-minute cooldown.

Students tackle ten-mile mud run

Eleventh and twelfth-graders compete in the Tough Mudder Run

by Lily Quartermaine

Asst. Entertainment Editor

A spirited group of six fearless students took on the muddy challenge of a lifetime Dec. 7. Twelfth-graders Joshua Widjaja, Thomas Kochevar, Hannah Sticht, Riley Davis, Lucas Caragiulo and eleventh-grader Alexis Firlie all participated in the Tough Mudder run in Bartow, Florida.

The Tough Mudder is a ten-mile run with intense and painful obstacles, such as monkey bars and rope-climbing, all the while being absolutely soaked in mud. Whether it be swimming through it, jumping into it, or withstanding a bizarre activity in it, most of the activities are completed in giant mud pits. The event's finale, the electrical obstacle, is shocking, both literally and mentally. The runner must sprint through an excruciating series of electrical wires.

The group of six courageous students braved the course in two separate groups — Sticht and Firlie ran together at an earlier time, and Widjaja, Kochevar, Davis and Caragiulo ran together at a later time. Sticht and Firlie ended up finishing an hour earlier than the other four, but the two groups still met up at the end of the run to take pictures.

The two groups had different reasons for planning the race but gained similar experiences in the end. Sticht planned on doing the race, because she had done the 5k with her family the previous year, but saw Wi-

djaja post about it on social media and decided to discuss it with him. Widjaja, on the other hand, saw this as an opportunity to kick off senior year.

"I saw an advertisement for it on Youtube and wanted it to be a last hurrah for high school," Widjaja said.

Soon after, he recruited some of his closest friends, Kochevar, Caragiulo and Davis, and the group was all set to face the Tough Mudder.

When it came to the teamwork aspect of the run, the four already had the advantage of being friends. While Caragiulo, Davis and Kochevar were not as close before the race, they had the opportunity to bond over one of the most unique team building experiences out there.

Helping others, even strangers, was a common theme throughout the run. Some of the craziest obstacles were team-based and focused on cooperation, which supported the sense of community throughout all the participants.

Unfortunately, Widjaja had a rough experience that served as a stark contrast to the positive vibes of the run. About seven miles in, he found himself stuck with a bad cramp.

"Health officials were offering me a ride back, but I wanted to finish it. I was lucky enough to have a supportive group of friends that stayed with me," Widjaja said. "When I cramped, people offered to stretch

It's that moment when you don't want to do it that people step in and tell you 'You got this!', 'You're almost there!'"

**Hannah Sticht,
Twelfth-grader**



Twelfth-grader Hannah Sticht, eleventh-grader Alexis Firlie and twelfth-graders Riley Davis, Thomas Kochevar, Joshua Widjaja and Lucas Caragiulo (left to right) meet up after the race to pose for a photo. They had just completed a ten-mile run with a plethora of intensive obstacles. PHOTO PROVIDED BY JOSH WDJAJA

my calves for me and offered food and help."

The rest of Widjaja's group, Kochevar, Davis and Caragiulo, remained right by his side.

"When Josh was getting really bad cramps, there was a group of people that saw us two separate times that gave him some food. There was another guy who was a physical trainer or something that stopped for like 10 minutes to stretch him. It was pretty cool to see people like that," Caragiulo said.

Sticht and Firlie, already best friends, used their teamwork to get through the toughest parts of the run. Sticht had a moment where she felt her lowest, struggling to keep moving forward. Around five miles in, she became sore from the extreme monkey bars obstacle and did not want to jog

the next mile.

"It's that moment when you don't want to do it that people step in and tell you 'You got this!', 'You're almost there!'" Sticht said.

To help others understand the reasoning behind the group's impressive yet dangerous feats, Firlie offers a fresh perspective.

"I would even relate this to math class. I struggle with math and for me this teaches me that if you work at something you think you can't achieve, and have somebody there beside you, like Hannah, you can always work through it," Firlie said. "For people with mental health issues, every day is an accomplishment. For me, doing this shows me that sometimes it may be hard to get out of bed, but you've done this so you can keep going."

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MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**



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What your locker says about you

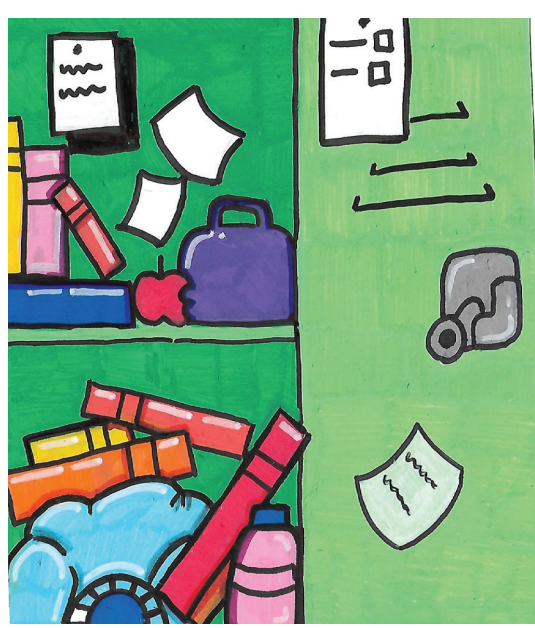
by Madi Holmes
Web Editor-in-Chief

There are two types of students in this world — those always strapped with an entire set of color Muji pens and a matching bullet journal, and those content with the singular black ballpoint buried at the bottom of their backpack. Not to judge a book by its cover, but it seems to be that the average school goer's surface-level organization can all be rooted back to one thing: the locker.

The locker is a very sacred space full of mystery. No one really knows what's behind those orange, green and yellow doors besides the owners themselves and it makes for very interesting social judgments.

Seeing someone's locker is like peeking into the deep, endless caverns of someone's

mind. To mock or insult someone's locker simply by the cleanliness of its state should be a felony. Even if it's the fourth time this week that someone's collection of first-quarter flashcards comes barreling onto the locker pod floor upon opening, it is their business and their business alone. Whether the items in your locker are color



coded or coded in mysterious, unknown colors, the world has no right to deem you inferior to your peers.

As a recovering messy locker owner, I can assure you that old habits die hard. Why would I waste time and money on a locker shelf when I can just use my stack of miscellaneous papers as a DIY version? Recently, I recognized these toxic habits and have changed my ways, but I still sympathize with those struggling with my same past flaws.

Whether you're the person struggling to slam the door closed or trying to remember your combo out of lack of use, you are both considered equals. Your emotional dependence on that rectangular prism doesn't define you, sweetie.

GRAPHIC BY LILY QUARTERMAINE

No questions asked, PeaceJam is a cult

by Leo Gordon
Match Editor-in-Chief

The rumors are true. PeaceJam, the most notoriously secretive and selective club on campus, is a cult. Anyone who's heard anything about the club, from its members to its Family meetings, knows that something about the group isn't quite right from the start. What do they do in their weekly meetings? What are they chanting about? Why do they meet at members' homes? Through eyewitness accounts and photographic evidence, The Torch will document the secrets of Pine View's one and only cult — PeaceJam.

The modest roots of PeaceJam date back to the days of former English teacher Brigid Shannon's leadership. Last year, Shannon left Pine View to become the director of the entire PeaceJam Southeast region. As observed by outsiders, since Shannon's leaving, the club has continued to embody the definition of "culthood" under the club's new and powerful leader, Maggie Higgins.

Far-fetched? Keep reading.

The club, comprised of about 40 members, holds regular monthly meetings at members' homes. With declining senior attendance rates across the board, especially of PeaceJam members, outsiders are raising questions about the possibility of sacrificial rituals at meetings.



Peace Jam members pose for a group picture at their yearly "conference." Suspicious.

GRAPHIC BY LEO GORDON

"I haven't spoken to Kaseh Whan since last month. The last text I got from him was 'Hey. Heading to Jamily meeting RN.' I hope he's doing well, wherever he is," peer of Whan, Izshe Dedd, said.

Recently, the club formed a logistics committee of around 10 students to help club operations run more smoothly. The committee meets an hour before the rest of the club gathers, and makes most of the club's decisions.

"Technically we're not officers, but we oversee everything in the club. Whatever we say goes, pretty much," tenth-grader and logistics committee member, Notpre Sident, said.

Sounds like a cult, doesn't it?

In addition to their cult-like head committee, the club

also travels to Tallahassee every year for a conference with the "larger parent organization," PeaceJam Southeast, now led by Shannon. At the conference, members sit in circles and secretly discuss the actions of a new "acclaimed speaker" each year.

Sounds pretty sketchy to me.

"I just don't really understand why people think we're a cult. Even though literally nobody knows what we do on a weekly basis, or at member homes, they have no right to judge us," four-year ambassador and PeaceJam-lover Wecul Tinn said.

If you have any questions about PeaceJam, or want more proof that the club is actually a cult, don't ask anyone — just stand outside of a meeting and watch.

[an infographic]

Which Sub Are You?

What is your ideal Saturday morning?

- a. absolute silence
- b. hanging with the squad
- c. solving the newest Mensa puzzle

What is your pencil of choice?

- a. organic wooden #2
- b. whatever one is at the bottom of my backpack
- c. strictly Muji 0.5mm

How would you take attendance?

- a. let the vibes tell you
- b. call out names until voices crack
- c. reference the seating chart

mostly a...

mostly b...

mostly c...



MEME OF THE MONTH

This meme originated on Twitter, first as a self-care tweet from @ChanceFrom79th. Parodies soon followed after the tweet blew up. These tweets follow the same format and have started to indirectly reference famous storylines from movies, books and television shows. The meme's popularity began in early 2020.



Canceling plans is ok. Lying about being a teacher is ok. Subbing for a class of ten year olds and teaching them rock and roll is ok. Sneaking them all in a van to battle of the bands is ok. Do what you need to cope.

7:59 AM · 1/6/20 · Twitter for Android

PINE VIEW EDITION



canceling plans is ok. coming up with fake data for a chem lab is ok. making up a test 9 weeks late is ok. pretending to have read 1984 is ok. not knowing what decade ur learning about in apush is ok. almost getting run over in the shell lot is ok. do what you need to cope

12:51 PM · 1/14/20 · Twitter for iPhone

The format of this meme is "Canceling plans is ok," followed by a series of questionable activities, ending with the statement, "Do what you need to cope."



Canceling plans is ok. Being forced to participate in a fight to the death is ok. Having a fake relationship to trick the wealthy into loving you is ok. Becoming the face of the rebellion is ok. Do what you need to cope.

5:48 PM · 1/7/20 · Twitter Web App

GRAPHIC BY OLIVIA HANSEN

[a column]

The peak of cinema: 'Ratatouille'

We all know Pixar has made some of the most iconic movies of the century, and as the decade is now over, I would like to take this opportunity to rehash which one takes the cheese.

Some can argue that "Toy Story 2" (not Toy Story) and "Finding Nemo" are strong contenders in the continuous debate over which Pixar movie reigns supreme. However, I plan to strongly suggest that these predetermined notions are incredibly inaccurate. "Ratatouille" is by far the best movie ever made, objectively speaking.

Though "Toy Story 2" offers valuable lessons of morale and kinship, it does not compare to the mere title slide of "Ratatouille"; greatness is presented in the very first seconds of the cinematic masterpiece. The authentic incorporation of French culture elevates the animated film to a whole new level of virtuosity.

First, a little bit of backstory about this movie. Remy, a small gray rat with a bloodline of thievery,

left his life of poverty and ceiling insulation on a spur-of-the-moment adventure and transformed into a culinary god. May I also just say, he is a man (or rodent), of generosity. He saw home-boy Linguini struggling and dropped everything to help.

Just based on that, I strongly believe this movie should be ranked up next to "Titanic" because of the con-



Elena D'Amato, Asst. Humor Editor

vincing acting coming from the drama-filled plotline, and with an obvious 96% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, it is safe to assume that this is probably the best movie to come out in the Disney universe. This is factual information, of course.

Not to mention the out-of-the-box cinematography used throughout this 2007

Brilliantly blending animated characters and live-action storytelling work together to create an experience that cannot be matched.

treasure. Who would've thought of the unique camera angle from the inside of a

chef's hat? Brilliantly blending animated characters and live-action storytelling work together to create an experience that cannot be matched.

The choice of naming the movie "Ratatouille," while a rat is serving that specific dish is so well-thought through, and the pun really shines. I speak for the entire Torch staff when I give this movie six out of five torches.

The Epitome of People Watching: Pine View Shell Lot

by Brianna Nelson
Spark Editor-in-Chief

We all know the shell lot sucks so let's get the cliches out of the way; the melted lip balm and layers of dust caked onto your front bumper, the parking spots fit for a sedan (and that's about it) and a neverending sense of dread that some sophomore is going to ram into your car.

However, spend a little time looking deeper into the white abyss and you'll find more than meets the eye.

The shell lot is one of the best places to people-watch on Pine View's campus. It all starts in the morning with poor younger siblings and unwanted freshman being driven to school getting kicked out of the car. Their exodus is visible to all, a journey of loneliness and fear as they prepare to sit in the Student Union for hours on end.

They're the first, but as you wait you can sense the urgency as the clock ticks down to 7:21, the parking is the first to take a toll as student's whip into their spot, as an amazing macroeconomics student, one can compare parking skills over time to the Short Run Phillips Curve. The



Shell lot enthusiast stands idly by as he witnesses the diverse selection of student drivers that populate the lot.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY ELENA D'AMATO

damage, however, doesn't come from the questionable parking skills but more the underestimated distance between parking neighbors — the secondhand embarrassment of seeing someone crash their car.

Exiting the car at the perfect time, a precise 7:15 a.m. to make it to AP Biology on time is the next step — the next part of uncovering the beauty of the shell lot.

Weaving between cars, one can truly see the diversity of Pine View and Sarasota as a whole, from the Mustangs to the Range Rovers (and for the environmentally friendly, a Tesla will do). Pine View truly is a melting pot of class and privilege. Don't ogle too much, or a distracted driver blaring terrible loud music may run you over, you wouldn't want to be late to first period.

Who's that Pokémon?

As part of a Humor tradition, each issue will include a teacher-based Pokémon. Try to collect them all!

BASIC Roberto Lamela HP 90

APUSH Pokémon. HT: 1776" WT: 1788.

Chocolate Milk Power Strike
Notorious for his infatuation with chocolate milk, Lamela often uses the beverage to his advantage when facing an opponent. When threatened, Lamela drinks three bottles of chocolate milk and triples his strength, effectively crushing his competitors. This popeye-esque ability is perhaps what makes Lamela such a feared opponent.

α-PUSH
Perhaps Lamela's most harrowing attack is his ability to forcibly push over his competition by merely stating a fact relating to U.S. History. The sound waves that he emits are strong enough to crush his opponents flat, although this attack is the most fatal when the fact relates to the Jeffersonian era. Opponents cover in fear as Lamela describes the causes of the War of 1812. STEM majors beware!

weakness **resistance**

retreat

GRAPHIC BY ANNA LABINER

[staff editorial]

In praise: Sarasota's collective effort to take back Sarasota County Schools

Facing mounting evidence of Superintendent Bowden's mishandling of crucial information and widespread backlash from our community, Bowden and the school board agreed to a mutual separation agreement.

With the Sarasota County School Board taking final action to remove Superintendent Todd Bowden from his role Nov. 19 after months of investigation, the community that helped bring down the "boys' club" can finally begin to heal and restore their trust in our school district.

This "club" first formed in October 2016, after Bowden was hired as superintendent in a 4-1 vote. He has since been plagued by numerous sexual harassment complaints, rocky negotiations with the teacher's union and discrimination complaints. Bowden took leadership of the school district despite investigations into the harassment allegations against him by Dr. Lyna Jimenez-Ruiz and Susan Forrest — two former employees of Suncoast Technical College, where Bowden served as director. Bowden should not have been voted into office amid these allegations.

Regardless, Bowden is out of office today, and Sarasota students owe those who spoke out and rallied against him, despite the risks associated with doing so, a huge thank you.

Jimenez-Ruiz, who was Assistant Director of Suncoast Technical College, continued to place a spotlight on Bowden's misbehavior since he first assumed his position. Subsequent to an inappropriate encounter in July 2015 when Bowden allegedly attempted to convince her to take shots of alcohol and then continually

insisted on walking her back to her villa while attending a convention, Jimenez-Ruiz was transferred to Booker High School after reporting the encounter to her colleagues. Despite risking career suicide with allegations deemed "unfounded" in a 97-page report by Sarasota-based Hultman Sensenig + Joshi, Jimenez-Ruiz has maintained a crucial role in the removal of Bowden from his post.

Acting as the catalyst for the removal of Bowden, Cheraina Bonner has displayed courage since June in pursuing justice against former Chief Operating Officer (COO) Jeff Maultsby and Bowden for allegedly mishandling her harassment complaint.

Hired by the Sarasota County School Board to investigate Bonner's claims against her boss, Sproat Workplace Investigations concluded in its 118-page investigation report that Maultsby did sexually harass Bonner, created a hostile work environment, and threatened

Sarasota students owe those who spoke out and rallied against [Bowden], despite the risks associated with doing so, a huge thank you.

to retaliate against her when she reported her concerns.

The report found that

Bowden did not take prompt or appropriate steps to investigate Bonner's claims and instead notified Maultsby of Bonner's allegations.

The Sproat report not only contributed to Maultsby's resignation from the district, but also uncovered Bowden's mishandling of the situation. After



a Nov. 5 school board meeting to discuss the investigation and Bowden's involvement, he was put on a 30-day notice, at the end of which the school board would vote to reprimand, suspend or terminate him, or take no action.

Bowden's offer to step down and the school board's unanimous vote Nov. 19 to accept a "mutual separation agreement" removed Bowden from his role. While board members Jane Goodwin, Shirley Brown and Carolyn Zucker originally spoke out in favor of Bowden, they put the communities needs first by setting their personal opinions aside and voting for he mutual separation agreement.

Without the public's outcry for change in leadership, the board would not have

come together to make the much-needed modification in authority, and Bowden would still be serving today.

The community has welcomed Mitsi Corcoran, the district's chief financial officer since 2007, as interim superintendent. Now, Corcoran and the school board are working to hire an agency to train staff and students to make sure everyone knows what sexual harassment is and what to do if and when it is reported. The board will continue its search for a permanent superintendent; however, the priority should remain to rebuild the trust of the community that has been lost through the district's actions throughout the past three years.

A suggestion posted outside of the Sarasota Classified Teacher's Association, after

Bowden signed the mutual separation agreement, exemplifies the idea of many community members: "Let's get back to educating our kids."

Until the next superintendent can clean up the stain left behind by the "boys' club," the community will continue to be affected by Bowden's mishandling of a sexual harassment complaint, negotiations with the teacher's union, a state investigation into the district's special education services, and a deeply divided board. However, with Bowden's departure as the first step in the right direction, students, teachers, those affected by the alleged harassment and Sarasota residents can hopefully take their first step toward a renewal of trust in our district.

PHOTO BY BEN GORDON

Transactional friendships exemplify our atomized culture

by Brianna Nelson
Spark Editor-in-Chief

In 1983, feminist and anticapitalist sociologist Arlie Hochschild coined the term emotional labor, however, not even she could predict the impact of her work in a new age of internet discourse and hyperindividualism. The fact is, not only has Hochschild's impact been felt in debates of feminism and mental health, but her ideas have been radically co-opted by Twitter activists.

The true definition of emotional labor lies within the female-dominated service industry, in which suppression of emotions is not only expected but necessary to please the customer. In essence, the labor of these jobs lies not in heavy lifting, but instead the mental toll it takes on its employees. Twitter, however, has given new meaning to the term: one built on a capitalist framework in which emotional labor is a transactional and normal aspect of friendships and relationships.

This recent mania surrounding emotional labor was kickstarted by a tweet thread by user Melissa A. Fabello, which implored readers to ask for consent before unloading their issues, and even creating a template for what to respond

with when "at capacity."

"Hey! I'm so glad you reached out. I'm actually at capacity / helping someone else

"woke" culture. From self care to emotional labor, these terms have been shifted in their meaning to serve the ends of

no longer built on a natural give and take, instead a form of supplying and demanding care, care that will be compen-

culture of transaction.

This transactional perspective on relationships is not only unhealthy, but ignores the true responsibilities of a friendship. Friendships and relationships will always be give and take, an uneven balance, but you shouldn't be tallying up the score. How many times have they complained to me? How many times have I been forced to sit and watch them cry over FaceTime? These are aspects of a friendship that, while requiring a certain level of focus and emotional vulnerability, are simply part of creating human bonds.

Our relationships are built on a give and take: they should not be meticulously measured with a corrupted definition of emotional labor in mind. See your friends as humans, and yourself the same, with waves of emotion and a need to socialize, to be heard. This labor is simply an aspect of friendship that will be "repaid" but not in a traditional sense.

The support of a friend when the tides turn and things get tough for you, someone who can just listen, maybe even someone to read over your terrible opinion story — these are things that can't and shouldn't be quantified; they're just the qualities of a good friend.

GRAPHIC BY ZOE MERRITT
who's in crisis / dealing with some personal stuff right now, and I don't think I can hold appropriate space for you. Could we connect [later date or time] instead / Do you have someone else to reach out to?"

There's a lot to unpack here, but this has become a new normal, symptomatic of a strain of hyper individualist perspective, masquerading as

a selfish and atomized worldview in which community and people will always come second.

But this post is more than that: it's a prime example of the way we view friendship in this competitive and productivity-based culture. The fundamental way emotional labor is used shows a level of transactional expectations within a friendship. Relationships are

sated for. This, however, is almost an internalization of the neoliberal mindset, one where every aspect of one's life must be monetized, constant productivity is required and value must be assigned to an action, no matter how miniscule. This mindset is then pushed toward the people under the guise of a feminist framework that refuses to take into account the way it has internalized a toxic

[student voices]

Who do you support in the Democratic presidential primary?

In advance of the 2020 presidential election, a large group of candidates are competing for the Democratic Party's nomination. Pine View students have expressed their preferences below, which cover a wide range of ideologies and positions.



Carlton Leffler, grade 12

“Elizabeth Warren. I support Elizabeth Warren because I feel like she has really good policies on healthcare and education. I also think she is a very good public speaker; she is less aggressive and instead uses facts.”



Rithvik Kamarajugadda, grade 10

Pine View students: Do not fear asking stupid questions

by Olivia Hansen
Humor Editor

Picture this: you're in a classroom of "gifted" students, and the teacher begins to discuss the development of social classes during the 1500s and the feudalistic society. Suddenly, your train of thought is disrupted as you try to recall what feudalism, an unfamiliar word, means. You try to disregard your momentary halt with hope that your topic of confusion will not be relevant moving forward, since everyone else seems to know what it means.

However, the word continues to present itself and becomes the foundation of the discussion at hand. Now you are at a loss and unable to dive deeper into the conversation, and you missed out on a part of the lesson. If only this situation could have been avoided by asking the teacher what feudalism really means.

This fear of asking questions is often disregarded and under-discussed. You may be thinking, "No one cares what questions you ask!" After all, we have constantly heard since elementary school, "Raise your

hand, remember, there are no stupid questions!" However, when placed in an academically hyper-competitive environment like Pine View, there are stupid questions — and our peers make that very clear. The instance I discussed earlier is something students, including myself, endure on a regular basis.

When taking academically challenging classes at Pine View, where you are surrounded by kids of different grade levels and higher intellectual potential, it becomes more and more difficult to reveal your academic naivety that is exposed when you ask a "stupid question."

This subtle, sometimes conspicuous notion isn't always intentional. After all, it is a known fact that judgement and inflicted criticism is a result of insecurity, in this instance, academic insecurity. As "gifted" students, we are reluctant to admit our deficiencies in the classroom. And going to a school that places emphasis on educational prosperity makes it harder to accommodate for weaknesses while also embracing your strengths.

Our standards of success should be based on personal improvement and growth, but at the same time, it's hard when your best work is another's worst. Our peers' higher standards for themselves devalue the hard work that others go through.

Most Pine View students have a predetermined idea of what their peers should know, whether it be school-based or political. When a student falls short of this set intellect, which is made clear when they ask the teacher to clarify or explain something they "should already know," a sense of blame and discouragement is inadvertently placed on them. This is toxic for a classroom environment.

Regardless of how you may be perceived, it is your job as a student to clear up any misunderstandings, and ask that "stupid" question. As Pine View students, we pride ourselves on academic success. How can we succeed without using readily available resources like our teachers, or even fellow students? Ignore the judgement, ask the question, and set the stage for a less-stressful learn-

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otherwise noted. All stories are subject to prior approval by administration. Guest columns and reader input. The Opinion section of The Torch is an open forum for editorial commentary. The Torch

[a column]

Big things are coming for the year 2020

As we ring in the new year, we've witnessed an unnerving introduction to the year 2020: Australia is burning (and over 1 billion animals have died there), tensions with Iran have escalated, and lengthy, bitter impeachment proceedings have begun. Still, we haven't quite grasped how consequential the year 2020 will be — how much it's going to impact the rest of our lives. Let's take a look at what awaits (politically) in the new year.

Right off the bat, the 2020 presidential election is surely the most consequential presidential election in recent history. The president's consistent attacks on journalists, other elected officials, and everyday Americans will only be amplified if he wins a second term. The wrong results could mean the end of any political cooperation among opposing parties in Washington — that is, if any cooperation still even exists today. Republican or Democrat, ensure our country escapes its descent towards division by making your voice heard.

Florida will vote whether to gradually raise the minimum wage from its current rate of \$8.46 to \$15 by 2026. Nonprofit groups are gather-



Ben Gordon
Opinion Editor

ing signatures to allow Floridians to vote on a ban on assault weapons and the legalization of recreational marijuana. Constitutional amendments are the most effective way Floridians can have a say in state laws, and 2020 brings some of the most significant

Imagine what our government could become if it worked the way it was supposed to — by the will of the people.

initiatives Floridians have ever seen.

As we watch the next year's bitterly partisan election campaigns play out,

imagine what our government could become if it worked the way it was supposed to — by the will of the people. Most importantly, make sure you vote — and if you can't, do everything you can to ensure our elections result in an America that works for everyone.

The Verdict

DARE: We are sad to see the DARE program leave Pine View for the next school year. It was valuable in the fight against drug addiction and abuse, and it will be more difficult to raise awareness without it.



Sarasota Art Museum: We are excited to see a new museum for contemporary art opening in Sarasota, further contributing to the city's thriving arts scene.



Teacher Pensions: We are sad to see the complications involved with teacher pensions locally and around the country. Teachers deserve infinitely better treatment.



Blood Drives: We are happy to see increased participation in blood drives on campus when compared to previous years.



the Torch

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A spotlight on Mr. and Miss Pine View 2019

by Kasumi Wade
Sports Editor

Every year, groups of seniors compete for the titles of Mr. and Miss Pine View. This year, twelfth-graders Reed Spahn (Mr.) and Natalie Taylor (Miss) were crowned after winning their respective shows.

What does it mean to be Mr./Miss Pine View?

Miss: I think it means that you love Pine View, and you have to embody parts of your class. It's like you are a representative of your class and have this positive energy. You are willing to talk to anybody and be friends with anybody. You aren't mean or sarcastic, and don't care if you haven't had a class with somebody in years but can still go up to them and compliment them. It means being kind to others, not just in your class, but being a role model for the younger kids because we are the "giants."

Mr: It feels kind of surreal, honestly, since I've been going to this school since second grade and have been attending Mr. Pine View for a long time. Now to be Mr. Pine View, it's a weird experience. I could not imagine myself going to any other school at this point other than Pine View. Maybe it is just because I have been here for so long, and I don't know anything else, or it just feels

right. But being Mr. Pine View is about being an embodiment of the school and it is overall a super cool idea to share with the people in your class and the people that attend the school. It just feels really good to think you can be an inspiration to the kids that want to follow their passion. I've had several little kids come up to me and be like, "Dude, you're guitar playing was so cool," or "Your dog was so cool." I'm like about to cry thinking about it knowing that you can have an impact on the young mind and inspire them to do their own thing. Even if it is a little high school talent-showesque type thing, it is the little things that count. Because maybe you inspired that kid to go on and follow their passion or some kid who watched me is going to go pick up a guitar or train dogs. It is an overall extremely rewarding and just cool experience.

What was your favorite part of the show?

Miss: Thinking that we aren't



Twelfth-graders Reed Spahn and Natalie Taylor converse about their experiences with the shows. Spahn and Taylor were crowned Mr. and Miss Pine View, respectively. PHOTO BY BEN GORDON

going to be here next year and that most of us have been here for ten years, it is just crazy. The show was a moment to have one of our last hurrahs before we leave. You don't know if you will keep up with these people and see them on breaks and stuff in the future, so it's nice to have this moment shared with all of these people before we graduate. It is a moment you are going to remember for the rest of your life, and that the school is going to remember. My dad told me I was in the history books at Pine View now, and it is weird thinking about leaving a legacy.

Mr: There's a lot of things I could say. I loved every minute of being there. I enjoyed the times when things went wrong, when things went right, and just all of it. Anytime we were on stage, there was this air of brotherhood and fellowship with some of the people I've known for most of my life. With these boys that

I've known for practically a decade, it's a really rewarding experience to see how far you've come. When you see old photos and watch videos of yourself from second grade, and then you look at where you are now. It is a surreal experience to think of how it all happened. It is super cool to be up on stage with those guys and think that we all started from the same place, and now here we are eleven years later. We are the giants now, and that's how I've really felt all year. It was crazy to sit there on stage with all these guys and think that we are the people that we looked up to back in second grade. We are now the people that inspire the younger generation to do more and to follow their passion and to have fun.

What advice do you have for future contestants?

Miss: I would say to not take yourself too seriously. When going on stage and doing all

the dances, you think you're gonna be so embarrassed. But honestly, the audience is just gonna love that you are putting yourself out there and you're gonna look back and think, "Man, I can't believe I did that. I'm really proud of myself." Just don't be afraid to do crazy and stupid things, because it's fun and you are going to have great memories.

Mr: I got up onstage and danced to "Glamorous" by Fergie, which I don't think I ever would have done if it wouldn't have been for this. You can't take yourself too seriously, and you have to learn to laugh at yourself. Don't be afraid to be yourself onstage, because everyone just wants to see you up there, that's why you are in the show. Everyone wants to see you having fun and interacting with other people. Do what you love, and when on stage don't try to minimize yourself. Just make sure it's fun.

Senior plays music for medicine



Twelfth-grader Jack Gallahan celebrates the success of Music for Medicine, his program, alongside friends. Gallahan started Music for Medicine in 2014. PHOTO PROVIDED BY JACK GALLAHAN

by Mahitha Ramachandran
Asst. Opinion Editor

Sitting elegantly in the lobby of the Sarasota Memorial Hospital is a glossy black baby grand Steinway piano.

The piano was brought to Sarasota Memorial Hospital through an initiative that Pine View twelfth-grader Jack Gallahan started in 2014. After seeing a piano in the HealthPark Medical Center in Fort Myers, Florida, Gallahan was inspired to bring something similar to Sarasota. Gallahan spoke to the Chief of Staff at the Sarasota Memorial Hospital about bringing a piano there. He started a crowdfunding campaign to raise money for the \$15,000 piano, and soon, two anonymous donors donated the full price. Once the new piano was brought into the lobby of Sarasota Memorial Hospital, Jack Gallahan's Music for Medicine program was born.

Gallahan began taking piano lessons in second grade, eventually switching over to the cello in middle school. He continues to play the cello in the Sarasota Youth Orchestra program and on his own with private lessons. His passion for music inspired the Music for Medicine Program and continues to allow the program to grow.

“Bringing in a piano and bringing music to the hospital brought it to life,”

Jack Gallahan,
Twelfth-grader

The piano was just the start of Gallahan's Music for Medicine program. Although Gallahan's initial idea was to invite local student pianists to play the piano in the lobby of the hospital, Music for Medicine has since blossomed into something much greater, now involving many components. There are now volunteer musicians, both students and adults, and they range from pianists to guitarists, flutists and other instruments, as well as small ensembles. These people volunteer to play regularly at the hospital on a certain

day and time each month, for example. Additionally, local ensembles occasionally put on concerts in the courtyard of the hospital. The newest addition to the Music for Medicine program is called Art Destinations, an event that focuses on the therapeutic power of art and music. During an Art Destinations session, a professional art therapist comes to the hospital and guides several patients through an art project while Gallahan, along with other musicians, play music.

Gallahan noticed that the usually quiet space of the hospital, only occupied by beeping machinery and hushed voices, was transformed by the introduction of music.

“Bringing in a piano and bringing music to the hospital brought it to life,” he said. “It allows the patients to enjoy the space through the music rather than it being a place of silence.”

Gallahan says he typically plays at the hospital once or twice a month.

“My main job as the founder of Music for Medicine is planning the events, sending emails, and coordinating everything for the program,” he said.

As a senior, however, Gallahan is also planning out the future of Music for Medicine so that the program can continue once he goes to college. In fact, Sarasota Orchestra cellist Chizuko Matsusaka, who Gallahan has worked with and who has recently earned a certificate in music therapy, has started a non-profit that will continue the Music for Medicine events once Gallahan graduates.

Whether it be playing his cello at the hospital or sending out emails to coordinate a concert there, it is clear that Gallahan is dedicated to enriching our community through his Music for Medicine program.

[a column]

It's okay to cry over spilled milk

In the 2017 hit box office film, “Lady Bird,” one of the most emotional scenes happens when Saoirse Ronan's character delivers the line “different things can be sad, it's not all war...” And while a teen movie isn't exactly full of wisdom, this line resonated with me.

Recently, there has been an underlying sense of cataclysm among the general public, and specifically the youth. From the impending climate crisis to the presidential race, we tend to view our own personal problems as insignificant, or not worth others' time. In such a chaotic climate, it can be hard to focus on yourself, especially when other people trivialize your own emotions and day-to-day hurdles.

While there are many important world matters that need attention, keeping personal problems to yourself, or dismissing them as trivial doesn't actually improve anything. The classic saying “there is no use crying over spilled milk” while true, should not be used to invalidate feelings, no matter how small.

When the habit of invalidating your own feelings becomes a part of daily rhetoric, even if it is just in your own head, invalidating others' issues becomes a habit as well, even if it is inadvertent.

Invalidating our own concerns has become a normal part of expressing them. It's common to add “it could be worse” or “it's not that

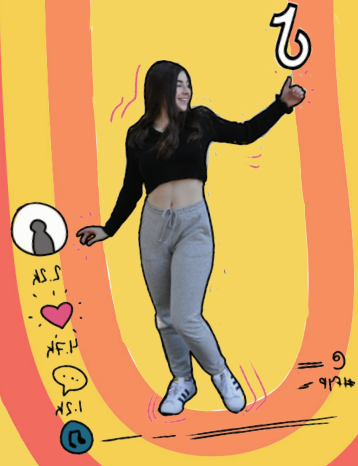


Ella Hechlik,
Editor-in-Chief

bad” each time one expresses what they have been feeling. And while it's important to acknowledge your privilege and keep your own issues in perspective, the world's overarching problems do not invalidate your own feelings about problems in your life, or make them any less significant.

Denying yourself attention to your own problems and withholding time spent resolving your issues can lead to a build up of negativity and a consequent inferiority complex. Yes, things could be worse, but that is true for everyone, and brushing off your problems because you consider them of less importance becomes unhealthy deflection quickly.

Nobody deserves to feel invalidated for their own feelings, so moving forward, remember to consider both the struggle of the individuals that you surround yourself with while also reflecting on the big issues. It's okay to be upset, even if someone else is going through something you may see as worse. It's not all war.



RETROSPECTIVE:

THE TORCH
REFLECTS
ON 20
YEARS OF
THE 2000S



Mr. Brightside

(2003)
 “Mr. Brightside” is catchy as heck, emotional and memorable. Everyone knows it, even if they don’t, and singing this early 2000s hit with a group of friends is fun and cathartic. Bringing about honest feelings of jealousy in almost every breathing person, “Mr. Brightside” will never die.

Parks and Recreation

(2009-2015)
 Airing during the golden modern age of NBC television, “Parks and Recreation” follows the career of middle-aged politician Leslie Knope in her Pawnee, Indiana Parks and Recreation office. The subtle yet direct humor offered by the relatable cast is what makes the show one of the best of the past two decades. Overall, “Parks and Recreation” has come to be recognized as one of the three shows included in the famed “Golden Trio” alongside “The Office” and “30 Rock.”

One of the Boys

(2008)
 Listen to Katy Perry’s song “I Kissed a Girl” once, and you’ll immediately understand the hype behind Katy Perry’s first successful album. The album, released in 2008, also features another of Perry’s hits, “Hot N Cold.” Back in the days of the album’s release, “I Kissed a Girl” was met with criticism for its portrayal of bisexuality in the mainstream pop sphere. Today, it’s viewed as one of the biggest and most socially relevant hits of the 2000s.

Game of Thrones

(2011-2019)
 Although the final season of HBO’s “Game of Thrones” was a disappointment to its die-hard fans, the series, which has so far accumulated 283 high-brow television awards, is one of the most followed shows of the decade. The series’ final episode alone accumulated a staggering 19.3 million viewers, a record for HBO. Also, before we forget the whole plot, we’re still waiting on the next book, George.

Radioactive

(2012)
 Imagine Dragons’ 2012 hit “Radioactive” was one of the top songs of 2012, peaking at number one on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart, where it stayed in the top 100 spots for a record-breaking 87 weeks. The song also inspired an iconic Minecraft parody cover, called “Dragons,” which is still available on YouTube, ready for its impending resurgence in popularity.

Wrecking Ball

(2013)
 Could any 2013 child forget the image of childhood icon Hannah Montana swinging through a construction site on a wrecking ball? Probably not. The song was the least of Miley’s problems in 2013, though, as her performance of “We Can’t Stop” at the 2013 American Music Awards, alongside Robin Thicke, was met with some harsh criticism.

Drake & Josh

(2004-2007)
 “Drake and Josh” is nostalgia at its finest. Whether you were a Drake stan or a Josh stan, watching Helen, Crazy Steve, Mindy and Craig on a casual summer afternoon — Capri Sun in hand — was the epitome of mid-2000s childhood culture.

Get Out

(2017)
 Nominated for best picture and Best Actor among many other awards at the 2018 Oscars, Jordan Peele’s 2017 film “Get Out” served as a vehicle for social commentary by highlighting the continuity of racism and cultural appropriation in American society. The film received a 98% rating from Rotten Tomatoes, an impressive feat. Additionally, Peele brought attention to racism in the film industry.

Stranger Things

(2016-)
 You either love or hate Netflix’s hit series “Stranger Things,” and that’s why so many people can’t stop watching it. The sci-fi-horror series, chronicling the lives of a group of children and adults in a 1983 Indiana town, has brought young stars like Millie Bobby Brown to incredible heights of fame, having heightened the 80’s aesthetic nostalgia to its peak.

The Crown

(2016-)
 The world has always been fascinated by Britain’s Royal Family, and Queen Elizabeth, the protagonist of the Netflix-original, “The Crown,” is no exception. Following the life of Elizabeth from the 1940’s to present day, the series swapped its leading actress Claire Foy for Academy-Award-Winner Olivia Coleman in its third season to account for Elizabeth’s age progression throughout the show. At the 2020 Golden Globe Awards, Coleman won the award for best actress in a drama series in “The Crown.”

Thank u, next

(2018)
 Ariana Grande had released hits like “Break Free” and “Problem” in 2014 and “Dangerous Woman” in 2016, but she’d never seen true superstardom until the release of her hit single “Thank U, Next,” her first song to reach the number one position on the Billboard Hot 100. The release of her 2019 album, also called “Thank U, Next” broke records for being the most-streamed record by a female artist in history, among many other record-shattering statistics. 2018 and 2019 were the years of Ariana, for sure.

Fine Line

(2019)
 A crowd favorite of the classic 2010’s band One Direction, rising solo artist Harry Styles has led a wildly successful career following the breakup of the famed British boy band. Styles’ most recent album, “Fine Line” became a favorite quickly after its release, topping the billboard charts within days. Styles is also well-known, in this stage of his career, at least, for his unique fashion sense, which is regularly praised for its originality.

Shrek

(2001)
 An Academy Award-winning film prevalent throughout meme culture, “Shrek” has maintained its long-standing title as one of the most iconic animated movies of the early 2000s since its 2001 release. Following an ogre in his swampy domain, the film, though followed ironically, is undeniably nostalgic. Also, who could forget the credits scene, set to Smash Mouth’s “All Star”?

Fairly OddParents

(2001-2017)
 If you don’t shed a tear of nostalgia following mere utterance of the names Cosmo and Wanda, you’re not human. Following the life of ten-year-old Timmy Turner and his two fairies, Cosmo and Wanda, “The Fairly OddParents” is all about growing up. In one of the series’ most iconic episodes, Timmy wishes to stay 10 forever in an effort to prevent Cosmo and Wanda from forced retirement. I think we all want to stay 10 forever, Timmy. A tear-jerker, for sure.

Frozen

(2013)
 Following the chronicles of Anna and Elsa’s tumultuous — or, perhaps, icy — relationship, Pixar’s “Frozen” was the highlight of every ten-year-old’s 2013 cinematic experience. Just admit it — you knew “Let it Go” would be a hit from the start.

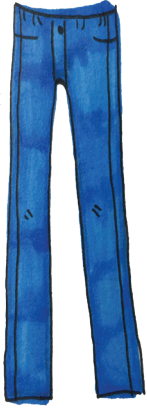
Ratatouille

(2007)
 There’s a little rat in all of us, so it’s no wonder this iconic Pixar film received a 96% rating on Rotten Tomatoes and an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film. Describing the journey of French rat Remy in his culinary endeavors inspired by the novel “Anyone Can Cook,” the film is not only visually and emotionally stimulating, but also musically alluring. The film’s featured song, “Le Festin” by Camille, draws to the deepest memories of every Generation Z child.

2000 - 2005

Low-rise everything

Contrary to the most prominent styles of pants and skirts today, most jeans and bottoms worn by women in the early 21st century were low-waisted to flaunt their midribs and fixate the focus of the fit to the blouse. Even low-rise skirts and shorts made a fashion statement, radiating confidence and beauty through fashion.



Bell-bottoms

Not only were the most popular Levi's and Calvin Klein jeans low-waisted, but they flared out at the end, a trend on its way back around to street style today. This look, originating in 60s flowerchild styles, eventually made its way into urban fashion in the early 2000s.



Denim on denim

The controversial debate on whether denim on denim is acceptable in the world of fashion was put to rest when Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake wore a full denim fit to the red carpet in 2001. This look rose to popularity making denim jackets, jeans, and more a staple in your closet.



our hair, a real fashion statement. This iconic trend

But-

2006 - 2010

quickly fizzled along with the dying of our hair with Kool-Aid. All for a good reason.

terfly clips

This playful accessory first rose to fame in the '80s, then sparked admiration in the late 2000s and is even making a comeback in fashion today. Not only did these whimsical embellishments frame your face, but they added a spirited, youthful touch to your look.

Velvet jumpsuits

From going out with the girls to lounging around the house, these practical Juicy brand sets were iconic, defining statement pieces from the 2000s. Playing with material and texture, these monochrome outfits set the stage for looks to come.

Chokers

The essential fishnet choker that completed every look, channeling your inner Avril Lavigne or finishing off that perfect emo look, is a staple to this day. This accessory peaked in the 2000s, seen on celebrities and all age groups, striking the fashion community with a simple necklace to spice up your look and instill a sense of power and confidence.

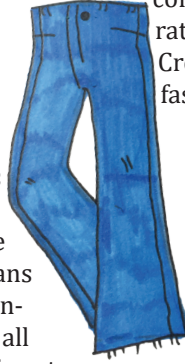
Cold-Shoulder cut-outs

This seemingly bohemian style of shirt rose to popularity in the early 2010s, consuming fashion outlets and boutiques. Though it didn't entirely pass the dress code, these shirts remain popular even to this day.



High-waisted everything

The main change in fashion from 2000-2020 was the style of pants and skirts that were most prominent on the shelves. The style of high-waisted jeans became popular to accentuate curves and flatter all body types. The style of pants evolved as body standards did.



Mom jeans

One of the most defining clothing items of our era is the mom jean. Inspired by the '80s, this must-have piece is a way to embrace comfort and style effortlessly. These pants make the blouse the highlight of the outfit.

Crocs and Birks

These shoes refined the idea of comfort in fashion, creating a sense of style while being at ease. The 2010s was a revolutionary year for embracing comfort, with the incorporation of mom jeans and Crocs and Birkenstocks in fashion.



2016 - 2020

Tiny sunglasses

This trend, inspired by looks in the '90s, gained popularity again in 2018 and still presents itself in edgy, vintage stores. The statement piece adds youthfulness and a sense of confidence to a look.

2011 - 2015

Feathered hair

We all went through a time where we insisted that we get a feather braided in

IN AND OUT OF STYLE
iconic trends & memorable looks from the past two decades

GRAPHICS BY ZOE MERRITT, LILY QUARTERMAINE AND ISABELLA GASKILL

What type of kid were you?

28% Nickelodeon

39% Disney

31% Cartoon Network

2% Boomerang

Victorious or iCarly?

72% iCarly

28% Victorious

Original Sonic or Cats?

80% Sonic

20% Cats

Vine or TikTok?

57% Vine

43% TikTok

One Direction or Big Time Rush?

58% Big Time Rush

42% One Direction

Based on a survey of 114 Pine View students in grades 9-12

Notable News

A brief overview of noteworthy events in the United States over the past two decades.

BUSH V. GORE

2000

Florida's recount of state votes would play a pivotal role in the election of the president and the subsequent win for George W. Bush.

2001

SEPTEMBER ELEVENTH

2001

The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York left a permanent mark on the country.

2000

XIX WINTER OLYMPICS

2002

In February, Salt Lake City, Utah, hosted the nineteenth Winter Olympics.

2002

STORM AREA 51, THEY CAN'T STOP ALL OF US

2019

Beginning with the viral Facebook post made on June 27, the viral meme that quickly took over the internet culminated on the scheduled raid day September 20.

IRAQ WAR BEGINS

2003

The war in Iraq begins with an invasion by the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Poland.

2003

HUMAN GENOME PROJECT

2003

Begun in 1990, the Human Genome Project completes its goal to map every gene in the human body.

2019

WOMEN'S SOCCER WORLD CUP

2019

The United States national women's soccer team took home their fourth world cup win in the finals against the Netherlands, with the score 2-0.

WOMEN'S MARCH

2017

Thousands of people across the country marched in protest and advocacy for women's rights the day after the inauguration of President Trump on January 21.

2018

PARKLAND & MARCH FOR OUR LIVES

2018

On February 14, 17 people were killed at Major Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The next month on March 24 the student led demonstration March For Our Lives took place in support of stricter gun laws.

2004

FLORIDA HURRICANE SEASON

2004

Hurricane Charley (category four), Ivan (category five), Frances (category four) and Jeanne (category three) all hit Florida August through September.

HURRICANES HARVEY & MARIA

2017

Category four hurricane Harvey hit Houston, Texas on August 25 and caused severe damage and flooding. On September 20 Hurricane Maria, a category five, hit Puerto Rico and caused over three thousand fatalities. Maria was the worst natural disaster in recorded history to affect the region.

2017

2005

YOUTUBE

2005

On February 14 YouTube was launched, and the website's first video "Me at the zoo" was uploaded by one of the creators that April.

DAVID BOWIE PASSES AWAY

2016

Internationally famous musician David Bowie (1947-2016) died of liver cancer at age 69 on January 10. Per his request his ashes were scattered in Bali.

2016

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

2015

The Supreme Court strikes down all bans on same-sex marriage nationwide with the case Obergefell v. Hodges, and requires all 50 states to honor out of state marriage licenses.

2015

2006

PLUTO'S PLANETARY STATUS

2006

Pluto is expelled from our planetary system and reclassified as a dwarf planet after seventy six years as the ninth planet.

STOCK MARKET CRASH

2008

That September the housing bubble burst and the subsequent crash of the stock market resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

2012

SANDY HOOK

2012

On December 14 the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary school resulted in the deaths of 26 students and faculty. The Sandy Hook Promise, a nonprofit organization, was founded the following January in 2013.

2008

BARACK OBAMA IS ELECTED

2008

On November 8 Barack Obama is elected the United States's first African American President.

2011

SPACE SHUTTLE ATLANTIS

2011

On July 8 NASA launched its final space shuttle "Atlantis" from Kennedy Space Center.

2010

OIL SPILL IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

2010

The Deepwater Horizons oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico occurs and is recognized as the worst oil spill in United States history.