

FOCUS

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

March 2010

Academic Integrity Survey Results Create a Need for Change

By Alex Dreschler

At the December 14th Board of Education meeting, the Blind Brook administration released the results of an academic integrity survey that was taken by students in grades nine through twelve and by faculty. According to Director of Guidance Mary Mediate, the survey revealed that a significant percentage of students at Blind Brook engage in some form of cheating. The results of the survey will be incorporated in a larger project targeted at improving the district's Character Education program, a goal selected for the district by the Middle States Program.

Dr. Donald McCabe, a Rutgers professor, derived the survey taken by students and faculty and has administered it nationally. McCabe has been conducting research for fifteen years and has surveyed 18,000 high school students plus thousands of college students. According to Mediate, McCabe provided the survey, the answers were sent directly to him from the students and faculty, and then the results were returned to the district.

The survey was administered electronically to students and to Blind Brook faculty on November 16th. According to a presentation made by Mediate at the December 14th meeting, the entire faculty and all but eleven students participated in the survey.

The results revealed that, in total, 29% of the student body admitted to copying on a test or exam more than once. 63% of students in the entire district admitted to letting someone else copy their homework more than once. A high percentage of students also admitted

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The Search Continues

By Stephanie Hennings

After four consecutive years with four different principals, Blind Brook High School is preparing to hire a principal with the help of the Principal Search Committee, which contains representatives from all constituents of the high school. The PTA, the Administrators' Association, School Related Personnel, the Federation of Teachers, and students are all represented. "It's a very hardworking group that really wants to do this, and they're doing a great job and putting everything together," said Eugene Wolotsky, the Director of Pupil Services and the facilitator for the committee.

"The principal is such a key position in the high school, and since we have had so many different principals over the last several years, we really have not had a consistency in our leadership," said Jean Follansbee, a member of the committee representing the Federation of Teachers. "That makes it very hard in moving our goals forward because we seem to start something, and then we have a new prin-



Photo/Taylor Hoff

Members of the Principal Search Committee meet to review applications for next year's principal.

cipal and go back to square one in order to educate the new principal," she said.

Representing the administration on the search committee, Middle School Principal Karen Bronson said, "I have always worked very closely with each high school principal. We share the facilities, teachers, and much more. It is important that we have a strong working relationship because it benefits the students."

Student representative, junior Rebecca Gaines said that although she will only

be a student for one year with the principal, she is still excited to find a principal who will be an asset to the school for future classes. "The junior class has gone through three principals in three years. Although it did not hurt us to have so many principals, if we had had a stable principal, we could have gotten a lot more done," said Gaines. Sophomore Nikta Daijavand and freshman Alex Lubkin were also elected by their class as student members of the committee.

So far, the committee has focused on accumulating a list of ideal principal characteristics. They feel that the principal should be a curriculum leader, have a good track record, and be able to gain the trust and respect of the school members. The committee members also agreed that the new principal should have school spirit, be part of the school community, and take a collaborative approach. "We are looking for someone who is an instrumental leader and who has professional

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BBHS Rises to 55th in US News and World Report

By Stephanie Hennings

Blind Brook High School now ranks 55th as best public high school in the United States, earning a place on the *US News and World Report* Gold Medal List in their annual high school rankings for 2010. This 32-spot improvement from last year's ranking of 87th was due to an increase in the student passing rate on Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

"We are a small school, and, therefore, we do not need much for numbers to fluctuate," said William Stark,

Superintendent of Schools.

Yet, administrators suggest the jump does not signify much change for the school. "Speaking to most educators, you find some degree of skepticism with the rankings," said Interim High School Principal Vincent Galasso. "Being on that list and being recognized is a good thing. Having said that, it is hard to take too much out of that ranking. Knowing the evaluation parameters, I was actually surprised by how highly the school was rated...but it is better to be rated positively than

not at all," said Galasso.

School Evaluation Services developed the numerical methodology used to rank high schools: 21,786 public high schools from 48 states and the District of Columbia were evaluated based on data from the 2007-2008 school year using three major steps. Step one examined how each student in the school scored on the math and reading components of standardized tests compared to the state's average. The percentage of economically

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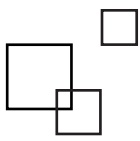
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Drug Panel Discussion to Promote Change

By Leigh Engle

A panel addressing the consequences of substance abuse met with Blind Brook students on February 9th. The panel, moderated by Andrea Fallack, the director of the school-based program for student assistant services, included Judge John Colangelo of Rye Brook, Rye Brook Chief of Police Gregory Austin, Frank Priolo, chief of the Rye Brook division for the District Attorney's office, and Dr. Marvin Davidson, the medical director of the Greenwich Hospital emergency room.

During the two class-period discussion, panel members analyzed various scenarios and answered follow-up questions posed by students. Fallack said, "This panel is usually for parents, but our belief is that the more information you have, the more your decisions will be informed and the greater likelihood you will make healthier decisions."

The scenarios were meant to simulate actual situations that the students could find themselves in. The first consisted of two students getting caught using a fake ID at a liquor store. Judge Colangelo discussed the violations and the criminal liability of the individual while Chief Austin stated that, in the eyes of the law, you are an adult if you are older than 16. In discussing the type of crimes involved in the situation, Priolo said, "If you are charged with a misdemeanor

and are not yet 19 years old, then you can be charged with youthful offender status, and your record is sealed."

Another scenario involved a 15-year-old female having sex with a 19-year-old male. According to the panel, the male would be charged with statutory rape regardless of whether or not the female had consented. The panel stressed that sex with a minor is illegal, even if both parties willingly engage in it. Judge Colangelo explained that being charged with statutory rape is a conviction. "When you apply for a license to work, you may be denied that privilege because of a conviction," Colangelo said. Dr. Davidson discussed the health risks that come with sex.

Other scenarios included the dangers of misusing prescription pills, driving drunk, and mixing alcohol with other drugs. Dr. Davidson said, "Most people are prescribed a medication for a reason. If someone else is taking it, they might not be aware of the side effects. Two people might react differently to the same medication."

Students were highly vocal in the assembly, and some prompted quasi-debates with members of the panel. Senior Mike Tomasula said, "I think the assembly was a good way to inform kids. I just think the way that some kids were attacking the panelists was not a good idea."

Some students were initially

optimistic about the assembly, hoping to gain valuable information and have their questions answered; however, a majority were let down.

Adam Goldberg, a senior, said, "It was interesting, but I am not sure if it achieved its purpose. It was basically telling some kids what they can get away with."

According to sophomore Josh Hamlet, "I thought some things they said were helpful and interesting, but a lot of it was common sense, and we have been taught a lot of it in the past."

Still, some had more positive views on the assembly. "I thought it was good having local authority faces there, instead of people that nobody knows," said senior Jack Santon.

When asked what the most important message of the assembly was, Judge Colangelo said, "[Students] have to understand that there are wide-reaching ramifications of their actions--not only legal, but also in regard to their general health." He added, "Let's face it: we were all that age, and we all thought we were immortal. It is a fact of life that when teenagers put themselves in harm's way, they think they're immune to the danger."

Student Assistance Counselor Angela Marciano brought the panel to Blind Brook to give students the opportunity to listen to experts and ask questions. Marciano said, "We had a similar panel

in November, which was held solely for parents. About 150 parents attended, and there were students and parents who came in and requested a similar panel for the high school students."

Marciano was very pleased with student behavior before the panel. She said, "Our students were very good in the assembly. I was not even offended by the twelfth graders; they have a right to get their questions answered." Her goal in bringing this panel to Blind Brook was to, above all, inform the students. She said, "I think it was beneficial in the sense that we gave out information. We hope that students apply that information towards health and safety."

When asked if there was anything he would change about the panel for the future, Chief Austin said, "I think that to come up with one specific scenario that addresses different topics would be beneficial. In terms of students asking very specific questions, I did not want to get into talking about a specific incident. I wanted it to be general so everybody could benefit from it." Interim High School Principal Vincent Galasso said, "Better decisions and poor decisions both have unintended consequences. This assembly could cause individuals to have better unintended consequences."

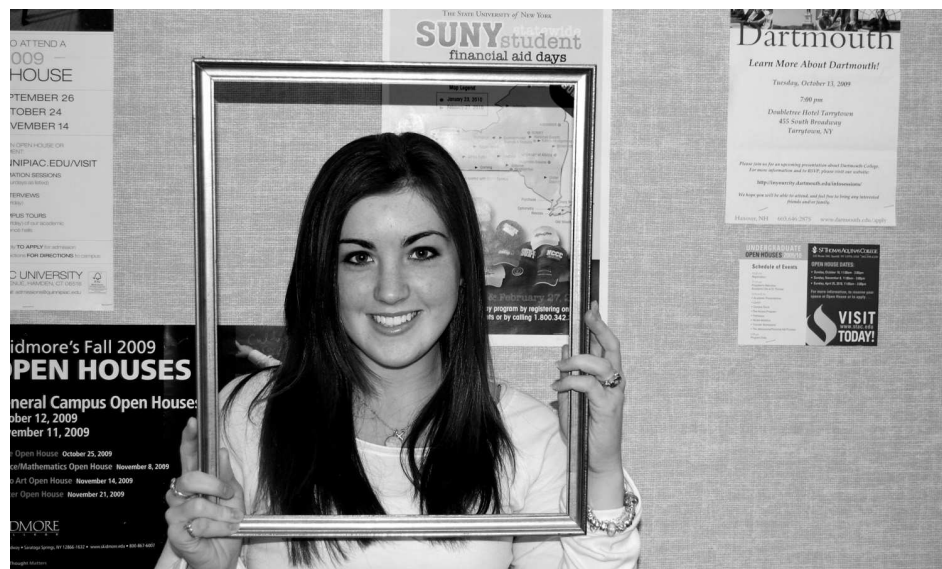
The Rise and (No) Fall of the College Wall

By Allison Engle

Students and teachers recently completed a Congress survey to determine the fate of the traditional senior college wall. Every spring, each senior's portrait, labeled with the name of the college that they will attend in the fall, is posted on the bulletin board located near the entrance of the school. However, at the end of last year and continuing into this year, Congress discussed whether or not the college wall should remain the same, be altered, or be removed.

Secretary to Guidance Grace Carroll is the founder of BB's college wall. In 1996, when Carroll came to Blind Brook, seniors wrote their names and the colleges they were attending on a white board in the guidance office. Writing their names on the board "was almost like a rite of passage for [the seniors]. They just couldn't wait to do it," said Carroll.

In 2001, the guidance office was rearranged, and the white board was removed. The next year, seniors were permitted to have a bulletin board to display the colleges that they were going to attend, and Carroll said, "I suggested that we put their pictures up along with the name of the colleges they were each going to. The one thing I required was the permission from each student to put



Photo/Blythe Duckett

Senior Devan Toal poses in front of the College Wall bulletin board.

their picture and college up"

According to Congress President senior Rick Vavolizza, "There are many people who don't like how the wall is set up in that it allows the people looking at it to associate the students with a college name and nothing else. The college wall could provide people with a false representation of students' abilities."

Vavolizza said that students are frequently judged by other parents based on the wall, "Parents often come into the school building and, without even knowing who the student is, judge him or her

solely based on the college name next to his or her picture." Congress presented all students and teachers with three different options for the college wall in a school-wide survey. "We decided that issuing this survey may be very valuable to get other people's opinions on the issue of the college wall. This survey wasn't a vote; it was a survey representing what the whole Blind Brook population thought about this issue," said Vavolizza.

"The first option was to keep the college wall in its present form. The second option was to alter the college wall," he ex-

plained. The third option was to remove the college wall in its entirety. In its altered form, the college wall would contain all of the graduating seniors' portraits, along with a list of the colleges that the students would be attending.

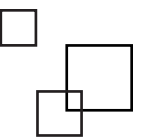
Director of Guidance Mary Mediate said, "We should be celebrating the collective accomplishments of the class, so I support option two. An alternative to listing each student's college of acceptance under each picture might be to publish a quote of the student's choice in its place."

"I liked the idea of having photos of the seniors up and a list of colleges on the side to celebrate their accomplishments and to downplay the competition," said Social Studies teacher and Congress advisor Shelley Jacobson.

"I'm more neutral than anything. I understand the point of view of the people who think that it adds to competition and stress," said Interim Principal Vincent Galasso. "However, I'm not so sure that the level of competition that is raised is enough of a reason not to have the college wall."

Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth explained, "When I first started working here, I was a little taken aback by the college wall and thought that it put a lot

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Academic Integrity Survey Results Create a Need for Change

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ted to reading an abridged version of a book, helping someone else cheat on the test, collaborating on independent assignments, and turning in work copied from another person.

These results alarmed the majority of administrators. According to Mediate, it was “the totality of the information and the combination of the data” that was most shocking. Superintendent of Schools William Stark said, “This is an issue which I have great concern about and have had for some time as a teacher and an administrator.” He said that he sees academic integrity as an extension of the Character Education initiative that the school has undertaken.

The survey also asked students to rate various actions as not cheating, trivial cheating, moderate cheating, and serious cheating. Very few students believed any of the various forms of cheating presented would be considered “serious”. In fact, turning in a paper from a term paper mill and selling or buying an exam were the only two forms of cheating that more than 50% of students classified as serious cheating.

Interim Principal Vincent Galasso said “the feeling of entitlement” and the idea that there are “good reasons” for cheating are the culprits behind these high numbers. “There really is no good reason,” said Galasso. However, the survey indicated that students believe there are justifications for cheating; 30% of students said that they believe cheating is needed in order to pass; 43% said cheating is needed in order to get good grades; 42% of students said that they felt cheating is never justified.

Galasso expressed concern at these results. “We need to get back to the

norms that you are accountable for the work that you do,” he said. According to Galasso, the effort starts with prevention. “You need to provide the consequences to keep people from doing it.”

Junior Ashley Mango said, “People have it so embedded in their head, they don’t have to think twice about cheating.”

When asked if an incident of cheating had ever been ignored, 40% of the faculty answered “Yes”; 31% said that lack of proof was a factor influencing this decision, while 10% cited a lack of support. According to the survey, 71% of

“71% of the district’s students do not believe that teachers catch most cheating.”

the district’s students do not believe that teachers catch most cheating.

In addition to summarizing Blind

Brook’s results, McCabe provided cumulative statistics of public high schools. In terms of the percentage of students who cheat, Mediate said, “We are slightly higher, but not wildly different,” in comparison to other schools nationwide. “There were two factors that came across stronger than most schools nationwide: one was the sense of entitlement that the students have, and two was the extent that the environment plays as far as a trusting safe environment,” said Mediate. “For the most part, it’s not unusual for teachers to be concerned about bringing information [about cheating] forward, but it appeared as if it was to a greater extent here.” Mediate said that the

administration and teachers are working on making teachers feel more comfortable about bringing information forward.

“I think that kids are being taught that the results are worth any cost. That’s a terrible message,” said Assistant

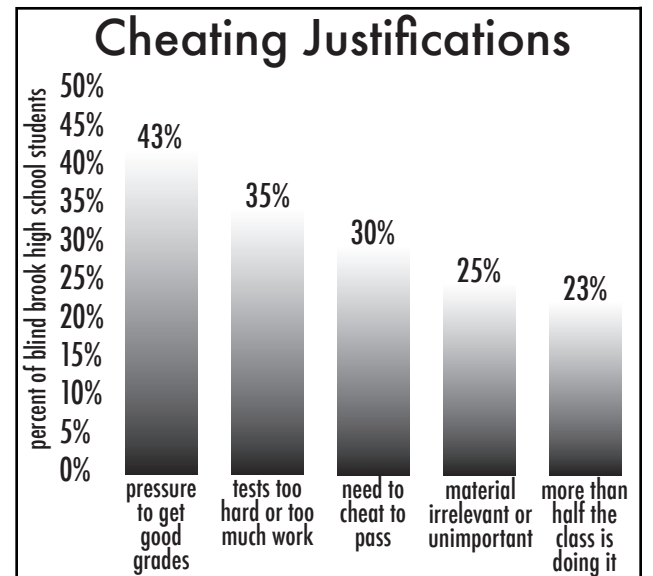
“63% of students admitted to letting someone else copy their homework more than once.”

Principal Jane Wermuth. Stark said that students most likely feel this way because of the tremendous pressure to succeed, and the environment at Blind Brook is to blame. “Most people believe that school is one big test that will determine if you succeed in life,” said Stark. He said that many people think that “learning how to play the game of the system” or learning how to get good grades is as important as the knowledge obtained from school.

As a result of the survey, an academic integrity committee will be formed. Mediate said that the only way to work toward eliminating the cheating in the district is to involve students, teachers, parents, and administrators in the committee. “Unless the students and everyone else are actually involved in developing the solutions and becoming part of the solution, we can implement deterrents, but it’s really not going to get at the core of what we want to change,” said Mediate, “and that is the behavior and the reduction of stress, the actual situation where students will not want to cheat; they won’t find a need to cheat.” According to Mediate, the committee will engage its members in “developing and implementing a strategic plan for

changing beliefs and behaviors.”

Board of Education member Nancy Barr said that cheating is “not okay, that students are going to be called on it, and that there are going to be consequences” in elementary school. This way, when students enter



high school where “it counts,” they will not cheat.

Stark said that another part of the answer would be to create a more positive environment and possibly to implement an honor code. Under such a code, students would not only be expected to refrain from cheating, but would also be

“29% of the student body admitted to copying on a test or exam more than once.”

responsible for turning in anyone who they knew had cheated. According to Stark, an honor code means “that you are part of a system and a community and that you defend the mores of that community.”

“I view teachers and administrators as the secular clergy. Society looks to us to develop morality for the future leaders of this country,” said Stark. “Rather than looking at the shortcomings of students, part of the responsibility of the school district is to strengthen them.”

BBHS Rises to 55th in US News and World Report

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disadvantaged students enrolled in the school was factored in because, according to the School Evaluation Services, these students tend to score lower than economically privileged students.

Step two determined if the least-advantaged students in the school performed better than the least-advantaged students in the state. African Americans, Hispanics, and students from low-income families were categorized as least-advantaged students, so their math and reading proficiency scores were compared separately.

If a school’s scores qualified based on these two steps, then the school

proceeded to the third step, which investigated how well the school prepares students for college level work. This section was based on scores on AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams. A college readiness index was given to each school to judge whether or not the school’s AP or IB programs are effective. This was based both on the school’s participation rate and the passing rate in these programs.

The schools with the top 100 scores on the college readiness index were placed on the Gold Medal List. Other Westchester schools that placed close to Blind Brook include Yonkers High

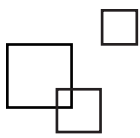
School, ranked 41st, Horace Greeley High School in 51st place, and Rye High School, ranked 59th.

Students at Blind Brook are pleased with their school’s placement on the Gold Medal List. “It is great that this school surpassed the requirements, and it makes me feel more secure about my education,” said junior Jacob Kupin.

Stark stressed that Blind Brook is not asked to participate in the report; all New York State schools are subject to evaluation. When given the opportunity to participate in lists such as that in *Newsweek*, the district declines. Additionally, while the *US News and World Report* rankings

were originally put on the school profile, they are no longer present. Administrators said that other information is more vital to the school profile than the ranking. “The college admissions offices are sophisticated enough to understand the nature of our profile without the ranking,” said Stark.

“If we don’t put much stock in these rankings, there is a kind of hypocrisy [in publishing them],” he added. “It is nice to be recognized, but this is just one small assessment of what makes this a great high school. The student body and the awards really stand on their own.”



We Are the World

By Nikki Adler

Anyone who has signed onto Facebook, turned on the TV, listened to the radio, or taken a current events quiz knows about the earthquake that devastated the small island country of Haiti in January. Since the traumatic natural disaster took place, helping the people of Haiti has rightfully become the new fad. Celebs are donating millions, flying out on their private jets to do relief work, and collaborating in the recording studio and at concert benefits to raise money and awareness.

On a smaller scale, we are texting and calling the numbers on our screens to donate spare dollars ourselves. While it is easy for us to send the money, and by all means we should, we need to repair the damage that has come to the people on earth.

Although it is the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, people haven't shown much concern for the

Haitian people prior to this disaster. We cannot forget them. It is hard to imagine the losses that the people in Haiti suffered.

In the "Rye Brook bubble", our priority is not surviving. For those who can afford to live in this district, it is largely guaranteed. Our highly pressured generation's priority list, for the most part, consists of getting into a prestigious school, wearing brand name clothes, and blowing off steam at the most parties possible. Since people from our culture and economic standing have long possessed the bare necessities, new challenges have evolved from generation to generation that motivate the youth to aspire for something more—however unnecessary or relatively unimportant to anyone else.

While our intense work ethics and aspirations have positive effects,

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A Crisis of Culture

By Nathan Marrow

Optimistic economists say the recession ended last summer; pessimists predict we won't see a full recovery for at least a year. But as I sat in my US history class of 27 students, across the hall from a vacant computer lab and adjacent to a vacant Mac Lab, one thing was clear: Blind Brook's budget crisis is far from over.

It is evident now that this year's budget will be significantly more austere than last year's: up to 24 staff positions may be removed as the district's financial crisis deteriorates. Undoubtedly, districts across the country face hardships; it would be foolish to assume Blind Brook has a panacea for the fiscal irresponsibility endemic to our nation.

Then again, Blind Brook has always strived to be unique. It has always sought to provide the best services and the best programs regardless of cost, attempting to compensate for obvious shortfalls like poor retention. This culture—or rather, crisis of culture—has led to our crisis of budget. For too long, our district has thrown money at its problems—money we couldn't afford to spend then, and definitely can't afford to spend now.

Just 4 months ago, the Board of Education approved a new contract with the district's administrators, offering them raises of over \$10,000, even with the district's fiscal dilem-

mas in plain sight. Ostensibly, these raises would improve Blind Brook's record of administrator retention, potentially bringing stability to a district whose graduating high school class has seen a new principal each year for four years.

These raises, though, are not only financial imprudent, but also incapable of bringing about their desired effect. Blind Brook may never be able to pay administrators enough to remain in a district where every decision evokes strident criticism from parents. And while administrators may, in fact, deserve added compensation for conscientious work, now is not the time to award it. Many professionals across the country, including local taxpayers, are working harder than ever before just to keep from losing their jobs.

Likewise, administrators and the Board attempted to solve the problems of poor tests scores and teacher retentions through our culture of profligacy by proposing that students should lose an hour of instructional time each Monday to allow teachers time for Professional Learning Communities. Few could fault parents for indignation upon learning that while they went to work each Monday, perhaps struggling to keep their jobs to pay the district's ballooning taxes, their children would be playing

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To The Editor:

Recently, the local media has centered attention on several negative characteristics associated with Blind Brook students. We have heard about our students' lack of academic integrity and lack of awareness about issues that people face outside of our community. Some have suggested that we live in a bubble.

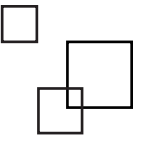
It is very easy to focus on the negative and lose sight of the many wonderful things we, at Blind Brook, do every day, as citizens of our local community and of the larger world around us. To be specific, this year the members of Spanish Club, under the leadership of Jane Wermuth, have adopted a mission to help members of the local Hispanic Community who are in situations of need. We have raised money to donate to Centro Hispano, a community resource to Hispanic immigrants and their families here in Westchester County.

In this light, Spanish Club will make a donation in the amount of \$500.00 to provide transportation for cancer patients who cannot afford to get to and from chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

The students at Blind Brook are

more than the sum of our parts. We are citizens of an increasingly complex society where financial need is becoming more pervasive than ever before. We are aware that we are fortunate to live where we live and have access to the privileges we do. Spanish Club's contribution to Centro Hispano is only a small part of our students' commitment to being responsible contributing members of the world we live in. We have integrity, and it is that integrity that pushes us to take responsibility and help those who cannot help themselves.

Sincerely,
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Wasteful or Worthwhile?

Senior year: a celebration of sanity after twelve years of academic angst. A clutter of tired traditions and discarded cut slips, twelfth grade is defined more so by hedonism than hard work. Since facing the indignity of freshman year, we have advanced patiently through the ranks, waiting to embrace the idle paradise of seniority. And now that we've arrived, it seems rightful compensation after 43,200 bell-dominated days. Twelfth grade is an entitlement scripted in some silent constitution, an untouchable treasure and a well-deserved guarantee.

Not according to Utah Senator Chris Buttars. In an attempt to trim several million from the state's budget gap, he proposed removing senior year entirely. Justifying the rather hefty sacrifice, he dubbed twelfth grade a time for "nothing but playing around". Buttars' pitch prompted backlash from parents and teens nationwide, determined to defend what has become the ultimate rite of passage. The simplified student consensus? "We need this year."

Midway through my own second semester, however, Buttars' argument is tempting. I am doubtless joined by my peers in the recent onset of total lethargy, an affliction neatly dubbed "senioritis". With the prospect of college constantly looming, any trace of motivation to complete high school work has gradually dimmed. And while I've thoroughly enjoyed the lazy luxuries that come with such apathy -- Beach Day, Spirit Week, and the indulgent cry of "second semester seniors" -- I wouldn't mind parting from this revelry to embrace the coming phase.

But after mulling over my visceral reaction, I've undergone a change of heart. Despite its recent conveniences, senior year is both academically and emotionally constructive. While junior year is largely defined by standardized tests and the novel difficulty of Advanced Placement courses, the start of twelfth grade entails steeper challenges. Most incoming seniors are consumed by college applications throughout fall and

winter, and while previous stressors like AP exams and SATs climax with numeric validation, this is no longer the case. With the exception of students admitted early decision, the agony of waiting for acceptances (and rejections) is a lesson in patience and humility.

So why not shift this process to junior year? After all, would it not be better to cram all of high school's greatest struggles into one nine-month stretch?

Not exactly. Condensing the prospects offered in four years of high school down to a three-year period is neither feasible nor practical. Senior year provides time to attain leadership positions, train for collegiate athletics, and pursue higher-level coursework, all of which would be compromised with its removal. Aside from helping to build a competitive college resume, these prospects are tools in fostering personal growth and realizing long-term interests.

And after three and a half years of numbers, notebooks, and neuroticism, having some idle time

is crucial; it allots for a valuable period of self-reflection and exploration. Contrary to its stigma as a naïve free-for-all, twelfth grade demands an advent of maturity. It marks a departure from adolescence into young adulthood, and while maudlin, it prepares us for separation from family and friends.

Though this struggle may seem an embodiment of every available teenage stereotype, it is both real and present. Roughly three months away from my own graduation, waiting in limbo for the next stage, the remaining months seem fleeting and precious. So what is my reply to Buttars' desperate pitch? To echo the resounding sentiment of my peers, we need this year.

Sarah Sgro
Editor-in-Chief

A vs. Your Education

By Sharon Friedlander

We are indoctrinated from kindergarten that education is quantitative, that it can be measured by a simple letter or number written at the top of our papers. We got smiley faces on our vocabulary quizzes when we received a 100, maybe even a gold star, validating our belief that only perfect grades are acceptable. From that age, we are made to believe that grades measure our education, and while they may be indicative of our intelligence, our education cannot be measured.

It has become apparent that we, as a community, place so much value on grades that we have begun to let them define us. The difference between receiving an A or a B in history seems earth shattering, not necessarily because the information wasn't fully comprehended, but because of the fear that a college down the road may not find you "flawless" because of it. However, getting a grade other than an A does not make you flawed; it makes you human. An A is supposed to signify that you have a passion for a subject and have excelled in it; yet, grades now only represent a hollow shell of what they used to be. The excitement behind learning is almost gone, and doing homework and studying have become mechanized, done for the sole purpose of getting it done. Students enter classes

that have the title "AP" in front of it just to check off another requirement on their mental list of things to do so colleges will find them appealing.

There is no denying that grades are extremely important—somehow your progress must be compared to your peers—but allowing numbers or letters to shape who you are puts you at risk for losing your identity and individuality. True education is not just about grades, nor is it just about academics. *Education* is the body of knowledge you have acquired throughout your years in high school. Students who push themselves to an unreasonable extent just to get that A on their report card, rather than exploring their passions and potential interests, are truly selling themselves short in the long run.

Students are often pushed to be something they're not in school, to take more rigorous classes for the sake of forging the appearance of academic excellence. However, people may have "genius" ability in multiple types of intelligence; scholastic intelligence is just one of them. Why then, is the burden placed on that so much greater? If the fear is for college, each university creates their application for a reason; a transcript from high school is only one part of the total product. They recognize,

Please turn to page 6

Diversity Training

By Kate Citron

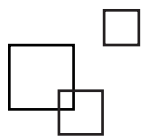
At the last Junior Class Meeting, as some of you may know, we voted for a student representative for the Principal Selection Committee. We each were told to write down the name of one of our fellow students who we felt was best suited for the job. Two immature members of the junior class decided to write down a discriminatory term for their vote, in place of another student's name. Their actions show that they let the negative influences of their environment get the best of them.

The very fact that this incident occurred proves that we students are not being exposed to enough positive influences. This episode may be useful in awakening the Blind Brook community into taking action to counter the negative aspects of society.

Through rap songs and blockbuster hits such as *Superbad*, we are exposed to many discriminatory terms which have become almost commonplace. It is our responsibility to look inward towards our core values so that the media does not easily sway us. We must learn what to take in and adopt as our own and what to screen out while remembering that we will soon influence the future of America.

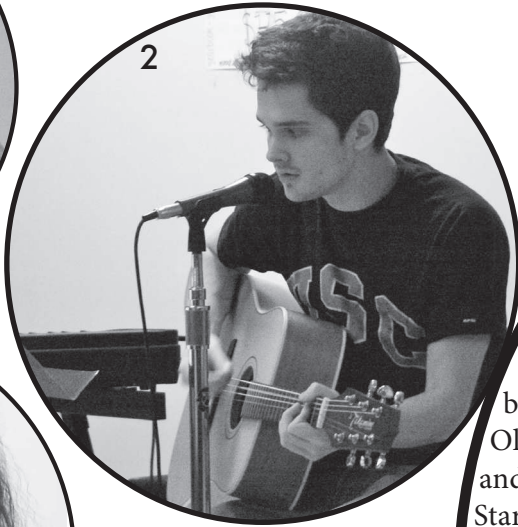
Actions made by the school to educate the student body on how to conduct themselves within a diverse setting are especially important in a school like Blind Brook. BB students are not exposed to nearly as much diversity as students of other communities. In fact, it is a disservice to the students, as they will go through their high school careers without gaining first hand knowledge of various cultures. Within the next four years, every student will leave this familiar setting behind and move on to the differentiated community of college. These students are in for a shock when they realize that most of the world is quite different from the little village of Rye Brook.

Both the school and families play a key role in creating a positive atmosphere for the students here at Blind Brook. They must put forth a joint effort to incorporate diversity training into the education process. Through future efforts, students will hopefully become more conscious of the way they express themselves, as in this age of multimedia, anything we do can influence the future.



INVISIBLE CHILDREN'S SECOND ANNUAL

COFFEE HOUSE



1. Senior Zach Held sings a rendition of Drake's "Best I Ever Had."

2. Senior Justin Cohn performs an original on his guitar.

3. Freshman Olivia Weinshank plays a mash-up of Taylor Swift and Justin Timberlake.

4. Senior Andrew Bergman channels inspiration Weezer.

5. Senior Justin Starr makes his BB debut with a cover of the Flaming Lips' "She Don't Use Jelly."

By Lauren Fay and Rachel Coby

Invisible Children Club held its second annual Coffee House and Art Show on Friday, February 5th.

The Middle School cafeteria was turned into a mock coffee house complete with café tables and dim lighting, and the artwork of many Blind Brook students was put on display throughout the Commons. After paying \$5 for admission, attendees were offered coffee, hot chocolate, cold drinks and the sound of live musical performances by Blind Brook students. Performers included freshmen Nicole Heney and Olivia Weinshank, Space Cushions (comprising seniors Justin Cohn, Zach Held, and Jason Pardes and junior Eric Brett), sophomore Julia Klein, and seniors Justin Starr, Olivia Gawrych, Sam Langstein, and Andrew Bergman.

Reflecting on the event, freshman Ellen Thomas said, "I liked Coffee House because it combined Blind Brook's art, students, and music in a fun and enjoyable way."

The Coffee House raised \$440, all of which will go towards victims of the war in Northern Uganda, the longest running war in Africa's history. Invisible Children helps by rebuilding schools and providing Ugandan children with clean water, sanitation services, books, equipment, teacher support and technology, as well as scholarships to secondary school students.

According to Dr. Lisa Freund, the club's faculty advisor, "It was a very successful event and showcased some of our most talented students as well."

"It was great to see how many people came out to support their friends and help the cause. The performers were spectacular, and we really appreciate the fact that they put themselves out there to perform the way they did," said Invisible Children president senior Tyler Ketchabaw.

Photos/Rachel Simon

We Are the World

Continued from page 4

we cannot let them deter us from appreciating the surviving essentials that we have. The best way for us to appreciate them is by taking advantage of our resources to help those who are less fortunate than we are.

I am proud to acknowledge the efforts of our own student organizations, including the Community Service Club, Midnight Run, Invisible Children, ROPE (Reaching Out to Provide Enrichment), Habitat for Humanity, and Spanish Club. Whether it is fundraising to buy children computers, building houses, writing letters, delivering food to the homeless, raising awareness, or even throwing holiday parties for underprivileged children, these clubs improve the lives of many in our community.

The 80-hour service requirement at our school has guided us all in finding meaningful ways do community service, but the next

step is surpassing the 80th hour and continuing to lead lives after high school in which we are appreciative and charitable individuals.

While I condone the publicity and benevolent acts that have been done in regards to helping Haiti, it is unfortunate that it took a devastating earthquake to revoke such responses. We must ensure that people in need such as the Haitians never lose their time in the spotlight, because people in dire need shouldn't ever be pushed aside. It is our responsibility to set aside time in our busy schedules to appreciate what we have and to give whatever we can of our time and resources to those who have less. It is imperative that each of us makes a promise to give back to the world that has given each of us so much, and to not just flip between trendy causes.

A vs. Your Education

Continued from page 5

as we should, that grades are not the only thing that encompass who a person truly is, they are only one small piece.

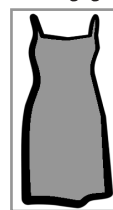
Looking back on your high school career, you shouldn't remember your grades; you should remember what you learned and how much you enjoyed the classes you took. The enrichment that we will all get from craving to learn more and actually enjoying what we are studying will in turn lead to the better grades that we desire. This is by no means an easy feat; I

cannot say that I have fully accepted the fact that my education doesn't revolve around the letters posted on my transcript either.

A grade is simply a letter on a piece of paper. If you let a piece of paper define you for the rest of your life, you aren't the person your education would allow you to be. By selecting the right classes that you will enjoy and excel in, you can have the A and your education; it does not and should not have to be either/or.

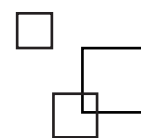
All Dressed Up

Betty Dayan



Monique Gootkin

Unique Party Attire for Girls, Pre-Teens, and Juniors
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EMAIL: alldressedup2@aol.com



A Fist-Pumping Frenzy



Jersey Shore cast members pose on the beach near their Seaside Heights home.

By Olivia Weinshank and Jackie Ciraldo

With a cult following ranging from 14-year-olds to 40-year-olds, MTV's *Jersey Shore* has catapulted America into the biggest "fist pumping" fury it has seen in a long time.

Shot in Seaside Heights, New Jersey, the *Real World*-style reality show follows the summer happenings of eight Italian-American housemates working, finding love, and, above all, partying during the last few weeks of summer. The colorful bunch includes Angelina "Jolie" Pivarnick, Jenni "JWoww" Farley, Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino, Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi, Paul "DJ Pauly D" DelVecchio, Ronnie Ortiz-Magro, Sammi "Sweetheart" Giancola, and Vinny Guadagnino.

"If I could spend one week in the shore house with one person from the show, it would be Vinny," said freshman Annie Levine. "He is the only one who isn't annoying and can teach me how to do the fist pump!"

Among the show's most well-known and notorious housemates are Snooki and Mike "The Situation". "Mike and Snooki are definitely the most interesting people on the show," said Jordie Blum, a junior. "Everyone loves them because they are very out there and don't hold back in front of the camera." Sophomore Melissa Blanco said, "My favorite character is definitely Snooki. She is just so funny and little and loveable."

One of the show's most memorable moments thus far would be the brutal altercation in a shoreside bar, where a drunken high school gym teacher punched Snooki in the face.

Despite the show's overwhelming success, incidents like this feed the media frenzy that constantly surrounds *Jersey Shore*. Many believe that the show is inappropriate for its target audiences and places a negative stereotype on Italian Americans. Proudly labeling themselves as "guidos" and "guidettes," the cast glamorizes drinking, tanning, and incessant partying. In December, the New Jersey Italian American Legislative Caucus called for MTV to cancel the show because it promotes derogatory ethnic stereotypes and is "wildly offensive." As a result, major companies like Dell and Domino's Pizza have since pulled advertising from the program.

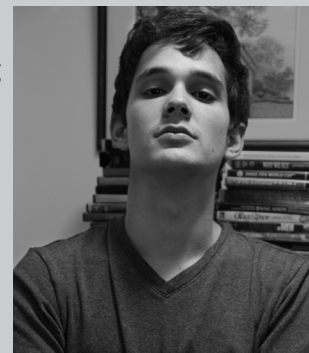
Regardless of such controversy, the show's season finale set a series record at 4.8 million total viewers. "I think they try to make out all Italians as fist-pumping guidos when, in reality, they aren't. Sure it's demeaning," said sophomore Cameron O'Brien, "but it makes for great TV."

Just recently, MTV picked up *Jersey Shore* for a second season, resulting in twelve new episodes that will premiere in Summer 2011.

Why the Grammy Awards Lost Their Way

By Justin Cohn
Arts and Entertainment Columnist

On January 31st, 25.8 million Americans plopped down in front of their TVs to watch the Grammy Awards, and I have no idea why. The Grammys have no modern meaning in a music world where popular interest can best be gauged by blogs and illegal download statistics. It is simply a way for all the "stars" of the comatose record industry to get together and compliment each other as they wait for the



apocalypse. In reality, the awards mean little, as categories like "Album of the Year" and "Best New Artist" barely satisfy their titles in the minds of most music lovers.

For those of you who missed it, the "Album of the Year" was handed to pop idol Taylor Swift for *Fearless*, a Disney-tinged country-pop, compression-heavy routine that touched the hearts of millions of teenage girls. Critical reception was good, but not enough to warrant the grand title of "Album of the Year." It is currently rated 73% positive on Metacritic (a website that aggregates critic reviews from reputable sources). It's not even in the Top 30 best-reviewed albums of 2009; the highest ranked studio album on the website is Animal Collective's *Merriweather Post Pavilion*, currently at 89% positive (Animal Collective garnered zero nominations). In fact, not one of the albums nominated for "Album of the Year" is in the Top 30.

"Alright," you might say, "so the Grammys aren't exactly in line with music critics. They must base nominations on popularity."

That's not really true, either. Though the Grammy website claims in bold, capital letters, "WE'RE ALL FANS," the Recording Academy is an elite core of musicians and industry people who have been in the business long enough to be awarded with the privilege of being on such a commit-

tee. The most listened-to music of 2009 came from The Black Eyed Peas and Lady Gaga. Both artists failed to capture a single one of the four major awards ("Record of the Year," "Album of the Year," "Song of the Year," and "Best New Artist"). Sure, *Fearless* sold the most hard copies of any album in 2009. But CDs are no longer an accurate standard to test an artist's popularity -- digital downloads, legal and illegal, vastly outnumber copies of albums sold.

And quite frankly, award shows in the same vein as the Grammys have not historically been centered on democratic philosophies. The Oscars, for instance, are infamous for nominating and awarding films that never make wide release and would be easily forgotten if not for their Oscar status.

You object again, "But even if the awards don't mean anything, there are great performances."

Well, there used to be great performances. This year, in particular, the show was extremely lacking in its live music segments. The pairing of Elton John and Lady Gaga seemed to rouse a few oohs and ahhs, but probably from viewers who forgot the 2001 Grammys, when Elton John paired up with a similarly eccentric musician by the name of Eminem. Eminem's performance this year -- teamed up with Lil' Wayne, Drake, and Travis Barker -- was ruined by excessive censors that turned a six minute medley into four minutes of silence with two minutes of music clips.

The Grammys, as the major American music awards ceremony (the AMAs and the VMAs certainly don't garner over 25 million viewers), have a chance to be great. Every year, a plethora of music stars, young and old, gather in the Los Angeles Staples Center, hoping to take part in a monumental music industry tradition. But the show lacks each year, and still, we keep watching.

The Rise and (No) Fall of the College Wall

Continued from page 2

of pressure on the students and that it exacerbated existing competition between them." However, based on her experience at Blind Brook over the years, Wermuth said, "I've come to accept it as a Blind Brook tradition and feel that it's really not my decision, but for the students to decide whether to continue it or not."

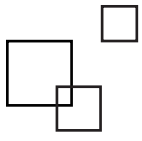
Based on the results of the survey,

Congress decided that the college wall would remain as it has been in the past. Vavolizza explained, "Congress' actions in regards to the wall were heavily weighted by the results from the survey." He said that the majority of the Blind Brook population wanted to keep the wall as it is, and votes from all students and teachers were weighted evenly. The results showed that "the majority of

teachers wanted to alter the college wall and that the majority of the students in all four grades wanted to keep the college wall," said Vavolizza.

Seniors still have the opportunity to choose whether or not they want their picture and college name to be posted on the college wall. "I agree with the decision made for the college wall...It's fair for everyone. In the end, everyone

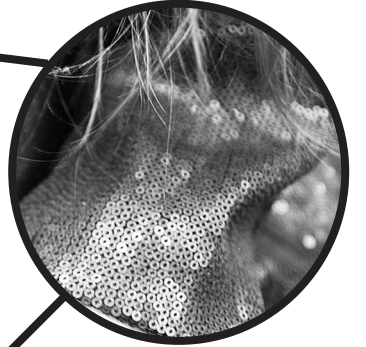
should be excited about graduating, and they should be happy to represent their new schools," said senior Devan Toal. Camilo Dovila-Molina, also a senior, is pleased with the decision. He said, "I'm glad the college wall is staying up because it lets the seniors show that they're proud of where they're going and that they are happy they got into college."



from the Runway to the Hallway

Sparkles & Sequins

Nothing has taken over more pieces of clothing in a girl's closet this season than sparkles. There is no better way to look classy and fun at the same time than with a little shine. Just look into a Free People store and you will find shirts, shoes, skirts, shorts, dresses, and even hats gleaming with sparkles and sequins.



Sweaters & Cardigans

Whether it is button up, pullover, v-neck, or striped, a decent sweater is a necessity in every guy's closet. Not only do they complement a preppy look, but they can also be worn with almost anything from jeans to khakis and polos to regular tees. This trend can be found at almost any store, including Bloomingdale's and, more locally, Lester's.



Zippers

Ladies, add some funk to your wardrobe with the zipper. Vertical, long zippers are seen on the front of many dresses, on the back of shirts, and down the sides of leggings and jeans. Found at stores such as Urban Outfitters, Lester's, and Havana Jeans, this style will allow you to be daring!

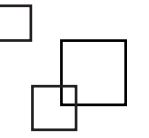
Nike Air Force 1 Sneakers

While Nike Air Force 1s are not necessarily a new trend, they remain must-have footwear for teenage boys. These classic shoes can be paired with any outfit, from jeans to shorts, to add fashionable flair. Sold in almost any color or pattern, you'll find these popular sneakers online at Nike.com or at any Nike store.



Over-the-Knee Boots

This season's must have shoes are over-the-knee boots, also known as thigh high boots. Whether they go as far as your knees or almost reach your hips, these trendy boots can be worn with jeans, leggings, skirts or dresses. They are available at Bloomingdale's and Nordstrom, both of which offer a variety of colors and shapes.



Student Spotlight: Raymond Ramirez



Photo/ Victoria Ferrer

By Karen Rind-Siegel

Junior Raymond Ramirez is producing a documentary set in the halls of BB. With help from a film club run by American Sign Language interpreter Ms. Lynn Martirano, Ramirez aims to show the school what it is like to be a deaf student.

Q: How did you get involved in the movie?

A: Well, my teacher Lynn Martirano decided to open a film class last year. She selected some kids to be in a film to be done by springtime. That is how we started. We got involved because of how creative we are.

Q: What is the movie about?

A: The movie is about the deaf kids in Blind Brook High School. We are telling hearing people who we are, where we came from, and how we became deaf.

Q: What does it mean to you to get involved?

A: For me, it takes a lot of energy and focus to make a movie because you have so many different ideas you want to put in the

film. You have to...share with others, and combine it into one film. So far in [BBHS] nobody knows about the deaf, and now we are making [ourselves] visible.

Q: What is your role in the movie?

A: My role is director, [videographer], actor, and interviewer.

Q: What are some challenges that come along with being a deaf student in a public school?

A: Trying to understand what people are saying when they speak fast. It's hard to follow in classes and to make friends with hearing people. I have to ask them to speak louder. Communicating is a problem.

Q: What is your connection with the other students in the film?

A: We are best friends. We have to know how to work as a team, which is hard because we have so many different ideas.

Q: When will the movie be released and where?

A: We are thinking about [having] a town meeting in either spring or May. Everybody can see it at the town meeting.

Q: What knowledge have you gained from the experience?

A: How to use Mac computers. From editing the films, I learned that I can do better by coming up with new ideas and putting them on film.

CLUES

Across

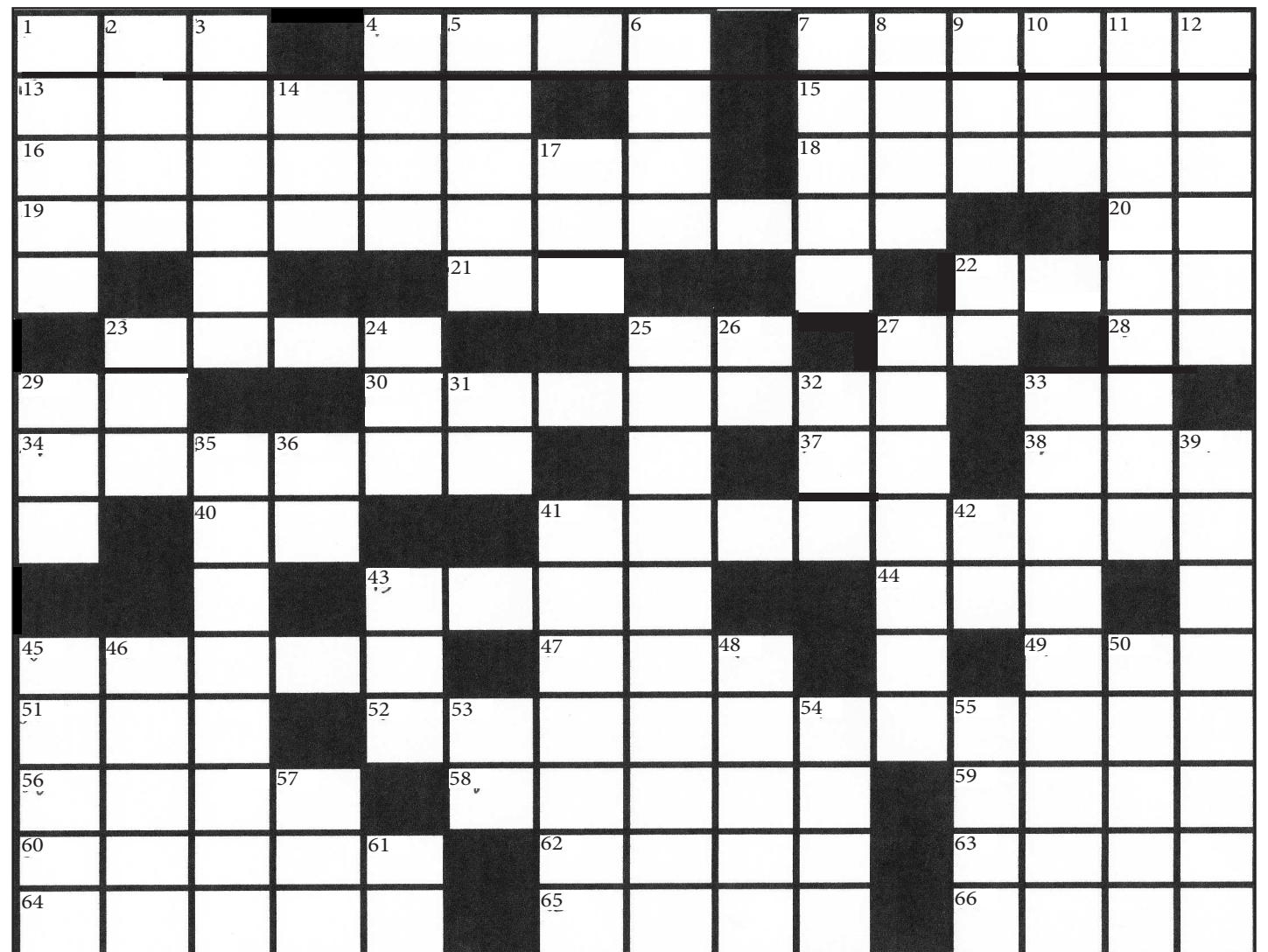
1. ____ Cha Slide
4. Munich and Troy star Eric
7. See 35-down
13. Catcher in the Rye narrator, Caulfield
15. 22nd James Bond Film, Quantum of
16. Treaty
18. SOH ____, BBHS Trig Acronym
19. Goldberg, Petyt, Epstein introduction to an older female
20. Polite text message denial (abbrev.)
21. 1982 Spielberg Classic
22. FOX's "American ____"
23. Pop star, known for 2009 hit, "Replay"
25. French pronoun "il," translated to English
27. Health care pro, assistant and advocate for doctors and patients (abbrev.)
28. First person possessive pronoun
29. User account for AOL IM (abbrev.)
30. Magician's cry: "Abra ____!"
33. Nickname for U.S. Army soldier
34. Teen sensation ____ Montana
37. "Crank up the ____, it's boiling in here!"
38. Commissioned ships of the U.S. Navy, for short (ex: Maine and Ohio)
40. Stop here if you break a bone
41. Isolate; separate
43. Assisted living home, Sterling ____
44. BMP-RSS kindergarten computer program
45. "I ____ the fifth!"
47. #1 Hit "Tik ____," by Ke\$ha
49. "____ you ready for some football?!"
51. Suffix, could follow Pion- and Engin-
52. Rare form of word or phrase, displayed in 19- and 34-across, 27- and 46-down, and the combination of 35-down and 7-across (in succession)
56. Shakespeare birthplace, Stratford-upon-____
58. The "v" in 53-down
59. Upper story; attic
60. Coniferous tree, similar to the Fir
62. "You thought you'd ____ it all, until..."
63. And that's what you missed on ____!
64. "Respect your ____!" (Singular)
65. "A fairy ____ ending"
66. Flo Rida's "In the ____"

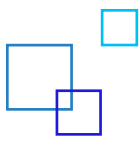
Down

1. Anchorman's Sportscaster ____ Kind
2. "Hello," to Enrique or Maria
3. Adrian Peterson nickname
4. Ray of light
5. Redhead with "Hard Knock Life"
6. For a square, length multiplied by width
7. Prize for winning an Academy Award
8. To wander; to use cell phone outside local calling area
9. First initial of first name of 3 teachers (in order): Ryan, Pellegrino, and Levy
10. Large container used to hold liquids
11. The ____ (Magazine that could be featured on CNBC or Fox Business)
12. "Fold your clothes ____, sweetheart!"
17. Carrie Underwood's favorite channel
22. "Are you ____ or are you out?"
23. Food Network Host/Chef Garten
24. First initials: Held, Mansfield, Knox
25. "Does this make sense,?" "No, Ms. Ryan, I ____ how to do this" (phrase)
26. *Stuart Little* author
27. It says 24 on Jeff Gordon's
29. Bashful; diffident
31. Sound of relief
32. Comp- (to buy) or encont- (to find)
33. "Holy ____!" a bad speller's rhyme
35. With 7-across, what the number zero is, compared to other whole numbers
36. Film with no G, PG, PG-13 or R label
39. I am a Second ____ Senior (giving me the free time to create this puzzle)
41. Musician's written repertoire
42. Up in the Air male star's initials
43. Measurement of the USA's output, goes on the x-axis of some of Mr. Markolovic's infamous graphs
45. Word before corps, sign, or prize
46. A floor of a building
48. "____ before the King!"
50. Charge again
53. BBHS's newest student organization, the ____ Club
54. Well-____ (possible steak order)
55. Helga Pataki's sister in Nickelodeon's "Hey Arnold!"
57. America's engineering organization (abbrev.)
61. The Reading, or B & O, in monopoly (abbrev.)

Drawn Inward

By Alex Visoky





Blind Brook Foreign Language Week

By Kristina Creadore

From March 1st to March 5th, students nationwide participated in Foreign Language Week, an annual celebration of students' studies of a variety of languages and cultures. Foreign Language Week raises awareness among students, both those taking a foreign language and those not, about countless countries from around the world. With Blind Brook students studying Spanish, French, Latin, and Italian, a wide array of cultures are represented each year.

Students are participating in many activities in honor of this year's Foreign Language Week. Freshmen completed projects on the different regions of Spain, provinces of France, and cities in Italy. Sophomore French students worked on literary projects, while Spanish students participated in an olympics. Students in all grades decorated the school to get the Blind Brook community in the spirit of the celebration and compete in language competitions. Foreign Language Week also unites the middle and high schools as students in grades six through eight also participate, making t-shirts, flags, and posters.



Italiano 4-5

By Michael Shaw, Joshua Hamlet, et Joseph Joyce

Michael é bello
Joyce non ha un capello
Marcoccia é energico
Josh é atletico
Carly é sportiva
Barrella non arriva
Klapper é la studentessa preferita
Jess non é attenta
Rachel ha una avventura gastronomica
Federici e Gimore prendono Fisica
Weiss dibatte con Marcello
Noi amiamo Italiano 4-5
Fine



Una ode a Marcoccia

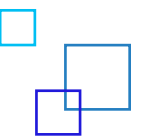
By Rachel Friedlander et Sage Klapper

Lui é divertente e serio
Atletico e intelligente
Ha voce alta e matto
Tutte caratteristiche e le ragioni perche l'amiamo
Come professore e allenatore
Lui é fantastico
E come persona é migliore
Vedendolo lasciare é molto triste
Lui é molto importante per noi
Noi sentiremo la sua mancanza
Divertiti giocando a golf tutti I giorni

Calzone Calzoni

By Emily Gilmer, Kaitlyn Weiss, et Elyssa Federici

John Buongiorno principessa
Maria-Barbara Ho una fame da lupo
John Andiamo al ristorante di mio fratello, Secondo.
Maria-Barbara Aspetta , ho bisogno dei calzoni
Più tardi al ristorante
John Voglio un calzone, mi piace il formaggio
Maria-Barbara Questo ristorante é bello
John Ah, mio fratello. Come stai?
Secondo Bene grazie
John La mia principessa vuole un calzone
Maria-Barbara No le mie gambe hanno freddo.



L'Ours Egoïste
Par Michelle Riesenfeld et Nicole Jablon

Il était une fois un ours indépendant
Qui ne pouvait rien attendre
Il est parti des autres il n'est pas resté
Sur personne il n'allait pas dépendre

Toujours quand les autres ours
Ont trouvé leurs graines
Il ne voulait pas partager
Il en voulait pour lui-même

Un jour les ours retournent avec un grand poisson
Le têtu leur demande s'il peut s'en manger
Mais les ours ont dit <<Non, maintenant tu apprends>>
L'ours gourmand s'en va à la forêt

Si vous ne partagez jamais, et vous êtes égoïste
Personne ne voudra partager avec vous, et vous serez très triste!

La Primavera

Por Molly McBride, Sage Berger, Jason Pardes,
Camilo Davila-Molina

La nieve está derritiendo
Las flores están apareciendo
El calor nos rodea
Las estaciones cambian como nuestros directores, en
la primavera
Mendigos agresivos quitan sus chaquetas
Perdices cantan canciones hermosas
Amantes respiran juntos el aire puro
Es el empuje de algo nuevo...

Oda

Por Evan Ochocinco Jacobs

La pizza
Es crujiente, sabrosa, caliente,
cocida, y jugosa
Cocer en el horno
Horner en la estufa
Comer en el restaurante
Me fascina la pizza
Tiene el queso y la salsa
Durante todo el año
Caliente con pollo picante
Es deliciosa
En el restaurante, la pizzeria
En mi casa
Me siento estupendo suave
Emocionado

El Amor

Por Evan Heib

Amor es un fuego
De pasión
Amor es una parte de la vida
Amor es corriendo en la lluvia
Por tu amor
Amor es un laberinto
De emoción

El Plan

Por Ben Berger

El plan es simple:
Irás a una buena universidad,
Y entrarás en el mundo de trabajo donde puedes ganar mucho dinero.
Después de establecerte económicamente, encontrarás una esposa
Y vivirás en una casa en el suburbio con ella
Y tendrás dos punto cinco hijos
Y ellos pueden seguir el mismo plan que tu.
Cuando tienes muchos años y no quieres trabajar más, puedes retirarte,
relajarte, y morir.
El plan es simple, eficaz, rígido, y aburrido.
¿Te gusta el plan?

La Manzana

Por Brian Nacho Berman

La manzana
suave, deliciosa, sabrosa, fantástica
rojo y verde
para estar sano, dar a una maestra
cortor en pedazos
cuando como una manzana, yo pienso mucho
pienso en los picnics
al parque con mi familia
cuando era joven
Me siento feliz, cariñoso e excelente



Les Feuilles Tombent
Par Antoine Saliba

L'automne commence en septembre
avec les feuilles qui commencent à tomber
et le vent qui commence à souffler.

L'air est frais

et les feuilles tombent comme la pluie.

Les couleurs vertes sont remplacées par le jaune le
rouge et l'orange.

L'été est remplacé par l'automne.

Le sourire de l'été change à la tristesse de l'automne
et le temps passe et les saisons viennent et partent
et les feuilles tombent chaque année.

L'automne

Par Ali Hartman

Rouge, orange, et jaune
Les couleurs vibrantes et belles
Les odeurs calmes sont dans l'air
Beaucoup de citrouilles, sucre, et cannelle

L'air est clair et un peu froid
L'automne est la meilleure saison chez moi

Cette leçon de la fable signifie
Que la générosité est importante pour avoir des amis

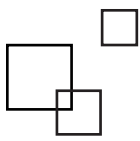
Le Plumage du Paon
Par Stéphanie Hennings et Eric Halpern

Il était une fois
Un paon de couleurs
On ne sait pas pourquoi
Et les autres avaient peur

Il n'avait pas d'amis
Quand il avait cinq ans d'âge
Il avait une idée une nuit
Pour offrir son plumage

Ainsi le prochain jour
Ils ont reçu de lui quelque chose
Par exemple, il y a un ours
Qui a trouvé une plume rose

Bien que le paon n'ait pas sa beauté
Il a aimé le fait que lui
Le paon a gagné son amitié
Pour tout le reste de sa vie



The Skinny on Eating Disorders

By Carly Hoff

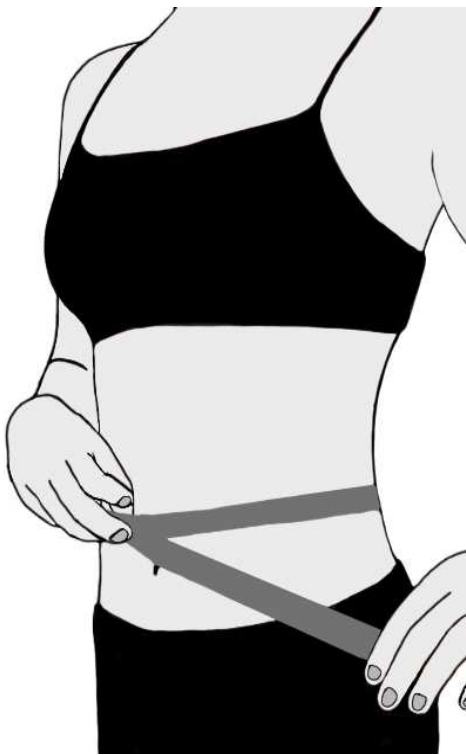
Gone are the days when curvy or full-figured women were considered most attractive. Now, America's youth seems determined to achieve a "skin and bones" appearance, even if it means taking extreme weight loss measures. With approximately ten million anorexia and bulimia nervosa patients worldwide, according to the National Eating Disorders Association, eating disorders are more prevalent in today's society than ever.

Some Blind Brook students are unaware of what constitutes an eating disorder. Junior Nicole Jablon said, "A lot of teenagers use the term 'eating disorders' in everyday speech, but they do not actually know how to identify one." The National Institute of Mental Health outlines a definition of this health issue, stating that eating disorders are "marked by extremes." Whether it is eating too much or too little, individuals who suffer from anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa make a seemingly harmless change in their eating habits. This slight adjustment develops into compulsive desires over which victims have little control. Sufferers usually experience physical health issues due to their specific habit, whether it be bingeing, purging, or starving.

Unlike other psychiatric disorders, there is no single way to assess the cause of an eating disorder. Each individual case is different; unique social, biological, personal, and psychological factors need to be taken into consideration. Typically,

eating disorders are found in adolescent girls ranging in age from 12-25 years who are insecure and impressionable. TV shows and models often portray an impossible image of "normal women" which these young girls try desperately to achieve. Most recently, it was speculated that Brittany Murphy's death was due in part to a covert eating disorder (although the medical examiner ruled her death to be from natural causes).

Eating disorders do not only affect women. In the late 1980s, Elton John spoke very candidly about his battle with bulimia nervosa. John's case is representative of Hollywood's unrealistic standards regarding appearance. "The media shows extreme cases of the human form, which are unrealistic in everyday life," said junior Alex Kellman.



Illustration/Yuriy Botshteyn

How is youth to deal with this pressure? Due to the large spectrum of stimuli that can spark eating disorders, it is important that society does their part in reducing these factors. "Stick-thin bodies shown on TV and in magazines are not realistic," said Jillian Forbes, a senior. "Dove commercials show real women with healthy bodies, which sets a much better example for teen girls."

Since many factors can trigger eating disorders, support and treatment are vital to the well-being of patients. Early diagnosis and treatment are crucial in combating these disorders, which can easily spiral out of control.

Bye, Bye Burgers

By Amanda Haber

For high schoolers fed up with flesh, switching to a vegetarian diet means more than just eating carrots and celery. When making this dietary change, it is important to be aware of ways to supplement for lost nutritional value.

The vegan diet, void of any animal products, requires the most commitment. An ovo-vegetarian may consume eggs, while a lacto-vegetarian may consume dairy products. A follower of the latter two



Photo/Victoria Ferrer
Vegetarian Samantha Steinberg enjoys a salad for lunch.

diets has an easier time compensating for loss of protein.

According to biology and psychology teacher Julie Hensley, "You have to make sure to get essential amino acids. Eggs, beans and corn are good foods to eat that have the essential amino acids you need." Amino acids, also found in nuts, tofu, and soy products, are smaller molecules that join together to form a protein. In addition to serving as enzymes, proteins are required for muscle, hair and nail growth. A decrease in calcium levels is a common side effect of vegetarianism. Calcium is particularly important for the body, as it is required to build strong bones. Dairy products, soy products, orange juices and cereal bars are all rich in calcium.

In the past, some teens starting a vegetarian diet found it difficult to ob-

tain foods with a decent taste. However, this is no longer the case. "I have been a vegetarian for years, and I have definitely seen an increase in the amount of vegetarian choices in both super-

markets and restaurants," said Samantha Steinberg, a junior. In local supermarkets, tasty vegetarian meals such as Amy's Natural and Organic Foods can be found in the freezer aisle. Organizations like PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) are also putting effort

into helping people make a vegetarian adjustment. Currently, PETA is opening vegetarian starter-kit stands on street corners in many east coast cities, including New York City. These stands provide information on how to say goodbye to one's inner carnivore. PETA distributes a glossy pamphlet that welcomes its readers with "Congratulations! By opening this guide, you've just taken the first step towards one of the best choices that you can make for yourself, animals and the planet." Readers are also provided with recipes and tips on how to raise a vegetarian family.

Sophomore Pam Wesley said, "In order for me to be a healthy vegetarian, I need to pay a little extra attention since I need to eliminate certain foods from my diet. It's definitely worth it; I feel healthier than ever!"

A Crisis of Culture

Continued from page 4

board games under the supervision of teacher aides.

This cultural demand for excellence—at any cost—has also spread into the classrooms. Students are consumed with a desire to "increase academic rigor": to take as many AP courses as possible just to "get into college."

This goal seems to have consumed administrators as well, for AP courses are an important factor in school rankings. Blind Brook High School was 55th in the country this year accord-

ing to *US News and World Report*, and administrators, no doubt, would like to keep it that way. Thus, as sizes of many classes inch upwards, those of some AP courses have been moving in the opposite direction, sometimes to fewer than 10 students, as we attempt to squeeze as many AP courses as possible into the 9-period day.

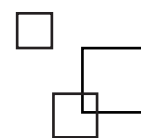
In this case, the crisis of culture in Blind Brook has forced the district into a detrimental situation. Dozens of computers into which it has poured

significant taxpayer dollars now lay idle, used sparingly by a school which no longer has a computer teacher. Yet, it seems the district feels compelled—again by its culture crisis—to allow even more money to be drawn into the technological maelstrom. Recently, the Board approved the purchase of over \$9000 of Macbook laptops for the Creating Digital Media class.

With heated budget discussions on the horizon, Blind Brook stands at a crossroad. The district can once again

respond only to the pecuniary incongruity facing the community, raising taxes and laying off teachers with the hope that next year will be better. Or, the community can engage in some significant introspection, examining the deeper incongruity between our quixotic practices and our long-term budget realities.

If we chose the latter, we can take the first step in ameliorating our flawed culture. If we chose the former, we will only be hurting ourselves.



Got Love on the Brain?

By Rebecca Gaines

Love: romantic, beautiful, sensual...scientific? Believe it or not, our most raw, vulnerable feelings for another person can be explained through brain activity. In 2005, Helen Fisher, a biological anthropologist at Rutgers University who studies romantic love, sought out a neurological basis for the sweetest emotion of all.

Fisher's experiment, the most in-depth study of the brain's reaction to love ever performed, used word of mouth and a poster reading "HAVE YOU JUST FALLEN IN LOVE?" to attract participants. Prospective subjects were then screened to ensure that their romantic passion was up to par.

Subjects were first placed in an fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) machine, a tool that tracks blood flow to certain parts of the brain. As a brain area is being used, energy and oxygen are depleted. Blood supplies oxygen to the brain. Therefore, blood will flow to the oxygen-deprived areas of the brain, and scientists can see which parts of the brain are being used.

While in the fMRI machine, subjects were shown a picture of their lover. Meanwhile, the machine recorded blood flow to certain areas of the brain. In order to return the subject's brain to its normal, not in love state, they were asked to count backwards from a large number for 40 seconds.

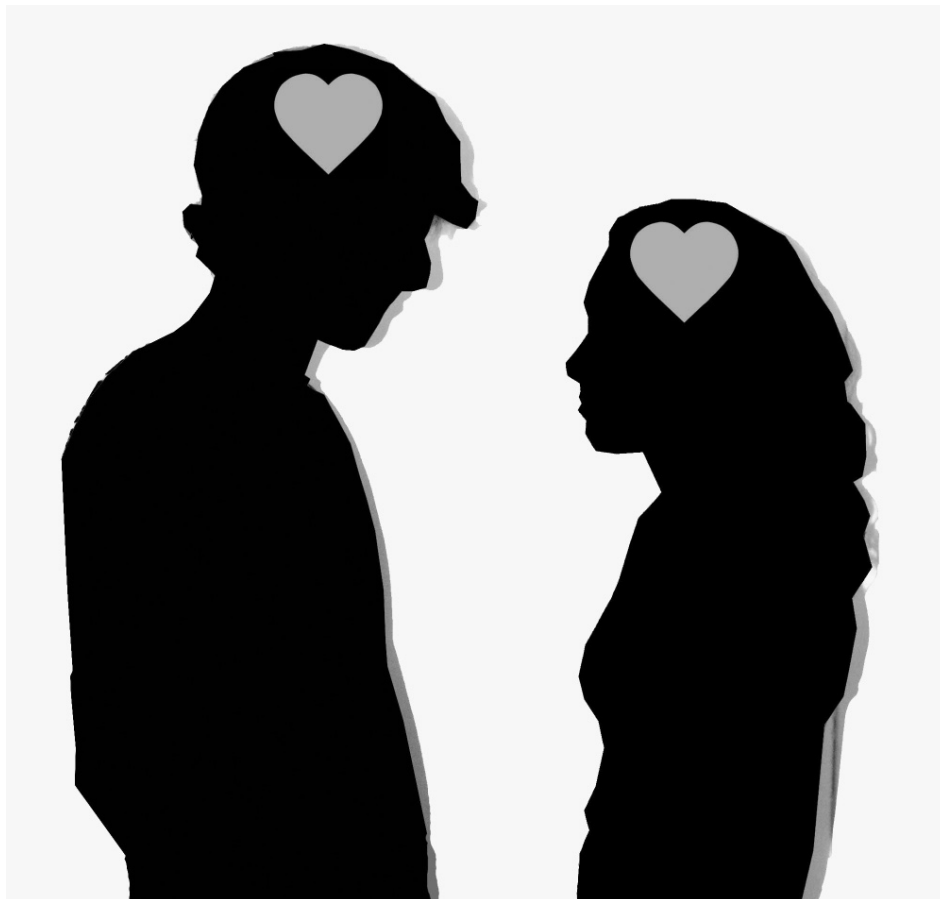


Photo Illustration/Blythe Duckett

Once the brain began to divert its focus, a neutral photograph of a casual acquaintance appeared, and blood flow was recorded once more. The different scans – of a neutral brain, before any pictures were shown, the "in love" brain, and the "friend" brain – were then compared and analyzed.

"Many brain parts became active in our love-struck subjects as they focused on their beloved. However, two regions appeared to be central to

the experience of being in love...the caudate nucleus...[and] the ventral tegmental area (VTA)," said Fisher. The caudate nucleus is a primitive part of the brain that controls one's reward system, a neural pathway that is stimulated when one feels aroused. When one of Fisher's subjects viewed their beloved, the pathway to the caudate lit up, revealing increased activity. Other areas of the reward system lit up as well, especially those that become

active when consuming an addictive substance. Thus, Fisher concludes that "romantic love is addictive, too."

The second impacted area, the VTA, is also a central region of the reward system. The VTA makes a surplus of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that, among other things, is responsible for providing pleasure and enjoyment. We feel happy when we have a normal amount of dopamine. When the VTA is active, we have an overload of dopamine and an overload of happiness and pleasure – otherwise known as romantic love.

Fisher has developed three labels to define different levels of love: lust, attraction, and attachment. Our initial lust is controlled by sex hormones – testosterone and estrogen, for men and women, respectively. The second level, attraction, is driven by three significant neurotransmitters – adrenaline, serotonin, and dopamine. These hormones prevent us from thinking of anything other than our lover. To the layperson, this stage is defined as "love-struck." Lastly, attachment is driven by oxytocin and vasopressin. Oxytocin, which is released during sex, deepens the feelings of attachment between couples. Vasopressin is released after sex and has a similar role to oxytocin.

So much for the conflict of head versus heart.

Brrr! Frosty Temps Spark BB Weather Chatter



Photo/ Stephen Santon

This winter season, temperatures have been particularly cold.

By Jack Barbaro

Each morning, most Blind Brook students and staff members cross the relatively short stretch of courtyard on their way to the school entrance. This winter, that brief journey became a more arduous task, as unrelenting winds whipped cheeks and turned lips blue.

The wind chill factor can cause temperatures outside to feel abnormally low, potentially below zero degrees Fahrenheit. As stated on *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*, wind chill

is defined as "a measure of the rate of heat loss from skin that is exposed to the air." Wind chill can be accurately measured because it increases with wind speed.

According to Blind Brook math teacher Mrs. Simmons, "I would not say the season is collectively colder than usual, but that there have been certain weeks that have been extraordinarily cold." The intensity of this winter has sparked increased student interest in how weather affects daily life. Blind Brook junior Jacob Kupin

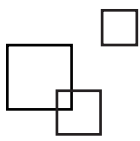
has created a Facebook account called "Blind Brook Weather" whose goal is to publicize predictions of incoming storms and school closings. Blind Brook Weather has over 250 Facebook friends, roughly half the students at Blind Brook High School. Junior Alison Hartman said, "I look at this page every time I hear of a storm coming. It's great to have a weather site customized to our neighborhood."

Based on a report by *BBC World News*, this winter's frigid temperatures have inflicted a number of illnesses. When the body is exposed to intense, frosty conditions, the mucus membranes of our respiratory tracts become thicker. As a result, we become more susceptible to various viral and bacterial infections. "I've noticed that the particularly cold winter is having an impact on the wellness, and therefore, the attendance of students in school," said sophomore Nicholas Brasesco.

With temperatures gradually spiraling downwards, there has been

much controversy over the theory of global warming, which states that international temperatures are increasing rapidly on a large scale. Some scientists argue that "global warming" is not the appropriate term to be utilized in classifying these meteorological patterns. Instead, they refer to them collectively as "climate change". Although general climate changes show that temperatures have dropped significantly in parts of Western Europe and North America this season, many regions of the world are experiencing extreme dryness and scorching heat. For example, weather in Bulgaria has reached record high temperatures this year.

When temperatures are dropping to such extremes, it is always important to bundle up and stay as toasty as possible. One should avoid short sleeves and thin shoes, and become comfortable in fuzzy boots, and long-sleeved sweaters for better insulation. "As my mom always says, 'dress in layers!'" said junior Ali Hartman.



Sitting Down with Martin Rogowsky

By Victor Alves

Martin L. Rogowsky is the Westchester County Legislator for the Sixth District, which includes Rye Brook, Port Chester, and Harrison. He is the former majority leader and the current chairman of the Energy Committee of the County Legislature. He was reelected in an uncontested election in November.

Q: You ran unopposed on the last election. Do you think your constituents would benefit from some competition?

A: *It always would be a good thing to have competition in an election because it just makes any legislator, including myself, work as hard as I can to be responsive and be representative—to do what my constituents want, as opposed to just what I want. At the same time, by running unopposed, I do take as a certain judgment by the people in my district that I am doing a good job.*

Q: How do you see the economy of Westchester during this period of economic recovery?

A: *I hope we are in a recovery. The businesses in Westchester and the homeowners of Westchester have taken a hit. There are many more foreclosures going on...there are hundreds of foreclosures happening in Westchester now, versus relatively few just a couple of years ago. So, the recession has had a big impact on homeowners; it's had a big impact on unemployment. Our unemployment rate was always relatively low...around four percent or less. It is now closer to eight percent...I think because we are so close to New York City, and there are just so many people in the area, that unemployment is not 10 percent as it is nationally. So, I think the recession has not hurt Westchester as much as other areas.*



Photo/Victoria Ferrer

Martin Rogowsky is the Westchester County Legislator for the Sixth District, which includes Rye Brook.

But to a person whose house is being foreclosed, it doesn't matter where they are—they're being foreclosed and it is difficult. We have definitely had our difficulties in Westchester, but generally, it has not been as bad as other places in the country.

Q: Regarding the affordable housing lawsuit filed by the Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro-New York, you voted against the settlement. What were your reasons?

A: *I was not convinced that the law that the plaintiffs used to sue us applied. I felt we had a very good chance...to make an argument to different judges that this law, which passed in 1863, was intended for other purposes. The plaintiff was very creative and used this law [for] the first time ever on this type of situation, with a county, and housing, and applications for grant money; but they convinced the judge, and we were asked to either settle and ac-*

cept the judge's decision or not. I felt, on the law, I would have taken the chance of going to appeal to the United States Supreme Court...The case would have been thrown out, so that was one reason. The law, even if it did apply, certainly would have cost the county taxpayers a whole lot of money if we lost the appeal—certainly a couple of a hundred million dollars if not more.

I philosophically disagreed with the idea of having a Federal monitor mandating where and how much housing we build. The law would not have done that; the law just would have said, "pay the big penalty," but there would have been no mandates to actually build the housing; there would have been no Federal monitor. We had to agree to those things, which we did in the settlement. I would have taken my chance, again, filing the appeal and even if we lost, it would have been a hit to the tax payers. But my constituents that I talked to felt it would have been worth

paying a little extra in taxes to cover the cost of the lawsuit to not have to face the mandate for the next seven years of some outside person, this Federal monitor and the Federal government, sticking their nose in Westchester and saying "You shall do this, you shall do that." Philosophically, I disagreed with that, so I had to vote no.

Q: Is it true that Westchester County may be facing a 60 million dollar budget deficit?

A: *No, that's not true. There was something in the paper about cash. Every week...we have to pay our bills. Westchester County collects taxes from the towns twice a year. The towns send the tax money to us in May and in October, so we got money in October. It looks like we are...going to be up to 60 million dollars short on cash. Come June 1st, we need...to pay the electric bill, and we may not have the money in the bank. It looks like we are going to have to borrow maybe up to 60 million dollars. We make projections, but our budget is based on no deficit. We will raise enough money in property taxes, and presumably in sales tax, to meet all our expenses. Usually, we have 100 million dollars extra in the bank...if we have a lot of bills, there is always money in the bank. Until our next payments, the sales taxes check comes in, the mortgages tax check comes in, the property tax check—as we are collecting money, we are spending money—we always had enough extra money in the budget to pay those expenses. We have run short of the extra money sitting in the bank, so we are going to have to borrow, just for a few months. We are short on cash...but I would not call it a budget deficit.*

BB Students Selected for Youth Council

By Nikta Daijavad

The Blind Brook Social Studies Department has selected junior Daniel Polonsky and sophomore Shalin Mehta to represent Blind Brook on a new youth council established by Congresswoman Nita Lowey.

Polonsky will serve on the council, which represents the 18th Congressional District, for its two meetings for the remainder of the school year. He will also attend its four meetings in the 2010-2011 school year. Mehta will serve as an alternate member and will replace Polonsky on the council after he graduates.

Social Studies teacher Marko Markolovic said, "We relied on a couple of different factors when choosing students, in terms of grades and grade level, as well as determining who sort of had an interest in politics and who would fit the mold

character-wise."

Lowey created the youth council to discuss the needs and challenges of students in her congressional district and to offer them the opportunity to learn more about the government. Her office then contacted BB Principal Vincent Galasso to request two students to serve, and Galasso then turned over the request to the Social Studies Department.

"I've always had an interest in government, and this will give me a great opportunity to learn about it from an actual Congresswoman," Polonsky said. "I'm very honored to be chosen and very excited. I can't wait to...meet Nita Lowey and get to represent our school."

Mehta said, "We get a chance to represent a great school like Blind Brook, so I hope me and Daniel can make a change, or at least try to."

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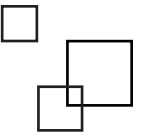
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SRP Union and BOE Employ Mediator

By Nikta Daijavad

After failing to reach an agreement on a new contract following approximately one year of negotiations, both the School Related Personnel (SRP) Union and the Board of Education have declared impasse and have brought in a mediator.

The mediator, from the New York State Public Employee Relations Board (PERB), will attempt to resolve the impasse proceedings that began on January 5th. The SRP Union and the board are still currently in the mediation process.

Superintendent William Stark said that both sides have agreed to keep negotiations confidential. According to the Westmore News, the district has sought to institute a merit-pay system for the union's employees like that in place for administrators. The SRP Union, with 96 members, represents school aides, nurses, and clerical, custodial, and transportation employees in the district.

The Board, represented by Superintendent William Stark and Assistant Superintendent Jonathon Ross, began the process of negotiations with the SRP negotiating team, led by union presi-



Photo Illustration/Victoria Ferrer

School nurse Nancy Garretto and district data clerk Deirdre Smithies proudly display their SRP buttons.

dent Deirdre Smithies, on December 10th, 2008. Since then, approximately a dozen negotiating sessions have been held in order to replace the contract that expired on June 30th, 2009.

According to Stark, when the two sides were not able to come to an agreement, New York State protocols mandated keeping the expired contract in effect until a new agreement is reached and having the PERB send in a mediator to help resolve the issue.

According to a statement made by Board President Steven Kaplan at the December 7th, 2009, Board meeting, the two sides were not able to come to a "meeting of the minds".

Approximately two dozen members of the SRP Union were present at the November 23rd, 2009, Board meeting, wearing all black and buttons that read, "IT'S NOT OK!" to protest the district's failure to reach an agreement on a new contract.

Blind Brook teachers have also worn buttons that say, "Proud to support the School-Related Professionals!"

"They're all incredibly hard workers and they do a phenomenal job," said Spanish teacher Maggie Juana. "When they asked us to support them, we started wearing these pins because they don't have a contract and they're kind enough to just keep coming to work."

"While the Board of Education highly values the contribution that members of the SRP make in the education of the students of this district, the Board is also entrusted with a fiduciary responsibility to serve the best interests, both short-term and long-term, of the residents of the Blind Brook school district," said Kaplan in his statement.

"A mediator says to both sides, 'Let's see if we can get both of you to agree,'" said Stark.

"It's a slow process, and it's not progressing to the degree that either side would like, but it is progressing," said Ross.

In the event that the mediator comes to the conclusion that an agreement still cannot be reached, the next step under the PERB is the employment of a fact-finder. A fact-finder searches for the specific facts relevant to each side and indicates a reasonable solution to the disagreement. A fact-finder, though, can only make a recommendation and cannot force a settlement.

Jerry Klice, a custodial bus driver with the SRP Union, said, "We're actually not going anywhere at this point. Nobody seems to be budging."

Teaching to the Test?

By Zachary Kratochvil

On January 12th, Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, with which the Blind Brook Federation of Teachers is affiliated, announced her union's new plan to evaluate teachers using four measures—including test scores.

Blind Brook does not currently use test scores to evaluate teachers, and Federation President Trudi Davis said, "I really don't think it's going to impact Blind Brook at all." With the support of New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, President Obama and Weingarten, however, evaluations of teachers based on test scores may soon become a reality.

Weingarten's proposed plan includes the adoption of teaching standards, assessing teachers on measures including test scores, implementing benchmarks for standards and supporting teachers.

On November 25th, Bloomberg announced a plan to tie New York City teachers' tenure to their students' test scores. The city already uses test scores to determine bonus pay for teachers and to rate schools. Bloomberg compared not evaluating teachers on their students' test scores to not evaluating heart surgeons on their patients' survival rates.

And in July, along with his Sec-

retary of Education Arne Duncan, Obama announced his "Race to the Top" program, offering \$4.35 billion to states that outline the most innovative plans for education reform. New York stands to win as much as \$700 million from the program, which will award money in two phases.

The program will not award funds to states that prohibit the use of tests scores in teacher evaluations. New York's application said that the state plans to use test scores to evaluate teachers and administrators. Its current law prohibiting teacher evaluations based on test scores for teachers hired after July 1st, 2008 is set to expire in June, and state officials have said they do not believe the law will hurt the chances of winning Race to the Top funds.

New York, along with 39 other states, applied for phase 1 of the program in January, and will learn if it will receive funding in April. If not, it can reapply in Phase 2.

Under Bloomberg's plan, the city immediately began evaluating teachers hired in 2007 based on test scores. Bloomberg also called on the state legislature to mandate that all districts evaluate principals and teachers based on data.

Nevertheless, New York's legislature has appeared unreceptive to education reform, particularly when supported by Bloomberg. In January, the

legislature recoiled at a last-minute plan supported by the mayor to increase the number of charters schools in the state and improve New York's Race to the Top application.

Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth said, "Anything at state level would always eventually trickle down to local districts." Therefore, a decision by New York's legislature regarding test score based teacher evaluation would surely affect Blind Brook.

Superintendent of Schools William Stark said, "I believe that student test scores should be a factor but not sole determinant," although Interim Principal Vincent Galasso said that examinations "should have little or no effect on teacher evaluation" so they would not "motivate teachers to teach for and carry out excessive review for these tests."

Davis said that she wants students to "have a love of learning," and said that on behalf of the majority of school faculty, there is a strong resentment of the notion of teaching to tests.

Both Wermuth and Davis stressed the importance of examining the whole population and talked about the impact of other variables on test scores, citing, among other things, the level of a course, and the varying degrees of academic focus and talent from one year to the next.

At present, Blind Brook follows

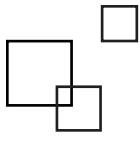
the state mandated tenure policy. It requires new teachers to be evaluated periodically over three years, or two years if they have already received tenure elsewhere. Administrators carry out these evaluations using a rubric, which does not include test scores.

This rubric assesses several components of the teacher's performance. It examines timeliness, organization, the classroom environment the teacher has created, their management/control of students, their lessons, engagement of students, and several other factors.

Additionally, teachers are required to maintain a portfolio. This folder is aimed at providing an easily accessible record of a teacher's noteworthy activities and accomplishments. Among the items a portfolio would include are records of field trips, advising clubs, and coaching teams.

After a teacher receives tenure, evaluations continue, usually annually or semiannually. Teachers are also required to continue to update their portfolios after receiving tenure.

Galasso said that this method of evaluation relies on "the administrator's ability to translate what he or she has seen or heard or experienced in the classroom into... feedback." Therefore, he said, this method is "fair if the feedback is honest, accurate and provides direction for growth."



Proposed 2010-2011 Budget Gains Support, Faces Criticism

By Rachel Simon

The Blind Brook school district may be forced to make significant changes in accordance with the proposed budget for the 2010-2011 school year. This budget, presented at the February 22nd Board of Education meeting, could require major cuts in school activities, services, and faculty, in order to comply with the current economic downturn.

The proposed budget, prepared by Superintendent William Stark, was submitted to the Board for review. The Board, along with parents, students, and community members, will discuss its strengths and weaknesses over the course of five public meetings, until a final budget is adopted by the Board on April 19th. This budget will be presented to voters on May 18th.

The proposed budget of \$39,555,126 is a 1.61 percent increase from the 2009-2010 budget of \$38,928,493. The 2010-2011 budget would require a 2.14% tax increase, up to \$33,838,268, from

\$33,129,006 in last year's budget.

"The budget is a forecast based upon events that have yet to take place but will have major impact on Blind Brook," said Stark at the Board meeting.

The need for a larger budget stems from the current economic downturn, as state aid has been reduced, along with revenues from county sales taxes.

In order to minimize taxes, several reductions may be necessary. The positions of nine faculty members may be terminated or reduced. "It would be a shame if teachers had to be cut because of the budget," said Social Studies teacher Shelley Jacobson. "That should never have to happen."

The budget does, however, allow for necessary additions, such as the position of a third grade teacher to deal with the large sizes of the incoming grades. As class sizes continue to expand, community members have voiced concern over the district's ability to handle the amount of students expected.

"We understand the relationship that exists between class size and quality education," said Stark. "The main priority is to maintain and improve the quality of our classrooms."

In addition to faculty, several other expenditures and programs may be eliminated or reduced. If necessary, the merged sports programs for swimming and ice hockey may be cut, a fact garnering much controversy from the community.

"We understand the hard economic times," said parent Steve Ketchabaw, whose five children all play hockey. His son, senior Tyler Ketchabaw, is co-captain of the Rye Town/Harrison Titans. "We're not asking to take money away from anyone else. Give us the opportunity to raise money, so we can save hockey," he said.

Parent David Nadasi, whose son, senior Paul Nadasi, is on the Titans, said, "It's chilling to me that hockey, a merged sport, is considered lesser than other sports."

Although there is significant support

to raise taxes in order to save programs and activities such as hockey, some community members are opposed to the idea. Taxpayers who do not have children in the district are opposed to an increase in taxes, since they would not be directly benefiting from the budget.

"It [the budget] would be ignoring senior citizens and just help the schools," said Rye Brook resident Lina Accurso. "The way I see it, it's not a two-way street."

In deciding what programs and activities would potentially be cut, Stark, along with Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Facilities Dr. Jonathan Ross, worked with administrators to review their budgets, which were then sent to the Board for their input. Over the next several months, the budget will be reviewed and refined until it is eventually voted on.

"My job is to balance the desire to maintain a quality educational program with a fiscally responsible budget," said Stark. "The goal is to make sure that our core program remains intact."

Patterson Releases School Money, but State Remains in Trouble

By Daniel Gelfarb

On January 14th, New York State Governor David Patterson announced he would release money he had withheld from school districts at the end of last year in an attempt to bolster the state's finances. All of the funds have been released, but New York still faces a fiscal crisis.

In Blind Brook's case, the majority of withheld money was \$510,000 in New York State school tax relief under STAR, a program in New York designed to reduce property taxes. The Blind Brook school district is due to receive \$2,647,831 in STAR funds from the state government.

Assistant Superintendent Jonathan Ross said, "The state has not been able to stop spending fast enough to make up for the decrease in revenue due to the recession." He also said that the state is "fiscally irresponsible."

Ross said that it would have been unlawful for Patterson to continue withholding the funds. According to Ross, the New York State Legislature appropriated the money and did not give Patterson authority to impound it.

BB has roughly \$1.5 million in reserves. If Patterson had not released the money, the reserve fund would have been tapped so that the district could meet its obligations to close the budget gap.

New York State now has a deficit of over \$8 billion dollars, according to the governor, although the New York State assembly has estimated it may be \$1.2 billion more. Patterson has proposed a \$135.2 billion dollar budget for next year, including \$5 billion in spending cuts his

critics say will not be enough to resolve the state's crisis. While the state's budget must be balanced when it is passed, in practice spending may exceed revenue.

Because New York is spending beyond its means, it may be forced to cut spending for education, leading to less aid for school districts.

Blind Brook receives 6% of its budget revenues from state aid, significantly less aid per student than other districts in the state. In the past two years, budget revenues from "other sources," including the state, have dropped almost \$1.5 million.

On February 18th, Patterson announced that if the legislature does not pass next year's budget by the deadline of April 1st, the state will withhold \$500 million in tax returns to citizens to prevent the state from going bankrupt on March 31st, the end of the fiscal year.

The majority of state spending goes to Medicaid, a healthcare program for the poor, and education spending. A key factor in the state budget crisis has been rising Medicaid expenditures. Enrollment is surging as rising numbers of citizens lose health insurance from their employers. Pension costs have also burdened the state as unions have lobbied against cuts. In addition, the recession has resulted in less revenue from sales and incomes taxes.

Junior Gabe Crivorot said, "While Blind Brook doesn't have many financial problems, that's not the case at most schools. It's very irritating that runaway government spending by inept officials has resulted in this decrease in funding for schools that need state support.

The Search Continues

Continued from page 1

integrity and is able to balance effectively the needs of students, teachers, and parents," said Follansbee. "I think it is very important that a principal gets to know all members of the community, which takes time," said Bronson.

"In order to better see what the juniors wanted in a principal, I created a Facebook group. The common response was that students wanted a principal who would stay for more than a year," said Gaines. "I think it is important that the principal is very accessible so students are able to talk to him or her but he or she must be willing to be firm."

PTA representative Marlene Adler said that the committee has also been "talking about the process that the committee will go through, and we have been working on developing questions that we will be asking the candidates."

The school has already received 88 applications online. William Stark, the Superintendent of Schools, conducted the initial screening process, reducing the number of candidates to 18. To cut the number of interviews from 88 to 18, Stark focused on whether or not the experience that the applicant had was adequate for the position as high school principal. Among the 18 candidates, 16 are sitting high school principals or high school assistant principals. Stark is now in the screening process and has already interviewed 7 of the 18 candidates.

When the screening process is complete, up to six candidates will be presented to the committee to be interviewed. The committee will meet on

March 2nd and 9th in order to determine the interview questions and the process for the day. On March 16th, the committee will interview the candidates who made it through Stark's screening process. From the group of six, the committee can send up to four candidates back to Stark for more screening.

These four candidates will be interviewed again by Stark, and Stark can select as many as all four candidates as finalists. The finalists will be sent to the Board of Education who will interview the candidates again. The Board of Education along with Stark will select the principal, who will be appointed at the April 12th Board of Education meeting.

Board member Glen Schuster said, "I hope to see someone with a passion to really excel, a superstar who really cares about the curriculum, and someone who has a lot of integrity and is excited about this opportunity." He added that, in making the final decision, the Board gives significant weight to Stark's recommendation. "The superintendent is the education leader of the district. We as parents and as the Board of Education oversee the actions he does, but he and his team are qualified to do it," said Schuster.

Wolotsky said, "As we look through, there are the common threads. What is interesting is that whether you're a teacher or student, everyone is working for the same type of person with the same type of experience."



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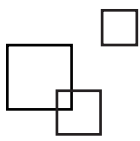
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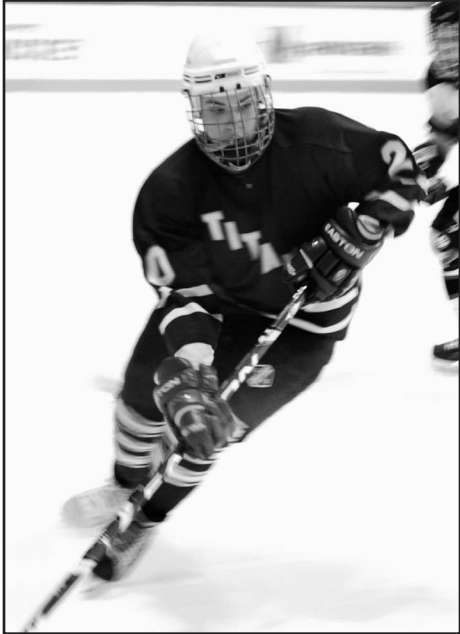
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BOE Discusses Cutting Varsity Hockey and Swimming



Photo/Thomas Ferrer

Sophomore Kirk Holmes looks to pass the puck.

By Lauren Freyberg and Victoria Denti

The Blind Brook Varsity Hockey and Swimming teams, both merged sports teams at BB, may be eliminated due to budget cuts unless a booster club is formed to help fund the team.

At the Board of Education meeting on Monday, February 22nd, Superinten-

dent William Stark presented his \$39.6 million proposed budget and anticipated removing the funding for Blind Brook High School students to join the Rye Town-Harrison Titans ice hockey team.

The Rye Town-Harrison hockey team consists of three schools: Blind Brook, Rye Neck, and Harrison. Each currently pay eighteen to twenty thousand dollars to participate in this merged team, which covers ice time, salaries, and bus travel. Being that Rye Neck only had one player this year, they are not going to be a part of the team next year; this leaves Blind Brook and Harrison to split the costs at around \$30,000, which further raises the price for parents.

When asked what the new price would be, Stark said, "It's hard to figure it out, because it depends upon how many students actually participate and what the actual cost is." He added that it depends on Harrison High School because they are the larger participant.

An estimated thirty parents and students showed up at the meeting to urge the BOE to reconsider. Parents offered either to pay for the program in the future or start a booster club.

"The hockey program is an opportunity outside the classroom that cannot be replicated. The parents are trying to find a way to preserve this for their children, and I applaud them for that," said BOE Vice President Sheri Zakower.

No final decisions on the matter have been made yet. Stark and Board of Education President Steven Kaplan followed this meeting up with budget meetings with affected parents and will continue to do so until a conclusion has been reached.

"We want to review what the options are for hockey because this has been a merged sport...we are trying to gauge how much it would cost. If the hockey parents were to run this on their own, it would cost them," said Stark.

It has been recommended by Stark to eliminate all merged sports, which by extension would mean the elimination of Varsity Swimming (currently merged with Rye). This news comes just as Blind Brook swimmer senior Ben Rubenstein competed in the Varsity State Swim Meet in Buffalo on February 28th.

"The swim team has been a great experience for me. I made a lot of friends and had the opportunity to represent

Blind Brook at the sectional and state," Rubenstein said.

Still, the Board of Education asserts that these decisions are made on a yearly basis and are never permanent. Board of Education member Lawrence Engle said, "We can't create a multi-year budget."

Yet, others are worried that for a sport like hockey where one must train start training early in order to compete at the varsity level, younger children in the Blind Brook community would not take the time to play without a team. If this were the case, there would never be enough interest to bring the team back.

"For years, kids have passionately played on the Titans and put in hundreds of hours of work on and off the ice," said Paul Nadasi, hockey team goalie. "For it all to be for nothing would be devastating"

**Editor's Note: As of this printing, the BOE has decided to allow for the formation of a booster club through which the team may be funded. With this, parents could pay a price expected to be around \$2,000 that would go towards the cost of the team. Stark is expected to announce his plan at the BOE meeting on March 22nd.*

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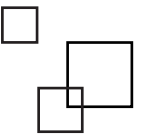
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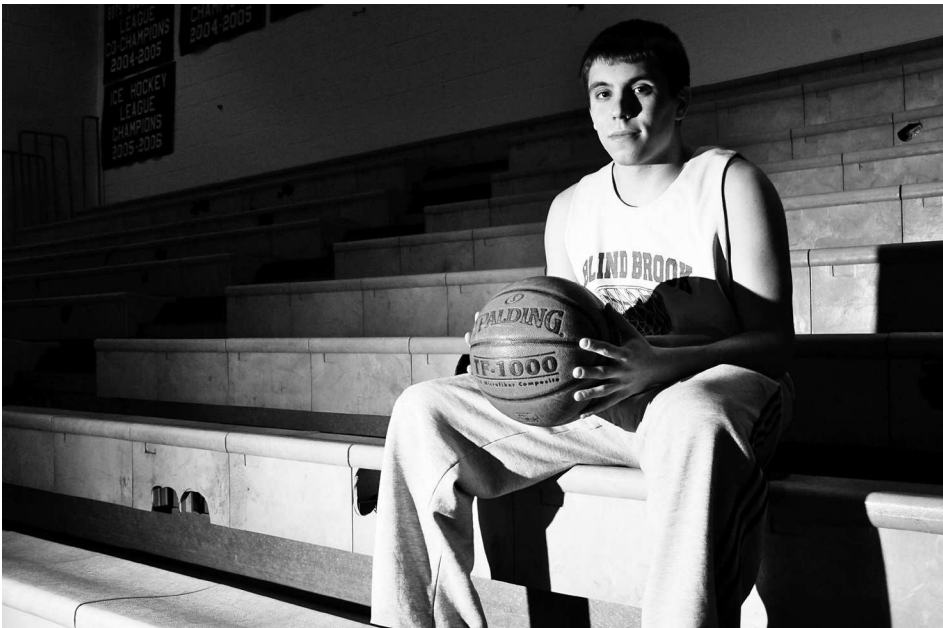
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Athlete of the Month: Mike Tomasula



Photos/Thomas Ferrer

By Victoria Denti

After the Varsity Boys' Basketball team's 61-43 Homecoming victory against Alexander Hamilton, freshman Sam Adler said, "Seeing Mike [Tomasula] play that well showed me exactly how I should play for my entire career. He showed great leadership the entire game, especially helping me adjust to the varsity game."

Tomasula, a senior, has proven himself both on and off the court during his years at Blind Brook. Underclassmen look up to him as one of three team captains and aspire to match his skill level.

"Mike is a unique player and is someone who brings a lot to the table," said junior and teammate Robbie Winston.

During Homecoming, Tomasula had his best game of the year statistically, putting in 19 points. He also played a strong defensive game,

keeping his opponents' scoring in check and coming away with a few impressive steals. He amazed BB fans with reverse lay-ups, quick footwork, and high jumps when rebounding.

Tomasula has been doing well from the point guard

position all season. Currently averaging 8.9 points after 13 games, he also runs plays and finds open teammates

in an effort to improve their performance. A number of Tomasula's drives to the basket do not end with a shot, but rather a dish to another player at the blocks who can easily put in a wide-open lay-up.

Tomasula's talent began to develop in third grade when he played for the local CYP (Catholic Youth Organization) team. He continued playing at that level before moving on to the modified team and eventually proceeding to JV. Tomasula has been on the varsity team for two years and was made captain by his coach Mike Welsh one game into this season.

Tomasula was also a captain of Varsity Football, which had arguably the most successful season in the team's six year history. He was an effective and agile running back and a dangerous weapon as a kick returner.

With high hopes for the end of the season, Tomasula said, "Last year, we had an extremely talented team and did very well in the regular season, and then we folded in the playoffs. This year, we are going to prove that we are mentally tough, and we are not going to falter under pressure."



March Madness Gone Mad

By Jason Pardes
Sports Columnist

Nothing excites sports fans more than three weekends of nonstop electrifying college hoops frenzy. So why change it?

As bidders prepare to engage in a fiscal war over the NCAA Tournament's likely expiring contract, the NCAA has decided to put the tournament's fate in the hands of the bidders. Sources say that these bidders are looking to add thirty-one teams to the tournament, and this is seemingly what they will get.

The eleven-year \$6 million contract, set to expire in 2013, has an opt-out clause for the end of the 2010 season which is expected to be exercised. As a source inside ESPN stated, if they NCAA opts out, "It's a done deal with the expansion of the tournament. Depending on how soon a (TV) deal is done, the added teams could start next year. The NCAA confirmed that bidders would be interested in 96 teams, so they're going with it."

Why change something that is already so compelling year after year? The answer is simple: money.

As March rolls around each year, companies from highly diversified markets brainstorm ways that they can work their name into the action, and they are all willing to shell out the big money. Being more inclusive allows for yet another week of NCAA games, and ultimately, another week of huge profit margins.

The proposal for a ninety-six team field system would work like this: the same initial sixty-five teams would be drafted into the tournament, with the top thirty-two receiving byes. As for the other thirty-one, there have been multiple ideas floated. The obvious proposal would be to simply add thirty-one more at-large bids. Duke Coach Mike Krzyzewski suggested that both the winner of the conference tournaments and the regular season winners of each conference receive an automatic bid. The remaining teams would pick up at-large bids. Coach K believes this would help put more emphasis on the regular season.

But this leads us into the downside of the tournament expansion. A significant portion of March Madness followers have scarcely

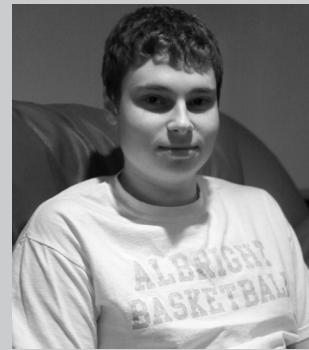
even watched a regular season game. There has been a growing concern that the regular season college hoops is meaningless, and

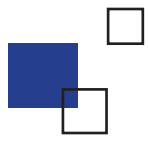
as long as a team can pick up a few big wins, they will be a lock to make the tourney. So think about what happens once the NCAA begins to include almost a third of the total field into their tournament; the regular season be-

comes virtually obsolete. With this expansion, every team that can pull one big upset in the regular season would be included in the tournament, just to be blown out as soon as they get there.

Let's be blunt: the purpose of the NCAA tournament is to crown a champion in college basketball. As it is now, there are only about thirty teams that realistically have a chance at winning the championship, and that's a stretch. Sure, it's exhilarating to see early round upsets for teams like George Mason and Davidson, but no team below an eight seed has ever won the championship in seventy years of tournament play. What would lead anyone to believe that the eighty-ninth best team in the country could? And, with the system already in place, these teams are still given a shot to prove their merit; they simply have to win their conference championship. If they can't do that, then we have no reason to believe that they could win the national championship. This would also make for an incredibly dreary first round of play. Essentially, we would watch the sixty-four worst teams in the tournament compete in extra play-in games to enter into the real tournament – a battle for the best of the mediocre.

While it is understandable that the NCAA wants to make more money, they must realize that by allowing these bidders to manipulate it however they want, they are effectively exacerbating their own crowning achievement. They cannot just sit back and allow ESPN, Fox, and a Turner Sports-CBS package to ruin my favorite time of year. By bidding the Tournament away, they will be permitting money to control its fate. But good news for Staples and Office Depot: stock in legal paper will be booming if fans want to fit their brackets on one sheet.





Sports

Blind Brook High School Focus, March 2010

Success at Sectionals

By Daniel Gold

Another Blind Brook vs. Valhalla sectional matchup: something that fans from both schools have grown accustomed to seeing throughout this year. During the fall season, Blind Brook matched up with Valhalla in the sectional semi-finals in Varsity Boys' Soccer. Blind Brook won that game, but lost in Varsity Football in the league championship. However, this rivalry was not going to end in a 1-1 tie, and it was only fitting that these schools would meet up in the Varsity Boys' basketball sectionals. The Trojans started their sectional run versus North Salem, winning at home. Next was Haldane at the County Center. Blind Brook won again, 46-33. Next in line was Valhalla, for the Section 1 Class C finals. With a two point lead at halftime, Blind Brook knew they had to step it up if they wanted to hoist the gold ball, and that's exactly what they did. Seniors Lance Freundlich and Mike Tomasula led Blind Brook on the second half surge they needed, outscoring Valhalla 27-15 in the second half of the game. Freundlich ended the game with 14 points and 14 rebounds, earning himself the section's most valuable player. "It's an amazing feeling to be the MVP, but it was really a team win. It proved that if we work hard as a team, we can really accomplish anything," he said. The Boys' Basketball team moved on to Regionals at Vassar College on March 10th against Section 9 class C champions SS Seward, where the Trojans took a 46-38 comeback victory. The boys then defeated Stony Brook 47-35 in the regional championship. They will now face Maple Hill High School in the state semifinals at Glens Falls on March 19th.



1. Photo/Thomas Ferrer
 2. Photo/Thomas Ferrer
 3. Photo/Jason Mandel
 4. Photo/Jason Mandel
 5. Photo/Thomas Ferrer



Girls' Sectional Run Ends in Semifinals



Photo/Thomas Ferrer

By Lori Janjigian

The Girls' Varsity Basketball team's season came to an end on Saturday, February 27th, at the County Center after a loss to North Salem in the sectional semifinals by a score of 43-29.

The girls reached the sectionals after finishing the regular season with an 8-10 record. They lost upsetting matches during the season to Ardsley, Valhalla, Byram Hills, Hamilton, Westlake and Briarcliff, but impressed by pulling off victories against Horace Greeley, Rye Neck, Pleasantville, Port Chester, Keio, and Hamilton.

On February 17th, the girls faced off against 3-15 Keio Academy in the first

round of the sectionals, crushing them 54-14. This was the Lady Trojans' third time beating Keio, and in each other game the result was similar, with victories by scores of 57-14 and 51-12.

In the game, Blind Brook took a big lead early, going ahead 10-2 after the first quarter, and progressively increased their lead as the game went on. Freshman Allison Silfen led the team with 14 points.

However, Blind Brook was unable to stop North Salem in their following game. North Salem's victory on February 27th can be largely attributed to the play of their 6 foot 7 senior, Danielle Fiacco, who scored a total of 27 points and had 19 rebounds and blocked 5 shots.

North Salem coach Eric Buzzetto said, "She's 6 foot 7 and dominates the middle. She had 27 points in a game that had 43 points. Looking at Blind Brook, I knew their guards were very good, but they lacked size."

For most of the game, Fiacco was guarded by Blind Brook freshman, Jackie Lavitt. Lavitt said, "She was a lot to handle, but I did the best I could, and I know the rest of the team tried their hardest as well."

Senior captain Samara Meyers said, "She would get most of the rebounds, offensively and defensively, and there was not much the team could do to stop her. We just did not have anybody close to her height to challenge her." Even with the play of Fiacco, it looked early on as though Blind Brook was going to pull off a victory. At the end of the first quarter, Blind Brook actually led North Salem 15-9, and despite faltering slightly in the second quarter, the game was still tied at 18 going into halftime.

North Salem began to pull away during the second half, bringing the score to 33-26 at the end of the 3rd quarter before almost completely shutting Blind Brook down in the 4th quarter to take the 43-29 victory.

Buzzetto said, "It had to do with

some of the frustration of guarding someone 6 foot 7. Not having the height inside is tough...also offensively, as they were driving in, they had to constantly change shots."

At the end of the game, Meyers led Blind Brook with 8 points, while her co-captains Jennifer Jond and Rachel Lumish were close behind with 7 and 6



Photo/Thomas Ferrer

points, respectively.

"We were more successful in the first half because we were able to hit some outside shots, but in the second half, we could not hit as many shots from the outside," said Meyers. Jond added, "We just could not handle Fiacco. Our defense was good, but we were having a hard time scoring."