

the Torch

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Burning Through the Budget

Sarasota County cuts over 100 teacher positions ahead of next school year.

by Marina Wissa

Match Layout Artist

At a time where enrollment is declining and costs are on the rise, Sarasota County schools is reducing their staff— leading to over 100 cut teaching positions.

In a March workshop session with the Sarasota County School Board, superintendent Terry Connor first introduced the financial constraints and subsequent cuts regarding the county's budget.

An unprecedented 136 to 180 teachers have received notice that their positions have been surplused, meaning that a permanent staff members position has been eliminated. New teachers more likely to be surplused, and they will either be relocated or face unemployment.

As such, Sarasota County School's official website has reported a seven percent

decline in classroom teachers within the district next year.

The temporary COVID relief funds that Sarasota County Schools was provided with paid for 182 staff positions. Those funds expired in 2024, and local funds are not able to cover the costs.

The primary driver of the budget cuts, however, were statewide school vouchers. These vouchers were passed in 2023 in House Bill 1 and established universal school choice.

"The one [reason] that I think is a little bit more complicated and extremely impactful is the universal voucher program that started in 2023," Liz Barker, a current school board member, said. "Any family is now eligible to collect somewhere between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per student to send them to a private school or to homeschool them."

The vast majority of

families using the voucher scholarship, which are public education funds, had never attended public school. Barker estimates the cost of educating both public and non-public school students has cost the state of Florida just under \$5 billion.

"I believe every family has the right to choose whatever school is best for their children," Barker said. "At the same time, as taxpayers, we deserve to know where that money is going and whether or not we're getting a return on our investment."

Multiple Pine View teachers with at-risk positions were contacted by The Torch to comment on their experience. None wished for coverage.

Angeles Pineda Villafana, a fifth grade teacher at Alta Vista Elementary, was informed she would be surplused when the budget cuts were first announced.

"I love teaching. Since elementary school, I've wanted to be a teacher," Pineda Villafana said. "It's hard to find a place where you belong. There will be students [I will be] missing."

Pineda Villafana's contract ends June 30, and she has yet to find a position for the upcoming school year.

"None of us are aware enough," she said. "We need public schools, and we need to take a deeper look at the areas and the people that are funding the public education

system. This affects everyone."

Jessica Thomason, a surplused teacher at Booker High, has shared similar sentiments on social media.

"Defund public education, label it as failing, and then offer an escape ... At some point, we have to be honest about what we are asking public schools to do — and what we are actually giving them to do it," Thomason wrote. "Because if the system only works for the families who know how to use it, then it is not a public system at all."



Scan to read the complete story on PVtorch.com

GRAPHIC BY ALEX LIEBERMAN

Budget Cuts and Enrollment

by the numbers, from the March 3 School Board work session

182 positions funded with temporary pandemic relief money that expired in 2024

116K students lost from Florida public schools since 2020

46% increase in homeschooling in Florida in the last four years

-\$13M district funds lost due to declining enrollment from the 2022-27

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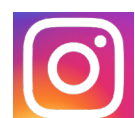


Living Like Royalty
Hear from Mr. and Miss Pine View as they reflect on winning.

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Lavallee Leaves Her Mark on History

by Minhkhue Tran
Match Layout Artist

Walking into room 210 of Building 17, a smile full of upbeat energy greets students into her class.

Carol Lavallee has been teaching for almost 30 years now and will be switching jobs from Pine View to the new Wellen Park High School.

After getting her degree in Social Sciences at USF, she started teaching at King High School in Tampa as a permanent substitute teacher.

Since then, she has worked at Venice Middle

School, North Port High School and an online high school. Eventually, she came to Pine View.

Here, she has had the chance to create lasting memories with students of middle and high school.

"I'll miss my walking encyclopedias, is what I call them, students that know more than me. I've learned a lot from my students. That's one thing you learn as a teacher: that you never know too much. If you think you know it all, you're wrong," Lavallee said.

She said she'll also miss the senior traditions, Pine View's staff members, the learning environment, and the connections with students and parents.

"These par-

ents of this school have gone above and beyond to make sure that their children get the best education they can. I have parents' support and staff support on academics," Lavallee said.

Along with teaching, she has led the History Fair and co-chaired National Junior Honor Society with history teacher Caroline Gannon for a few years.

When asked for a specific memory during her time here, Lavallee described when she was teaching eighth grade US history in the portables.

"I remember a student that just opened our eyes to the subject we were talking about. Because I knew a lot, but he had personal experiences with that topic," she said.

Freshman Bailey Boscarino, a current student of Lavallee's World History Honors class, shared

“That’s one thing you learn as a teacher: that you never know too much. If you think you know it all, you’re wrong.”
Carol Lavallee
History Teacher

her thoughts on Lavallee as a teacher.

"She's very open to having questions asked as well as to learning new things. All the time, kids in our class will tell her things that she didn't even know and she'll always look into them," she said.

Since being informed that Lavallee is leaving next year, Boscarino is sad to see her go.

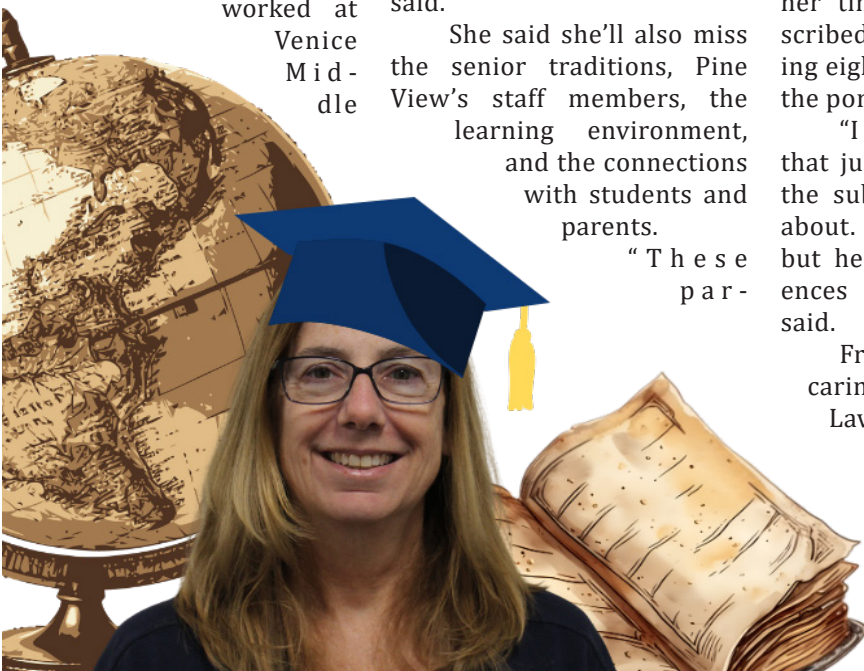
"She's a really nice teacher, a sweet person. I've learned a lot from

her class. I'm sure the students at the new school will really enjoy her because I liked her a lot," Boscarino said.

Looking forward to her future at Wellen Park, there are some experiences that Lavallee will take with her. She hopes to create a community oriented school because she believes that students need both their teachers

and parents' support to perform well. She wants to learn from the community and also bring it into her classroom.

"Sometimes at Pine View, I forget that you're in ninth and tenth grade. I look at you guys as adults because you're so intelligent and you ask such intelligent questions. When my students at the new high school, hopefully, give it their all, I want to remember to keep my expectations high, but to also remember that they're just kids," Lavallee said.



After years of teaching at Pine View, history teacher Carol Lavallee decided to move to Wellen Park High School to continue her career. PHOTO ART BY MINHKHUE TRAN AND MADELYN BAILEY

An E-mole-tional Moment: Chemistry Teacher Retires

by Alex Lieberman

Opinion Editor

When AP Chemistry and organic chemistry teacher Jay Skipper announced in March that the next few months at Pine View were going to be his last, some were in tears.

Skipper has been a teacher at Pine View for decades and has even made Khan Academy chemistry videos that his students, and those around the world, watch every day.

While Skipper declined an interview request, AP Biology and biotechnology teacher Angela Keiper-Wilson is among those who will remember their

time together fondly.

"... I think he adds a lot of personality to the science department ... And he kind of brings out a good, positive morale and attitude with everybody," Wilson said.

She was introduced to Skipper during her first year at Pine View in 2012, when they would eat lunch together.

"I think that's kind of my fondest memory [with him] because it's when we really got to be friends," Wilson said.

Beyond that, she talks with Skipper every day about school happenings or the shows they watch, like "Cops", which chronicles the lives of law enforcement officers.

"Just him keeping things upbeat ... I think that's the thing I'm gonna miss the most about him," Wilson said.

Skipper's influence is not limited to other

teachers, though. Senior Anna Kim, who had him for two years, also felt his impact.

"I hated chemistry when I took it in ninth grade, and now I'm majoring in it, partially because of orgo [organic chemistry]," Kim said. "I really love the subject and I love the way he teaches it."

Kim and senior Samara Broadway maintain a tradition called "Mole of the Day," in which they draw pictures of the animal, whose name also refers to a unit of measurement in chemistry, on Skipper's whiteboard every day.

"I'm a sucker for all the mole puns," Broadway said about the drawings and other jokes Skipper frequently makes in class.

She, like Kim, mentioned that Skipper's teaching style helped her succeed in the subject.

"I like that you have to learn the material at home and then you come into class and apply it," Broadway said. "And I think it's super helpful going into college being able to teach



GRAPHIC BY HANA MULLEN

myself stuff outside of class."

Wilson is unsure of who will take over his job next year, but she feels confident that the role will be filled.

"I know that no matter what happens, I have faith in Dr. Covert and [science Department Head Stacy] Chaillou that they'll get that position covered in the best way that they possibly can to where you guys aren't going to have any problems," she said.

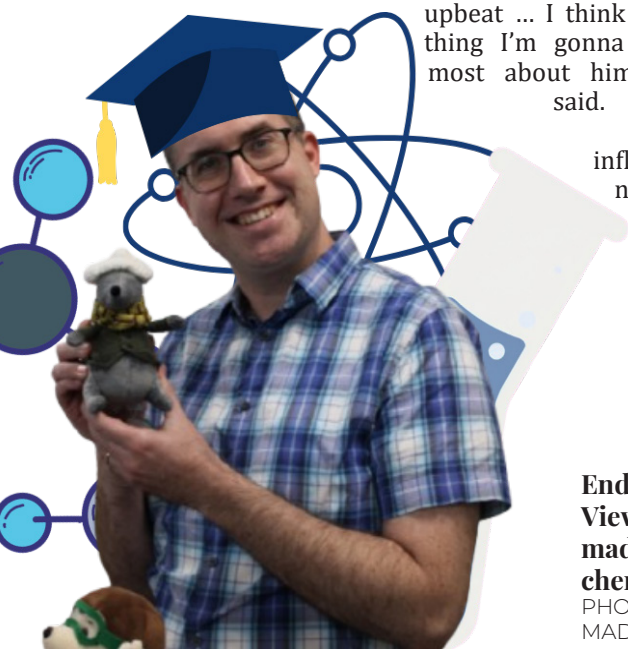
Skipper will be able to spend more time taking care of his daughter, who frequently travels around the state for

dance competitions. Mainly, though, he plans to pursue art after his retirement from teaching.

"If I could do that, I would also not be a teacher," Broadway said about Skipper's art abilities.

Wilson also acknowledged his talent and is excited to see where his art takes him.

"We love having him ...," she said. "But I am so unbelievably happy for him that he gets to pursue his true passion, art, and I know he's going to be great."



Ending his long teaching career at Pine View, chemistry teacher Jay Skipper has made the decision to retire from teaching chemistry to pursue his art career.

PHOTO ART BY ROBYN SCHOENBERG AND MADELYN BAILEY

A New Light to a New Dilemma

With recent budget cuts, the fate of Pine View's orchestra program is put to question.

by **Nathan DeSouza**

Director of Digital Media

Larger class sizes, teacher layoffs, and rising utilities costs — all phrases that are starting to integrate themselves into daily school life.

In light of the budget cuts throughout Sarasota county, uncertainty fills classroom environments, and by extension, is found in the forefront of the minds of Pine View families. One concern that students harbor regarding the situation is the integrity of programs that already exist on campus.

One being Pine View's orchestra program, with concerns stemming from Orchestra Director Audrey Naffe being on the list for tentative teacher layoffs.

The effect of the budget cuts are felt by students and families alike, with some taking action to minimize its impact. Members of the Sarasota Orchestra started a petition addressing the possible cut to the Pine View orchestra teacher position.

"Orchestra is more than a class. It teaches discipline, collaboration, listening perseverance, and expres-

sion — skills that extend far beyond the classroom," the petition reads, " ... Our students deserve access to the full spectrum of education — including the transformative power of music."

Apart from group sentiments, individual concerns are prevalent on campus. Junior Sophia Haakman, who is involved in Pine View Orchestra, shares her concerns over the budget cuts in our county with many students who are also in the program.

For Haakman, the music program is a way to balance academics and creative opportunity.

"Obviously, I, as a student, don't like the feeling of being afraid whether to take orchestra or not next year..." Haakman said, "besides orchestra being a class, a time for people to unwind, there's so many opportunities outside of school that require you to be part of the school orchestra, including All State Orchestra."

Despite student concerns sur-

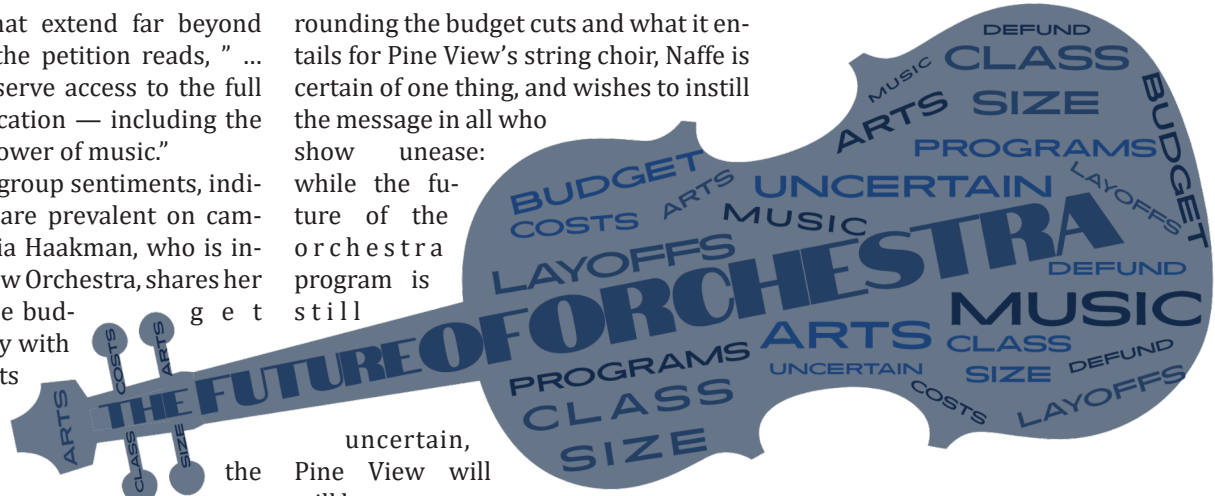
rounding the budget cuts and what it entails for Pine View's string choir, Naffe is certain of one thing, and wishes to instill the message in all who show unease:

while the future of the orchestra program is still

uncertain, Pine View will still have a program, no matter the outcome.

According to Naffe, the Pine View Community is one that has always seen circumstances like these through until the end, not harping on the fleeting problems of right now. Naffe encourages the Pine View community to look forward, and keep being the community that fights through problems instead of seeing current events as an obstacle to success.

"When you remove the director, it



GRAPHIC BY NATHAN DESOUSA

GRAPHIC BY MADELYN BAILEY

GRAPHIC BY JAKOB ROCHE

Time Change

For the 2026-27 school year, high school students will be shifting to a slightly later school schedule.

Current Start Time:

7:21

New Start Time:

7:30

Current end time (6th period):

1:01

New end time (6th period):

1:10

Classic Courses, New Regulations

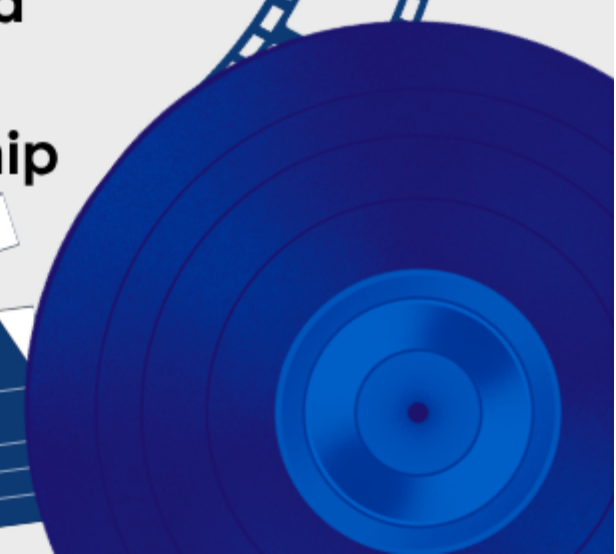
With recent revisions in the state Course Code Directory on what counts as a Fine Arts credit, some students are turning to FLVS to fulfill their graduation requirements. Here's some of what's available:

Theatre, Cinema, and Film Production

Art History and Criticism
Honors

Music of the World

Business Ownership
Honors



From Walks to Marches: A Journey to West Point

by **Jakob Roche**
Managing Editor

Senior Andrew Kim wasn't always confident he would end up attending the United States Military Academy at West Point.

When asked about West Point, Kim cracked a joke: "I was told [West Point] is for the Hellcat." Or, as his colleagues at McDonald's would call it, the 'hellkitty'. As his thinking went, the thousands of dollars saved on college fees could instead be redirected to high-performance sports cars.

Saket Sarkar, one of Kim's friends and a Pine View class of 2025 graduate, said that beyond Kim's lighthearted per-

sonality, there lies a serious and committed person.

"He always wanted to do good in all of his classes," Sarkar said, "He always wanted to do it his way. He always had his own approach, he wanted to innovate and learn new things."

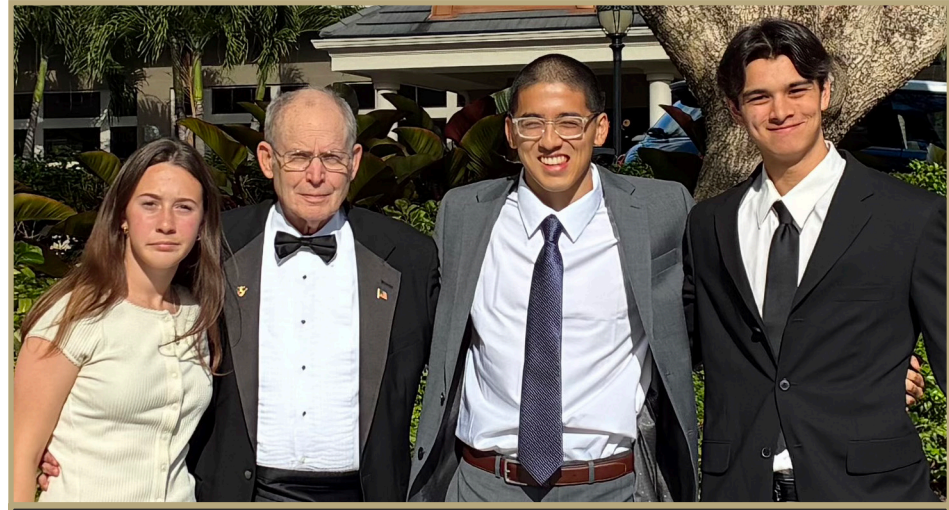
In sophomore year, after a meeting with Admissions Field Officer Martin Bowling, Kim started to decide that West Point, too, would be his way.

"Dr. Covert always goes on the announcements and says, 'Where much is given, much is expected,'" Kim said, "That's how I view this whole process. The founding fathers did so much for me, I have to reciprocate a bit."

But, before he could actually go, one of the major steps between Kim and West Point was the Candidate Fitness Assessment (CFA).

Kim spent the summer before senior year training for the CFA, took it in November, and passed with above average scores in sit-ups and pull-ups. He later received his letter of recommendation from Congressman Greg Steube and was subsequently accepted to West Point.

For Kim, getting this ac-



Senior Andrew Kim (third from left) poses for a photo with US Military Academy (USMA) candidate Clara Bloodworth (left), Admissions Field Officer Martin Bowling (second from left), and USMA candidate Paul Ramos (right). Kim was accepted to USMA West Point December 3, 2025. PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREW KIM

ceptance was meaningful on a personal level as well. Kim's grandfather served in Vietnam as a Sergeant with the Republic of Korea army from 1966 to 1968, and he would tell Kim stories about his time in the military. Getting the notification that he would be able to serve meant that Kim could follow in those footsteps.

Kim said one of the first people he notified of his acceptance to the academy was Sarkar. Right after hearing the news, Sarkar said that he was pleased that Kim had finally achieved this goal.

"I was just proud of him because he worked so hard all throughout high school. He's done so many things. I thought he deserves this so much; I really trust him to be a leader," Sarkar said.

After taking AP Physics 2 last year, Kim said he developed an interest in electrical systems. At West Point, he plans to

pursue a degree in electrical engineering before starting his five-year active duty requirement.

"We'll see after five years in active, [duty]" Kim said. "If it's going great, if I really like it, we can [ride] it out for 15 more."

Kim sees uncertainty in the future job market as an added benefit of attending West Point; he said serving in the military after West Point would be virtually guaranteed employment.

Regardless of what the future may hold, Sarkar said he thinks Kim will excel in whatever he pursues.

"I'd say if I had to pick one person to really exemplify [West Point's values] at our school, it would really be him," Sarkar said. "I see him continuing to ask questions, to be a leader. He's a person that I would really trust to be a future leader in America's military."



PHOTO AND GRAPHIC BY TIMOTHY NESANELIS

Built for the water, bound for the Navy

by **Alakh Bhatt**
Asst. Opinion Editor

For Senior Danica Aten, the United States Naval Academy represents more than a college decision. It represents a life she has been building toward for years. As Aten makes her final preparations before heading to Annapolis, she describes this moment not as an ending, but as the beginning of something she has been building toward for years.

As a senior swimmer for the Sarasota Sharks, Aten has spent much of her life in a home defined by discipline, repetition, and endurance. Swimming has been the constant foundation beneath all of it. Aten began the sport at age 6,

often dedicating 25 to 30 hours a week to the pool during training. Now, she is preparing to take that same mindset into a place where those qualities describe daily living.

"It's very exciting," Aten said. "It's a huge honor to get to go to a place that has so much camaraderie and tradition, where I can succeed academically and athletically."

That excitement comes from more than just opportunity. It reflects a connection to the Academy's culture of teamwork, something Aten has been exposed to since she was born.

As a nationally ranked swimmer, Aten had offers of recruitment from some of the most competitive universities in the country, including Stanford and the University of Florida.

But even with those options, her direction had already been forming long before recruitment began.

"Both of my parents are military, and my brothers are at the Naval Academy," Aten said. "It's something I've been exposed to my whole life."

That familiarity turned into clarity as she watched her old-



Senior Danica Aten competes at the 2024 U.S. Olympic Swimming Team Trials, which took place June 15-23, 2024 in Indianapolis. She participated in the 200m breaststroke preliminaries after qualifying the year before. Aten has since committed to swimming for the US Naval Academy. PHOTO COURTESY OF DANICA ATEN

er brother begin his own journey at the Academy, which helped her understand what the experience truly looked like beyond the campus visits and conversations.

"As I started recruiting and really thought about what my life would be like, seeing him there made it more real," Aten said.

That level of discipline is something her teammate and fellow senior Lydia Zhukovsky has seen firsthand over years on the Sharks swim team together.

Zhukovsky says Aten's impact goes beyond performance in the pool, her consistency and attention to detail everyday is what makes her who she is. That focus is what makes Aten a natural fit for the structure and demands of the Naval Academy.

"She's such a hard worker and so dedicated and motivated," Zhukovsky

said. "She'll definitely be able to get through any of the hard things they put her through."

Aten does not feel uncertainty about her future endeavors at the Academy.

"I've kind of been waiting for this my whole life," Aten said. "I'm not really nervous. I think it will all work itself out."

Still, she acknowledged that the process required sacrifice, especially when turning down elite collegiate programs.

"It was a really stressful and time-intensive period," Aten said. "But now that it's over, I'm just excited for the next phase."

For students considering a similar path, Aten emphasizes dedication over comfort.

"It's a huge commitment, but there are so many rewards and opportunities that come from it. It's unlike anything else you can do," Aten said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANICA ATEN

The Book Nook's New Look

Pine View's Media Center begins the first steps towards an updated design

by Timothy Nesanelis and Diya Panthulu
Co News Editor and Guest Contributor

In March, students entered the media center to witness shelves being removed and the books that once dawned them seemingly missing. For decades, the Pine View Media Center has served as an important hub for students of all ages to read, work, and converse with their friends. It's remained largely unaltered, but the Pine View Association (PVA) is changing that.

Since the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year, PVA President Silke Cuff has been working with the other members of the board, the media techs, and the Sarasota County School District to bring a refreshing update to the Media Center.

Although no plans have been officially confirmed with funding, Silke has hopes for the furniture, potentially including mobile shelves, new seating, and new tables, to be addressed in the changes.

"We have some [PVA] board members who went to Pine View and graduated in the 90s and 2000s, and the furniture was there when they

were there," Cuff said. "With how learning has evolved and collaboration has evolved... there are solutions that are better suited to what Pine View students need and deserve."

Alongside hopes of new furniture, a new system of organization is already being implemented for the various seating-areas and library books.

"Our main project this year was to divide [the nonfiction section] into three, so we have elementary, middle, and high school nonfiction sections," said Dre Dictor, the Sarasota County Schools's Mid-County District Media Specialist who supervises the libraries of 13 schools in central Sarasota County. "If you're doing a report, you know exactly where to go and how to find the materials that you're looking for."

Though some students and faculty were initially confused after seeing a large amount of books missing, Pine View Media Tech Pat Morgerson says that these books — which total about 5,000 — were chosen to be removed because they hadn't been checked out in over five years.

"They're not being thrown out, they are being reused," Morgerson said. "I believe some went to Africa... the latest group is a group of students who are incarcerated."

Despite fundraising from the community and from events such as the Scholastic Book Fair, the price of such refurbishing ended up being much larger than originally

“It's really going to bring us up to the modern day with furniture.”

Pat Morgerson
Media Tech



Senior Aashima Goswami sits and reads her notes in the newly formatted media center. Since the shelves were removed in March, a new segmented seating area, one for each of elementary, middle, and high school, has been created in the media center. PHOTO BY TIMOTHY NESANELIS

expected.

"We are so happy to have support [from] PVA," Dictor said. "...[but] depending on what we would change, that would be a couple of hundreds of thousands of dollars."

Due to this, Cuff believes that a gradual roll out in phases is most likely going to be the format for the updates over the course of the next few school years.

"The goal is to have something better by the start of next school year, but I'm reluctant to say it can happen that quickly because of the complicated nature of it," Cuff said.

Dictor, who has been in correspondence with Cuff and PVA, agrees.

"We are going back to our vendors over and over and working with Mrs. Cuff to en-

sure that it meets that [stage]," Dictor said. "That's why we think the phase effect will probably be the best effect."

Morgerson, who works every day in the media center watching over students from grades 2-12, is extremely excited for these changes. and says it will not only make her job easier, but also increase student engagement in the media center.

"It's really going to bring us up to the modern day with furniture," Morgerson said. "Hopefully, students will pick out some really neat books."

Taking the global stand for women



Junior Charlotte White gives a speech to the United Nations delegates on bridging the gap on women's involvement in STEM activities. "What I found eye-opening about the entire experience is that [there are] many issues discussed at the United Nations that are light years away, but hearing about the problems that happen in states like Georgia, it made me realize that these issues are not as far as they may seem to be," White said.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE WHITE



White poses for a photo in front of the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. White was given the opportunity to represent the Girl Scouts at the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE WHITE

by Melissa White
Co Entertainment Editor

From mornings in the classroom to afternoons filled with extracurriculars and evenings at home, junior Charlotte White (no relation to the author) embodies femininity and advocacy in every space she enters. Yet, despite the opportunities her environment provides, she and other young women like her are still met with bias.

"I still notice both myself and the girls around me are continually given the short end of the stick," White said, "...we all have a story where we've been discriminated against, talked down to, or viewed negatively by our male counterparts."

However, White does not intend to stay silent in the face of these experiences.

In 2024, she and a group of friends — girls who have faced similar judgment — created a website and accompanying Instagram page called The Pink Folder, highlighting real-world issues affecting women and young girls today. The platform addresses topics ranging from body dysmorphia and fetishization to more recent online trends such as "looksmaxxing."

Junior Niya Bobban, who White met at Girl Scouts, was one of the friends that she started The Pink Folder with.

"Charlotte has been amazing," Bobban said. "...Through these experiences, we've learned our love for different fields."

However, White's drive for advocacy

extends beyond the platform. As an advocacy liaison with Taiwan and a youth representative for the Girl Scouts at the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), she was presented with a unique opportunity to amplify her voice.

The annual CSW is a United Nations program dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women throughout the world. The Commission gathers at the UN headquarters in New York for an annual two-week session as they discuss emerging issues that affect women and girls worldwide.

"My responsibility was to represent issues that uniquely affect girls (females under 18 years old), which was incredibly powerful because I felt as though I was working in areas that actually affect me, as opposed to issues that seem worlds away," White said.

Currently, White is focusing her attention on an issue that may seem distant, but is increasingly relevant to girls everywhere.

"I am working on a project that empowers girls in Belarus and the Philippines who have been rescued from sex trafficking and connecting them to therapists, educational and vocational opportunities, and economic empowerment," White said.

White represents the courage it takes to create meaningful change. Her story is not over yet, but for many, she has helped them reimagine their own.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF UNWOMEN.ORG

Student Dashes to Columbia

by **Daria Shabunina**
Broadcast Editor-in-Chief

With over four years of hard work and a “likely letter,” senior Rohan Dash was not overly surprised when he was officially accepted into Columbia University.

Dash was accepted into Columbia as a Science Research Fellow – a title only 10-15 students receive each year that allows them four-year access to laboratories, mentorship, a stipend for research, and financial aid. Since entering the STEM Fair at the beginning of high school, Dash has ventured to science and technology research, and has reached sizable achievements.

“I knew of [Dash] and what he did before I knew him,” said Lance Bergman, who has gotten to know Dash over the past year while advising him for college. “When he came through the door, I was impressed, particularly with his intellectual precociousness, like his interest in a variety of subject matters ... and his initiative. ... What I [also] found remarkable is he presents with a humility. ... He has an authentic kind of approach.”

Many of Dash’s STEM projects center around machine learning. One of them included training an AI system to detect citrus disease and testing the effectivity of the model by flying a drone over an orange orchard, and another used AI to detect brain injury in mice at USF.

At the beginning of senior year, Dash also wrote a research paper for the Science Talent Search, a seniors-only competition, where he examined how to make AI systems more accurate and robust, the implications of which he highlighted in one of his college application essays to Columbia.

While a major part of his interests, STEM is not Dash’s only focus. He is also the president of Speech and Debate, which has contributed to his growth as a speaker, helped develop his analysis skills, and given him lasting friends from around the country.

“Speech and Debate is very fun ...” Dash said. “There’s competitions every month, and so the same set of kids from across the country travel to those competitions. And so you have a separate friend group outside of school who you know. And these are some kids who I actually leaned on and relied on.”

The interdisciplinary approach of his application was also a factor that helped him get into Columbia.

Now, like all seniors, Dash is looking towards the future. Although as of yet, unsure of a major, he has plans to continue researching and start a speech club to match and work with Columbia’s pre-existing debate society.

Bergman is certain that Dash has what it takes to succeed.

“When [Dash] goes to Colum-

bia, he’s going to be challenged by peers and his professors in a way that will be ... humbling,” Bergman said. “I think it will be like, ‘Whoa,’ right? And that’s what he wants. He wants that challenge, but he’s also going to bring, his persistent, and sort of boundless, energy for learning new stuff, doing new stuff ... When you get into the world, you’re going to be both stronger for having had this experience and unafraid to move forward.”

Senior Rohan Dash gives a speech on machine learning and its impact on society to about 1000 attendees at the 2026 State Science and Engineering Fair. Dash is interested in the capabilities and limitations of AI and has conducted several experiments on its uses. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROHAN DASH



Serious Business (and Science)

Niranjana Jayendran will pursue a dual degree program at UC Berkley

by **Katerina Mazzo**
Web Editor-in-Chief

While senior Niranjana Jayendran’s early high school experiences influenced her to lean towards the business world, it was her growing interest in computer science that shaped her academic path. In fact, Jayendran is taking her skills to UC Berkley this fall

for a dual degree in business and engineering through the Management, Entrepreneurship and Technology (MET) program—an opportunity that will help her connect the two fields.

“I really value the engineering aspect of learning,” Jayendran said. “I think engineering gives you the foundations of problem solving and critical thinking, things that aren’t explicitly taught in a business class.”

The Business Professionals of America (BPA) club sparked Jayendran’s fascination in business. There, alongside classmate and friend, senior Aarya Sateesh, she helped start Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) at Pine View.

Bringing DECA to Pine View meant starting from scratch and learning as they went.

“... it was definitely hard because ... we just figured out what the club was. We didn’t know what we were doing

and neither did anyone at the school,” Sateesh said.

Through that process, Sateesh saw Jayendran’s determination up close.

“She’s definitely an extremely motivated person, and even if things are about to fall down into pieces, she’ll still persevere,” Sateesh said.

As Jayendran continued building her experience through clubs and competitions, her interests began to expand beyond business alone.

“I think it was last year I started to explore how business and engineering, specifically computer science for me, were intertwined. So I got involved with more internships and began to see the practical applications of computer science in the business world,” Jayendran said.

When it came time to apply to colleges, she focused on finding a program that combined both of her

interests.

According to the Berkley MET website, the program allows students to earn two degrees simultaneously within four years through internships and career coaching in a tight knit community.

Looking ahead, Jayendran is excited about the opportunities the program will provide.

“The network that it provides is immense and incredible. The alumni network and the opportunities that you can have to advocate for yourself and just immerse yourself into the business and technology world there, it’s incredible,” Jayendran said.



Last year during Business Professionals of America’s national conference, senior Niranjana Jayendran not only won first place at states, but also was there to run for executive office. Jayendran first introduced herself on stage as a candidate during the opening ceremony. She has since been serving as National Secretary for the Secondary Division. PHOTO COURTESY OF NIRANJANA JAYENDRAN

Growing Out

Read about how Seniors grow out of their STEAM community



GRAPHIC BY SHRIYA ASHOK.



Living Like Royalty

Checking in with Mr. and Miss Pine View



by Ava Lenerz
Editor-in-Chief

Pine View's class of 2026 Mr. And Miss Pine View, Jackson Mitchell (JM) and Annica Pereira (AP), respectively, took time out of their busy schedules of receiving Blake Wiley's compliments and being worshipped by students to sit with The Torch (T) and reflect on the experience.

T: What are some memorable moments from this experience?

AP: Probably the dance rehearsals because I really could not dance, and I still can't dance, but Dominic [Myers] and Kelsey [Elton] especially; they did really, really good dances ... it was fun because all the girls were together. Then, it was really stressful, but I really liked Admin day. All the days we had in the auditorium, I think those are a lot of fun ... And seeing everyone's act, like how it was being made. [Haley] Brown would take a section of time and focus on one person's act, so it was really fun to see things actually come together rather than just hearing about it.

JM: I would totally agree, being able to rehearse the stuff ... like you [Pereira] said, those weeks coming up to the show were definitely very stressful, but stuff started to come together. It was kind of great to see; it was great to be hanging out with all those boys.

T: What were your friends' reaction to you winning?

AP: They were happy ... I saw friends who had left Pine View, but they came that night and I was really shocked to see them, so that was really nice. I saw some of my sister's older friends...

JM: It was great. I mean, I had friends on the Riverview track team and cross country team that had never stepped foot on Pine View's campus and they came that night. So them, in addition to all the great friends of mine here at Pine View, seeing everybody happy and possibly equally as surprised as I was. It was a lot of fun.

T: What were your friends' reactions to you getting the parking spot?

JM: Not winning, getting the parking spot, we're building up the anticipation ... It's all about the parking spot. Would you even do Mr. Pine View if there wasn't a parking spot at stake? Would you?

AP: I offered [my friends] my spot because I can't drive and they were like 'Oh, no. I'm ok with my spot.' Like, are you sure? I even offered Sarina [Sallapudi] first because she drove me around to all the bonding night stuff or after admin day she drove me back to my house.

T: Can you tell me about what life is like as Mr and Miss Pine View?



Senior Jackson Mitchell gets into the spirit of Elvis during his Mr. Pine View Act. "I think you want to try and blend funny and fun together when you're planning something out," Mitchell said. PHOTO BY TIMOTHY NESANELIS

AP: A lot of praise from Mr. Wiley. It's like he could add it to every possible conversation; he will bring it up randomly ... you don't expect that ... I'm still in the process of getting my driver's license ... I'm going to get it soon, at least before graduation.

JM: [The parking spot is] great, though, because I have an empty parking spot next to me every day, so I can always park really badly. It doesn't matter.

T: If you had the others theme (Candyland or Men of Mystery), what would you have dressed as?

AP: I know Greyson [Dawes] did Scooby Doo, but I would have probably done a Scooby Doo character, because that was my favorite show growing up; "Mystery Incorporated."

JM: ... Yeah, I would have been a Snickers bar.

T: What lessons did you take away from this experience?

AP: Definitely to put myself out there. I couldn't really sing before this. I couldn't play the harmonica before this. So I learned it for this, for Miss Pine View. I think I'm glad I did, because with my friends, I think I'm pretty extroverted, but when meeting new people I'm kind of more introverted and I feel like this was putting myself out

there to the masses, especially because I was actually a really shy kid. Never in a million years would I sing or do any of this stuff in front of people.

JM: I would totally agree with what [Pereira] said about putting yourself out there because that's what it's all about. It's also a great lesson in school spirit, so many schools have football games and of course, we don't have that. But Mr. and Miss Pine View are a huge deal.

T: Do you have any advice for aspiring candidates?

AP: Just do anything that you enjoy because it's not really about winning. I didn't really care about winning at all. I just wanted to do it, just because I think more of it was to get closer with the people and the girls in my class. Obviously, I knew a lot of them in elementary school, and I still know them now, but there's a little more distance between the classes and stuff. But I think it's really good to bond with people just to show people what you can do and who you are as a person, because not many people know who you are.

JM: Try out, go and do it! It's so much fun ... whether you win or you know anybody who wins, it's a great experience. Talk to anybody in the cast and I guarantee you they would say the same.



Senior Annica Pereira traipses across the stage in full Oompa-Loompa garb. PHOTOS BY TIMOTHY NESANELIS



Pereira sung and played the popular tune "Piano Man" by Billy Joel on the piano and harmonica. "I think over the summer I heard it with my brother in the car and I was like 'Oh, this could be a cool idea!'" Pereira said.

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY NESANELIS

Friday, May 15, 2026

Dancing Through Life (And Theater)

Joey Tricarico began with dance and ends with a career in theater

by Isabel Georgieva
Sci & Tech Editor

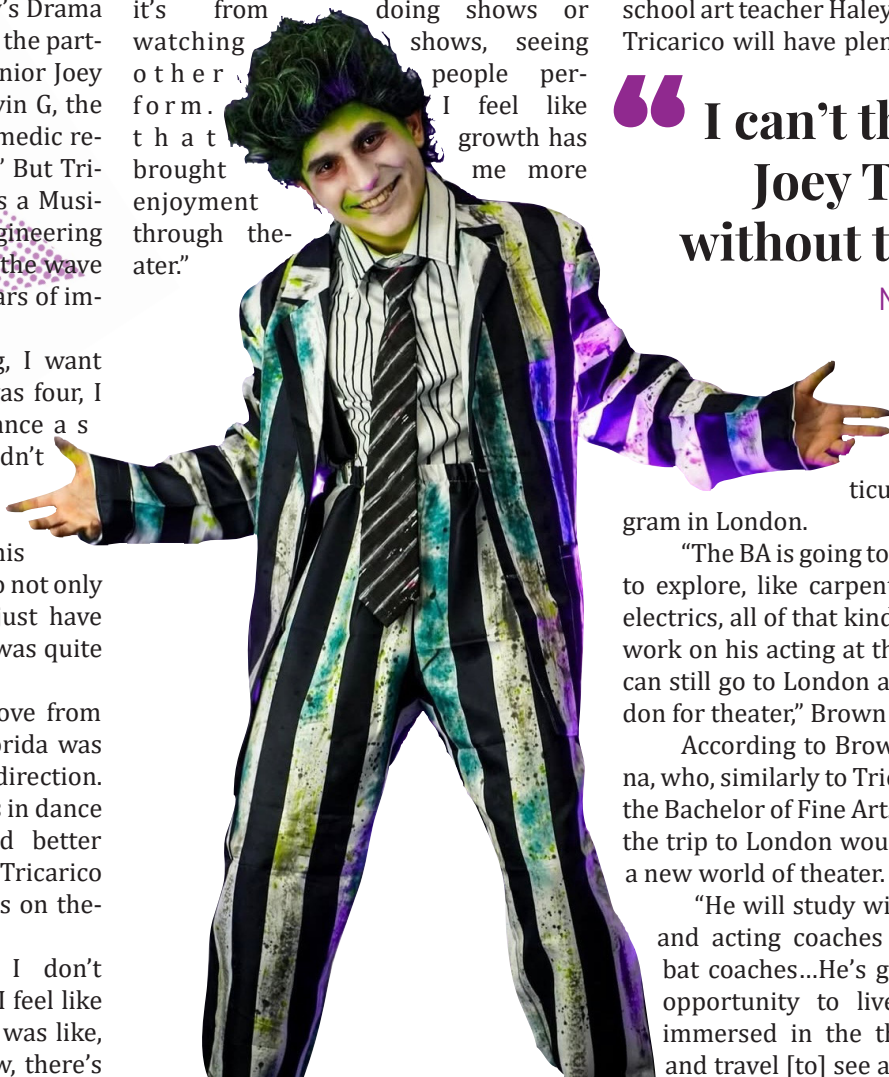
The dimly lit auditorium is where the magic created by Pine View's Drama Club comes to life. All it takes is the parting of the stage curtains for senior Joey Tricarico to transform into Kevin G, the fictitious lead athlete and comedic relief of the musical "Mean Girls." But Tricarico's acceptance into FSU as a Musical Theater and Mechanical Engineering double major wasn't thanks to the wave of a wand; it stemmed from years of immersion in the arts.

"When I was very young, I want to say that I started when I was four, I started doing competitive dance as a kid," Tricarico said. "I couldn't really tell you why; I was just a big bundle of energy and my parents thought, 'Hey, maybe this would be a nice outlet for him to not only let out that energy, but also just have some fun. And it turned out, I was quite good at it apparently.'"

Tricarico said that his move from Staten Island, New York to Florida was what prompted the change in direction. He mentioned that his ventures in dance let him build confidence and better personify his characters. Still, Tricarico doesn't regret deciding to focus on theater.

"Whereas, with dance, I don't want to say it was stifling, but I feel like there was a set point where it was like, 'Ok, you know the drill by now, there's

not much you can really do to build off this per se," Tricarico said. "[With] theater, I'm constantly learning, whether it's from doing shows or watching other people perform. I feel like that growth has brought me more enjoyment through theater."



With his acceptance into FSU's Bachelor of Arts (BA) program, high school theater director and middle school art teacher Haley Brown says that Tricarico will have plenty of opportuni-

"I can't think of a Joey Tricarico without theater..."

Mikayla Foss
Senior

ties to explore diverse niches in theater, particularly via a program in London.

"The BA is going to give him options to explore, like carpentry, set painting, electrics, all of that kind of stuff and still work on his acting at the same time. He can still go to London and study in London for theater," Brown said.

According to Brown, an FSU alumna, who, similarly to Tricarico, applied to the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) program, the trip to London would expose him to a new world of theater.

"He will study with voice coaches and acting coaches and stage combat coaches...He's going to have the opportunity to live there and be immersed in the theatrical culture and travel [to] see all types of differ-

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOEY TRICARICO

ent things," Brown said. "Some will be through his own volition, some will be programming through the school, where the school will have pre-purchased tickets and you go as a group. Then they have talk-backs about how it all works, they do script analysis."

As far as future careers go, senior Mikayla Foss, a friend of Tricarico's, believes that his work ethic is the precursor for his high-flying career.

"I think all of Joey's success is his own... He obviously has mentors and people who help him, but he works so hard that I think a lot of what he's propelled himself [into] and a lot of what he will do in the future is something he's accomplished himself," Foss said.

Foss also solidifies that Drama Club is where it all started.

"I can't think of a Joey Tricarico without theater involved, because it's always just been a very integral part in him... It comes back to that idea of community and creating communities that you can feel safe in and comfortable in to be yourself," Foss said.

So as the curtain is drawn, marking the end of the "Mean Girls" performance, a new type of magic lingers. It is the bittersweet feeling that only a curtain call can bring. It is the memory of exhilarating beginnings and of moments just around the corner. For Tricarico, this isn't the first time he has ever sensed the thrill of a successful performance, and it certainly won't be the last.

Sculpting A Future

For Hana Mullen, creativity is a shared language

by Andrew Ashby
Asst. Web Editor-In-Chief

Ask her friend Nathan DeSouza, and he'll tell you that Senior Hana Mullen's ingenuity shows up everywhere, not just on paper, but in the way she makes a birthday card, how she approaches a project, and even in the conversations she has.

"Her creativity... plays into every action that she does," DeSouza said. "She's very introspective... there's a lot of reflection, and that's what plays into her art."

That instinct has been there from the beginning. Mullen doesn't remember a moment when she got into art; it's always been part of her life. Growing up with parents who studied architecture and design, creativity was less a hobby and more a shared language. By high school, it had become the center of everything she did.

Still, choosing to seriously pursue art wasn't automatic. Mullen knew the stereotypes surrounding art majors, that art is a risky endeavor; however, after attending a summer program surrounded by other young artists, something shifted.

"Everyone was so freaking cool," she said. "I was like, I need to be like these people, this is what I need to do with my life."

What had once felt uncertain became clear: Art wasn't just something she enjoyed; it was something she needed.

Her work reflects that sense of purpose, but it's far from rigid. Her art changes depending on what she's trying to say. One of her AP Art portfolios focused on family, belonging, and mixed identity, using detailed portraiture to capture emotion and expression. Another took a completely different turn, us-

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HANA MULLEN



ing experimental sculptures to critique overconsumption, as she made an elaborate velvet-lined case meant to package a single banana. It was playful, a little absurd, but entirely intentional.

"Sometimes I feel like art is taken a little too serious. It's just for fun," Mullen said.

That balance between structure and experimentation is central to how she creates. Her process often starts with big ideas like symbols, metaphors, and emotions. From there, it becomes a kind of trial and error of figuring things out as she goes. When she gets stuck, she doesn't force it. She draws anyway, letting the act itself pull her forward.

Some of her most meaningful work comes from collaboration, for example helping design the National Art Honor Society (NAHS) Building 16 mural with her classmates, being a part of Miss Pine View or creating characters with De-

Souza, where a two-hour conversation about fictional backstories can be just as important as the drawing itself.

"In that way, she inspired me through her enthusiasm to start something new," DeSouza said.

Mullen is especially drawn to the idea of solving real-world problems through design. Inspired in part by her father's experience using a wheelchair, she hopes to work in areas like accommodative design, where creativity directly improves people's lives.

However, there's still some uncertainty and self-doubt. To the people around her, though, the outcome feels inevitable.

DeSouza puts it simply, "If anyone's going to tell you Hana's going to do great things, it's me."

And that's not just because of her skill, but because of something that is much harder to teach: Curiosity.



Psychology In Performance

Senior Mikayla Foss double majors in theater and psychology

by Skylar Bredlau

Sports Editor

From the time she first stepped onto a stage as a toddler in a church choir to her final performances at Pine View, Mikayla Foss has built a lifelong connection to theater that now continues into her next chapter at Florida Southern College, where she will pursue a double major with a BFA in Theatre Performance and a BA in Psychology. What began almost accidentally quickly became a defining part of her identity.

"I was really, really little — like two years old — and my mom put me in church choir," Foss said. "We did this Christmas performance about the birth of Jesus, and I was a lamb... That's the earliest I can remember being on stage."

That early exposure stayed with her. As she grew, she continued exploring performance through dance classes, church choir, and eventually programs at Venice Theatre, where her father's own past involvement helped guide her into more structured training. Assistant Director of Education and Community Engagement Kelly Duyn, who has worked with Foss since 2017, emphasized both her consistency and impact as a performer.

"She is obviously a very bright, smart, responsible young lady," Duyn said. "Hard-working ... somebody that you could always trust. If you put her in a scene with other people, she would elevate the work."

By the time Foss reached Pine View, performing had become a consistent part

of her life rather than just an extracurricular activity.

Still, that sense of direction, did not fully solidify until high school, when she found herself balancing several demanding commitments at once.

"Last year, I was doing varsity volleyball at Venice High and also heavily involved in theater at Pine View," Foss said. "I really started to gain a deeper appreciation and passion for theater, but trying to do both at the same time was really difficult."

Between rehearsals, practices, and performances, she realized she couldn't fully commit to both.

"I had to choose which one I wanted to pursue," Foss said. "And in the end, I chose theater because I knew it was what I was more passionate about."

Duyn noted that this level of commitment reflects Foss's overall approach to her craft.

"Her continued work ethic and doing the best she can has really, really shown in her acting," Duyn said. "She's really just soaked up every bit of theater she can ... which has helped her grow as an actress."

That choice opened the door to what Foss wanted to do within her academic goals; she decided to pursue theater alongside psychology in college, drawn to how the two fields intersect.

She explains that the connection between the two is deeply practical and creative, as understanding people is central to both disciplines.

That idea carries into her process as a performer. When preparing for a role, she investigates motivation, emotion, and context.

"I like to do an introspective look at things like, 'Oh, why does this character say this this way?'" Foss said.

Duyn described this approach as part of what makes Foss especially adaptable in performance settings.

“She’s what I like to call a theatrician...”

Kelly Duyn
Assistant Director of Education and Community Engagement

"She's what I like to call a theatrician— somebody who knows a lot about theater," Duyn said. "A utility player who can really plug into anywhere depending on the show."

It is this analytical approach along with performance experience that helps shape her versatility on stage.

One of Foss's most meaningful experiences came while performing in "She Kills Monsters," a recent play put on by the Pine View Drama club

in which she played the lead role, Agnes— a character she connected with personally.

"Agnes from 'She Kills Monsters' is somebody I resonate with; not because our lives are similar, but because of her personality and growth," Foss said.

From a child in a lamb costume to a graduating senior stepping toward Florida Southern College, she is moving forward with the same curiosity and creative spark that first brought her to the stage.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKAYLA FOSS

Jazzing It Up

Steven Kortie pursues music and finance

by Allie Chung

Asst. Editor-In-Chief

On any given weekend, senior Steven Kortie can be found performing across Sarasota, Tampa or St. Petersburg, guitar in hand, moving effortlessly between jazz improvisation and alt rock covers.

Outside of school, Kortie has built a steady presence in the local music scene, playing with multiple groups. He performs with the cover band Dead Set Florida and is also part of a duo, Sarah and Steven Music, where he and his girlfriend play a mix of original songs and covers.

For Kortie, performing is about the environment it creates. Whether he's reaching out to venues or tailoring setlists for specific audiences, each performance is intentional.

"A lot of times I'll just be walking by somewhere and I see live music... I just inquire and see, like, 'Are you guys looking for more music?'" he said. "It's also just meeting people to play with... it's another way to connect with people."

Kortie first picked up guitar around age 10 or 11, later joining Pine View's guitar program as a freshman before expanding into jazz band as a senior.

"My sister did music through all of my

childhood, so I started playing," Kortie said.

Now enrolled in AP Music Theory and Jazz Band, he has found a particular connection to jazz, especially its extemporaneous nature.

"Jazz is a lot of fun for me to play... It's not structured, it's kind of improvisation and anything can happen," he said.

To those who have watched him grow, Kortie's impact extends beyond his technical skill, and is reflected in the way he approaches both music and the people around him.

Ben Butakow, a longtime friend who first met Kortie in elementary school, has seen that evolution firsthand, especially as they've shared spaces in band more recently.

"He's very creative, very easy going, and very dedicated," Bukow said. "He knows what he likes and what he wants to do... as a musician and himself, he is very helpful to those around him."

Playing alongside someone he knows so well has made the experience even more meaningful, Bukow added, noting that having Kortie in band makes it "more enjoyable and engaging."

As Kortie looks ahead to studying jazz and finance as a double major at the University of South Florida, he plans to continue performing and expanding his reach. His advice to others reflects the same mindset that shaped his journey.

"Just going in with no hesitation, just start somewhere," he said.

Spending with a Student ID

GRAPHIC BY ROBYN SCHOENBERG

With college right around the corner, many students are considering the expenses that will come with more financial independence. Fortunately, there are businesses that offer discounts to college students on purchases they may already be making. It is worthwhile to check possible deals wherever you shop. Here are some of The Torch's favorite student discounts!

FOOD

- Uber Eats One...\$5/month for free deliveries and 10% discount.
- DoorDash Pass...\$4.99/month for free deliveries, 10% discount and member-only promos.

ENTERTAINMENT

- Ringling Museum...\$5 admission, but free for select schools.
- Spotify Premium and Hulu...\$6.99/month.
- Apple Music...1 month free then \$5.99/month.
- The New York Times...\$1/week for a year.

TECHNOLOGY

- Apple..."Education Pricing."
- HP Education Store...Up to 40% off.
- Adobe...Creative Cloud for \$19.99/month for a year.

RETAIL

- Amazon Prime... six months free then \$7.49/month including free delivery, Prime Video, Grubhub+ and more.
- Target Circle... \$4.99/month including free shipping, exclusive discounts and more.
- Nike...10% off most online items.
- Converse...15% off.
- Stanley...20% off through ID.ME.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHLOSTE RECRUITING

PV RECRUITED



Gabi DeLeo

by Robyn Schoenberg
Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Driven to be the best and empowered by the relationships she has made along the way, senior Gabi DeLeo has earned her spot on Georgetown University's Women's Lightweight Rowing Team.

When DeLeo started rowing for Sarasota Crew as a freshman, her goal was to be fast, and she quickly showed improvement in both ability and character.

"As I progressed, I started to achieve things that I didn't think I was able to achieve in the beginning," DeLeo said.

After winning in the Freshman Eight boat at States, she eventually gained a spot in the varsity program's top boat. In this boat she won first in States three times and has won first in the 6k Time Trials since her junior year. She even went to Nationals three times and won second at the U19 World Championship Trials in the single.

Beyond her stats, DeLeo proved herself as a leader—becoming the first junior Head Captain that the program has ever had.

"She just worked immensely hard to get that, and it was very well deserved," DeLeo's teammate, Brianna Qeraj, said. "... She's al-

ways put herself out there and kind of forced herself to be involved with the seniors, even her sophomore year, to be present in what she wanted to do in the future."

The summer before her junior year, she began the competitive recruiting process, and by April, she got an offer from Georgetown.

"That was the one school that when I visited, I immediately knew that was the place I wanted to go," DeLeo said. "... I didn't think I could find a school that fit everything that I was looking for, and then I did. So, it was just ecstatically exciting."

In addition to the team environment, coaches, and the unique campus; the university's location in the country's capital will provide unique opportunities as she studies government and policy.

"I've always been interested in pub-

lic policy and elected officials and the questionable decisions that they make, especially in these current times," DeLeo said. "I think that I'm somebody that just couldn't stand by and just watch it happen. So, that's why I know that I want to be somebody to influence it."

DeLeo has made her impact on Sarasota Crew and continues to strive for great things, from achieving more crew victories to pursuing an impactful career.

"I've never doubted her work commitment, and I'm just always astonished by how much she's accomplished in life," Qeraj said. "... I'm really proud of her and I know she'll do amazing things."

Senior Gabi DeLeo rows with her teammates in Sarasota Crew's top women's varsity boat at Nationals. In a competitive race of some of the nation's top rowers, they won fifth place.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GABI DELEO

Eli Ward

by Athena Erbe
Humor Editor

From being introduced to the recruiting process in his freshman year until now, senior Eli Ward has achieved his dream of being recruited as an athlete to one of the most elite college rowing universities in the country, Columbia University.

Ward's mother, Mindy Ward, was introduced to Sarasota Crew by a col-



About to seat race, senior Zinnia Kuipers waits in her boat as her rowers switch out seats.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ZINNIA KUIPERS

league whose son got into Cornell University through recruitment. Before this happened, no one in Ward's family had considered rowing or the college recruitment process, but this idea sparked curiosity.

The following summer, Ward joined a summer camp at Sarasota Crew and fell in love with rowing. However, the past four years have required a lot of sacrifices, as well as dedication from Ward.

"The recruitment process is definitely good days and bad days because you don't know where you're going to come out at the end of it, and you're not guaranteed anything in it," Mindy Ward said.

Still, celebratory moments, like when Ward was recognized as the Head Varsity Boys captain, make these challenging times worth it.

Another interesting memory in his rowing career still stands as the time a manatee hit his boat, creating a funny story to tell for years to come. Although this may seem small, to Ward, the little moments in crew mean just as much as the large achievements.

"I'm really in love with the sport of rowing, and for that reason, I didn't want to give it up just yet. So, I figured I'd do my best I can to get another four years out of it," Ward said, explaining his decision to continue rowing for a college team.

In the next part of his journey at Columbia, Ward will be on the mens lightweight rowing team, where he has weight limitations that he must keep



Eli Ward (right) competes in the Men's Youth Pair Event during the 2025 Southeast Youth Regionals. Through this competition, Ward helped lead his U17 8 boat to first place.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELI WARD

in consideration. In spite of these future obstacles, he is looking forward to joining the Class of 2030 and advancing his rowing career.

For now, Ward is eager to attend a university in the bustling city of New York and hopes to use the skills he learned throughout his career in Sarasota Crew to face future challenges.

"I would say one big thing that our coaches try to convey to us is that it's not about winning or los-

ing, but it's just about being better than the day before," Ward said. "I think that's a big idea that I've taken to heart, and then with that, you can build up a lot of friendships and teamwork."

Joe Kuipers said

she has a way of working through anything and remaining calm without getting too stressed out.

"She is an amazing coxswain and person, and I could not be prouder of her. It is exciting to see my last senior leave Pine View and move on to bigger and better things," Joe Kuipers said.

He is excited to have her coxing for Embry-Riddle, describing her as having leadership, consistency, and a great personality.

"My best memories in rowing will always be from the junior eight. Being super competitive with higher boats than us alongside some close friends was the most fun I have had in rowing," Kuipers said.

Zinnia Kuipers

by Anna Zhang
Asst. Match Editor

Before senior Zinnia Kuipers ever picked up rowing, it was already part of her world. Growing up in a family of rowers, she was surround-

ed by the discipline and intensity of the sport.

Kuipers first got involved with rowing in second grade after both of her older brothers joined the sport. She switched to coxing in fifth grade, as she was short for her age. Her dad, Joe Kuipers, quickly saw her pas-

sion. "I think Zinnia has always been a natural leader, and coxing has given her a place to show her talents," Joe Kuipers said.

Joe Kuipers describes Zinnia as a natural leader and says coxing has given her a place to show her talents.

"I remember watching Zinnia giving directions to a group of boys twice her size, and they all hung on her every word nodding their heads in acknowledgment," Joe Kuipers said.

ATHLETES 2026

WHAT DOES 'GOING D1' ACTUALLY MEAN?

Anna Kim

by Ana Easter
Match Editor-in-Chief

Just three weeks before the Head of the Charles Regatta, one of the hardest and most prestigious head races in the world, the Sarasota Crew team was faced with a setback. In October 2024, Hurricane Milton forced the team off the water during crucial preparation time with the major regatta nearing.

Still, the team traveled to Boston to compete. With current senior Anna Kim at the head of their A boat, Sarasota finished in 26th place, securing a spot in the 2025 regatta by 10 seconds.

Kim serves as a coxswain for Sarasota Crew, leading and coordinating the rowers on the water. Her coach, Colin Lee, believes her leadership through this situation reflects her strength as a coxswain.

"She memorized everything I told her to do without getting serious practice in," Lee said.

In the fall, Kim will be heading back to Boston, committed to continuing her career as a coxswain at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Kim's crew journey began in third grade as a rower, but she later made the transition to coxswain.

Kim is incredibly dedicated to her role, often arriving at practice an hour early to help set up equipment and prepare for the water.

With daily practices and up to 10 regattas a season, crew is an incredibly demanding sport. For Kim, however, the challenge has only deepened her connection to it.

"I have such a love and respect for the sport that I don't know what my life would be like without it," Kim said. "Competing at the collegiate level, especially D1, sounded very exciting."

Knowing that crew was something she wanted to continue in college, the recruitment process for Kim began in her junior year. Though MIT does not actively recruit athletes in the same way as many other division one programs, they do contact students via emails and calls. Through this process along with a visit to the campus, Kim realized that this program was the right fit.

As she prepares to graduate, and begin the next chapter of her rowing ca-

reer, Kim reflects on her time with Sarasota Crew, appreciating the friendships and experiences it has given her.

"Practices and racing don't always go the way you want, but my friends are always there for me and have given me the best memories and advice over the past decade," she said.

Sitting in the stern seat of the Sarasota Crew men's A boat, senior Anna Kim leads the boat through commands. After nine years of experience with Sarasota Crew, Kim is committed to continue her career as a coxswain at MIT.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA KIM

D1:

stands for Division one in NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) college sports, meaning there is a lot of competition to make it into this division. Division one athletes are focused mainly on their sports while attending college. 1-2% of athletes make this division

D2:

stands for the second division of college sports in the NCAA, this is a balance of academics and sports, allowing students to be competitive while also allowing time for college studies. 2-3% of athletes make this division

D3:

stands for Division three in NCAA college sports, competition is still intense but not as intense as higher divisions. D3 mainly allows students to prioritize their academic studies while keeping their sport as a hobby/extracurricular. 5-7% of athletes make this division

GRAPHIC BY JENNA HINCK

Clare Custer

by Maya Ruffin
Asst. Features Editor

Balancing early-morning practices, academics, and competitions, senior Clare Custer has been committed to swimming since she was four years old, when she started swimming with the Sarasota Sharks. She has always had one goal: to attend Harvard University and earn a spot on its swim team.

Custer appreciates the team dynamics that have grown while she has been on the National Team for the Sarasota Sharks.

"I really enjoy racing, but I also enjoy competing with my teammates on relays and cheering each other on and knowing that there is always someone cheering you on and watching you," she said.

Custer met senior Danica Aten at nine years

old when they were both swimming on the Sharks.

"She's always been a great teammate and a fun person to train with...she's incredibly good at racing," Aten said.

Aside from competing with the Sharks, Custer also competes on the Irish National Team for Swim Ireland; the national governing body of swimming, water polo, diving, open-water swimming, and synchronized swimming for the island of Ireland. She began swimming there the summer before her freshman year and has gone back each April and competed in their trials for the last two years.

"It's definitely a different feeling representing a country. In Ireland it's a really tight-knit community, so it's great to walk around the pool and see a bunch of people I know" Custer said.

Custer is highly committed to the sport. She has swim practice six days a week. Balancing academics was a challenge, but she

learned how to do well in school and be able to work hard for swimming.

"I do miss out on a lot of things, but in the end, swimming has given me so many opportunities that I have accepted the trade-off, and I have found ways to still have fun and make memories at school," Custer said.

When attending Harvard, Custer plans on majoring in government and attending law school afterward. She also hopes to compete in the Olympics in two years, and she hopes to attend and do well in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) swimming competitions while representing Harvard.

With years of experience, Custer has a bright future ahead.

"My training has definitely taken me to a place that I really enjoy. It's gotten me into Harvard and is setting up my future. It's definitely been harder over the years, but it's definitely worth it," Custer said.

With her eyes on her team in front of her, senior Anna Kim (right) yells out commands. As coxswain, Kim is responsible for keeping the boat synchronized on the water, serving as the voice of the boat.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA KIM



Clare Custer is seen swimming in the 2025 Irish Open Swimming Championships. Custer was 26 seconds inside the time set for the European Junior Team that year.
PHOTO COURTESY OF CLARE CUSTER



EMPACHER

The Extra Degree: Graduation Edition

by Ana Easter
Match Editor-in-Chief

At 7:21 a.m. every senior at Pine View received the same email.

Most ignored it. It was three days before graduation. Finals were over, AP exams completed, and all the boxes were checked.

The email sat unopened until a message was sent to the senior class group chat.

“We’re not graduating.”

Nobody was sure who had sent it, the events that followed were a frantic blur. Students searched everywhere for an answer.

The seniors were at a loss, until someone finally thought to check the email that had been sent. Sure enough, in a mess of unopened emails, there it lay. The email’s subject line read “IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR ALL SENIORS: UPDATED GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS,” the seniors frantically opened the email, the app glitching from so much use.

One student read it out loud:

“There has been a slight shift in the requirements for graduation. Seniors must complete the following activities prior to receiving diplomas:”

New Pine View Graduation Requirements:

- Wax Dr. Covert’s Head
- Defeat the teachers in a relay race
- Expand potholes in the Shell Lot
- Wait behind the elementary schoolers in the lunch line

*Failure to complete requirements will result in a delayed graduation.

Attached was a checklist with every senior’s name listed.

With desperation to graduate, the seniors raced to Dr. Covert’s office, where they found the waxing materials already set up.

“Lets just get this over with,” said Dr. Covert. His expression made it clear that he had played no part in deciding these new requirements.

Carefully, the seniors worked together to apply the waxing strips, some sitting by Dr. Covert’s side for moral support.

Somewhere, somebody checked them all off the checklist. Requirement one was complete.

The word spread fast of the news of the next requirement: the relay race. The teachers were already lined up. The seniors looked at their competitors. They could hear their joints popping as they stretched. This was going to be easy.

To maximize efficiency, the seniors decided that the fastest runners would lead off the race, and by the time they were done, they would have enough of a lead for the rest of the class to get away with walking.

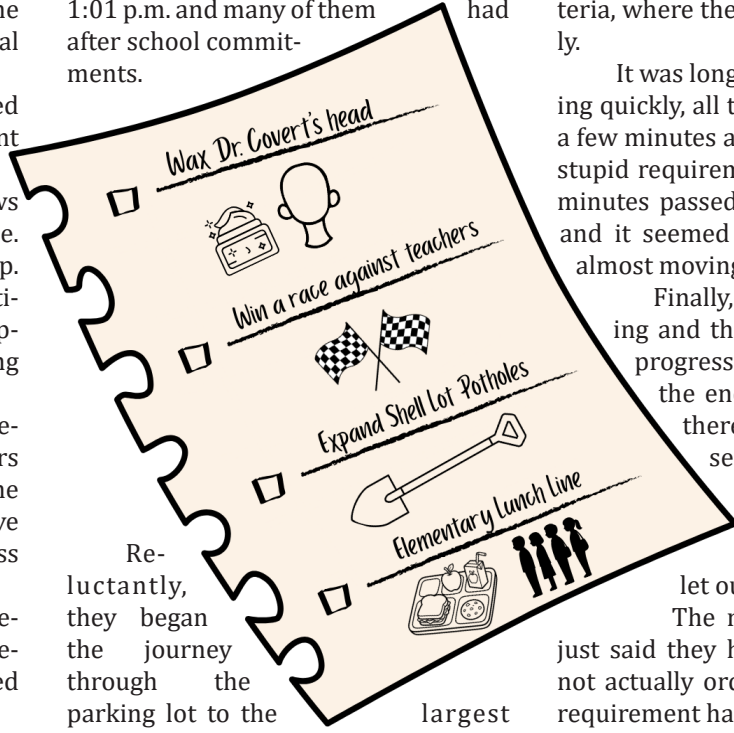
Their strategy worked, and the seniors won the race. They began to celebrate when a clap of thunder distracted them. A storm was on the way.

The next requirement was in the Shell Lot, so if they wanted to stay dry, they needed to get there quickly. The seniors rushed to the Shell Lot, their legs aching after the race. By the time they got there a light drizzle was already coming down. They saw that buckets and shovels had been left out

for them and hurried to get to work.

Suddenly, the slight drizzle turned into a downpour and water began pooling up in the Shell Lot, filling up the potholes they were tasked to expand.

Everyone hurried under the awning to discuss a plan. While it would’ve been ideal to wait for the rain to stop, the seniors agreed that they needed to get the requirement done as soon as possible. It was already approaching 1:01 p.m. and many of them had after school commitments.



Reluctantly, they began the journey through the parking lot to the largest pothole. They were about to dig their shovels into the wet goop when they paused. The hole already appeared larger than usual. Had the rain done their job for them?

Sure enough, someone checked the checklist and saw a green check next to requirement three. The stu-

dents had gotten soaked for nothing

Annoyed but relieved, the students walked to the cafeteria to complete their final requirement. Instinctively, the seniors marched to the front of the line, eager to get lunch when they were reminded of their task. They needed to wait in the line of elementary school students without cutting.

They turned and walked all the way to the elementary side of the cafeteria, where the line stretched endlessly.

It was long but seemed to be moving quickly, all they had to do was wait a few minutes and they could get these stupid requirements completed. A few minutes passed, and then a few more and it seemed that the seniors were almost moving backward in the line.

Finally, the line began moving and the seniors were making progress. When they reached the end of the line it seemed there was no food left. The seniors watched as an elementary school student took the last slice of pizza and they let out a collective groan.

The requirements, however, just said they had to wait in the line, not actually order food. So, their final requirement had been completed.

With that, the seniors had finished all of the new requirements and were able to graduate. Little did they know, the rush for credits was just an introduction to fighting for college classes...

GRAPHIC BY ATHENA ERBE

Dream AP Classes

by Alakh Bhatt
Asst. Opinion Editor



AP Lunch

[Go to AP Classroom](#)

Course Overview

AP Lunch is a fast-paced course focused on maximizing performance during a limited time window. Students will master strategic seating, efficient line navigation, and high-level snack trading. The class explores cafeteria dynamics, including traffic flow, table politics, and the unspoken rules of who sits where. Coursework includes real-time simulations where students must secure food, a seat, and at least one decent conversation before time runs out.

The final exam requires navigating a packed lunchroom and making a successful trade. Students must also leave with time to spare, without spilling anything or getting stuck in line twice.



AP Naptime

[Go to AP Classroom](#)

Course Overview

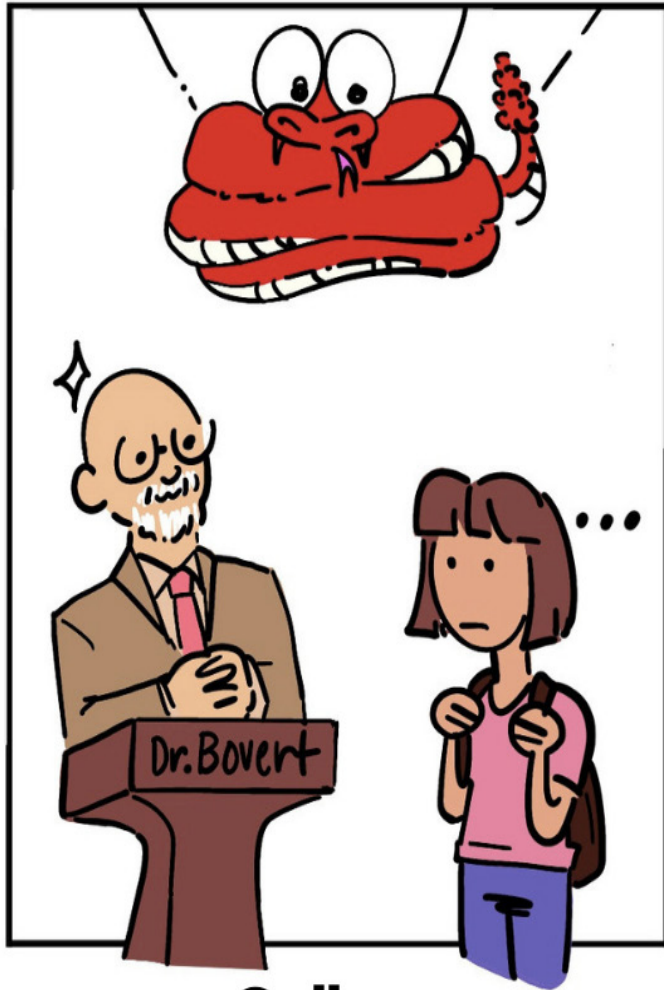
AP Naptime is a rigorous study of effective rest and recovery outside of the classroom. Students will learn optimal sleep positions, bedtime routines, and techniques for falling asleep quickly and waking up refreshed. Units cover sleep cycles, time management for better rest, and creating an ideal sleep environment.

Labs focus on tracking sleep patterns, improving consistency, and testing different strategies to maximize energy throughout the day. The final assessment challenges students to design and follow a personalized sleep schedule, demonstrating improved focus, energy, and overall well-being.

GRAPHIC BY HANA MULLEN



Pine View



College

by Hana Mullen
Graphics Editor
Dear Diary,

I've finally escaped high school! Who knew applications had such hardcore burnout symptoms. After getting into my dream college all I could think about was graduation. So then came electing new club officers, studying for the one AP credit that rolls over, and making lots of memories. Oh, and realizing I had to keep a 3.5 GPA to retain my admission.

Anyways, college is going to be great. I'm going to take tons of 8 a.m. classes, study weeks in advance, and live an entirely new life. Watch out world, college me is coming through!

Dear Diary,

It's been a month since I've moved into college and I said I'd start a new life but ... nothing has changed! I still have to do my laundry, still have to take long bike rides in the baking sun, still have to snooze through my 17 alarms for these 8 a.m. classes I said I'd be motivated for. It even feels like I'm still living with my sister--I have to wake my roommate up for class everyday! Even our mascot is a snake, and our president? His name's Dr. Bovert!

Well, you know what they say. I guess there's no place like home!

FOUR DIRECTIONS



Scan now to watch our debut single!

CONTENT BY
MADELYN
BAILEY AND
NAIRIYAT
TAKENOVA



Senioritis: An Investigative Study

What IS Senioritis?
A ~~non~~-medical term for the drop in motivation, energy, and grades experienced by high school seniors.



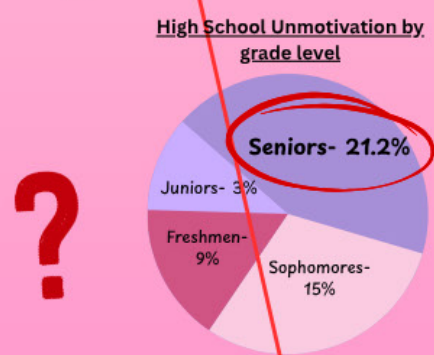
Common Symptoms:

- Wearing pajama pants "ironically"
- Invisible at school



Consequences:

- Becoming TOO familiar with late work policies
- More 'Missings' than the Lost & Found



So... What's the CURE?

- Fear.
- Just doing your work (still experimental)

I'll finish it later...zzzz

GRAPHIC BY
ANDREW ASHBY
AND ANNA ZHANG



[staff editorial]

AI, Journalism, and Moving Forward at Pine View

It's 7 A.M., and instead of unfolding a newspaper, most people are reaching for their phones. Whether they are looking through breaking news retold by influencers or misleading headlines by AI, the never-ending scroll reveals the collapse of traditional journalism.

Closer to home, changes are coming to the Pine View journalism room as well.

Online, as traditional reporting loses ground, social media has been quick to take its place. As reported in a study by NYU Stern, social media platforms use algorithms that boost sensational content over thorough news. This effect intensifies political polarization through controversy.

Many journalists and reporters have found themselves replaced by influencers or AI who can produce content in bite-sized, oversimplified forms that do not tell the full story.

Unlike journalists, creators on social media are not always subject to journalistic standards nor ethical guidelines, and so the accuracy of reporting is diluted. When algorithms treat news, opinion, and advertising with the same weight, the lines between what's unreliable and what's authentic blur into something indiscernible.

The rise of the digital age and congruent decline in attention spans have also accelerated the speed of news, allowing misinformation to spread faster. Forcing journalists to adapt to the current technological climate makes them choose between being first and being correct. As reported by the Columbia Journalism School, this leads to a staggering increase in AI usage that reshapes the media landscape entirely.

A lot of us have already seen the impact AI can have on the information landscape. Take an AI-generated video of a little girl presenting her story about cancer, for instance, that circulated on YouTube. The people shown are crying, but it seems superficial and insincere.

While it can create plots, characters, images, and videos, AI lacks the qualities that real human work is so valued for: humanity and truth. By outsourcing some, or all, of our news to artificial sources, we lose a lot of what made that information essential and valuable in the first place.

When an influencer or 'news hub' posts content that's news in name only, the incentive is monetary. More clicks lead to more revenue, so, naturally, the more outlandish and attention-grabbing the story is, the more revenue it generates – regardless of validity. The widespread availability of generative AI also makes this goal easier to achieve, enabling more flashy content to be produced at an unprecedented rate. These tendencies are what modern journalism emerged to combat.

Beyond this, when information is

distilled and recycled through the internet, it loses its accuracy. AI resides solely online, meaning it obtains its data purely from other sources on the web. If those sources are also AI-generated, then that information cannot be trusted. Unlike humans, AI systems cannot access the real world to get information from people, events, experiments, and other physical sources. In the long run, those so-called facts will be unreliable.

In the same regard that AI content has raised concerns for integrity in media, similar sentiments have been shared about censorship of journalists in previous years. With occurrences from the Pentagon's new policy requiring journalists have an escort when reporting there to the current presidential administration restricting the White House press pool, attacks have become more widespread.

Within Pine View's journalism program, we have felt this impact as we work with school administration to support ethical journalism while defining the boundaries of student press rights.

We've historically followed a process of prior approval in which administration approves or disapproves of published content without specific and standardized rules as to what is acceptable. After multiple censored or cut stories, Pine View students were motivated to pass a county policy, creating clear guidelines as to the limits and protections of student press rights, ideally bringing involved groups onto the same page.

Even after implementing this policy, we faced censorship, but ultimately published our stories with the support of student press organizations, news coverage, and eventually school administrators. This experience, matched with years of the stress that comes along with managing seven student publications, led to our adviser, Christopher Lenerz, deciding to step down from advising journalism.

Even through struggles this year, The Torch still produced quality publications, and last month, was named an

All-Florida newspaper by the Florida Scholastic Press Association (FSPA). This state-level honor would not have been possible without the dedication of the staff and our adviser.

Lenerz has edited every page of every publication, stayed after hours for press nights, and advocated tirelessly for his students for almost 15 years. At this year's FSPA convention, he was awarded District 5 Teacher of the Year — an honor he truly deserved.

To keep growing and reaching our fullest potential, The Torch needs a supportive adviser.

To continue as one of the top student publications in the state, it needs an adviser that cares just as much as the hardworking students.

We spend hours a week and some of us spend hours each day dedicated to producing quality news. Producing something we can look at and be proud of because it represents true journalism.

Time spent as part of The Torch family is truly worth the effort. We are excited to welcome the new adviser and hope it is someone willing to put in the time to support us and our passion like Lenerz has.

A staffer wrote that she was clueless when they first walked into Lenerz's portable in seventh grade. Five years later, as a current staff leader, she is confident in her abilities and proud to call herself a student journalist. Through years of his teaching, Lenerz has taught us that journalism is far more than just writing: it's courage, truth, and responsibility. He has imparted to us all what it means to hold journalistic integrity and defend the truth.

More than just a teacher, Lenerz has been a mentor and role model whose impact will stay with us long after high school. Lenerz heavily impacted our education, believing in us even when we doubted ourselves. His encouragement pushed us to work harder, ask questions, and become more confident as journalists. He has made our school lives so much more enjoyable and meaningful by being such an amazing inspiration. Lenerz has been like a father figure



TOP LEFT TO RIGHT: Journalism adviser Chris Lenerz with students at the 2022 Florida Scholastic Press Association (FSPA) convention. / The Torch and View staff members at Grand Central Station in 2025 for Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA). / The View staffers at the 2023 CSPA Walsworth dinner. / The Torch and View staffers at Columbia University for CSPA in 2023. MIDDLE LEFT TO RIGHT: Lenerz with his daughter Ava after she won Aspiring Young Journalist of the Year at FSPA in 2022. / The Torch staffers at the 2025 CSPA convention. / Lenerz with class of 2026 journalism students at the senior panoramic. BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: Lenerz with two students at FSPA in 2022. / Lenerz and students at FSPA in 2023. / Torch press night during the 2018-19 school year. / Lenerz and Torch alumna Lindsay Luberecki with a Holocaust survivor she interviewed in 2024.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHRIS LENERZ who encouraged our growth, challenged us to improve, and helped to shape our future goals; we are more than indebted to him for that. He has cultivated a noble publication, one that has allowed us to grow both as journalists and as people. His understanding and commitment to journalistic integrity has inspired generations of The Torch's staff to bring the knowledge they learned from his class into their lives and careers. That legacy has the power to change the world, and it will long outlast his departure.

+ [AI] +

"JOURNALISM"

ON THE RISE

Since NOVEMBER 2024

OVER 50% OF WEB-RELATED JOURNALISM IS WRITTEN BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

+ 60,000 AI-GENERATED NEWS ARTICLES ARE UPLOADED DAILY TO THE INTERNET

SOURCES

Five Percent Graphite Growth Pangram

GRAPHIC BY TIMOTHY NESANEL

Chance or Credentials?

by Athena Erbe
Humor Editor

Perfect GPA, out-of-the-ordinary extracurriculars, a rigorous schedule, and hundreds of community service hours — result? Rejected.

If you've been on the internet around college decision time, you've probably been bombarded by celebratory reaction videos from students who just got accepted into their dream school.

However, a different perspective looks at the thousands of rejected applicants, many of whom were just as qualified. Admissions officers often choose one dedicated student over another, with no clear answer as to why.

Throughout my childhood between China and the United States, I have constantly heard praise of the American education system from family and friends who put in decades of hard work to send their kids abroad for a better future. They hoped the sys-

tem would be more lenient, but what seems to be an easier path to success isn't always.

In mainland China, the main path into college is a multi-day, high-stress entrance exam which over 13 million students have to spend years preparing for almost their entire academic lives. To many, this one exam determines their future career, family, and quality of life. Although retakes are possible, missing exam day or having something go wrong can set a student back an entire year.

College entrance exams are also used in other nations, such as South Korea's Suneung and Turkey's YKS (Higher Education Institutions Examination). For students who excel academically, these ranking systems can offer a clear path to a successful future. Yet students in these countries often face intense pressure from parents and extreme stress over test scores, as even a single point can separate thou-

sands of students.

Whenever I visited my relatives in Shanghai over the summer, cousins and friends my age were constantly in after-school classes, doing homework, and preparing for exams.

On the other hand, Amer-

Admissions officers often choose one dedicated student over another, with no clear answer as to why.

ican high school students are often seen as more relaxed, with less academic pressure and schoolwork. But when I compare my experiences, I realize this is not really the case.

While academics are not

the only focus of U.S. college admissions, a well-rounded application also includes sports, extracurriculars, part-time jobs, leadership roles, standardized test scores, letters of recommendation, and essays.

The U.S. uses a holistic system for admissions, where multiple factors can determine acceptance on an institution-by-institution basis. Although the process is meant to be unbiased, factors like race and income have also been part of the conversation.

Without guidance, this process can feel overwhelming for many students, often leading to just as much stress and effort as preparing for a major entrance exam. This is especially noticeable at Pine View, where students aim for top universities, but with so many highly qualified applicants, disappointment is inevitable.

The American system's unclear evaluation process

shouldn't determine a student's future opportunities.

That being said, there are other admissions systems around the world, including the United Kingdom's process, which combines personal statements with exams. This more centralized system evaluates academic ability, work ethic, and future goals in a structured way. Since college is typically career-focused, this method of selection can be seen as more balanced and equitable than the extremes of other systems.

Whether a single exam decides everything or a holistic review process, keeping college admissions just is difficult. Some level of bias and unfairness may be unavoidable with millions of students applying; however, steps can be taken to standardize and make admissions practices more transparent in the United States and around the world.

Farewell From the Current Adviser

by Chris Lenerz
Adviser

Columbia University, Friday, March 18, 2018 — I still get emotional thinking about it — It was the day that it really hit me how strong of a bond I form with my journalism kids.

I was there with a couple dozen Torch and yearbook students for the annual Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) convention. It was around noon, and we had just come out of a standing-room-only auditorium, where the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, had just finished participating in a panel discussion.

Just over a month earlier, those students had been hiding in a closet with their adviser while a gunman killed 17 students and staff on Valentine's

Day.

I knew both their yearbook and newspaper advisers from serving on the board of the Florida Scholastic Press Association (FSPA) with them.

There had not been a dry eye in the auditorium as the students recounted their harrowing ordeal and its aftermath. And, all I kept thinking was "What if those had been my kids?"

As soon as we got into the hallway, I gathered all my students and said I needed a group hug. We held each other in silence for a few minutes and cried. I love my kids—my journalism kids.

Since 2012, I've had the privilege of not only working with some of the best kids on campus, but really getting to know them. When you spend four years (five and six with

some of the kids who started in middle school journalism) with students, you really get to know them.

You share in their triumphs — awards, college acceptances, promposals, and you try to be there for them in their struggles — college rejections, bad test scores, bad breakups. We laugh, we cry, we drink Starbucks on press nights. And I've shared my struggles and victories with them — not to burden them, but to let them know that life is a process; you never fully figure it out, you just keep learning and trying to do the next right thing.

I've stayed in touch with dozens of my journalism kids over the years.

They send me links to their stories on their college newspapers, texts telling me about jobs they've gotten, and

congratulatory messages when they see that the current students have won an award.

Being the journalism teacher has meant so much more to me than making sure we put out good publications. It's been about building community, helping students find their passion and their people.

More than any of the All-Florida's we've won, I will remember the trips to NY and Orlando, the Torch camping trips my daughter started, the yearbook end-of-year banquets, the smiles, the tears, the dancing (Ice, Ice, Baby!).

I'm so fortunate to have had many students tell me what a difference I've made in their lives over the years, but I'd like to take a moment to tell you all what a difference you've made in mine. I've learned so, so much from all of you. I am a

better person for having gotten to know you.

My superpower isn't being an amazing teacher, it's in trusting and believing in kids. And these kids have been the absolute best.

Love, Big Len

Journalism adviser Chris Lenerz outside his old portable in 2018. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS LENERZ



SENIOR VOICES: WHY ARE YOU GOING TO COLLEGE IN-STATE OR OUT-OF-STATE?

GABBIE MCFARLANE — IN-STATE



“Mostly, I would say financial, definitely, but we also have really good colleges here in Florida.”

EILA CHANDRA — IN-STATE



“I would say financial, but at least for me, one of my majors is going to be theater, and [Florida State University] has a great theater program.”

BRYN FAMIGLIO — OUT-OF-STATE



“I've lived in Sarasota my whole life and want to explore a new environment and meet people... [and] to gain new experiences from living somewhere else, especially with climate.”

JOE CALLEJA — OUT-OF-STATE



“[College] is a perfect place for you to test out where you are, and choosing to go out-of-state and far away, where you can start a new life... it's where [adventure] comes out.”

AEON JOHNSON — IN-STATE



“It's the best in terms of money for me, and I think [the University of Florida's] a really good school and closer to family.”

NATASHA ANTONIUK — IN-STATE



“Honestly, it's the best cost. I only applied in-state because I have Benacquisto, so it's basically all paid for... and it's the best for my [engineering] major.”

DEVDAAN LOBO — OUT-OF-STATE

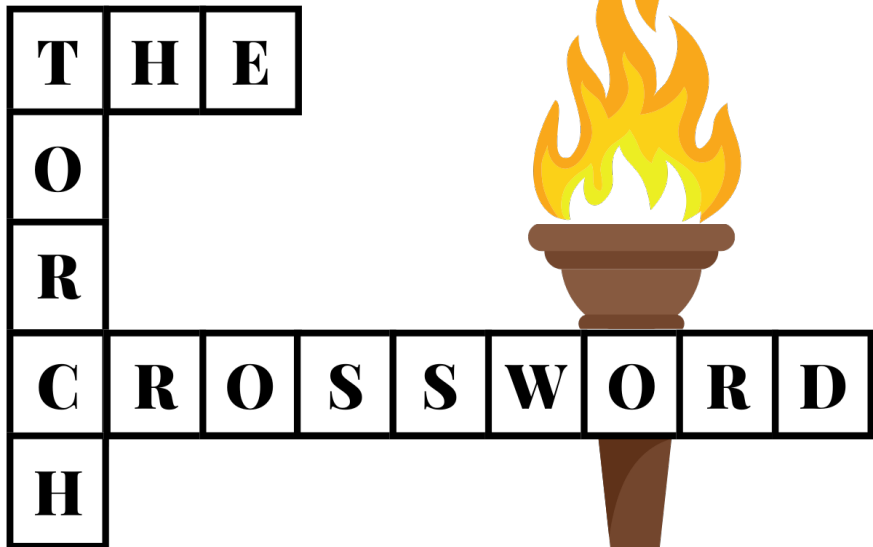


“...The opportunities I got from the schools outside of [Florida] are a little bit better. I'm also excited to live in a bigger city with more food options — I think about it every day.”

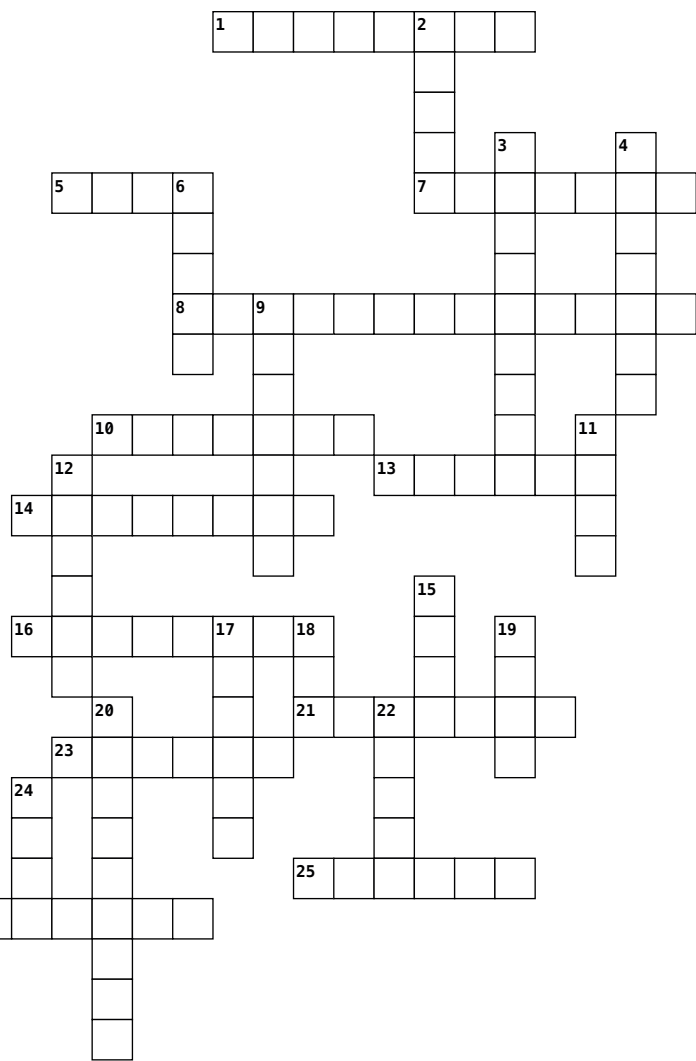
JANICE CHI — OUT-OF-STATE



“...I wanted to go to a bigger city. Also, Rice has a really big medical center in Houston that I would like to shadow and get experience in.”



Hints correspond to information shared in the stories throughout this issue, including through QR codes. The first person to bring their completed version in Room 117 in Building 17 will win a \$5 gift card. Good luck!



Across

1. Anna Kim serves as a ____ for Sarasota Crew.
5. About ____ thousand books were removed from the Media Center.
7. This company offers 20% off through ID.ME.
8. In the last four years, there was a 46% increase of _____ in Florida.
10. Custer is on the national swim team for this country.
13. The fruit Mullen made an elaborate, velvetlined case for.
14. Requirement Three to Graduate: Expand Shell Lot _____. (hint: check humor)
16. The university where the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas had a panel discussion.
21. In AP Lunch, students master high-level snack _____.
23. Lavallee will now be teaching at _____ Park High School.
25. Dash was accepted to Columbia as a Science Research _____.
26. The high school that Mitchell did track and cross country for.

Down

2. Foss' character in "She Kills Monsters"
3. Pereira played the piano and the _____ at Miss Pine View.
4. A Torch staffer wrote that they were clueless when they first stepped into Lenerz's portable in ____ grade.
6. Kuipers' best memories in rowing are from the junior ____.
9. This animal hit Ward's boat.
11. Kortie is studying finance and ____.
12. A program with FSU's Bachelor of Arts program sends you to this city.
15. When thinking about going out-of-state for college, Lobo thinks about his ____ options.
17. Dr. Covert's College Counterpart, Dr. _____.
18. Skipper is retiring to take care of his daughter and focus on ____.
19. The website White started with her friends is titled The ____ Folder.
20. The nickname Andrew Kim gives to the car model he jokes about buying.
22. Deleo received her offer from Georgetown in this month.
24. The first cure listed for Senioritis

Hear me out...

One Last Time, said like George Washington

I wish life was a musical. Even sad musicals are still enjoyable, the intense emotion of the songs piercing your soul with each lyric. I don't understand people that dislike musicals; it's just like life — but better!

But as I'm about to go into college, I've never felt this feeling more than I do now. I don't know how other seniors are feeling, but personally, I am not excited.

I have been at Pine View since second grade, but my dad has worked here before then, so I've been around campus much more than my 11 years as a student. Add on chronic anxiety and depression, you have someone wholly unprepared for college.

Though if life were a musical, I am confident, this would be the sad part right before intermission. That may sound despairing, but after intermission things will turn around; they always do.

I think the same can be said for The Torch. We've just finished an extremely successful year being recognized as one of the top six school newspapers in the state with our All-Florida award. This is the The Torch's first overall All-Florida since the 2015-2016 school year.

This win did not come easily and we still have a long road ahead. Yet, the



Ava Lenerz
Editor-in-Chief

staff proved themselves time and time again as they held fast to their morals and integrity through challenging times. I am honored to have worked alongside them.

The Torch is also going into an era of uncertainty with a new adviser, a loss of its Fine Arts credit, and any other changes the districtwide budget cuts may cause. Even so, this is just the end of Act One.

This dedicated staff is going to stay strong with the support of next year's Editor-in-Chief, Timothy Nesanelis. I have had the pleasure of working with this passionate journalist for five years. He is an incredibly authentic and empathetic leader, and I am so proud of how much he has grown even in just the past year and lucky to call him a friend. He cares for this paper beyond compare and will work hard to guide the staff through this transition.

Yes, next year may be scary, but it may be the change necessary for the characters to develop in order to reach the finale.

Perhaps things will change for the better, and I can't wait to find out what song will be playing when it does.



Timothy Nesanelis
Next year's Editor-in-Chief

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