

# FOCUS

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

February/March 2008

## Blind Brook Ditches Newsweek Top 100

By **Focus Staff**

When it comes to quality education, *Newsweek* has made it clear: it all comes down to numbers.

In support of the idea that high school should be about far more than that, Blind Brook joined other districts in signing a letter requesting its removal from *Newsweek's* annual Top 100 Public High School list. On this list, schools are ranked according to the "number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and/or Cambridge tests taken by all students at a school...divided by the number of graduating seniors."

"We will not participate in what we consider to be a flawed system," said Interim Principal William Stark.

The letter, written by Dr. William Donahue, Assistant Superintendent of the Byram Hills School District, calls the ranking system a "superficial approach to measuring quality." It also asserts that "students and school communities deserve better than simplistic and misleading school rankings." The letter was signed by nearly 100 schools across the country, including 30 districts in Westchester.

2006 marked the first year Blind Brook appeared in the Top 100, as #89. In 2007, Blind Brook

ranked #95 on the list. In May of 2007, Blind Brook accepted this honor for the second year in a row, but not without hesitation.

In fact, in the June 2007 *Blind Brook Exchange*, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Valenti stated, "Although we have substantial reservations regarding *Newsweek's* Advanced Placement formula and have urged a calculation based more on performance than participation, Blind Brook again placed among *Newsweek's* top 100 high schools nationally."

Based on this system of calculation, if all of a school's graduating seniors took the Advanced Placement American History exam and all received a score of one (the lowest possible), the school would still get 100 percent.

*Washington Post* columnist Jay Mathews, who devised the ranking system ten years ago while living in Scarsdale, said in a phone interview with *Focus*, "I designed the list to underscore the idiocy of the policies in most of our high schools."

Mathews observed that in many high schools, teacher recommendations were required to place a student in an AP course. At the same time, he studied the correlation between parental income and students' test scores.



Photo/Eddie Licitra

**Sophomore Samara Meyers and the rest of the Lady Trojans advanced to the Sectional Finals but lost by one point in a heartbreaker to the Haldane Blue Devils. For complete coverage, please turn to page 5.**

Students from low-income families, he observed, often had worse grades, which led educators to reject their request to take an AP course or test.

Mathews began his study after becoming unhappy with requirements that his hometown school of Scarsdale had developed for students wishing to partake in a college-level class. He soon researched the situation at Mamaroneck High School, which at the time had a similar policy to Scarsdale, and another school in California of a lower socio-economic class, at which anyone could take an Advanced Placement course. He attributed the success of this

California school to the mere fact that anyone was eligible to participate in AP courses and tests.

Mathews said, "I interviewed educators at schools all over the country, and the answers came back almost the same, that 'We really don't think anyone but our strong B and A students are ready for AP. And we really shouldn't let them take them because they'll be discouraged, they'll break down, they'll be frustrated, it will be harmful to them.'" This attitude, he said, left more students unprepared for college.

In 2003, *Newsweek* published its first report, based on Mathews' ratio, **Please turn to page 4**

## The Calculator Craze: Too Much of a Good Thing?

By **Alex Drechsler**

Excessive use of calculators has damaged Blind Brook students' basic math capabilities, according to members of the Blind Brook faculty, particularly those in the Math Department. Math teachers are now beginning to take measures to urge students to become less dependent on their calculators, and rely more on their own mental abilities.

A few years ago, graphing calculators were introduced into the curriculum in order to tap into the potential math accessible through them. This includes trigonometry functions (sine, cosine, and tangent) and quick, accurate graphing. Now, these calculators are required of students as early as eighth or ninth grade, as well as throughout high school. But the administration and the high school Math Department believe that students' use of calculators extends far past this.

Blind Brook High School

Math teacher Elise Ryan says students use calculators to solve problems they could have figured out in their heads. According to Ryan, "Students [lost] the ability to make certain computations easily because they frequently rely on calculators." Michael McCarvill, the head of the Math Department, believes students see calculators as a way to find the easy answer, as opposed to actually doing the work. He blames this situation on years of relying on calculators and said that students have become "addicted to this thing." McCarvill recalls times that even his most intelligent students, when asked to solve a simple math question, felt the need to use their calculators.

McCarvill fears that students do not understand the importance of mental math. He reminds students to think about their futures, when calculators might not be easily accessible or even appropriate. McCarvill provides the example of a boss and employee, a situa-

tion in which students are likely to one day find themselves. If a boss asks an employee to solve a simple mathematical problem, the boss is likely to be disappointed if the employee turns to a cell phone or calculator to determine the answer. Such an employee will seem both unintelligent and unprofessional.

This is not to mention simple everyday tasks such as figuring out how much an item of clothing is discounted or comparing prices of different size packages in supermarkets.

According to McCarvill, if students simply accept that minimal additional work is needed to sharpen their mental math abilities, and concern themselves with the big picture, they will realize the importance of not relying on calculators.

The Math Department, according to Ryan, has resolved to limit the use of calculators to times when students are required to use

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# News

News Editor: Aaron Wirshba

## The Young and the Restless

By Benjamin Engle

Voting is for old people, plain and simple, or at least it was until the 2008 Campaign for the White House.

Traditionally, the mantra in politics has been "the older you are, the more likely it is you will vote." However, in this Presidential Primary season, younger voters have been going out to the polling booths at the highest numbers since 1972, a year after the 26th Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified.

The 26th Amendment states, "The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age."

This Amendment was proposed by young people who felt it was unfair that they could be drafted to go to war in Vietnam but were ineligible to vote for the person putting them in that dangerous and unforgiving situation.

As they did during the 1970s, rallies and protests for change are occurring today by young people, but there is a technological difference: the forum is no longer the National Mall in Washington, D.C.; it is now the Internet.

Not only does each candidate have a website, they all have Facebook, YouTube channels, MySpace pages, and Flickr accounts. Of the top Democrat and Republican candidates for President, Barack Obama has 653,598 Facebook supporters; 126,217 Facebook users are for Hillary Clinton; John McCain has 77,541, Ron Paul has 84,687, and there are 57,298 Mike Huckabee supporters.

While these numbers don't mean anything in terms of actual primary results (Paul is mathematically ineligible for the Republican nomination), they reflect the enthusiasm for politics young people have today.

According to a recent *Time Magazine* poll, more 18-to-29-year-olds are paying attention to presidential campaigns. The poll indicates that currently approximately 74% of 18-to-29-year-olds are paying attention, compared to 13% in 2000 and 42% in 2004.

Sure, there have been "Rock the Vote" and "Vote or Die" campaigns designed to involve young people in elections, but this year there is more desire for change and with that has come the excitement and anticipation of every Primary Day, caucus, and de-

bate. In fact, on February 26, over 7.8 million viewers tuned in to watch what was possibly the final debate between Democrats. The debate was so popular with viewers, especially those in the 18 to 30 range, that only *American Idol* had more viewers.

This excitement comes from more than websites, debates, and Facebook pages; it is created by the sense of opportunity. It is an opportunity for change not only in the White House, but in the direction of the United States. Past candidates have dared not to engage the youth of America for support because the mentality of politicians has been that students could not be organized in the election process nor do they actually vote on Election Day.



However, the 2008 race for the White House is one like no other; it is truly historical. The Democrats will nominate either the first African American or

the first woman as a presidential candidate in the general election.

In keeping with the trend of change, Barack Obama decided to venture within the unknowns of the youth population. The Illinois Senator upset his New York counterpart in Iowa primarily on the backs of the under-25 voters. Not only was the number of young voters in Iowa up 135%, they provided Obama with 17,000 votes in a contest decided by only 20,000 votes.

With much attention directed towards students and young people this year, the 2008 Election is the most important election in decades for our generation. Students, whether or not they are of voting age, must find a way to get involved in this election because of its significance.

Young people need to show that they can make a difference and that they have an opinion on the future of the United States. The next President's actions won't only affect the over-30 population; they will affect everybody.

It is time to continue to shock politicians and the rest of the United States by doing the unexpected and taking part in this election. If you don't take notice of it and don't vote (if you are of age), you really have no right complaining about anything your government does.

It has long been said that "bad politicians are elected by good people who don't vote." Make your voice count and get involved.

## BBHS Voices Off on Proposed "White Paper" Policy

By Melissa Prusky

Students in Blind Brook have been talking for months about the infamous "White Paper Policy," a policy that the Board of Education has been considering that would involve a possible extension of the school's off-campus jurisdiction. However, on Thursday February 14, students finally had the chance to formally share their views, thoughts, and opinions about this controversial topic.

In all four grades, Social Studies teachers dedicated a class period to this discussion. Each followed a similar itinerary, not only successfully relaying the information and leading class discussions, but doing so without giving their opinions on the topic, a major goal of the teachers. "The teachers did a great job of presenting a controversial topic in an organized, structured, and dispassionate fashion," said Interim Principal William Stark.

On February 3, each student was assigned to read and take notes on a small portion of the White Paper Policy, in order to become an "expert" on that section. At the beginning of classes, each student briefly relayed his/her topic to the class so everyone would be relatively informed about the entire policy. Class discussions began with an article entitled "You're 16, You're Beautiful and You're a Voter," which discussed the responsibilities and possible opportunities of high school students, including passing a test that would enable teens to begin voting and holding credit cards at a younger age.

In this way, the discussions grew from a simple "I think" or "I don't think" the Board of Education should have the right to implement this policy into a wider consideration of students' rights to have a voice in the events going on in their lives.

The students' voices were literally heard as Stark traveled around

to the different Social Studies classrooms throughout the course of the day; he took extensive notes on the students' comments.

Although most students were adamantly against the policy, they were still able to respectfully hold intelligent discussions.

"In this classroom forum, students felt safe enough to give their opinion, and many were both articulate and strong in support of their beliefs," said Judith Mella, Social Studies Department Coordinator. Some students were even able to discuss the positive aspects of the policy in addition to the negative features, and several offered alternate strategies that could possibly be more successful. "I don't think [the discussions] could have gone any better," said Stark, in reference to not only the students' expressive opinions, but to the presentation by the teachers.

"The class discussions were a great idea because they made all the students more informed about the details of the policy," said freshman Jackie Albalah.

Not all students agreed. Junior Eddie Licitra said, "It wasn't that beneficial because the people who needed to hear what the students were saying weren't there to listen."

The Board's main intent for these classroom sessions was to reassure students that their voices are going to be heard. At the beginning of the classes, it was stressed that the Board has not reached any decisions yet, has an open mind, and sincerely wants to take the opinions of the community members into account.

"I thought the discussion was a good way of getting the students involved in the decision..." commented Sarah Berk, a junior.

This was only the first phase of student input, as students had the opportunity to voice their opinions at the town meeting on March 5, and will be able to attend the community forum set to take place in the near future as well.

**Focus would like to congratulate the following students who have been selected as National Merit Scholarship Finalists for 2008:**

~Andrew Becker~

~Rachel Polonsky~

~Madeline Sims~

## News Section

News Editor: Aaron Wirshba



Photo/Taylor Fuller

Junior Marissa Fortino listens to her iPod in the library.

### Lifting the Library Music Ban

By Rachel Simon

Blind Brook High School students are now free to enjoy listening (quietly) to their iPods and mp3 players in the school library.

About a month ago, new rules regarding the use of these music players were put into effect, as a result of complaints from a large number of students. Members of Blind Brook High School Congress's Library Committee pressed the issue, and the librarians agreed that as long as the students agree to keep the music low, they are willing to be a little more accommodating.

With the new rules put into place, Blind Brook Media Specialist Jean Follansbee has not noticed a major change in the usage of music players. "Surprisingly, there's been no tremendous upsurge," she said.

The matter of a student's ability to focus while listening to music seemed to be the biggest issue when deciding if a change should be made. Many students felt that the usage of iPods and mp3 players allowed for better focus while studying, since it en-

ables them to block out the noise created by other students. On the other hand, those opposed to the new rules thought that the music players are more likely to become distractions.

"Everyone focuses in different ways," said freshman Jamie Farquhar. "[Music players] aren't always a distraction, and can actually help people concentrate better."

Then again, there is some fear that "students will think that just because they can listen to music in the library, then they can listen in classes as well," according to English teacher Mackenzie Gumpel. "Then that, obviously, becomes distracting."

The issue of whether or not to allow music players in the library had been brought up several times beforehand, including in class and town meetings, at which students from all grades expressed their desire to be able to listen to music.

Although many students are pleased with the new change, there continues to be a ban on any other electronic devices, such as cell phones, in the library.

### Calculators: Too Much of a Good Thing?

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them in order to solve a given problem.

"It's a stupid idea!" says ninth grader Elyssa Federici, a strong believer in the continued use of the calculator. "In life, we'll have cell phones and other things with calculators on them." Federici, and many other students who have become accustomed to the benefits of calculator use, fear the impairments that students will suffer if the use of calculators is restricted. Studies performed by Texas Instruments, a main manufacturer of calculators, support these students' fears. According to these studies, incorporation of calculators into students' curriculum not only improved grades and abilities, but motivated students and positively impacted their attitudes.

Freshman Andrea Knox agreed. "I think that not using calculators will only increase the time needed to do a problem. This wasted time will add up and significantly reduce the number of topics learned efficiently," she claimed.

Junior Joey Kok said, "Calculators

make life easier and that is supposed to be the whole point of new technology. Students should be able to use them whenever they want to."

Dana Kadmon, a tenth grader, put most students' opinions into one straightforward statement. As Kadmon put it, "Later on in life, we're not going to be tested on whether or not we can do mental math."

Other students, such as ninth grader Rebecca Gaines, realize the positive effects of not heavily relying on calculators, yet do not believe students will be able to correct themselves. "It's going to be tough for students to adjust because we've been using them for a few years now and we have become extremely dependent on them," Gaines said.

McCarvill, however, has faith that students will realize the benefits of mental math and want to sharpen their skills. He said that students' resistance will quickly fade, as they realize how much they need the ability to do mental math and be, as McCarvill puts it, "mathematically literate."

## eChalk Out, Edline In

Blind Brook's Web System Changed Again



Photo/Stephen Santon

Blind Brook students check out Edline, the school's newest addition to its ever-evolving web system.

By Matt Goldwater

Blind Brook's continually evolving online web system recently underwent another major change. The school's eChalk system was replaced by Edline. This is the second large switch to the Blind Brook website since it was completely redesigned at the beginning of the current school year.

Edline will replace only part of eChalk's functions. eChalk was used for both teacher webpages and the school's email system for teachers and previously students. Edline will only incorporate teacher webpages, and teachers will use another system to send emails. This new email system should be in place by April, at which time eChalk will be fully abandoned. The teacher webpages on Edline can be used to post class announcements, assignments, or anything else the teacher feels is important. Edline was chosen to replace eChalk because it is considered to be more reliable and easier to use.

Previously, many teachers did not actually use their eChalk pages because they found it to be too complex or because the website crashed too often. With Edline, students will now be able to actually check their assignments online. Another feature Edline offers is the ability to allow other groups within the school to have their own Edline pages. For example, students who partake in student government, the musical, or other various clubs could potentially find out information on their next meeting through individual Edline pages.

Every student and teacher should have already received a yellow sheet of paper that contains the information for how to log in to Edline for the first time. Parents will also be receiving information to access Edline in the mail within the next month.

Blind Brook's website was also redesigned in the fall. It incorporated a new visual design, flash animation, an integrated Google search sidebar, and downloadable videos. Anyone is now able to also access the website's new photo gallery and kindergarten video tour. Additionally, the website was updated to include new online statements from all of the principals.

The project to improve the website and incorporate Edline was led by Christine Burton, Blind Brook's Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology. She was assisted by a committee made up of Blind Brook teachers Colin Byrne, Alistair Burke, and Jean Follansbee, Ridge Street teacher Betsy Murphy, in addition to Board Member Steve Kaplan, and Rye Brook residents Alan Oberrotman and Giorgio Rietti.

Byrne was pleased with the implementation of Edline. He stated, "Edline's reliability will prompt more usage of the website by teachers. I will happily do anything I can to improve parent and teacher communications."

Junior Russell Dulman commented, "I really like the new Edline system because it is really convenient to finally be able to check my assignments through the Internet."

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## News Section

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News Editor: Aaron Wirshba

# Blind Brook Ditches *Newsweek* Top 100

*Continued from page 1*

a formula it believed to be "one of the best measures available to compare a wide range of students' readiness for higher-level work."

Stark said that when schools realized "the methodology to determine the so-called top schools was flawed," one administrator at a nearby school district circulated a letter throughout the county, drawing support.

"The pressure to take AP courses has definitely been increasing," said junior Marissa Fortino. "I don't know who is to blame, whether it's the school, the parents, or maybe the rankings such as *Newsweek*. But, it's definitely gotten out of hand."

"Students here definitely feel pressured to take AP courses," said senior Amelia Viner. "It makes scheduling really difficult, because often students are forced to drop electives they would have enjoyed in order to fit in all the classes they think will make them look good to colleges. I think it was a good move on the school's part to withdraw from the *Newsweek* rankings."

"How you judge a school should not only be quantified by the number of standardized tests," Stark explained. "We love in this country to quantify, but what is most easily quantifiable is not the most significant."

Director of Guidance and Counseling Christopher Griffin believes that a school's quality of extracurricular and athletic offerings, sense of community amongst students and teachers, and overall outcome and college preparedness as measured by graduation rates are several omitted factors that should

be used to evaluate school districts.

"I am very comfortable with the decision to withdraw because I don't think [the ratings] took into account a lot of factors that make a school a great school," Griffin said. "Using a measurement based on just Advanced Placement participation is, in my opinion, too narrow."

Junior Russell Dulman, however, varied in his opinion. "Blind

Mathews called it "strange" that no administrators had come to talk to him prior to writing the letter. "I suspect that Mr. Donahue and the other people who made this decision haven't had a conversation with anybody who can enlighten them on the reasons for why this actually makes a lot of sense," he said. "If a kid decides to take an AP course, he is essentially saying, I want to work

people learn to cheat on the test, it gets out of hand. There are some schools that go around and put every kid in an AP class."

Mathews replied that this simply is not true. "In high school culture in this country, the principal and whoever was making that decision would be in deep political trouble the next day," he said. "It's never happened."

Along with all of the other schools that signed onto Donahue's letter, Blind Brook will continue to participate in a separate list created by *U.S. News and World Report*. Blind Brook placed 75 on "Gold Medal Schools," *U.S. News's* report, published on November 30, 2007. This report took into consideration the scores students received, placing 75 percent of the weight on the value of scores on the test, known as college readiness, while the other 25 percent was allotted for the participation rate.

Stark believes the *U.S. News* system has "a more realistic set of criteria" because it is not based upon just quantity; rather, it calculates how many students receive a score of 3 or higher. He added that perhaps the existence of a competing list may stimulate change in the way the *Newsweek* ranking is compiled.

When asked if he would alter his system, Mathews answered, "If they can convince me that their decision is based on any real argument, I would. But they haven't given me one."

*Reporting by Lisa Ganz, Ben Lubkin, Corinne Segal, and Madeline Sims.*

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*"...I don't think [the ratings] took into account a lot of factors that make a school a great school."*

-Christopher Griffin  
Director of Guidance and Counseling

Brook should not have taken itself out of *Newsweek's* listing," he said. "It shows that we have a great school. Why would we want to hide that?"

Mathews has firmly stood behind his ranking system. In fact, when *Focus* Features Editor Corinne Segal contacted Mathews at the *Post*, he had never before seen, nor even heard of, Donahue's letter.

"I'm surprised by this," he said. "I think it's a little bit shortsighted for educators to make their decisions, and certainly a bad example to their students, without considering all points of view, and they certainly haven't gotten our point of view."

hard this year." A student's score, he added, is less important than the act of preparing for college. "If you're working on the course, that's academic muscle that better prepares you for college."

Stark pointed out, though, that the validity of the list is further compromised by the fact that schools may require students to take AP courses in the hopes of improving their score.

"It's not surprising that we're on these lists. But then you take a look at these other places that have no business being there, and it lessens the significance of us being there," Stark said. "Once

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# Sports

Sports Editor: Lisa Ganz



Photos/Eddie Licitra  
The intensity of senior Co-captain Michelle Caley inspired the rest of the team at the County Center on March 1.

## One Point Short of Taking Home the Gold Ball

By Spencer Bernstein

Haldane senior Brittany Shields stepped up to the free throw line with 13.6 seconds left on the clock. She had made more than 300 free throws in her career, but this free throw was probably the most difficult one to make. Shields had just been fouled on a drive to the hoop in overtime of a tie game. Trojan fans sat silently while Shields stared at the hoop, exhaling with a loud scream as she released the ball. The ball rolled off the rim. Trojan fans stood screaming and waving their hands behind the hoop, hoping for another miss to keep Blind Brook in the game. As calm as can be, Shields made the second free throw, a shot that allowed her to receive the fifth gold ball and third tournament MVP of her career in what would be a 41-40 victory over the Lady Trojans.

"I think we couldn't have asked for a better game," senior Co-captain Sam Levine said. "I mean, we left everything out on the court. One point is nothing. There was nothing more we could have done than what we did in that game."

Shields led her team in a search for revenge, after the Lady Trojans ended Haldane's streak of 14 consecutive straight sectional titles last year. Shields helped her team regain the title by scoring 26 points, along with seven rebounds and eight steals.

"Shields carried her team, and we just couldn't collapse on her fast enough and steal it without getting fouls called," senior Co-captain Michelle Caley said.

The Lady Trojans prepared to take on Haldane, namely unstoppable Shields, after they faced Tuckahoe on February 25. The girls defeated Tuckahoe in the Semi-Finals, 39-24. With an aggressive press, the Trojans forced turnover after turnover, holding Tuckahoe star junior Katrina Blackman to just nine points on 2-of-11 shooting. Blackman, who struggled all game, is the 10th-leading scorer in the Lower Hudson Valley, averaging 18.3 points per game. Levine and fellow senior Keren Mikva controlled the backboards, with eight rebounds and two blocks and 11 rebounds and three blocked shots, respective-

ly. Levine sustained the Trojans' offense, scoring 15 points, followed by Caley who put up nine.

With momentum in their direction, the Lady Trojans started the game off against Haldane on March 1, leading 6-1 after just over three minutes of play. The Haldane Blue Devils responded, tying the score by the end of the first, 11-11. With 23 seconds left in the first, Shields made a shot to tie the game. By the half, the Trojans were facing a four point deficit, down 22-18. Mikva put up six points in the second quarter, the most significant coming with only 10 seconds left on the clock.

After a half-time performance by Blind Brook's Varsity Dance team, the Lady Trojans returned to the court, ready to regain the lead. With just under two minutes left in the third, the team did just that on a basket by Mikva. Shields retaliated seconds later, tying the score once again, 28-28. Within seconds, the ball had swooshed through the hoop again, for three points, this time off the hands of Levine.

Thus, the Trojans headed into the fourth quarter with a 31-28 lead, contrary to what many would have expected, as they had trailed 33-12 at the end of the third during the teams' regular season match-up. Haldane gained additional momentum when, with just three minutes left in the fourth quarter, the Trojans' ball-handling forward, Levine, fouled out.

"It was definitely a huge blow losing Sam and not having her in at the end of the game, especially since we went into overtime and she couldn't be there for that," expressed Caley. "But someone had to get those fouls, and she was guarding Brittany, so inevitably it was her. It definitely hurt us without her on the court."

With 1:05 left in regulation, Shields tied the score 36-36 with a pair of free throws. Of her 26 points, 13 were foul shots, almost all of which came at the most opportune times. Shields made free throws to tie the game at 28 and 36, in addition to her game winning free throw.

In the final minute, neither

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## Class AA: Mount Vernon Class C: Blind Brook Classless: Bill Belichick

By Max Linder

It is no secret that young athletes aspire to be like the professionals they see on television. Participants in youth basketball leagues imitate Michael Jordan, driving to the hoop gracefully, tongues hanging out of their mouths. Pop Warner football quarterbacks strive to perform like Joe Montana, leading their teams to miraculous come-from-behind wins. As for those children who play baseball, well, right now it seems as if those kids are out of luck.

Plenty has been written on whether or not it is fair for professional athletes to be held to a higher standard than the average-Joe; after all, these players are mere mortals. However, very little has been said about those whose job it is to be role models—mentors and coaches—to these players. The coach of a team is its true leader, responsible for acting in a way that serves as a good example for his players. Many coaches today have shown class during even the hardest times. Tony Dungy continued to guide the Colts following the death of his son. Joe Gibbs, in an analogous display of leadership and courage, led the Redskins following the death of Sean Taylor. Both head coaches inspired their teams in the face of adversity.

As anyone who watched Super Bowl XLII can verify, not every coach has remained classy in the public eye. With less than a minute left in the game, Coach Bill Belichick's New England Patriots were losing by three points to the underdog New York Giants. Down to their final pos-

session, the Patriots were unable to move the ball down the field, and with one second left, turned the ball over on downs. The Giants lead was now insurmountable, but the game was not truly over; after all, there was still one second left, enough time for one last snap. Belichick was in a position he had not been in for a very, very long time; he was about to lose a football game for the first time since August 17, a pre-season game against the Tennessee Titans.

The thought of this turned Belichick's stomach. He made a quick run to midfield, giving a brief word of congratulations to Giants' Coach Tom Coughlin. No, Belichick did not stick around to face his opponents, his own players, or the press following the loss. After a quick word with Coughlin, he made a hasty exit off the field entirely. The clock still had one second left on it.

Belichick attempted to explain his actions, arguing that he thought there was no time left on the clock, an explanation that seems implausible for a coach renowned for his attention to details. The truth is that Belichick let his emotions get away from him and left the field because he could not bear the thought of losing. He is an insult to the Lombardis and the Landrys of the league, men who coach football with a focus on character and honor. We look to coaches to set a good example for their players, not abandon them in their time of need. With this decision, Belichick has proven that in a league full of classy coaches, he is in a class of his own.



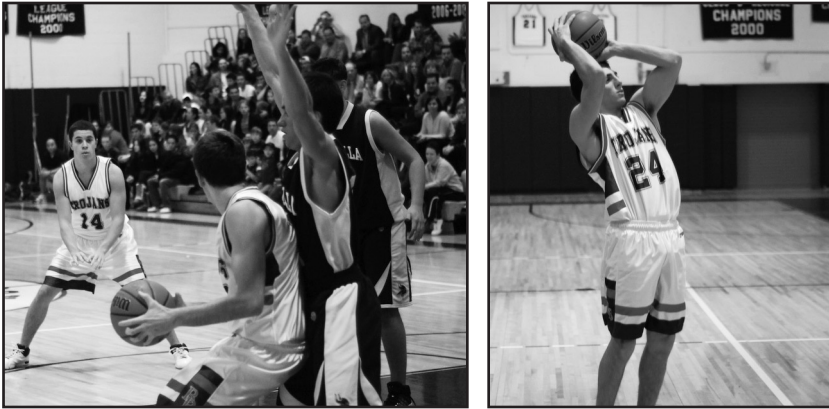
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- 3/28 - Boys' Varsity Tennis - Nyack @ BB - 4:15 PM
- 4/4 - Girls' JV Lacrosse - BB @ Pleasantville - 6:00 PM
- 4/7 - Boys' JV Tennis- Hastings @ BB - 4:15 PM
- 4/7 - Boys' Varsity Baseball - BB @ Pawling - 4:30 PM
- 4/7 - Boys' JV Baseball - Pawling @ BB - 4:30 PM
- 4/7 - Girls' Varsity Softball - BB @ Pawling - 4:30 PM
- 4/7 - Girls' JV Softball - Pawling @ BB - 4:30 PM
- 4/8 - Varsity Track - BB @ Bronxville - 4:15 PM

**\*REMINDER TO ALL SPRING ATHLETES:  
PRACTICE BEGINS MONDAY, MARCH 10\***

## Sports Section

Sports Editor: Lisa Ganz



Photos/Eddie Licitra

Trojan players show off their skills in front of a home crowd.

## League Champions' Season Ends at County Center

By Alyssa Chasanoff and Lisa Ganz

With 44.4 seconds left in the fourth quarter in No. 1 Blind Brook's Semifinal match-up against No. 4 Tuckahoe on February 25, the Trojans' season hung in the balance. The score, 39-39, flashed on the scoreboard, as Trojan fans watched with bated breath.

After a substantial lead in the third quarter, the Trojans' lead was cut to just two points, 39-37, with one minute remaining. Then, with just 6 seconds left, Tuckahoe's Robert Johnson (while being double-teamed) drove just inside the free-throw circle and put up a running floater. A moment later, the ball went in off the glass for what would soon amount to the winning basket. Blind Brook Head Coach Mike Welsh called a time out, down 41-39.

The five Trojans on the floor walked slowly back to the bench. They knew that they had to hit one shot to save their season, one that had been filled with some of the best Class C basketball in Section I. Welsh sent senior Co-captains Miles Fisher and Brett Paterno, senior Alex Piperis, and juniors Joe Magliano and Rob Magliano into the game for the final play.

"It was a play we had practiced a couple times if we were ever in that situation," said Paterno. "We had to get the ball in as soon as possible and get it up the court."

Rob Magliano saw Paterno, an open man off a screen, and threw it long to him. Paterno stretched for the ball, as the crowd, most of whom were sporting Trojan Empire shirts, held their breath in anticipa-

tion. The ball was thrown out of Paterno's reach and Blind Brook's season had ended in defeat.

"The team played well," said Fisher. "We did everything we wanted to coming into the game. We just didn't knock down shots."

The Trojans prepared endlessly for this game, which was a nail biter all the way through, tied 19-19 at the half. With 5:58 left in the third, the lead was in Tuckahoe's hands, as Blind Brook trailed 25-19. However, after Welsh called a time out, the team began an offensive explosion. Back-to-back shots were made by numerous Trojans, including three pointers by both Piperis and Fisher. By the end of the third, the Trojans led 34-29. "We fell short at the end of the game when we couldn't answer their run and stop the momentum," Fisher added.

With the end of the season comes the end of the seniors' basketball playing careers in Trojan uniforms. Senior players Fisher, Paterno, Piperis, Jason Hyowitz, Jordan Zaslav, and Ale Godoy will all graduate this June. Despite the game's disappointing outcome, every team member played his heart out. The team, in fact, had one of the most impressive regular seasons in years.

"The season overall was great," Fisher concluded, "It's sad that people are going to remember the last three minutes of that game and not the season we had as a whole."

Though the seniors will be hard to replace, core juniors Joe Magliano, Rob Magliano, and Jason Kulik look to lead the team next year, in hopes of capturing another League Championship.

# Trojan Athletes Spring Into Season

By Daniel Gold

## Varsity Baseball

The Boys' Varsity Baseball team looks to rebound after a disappointing 2007 season. Last year, the team went 6-11, missing Sectionals. Senior Alex Piperis, along with other returning players, has set high goals for the team this year.

"The goal of our team is to win a game or two in Sectionals this year," Piperis noted. Piperis believes that the team has a lot of talent this year, especially in regards to pitching. "Our pitching will be key this year now that Nick's [Leiningen] arm is at full strength and more sophomores are getting moved up, so we will have more depth in that area," added Piperis.

Piperis hopes that if other seniors, such as Brett Novick and Aaron Wirshba, step up and pull the team together, they will have a successful season.

## Varsity Golf

At the conclusion of the 2007 season, the Golf team boasted an impressive record of 19-1 and captured the League Championship. The team looks to accomplish that same feat this spring. Despite the graduation of David Yawitz, Greg Millar, and Eric Hamilton, senior Mike Yewdell has high aspirations for this year's team. Last year, Yewdell qualified for Sectionals, and he hopes to make it to States this year.

"I think we will perform very well this year, despite the loss of three key players," said Yewdell. "I think that this year's seniors, Ben Shultz, Cody McKinney, and I, will step up and lead the team to success."

## Varsity Boys' Tennis

After losing many seniors from last year, the Boys' Varsity Tennis team still has high hopes for repeating their Sectional Championship for the fourth year in a row. The team will focus their practices on strategies in doubles, as senior Harris Brett believes

that the key to a successful season is strong doubles teams.

"We have to win the late matches, the third and fourth doubles. Those matches really helped us out last year and in the past, and we definitely have to keep that up for this year," Brett stated.

The team is hoping to encourage people to come watch the matches, as their fan base normally consists of a few parents. As for student fans, Brett noted, "I think we had one two years ago, but that's about it."

## Varsity Softball

After a disappointing loss in Sectionals to end its 2007 season, the Varsity Softball team seeks to reestablish itself as the top team in the League and mirror the achievements of the very successful 2006 team. The team is determined to win the League and proceed to Sectionals, once again. Senior Dana Silverstein believes that the team will be strong this year because of a powerful offense and skilled defense that will only improve through practice.

"We are definitely going to put more effort into our practices. The team is planning to have more batting practice and more team bonding," Silverstein said. "We believe that the closer the team is, the better we will work together on the field."

## Varsity Track

Last season, for the first time in Blind Brook history, the Varsity Track team placed first in a meet, defeating Clark Academy and Lincoln Hall. This year, the team hopes to fare even better, backed by the leadership of senior Adam Potter and Coach Matthew Beatty. The team begins practice on Monday, March 10, in preparation for its first meet on April 8.

"I think we have a good team this season and I'm looking forward to being more successful than last year," Potter said. "It will be nice to have a home track, so we can have track meets at home for the first time ever."

# Michael's Pizza

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# Winter Sectionals Roundup



Photo/Thomas Ferrer

Titans' senior goalie Sean McKinney concentrates on the game, as his teammates attack offensively.

By Amanda Gottlieb

## Hockey

Senior Co-captains Brett Novick, Cody McKinney, and Sean McKinney led the Rye Town/Harrison Titans Hockey team to a 13-8 regular season, but the team fell victim to White Plains in the Quarterfinal round of Sectionals. The Titans competed in League 1 for the first time this season, earning the No. 3 seed and a first-round bye in Sectionals. On February 21 at Playland, White Plains (22-3) overcame their losing streak, defeating Rye Town/Harrison, 6-3. After the first two periods, the Tigers held a 4-3 lead. The Tigers then closed out the game with two more goals in the third period. Novick scored two goals for the Titans, and assisted Michael Finiguerra, who scored the team's third goal.

## Gymnastics

Of the three Blind Brook girls who compete on the Rye Town

Varsity Gymnastics team, one gymnast, senior Erica Dayan, qualified for Divisionals this year. In order to advance to the divisional round on February 7, Dayan needed to average at least 6.8 on the beam this season. Having accomplished this feat, Dayan competed in the next round where the standards were even higher. In order to move on to Sectionals, gymnasts had to obtain a 31 all around score, or place in the top 10 in an event. Although Dayan's strong efforts fell just short, three gymnasts from Rye moved on to Sectionals.

## Wrestling

The Varsity Wrestling team also earned a spot in Divisionals and Sectionals this year. Both students from Blind Brook who compete on the team qualified for Divisionals. Unfortunately, junior Steve Fisher was unable to compete due to an eye injury. Senior Eric Cassone, however, placed in Divisionals on February 9, mov-

ing on to compete in Sectionals on February 16. Cassone competed in the 275 pounds or greater weight class. He lost his first match to Harrison, won his second against Tappan Zee, and lost his final match-up to Yorktown.

## Swim Team

One student on the Varsity Swim team, sophomore Ben Rubenstein, qualified for Swimming Divisionals this year and moved on easily to Sectionals. In Sectionals, on Monday, February 11, Rubenstein competed in the 200-yard individual medley, receiving a score that qualified him for States. The race consisted of two laps of four separate strokes: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle. Rubenstein moved on to compete in States on Saturday, March 1. He swam the 100-yard butterfly, the 200 freestyle relay, and the 400 freestyle relay. Although he did not place in his individual events, Rubenstein placed 10th in the 200-yard

freestyle relay and 7th in the 400-yard freestyle relay.

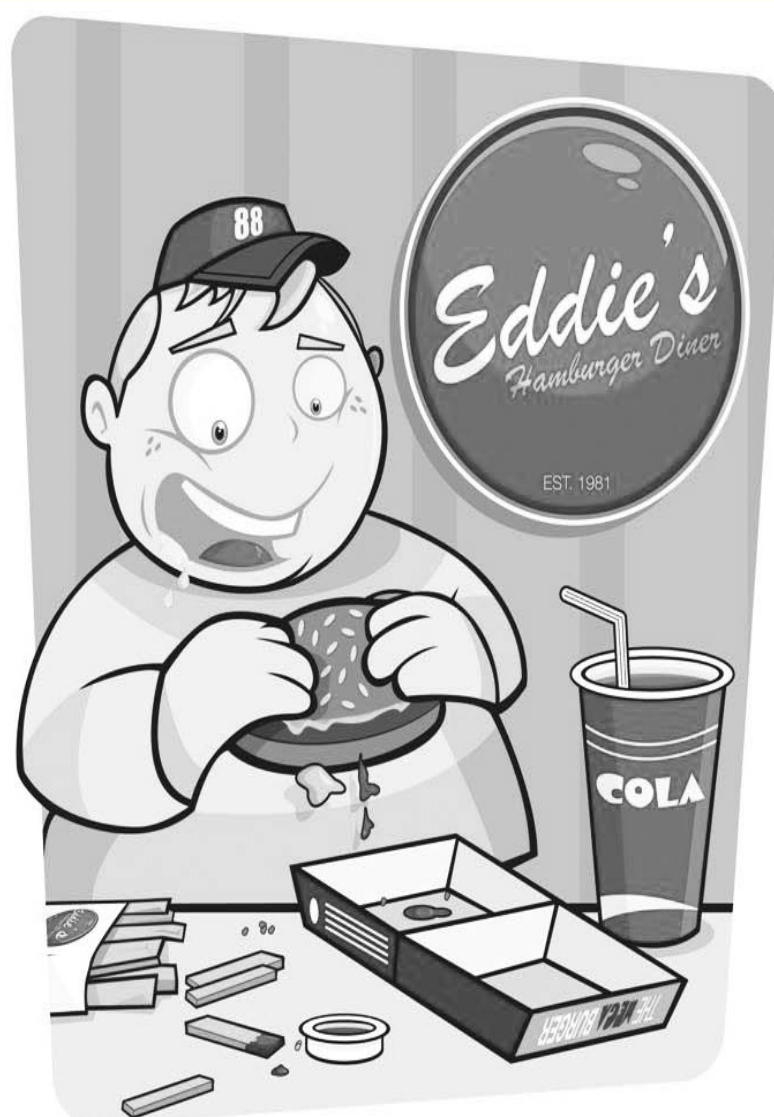
## Bowling

Senior Marco Vasile is the only student from Blind Brook on the Varsity Bowling team. He entered as an individual through Port Chester, showing up to their matches and practices throughout the season. He competed in Sectionals on February 15, along with about 150 other people. As an individual, he had to place in the top 3 in order to move on to States. Vasile scored 145, 221, 145, 165, and 203, placing somewhere around 50. "I was frustrated because I knew I could've done better, but I still had fun because I was with a bunch of people I knew," Vasile noted.

Although the winter season is over for Blind Brook, the teams look forward to rebuilding during the off-season as they keep their eyes on the prize: Sectional Championships.

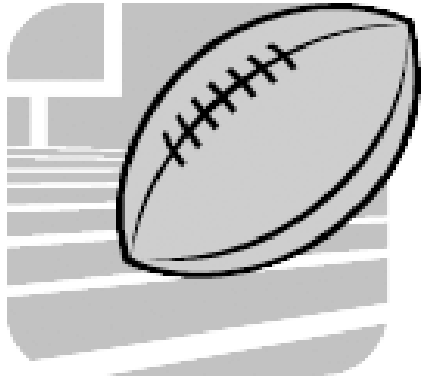
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# Superbowl XLII: A Big Win for the Underdogs

By Zach Held



The New York Giants' thrilling win over the New England Patriots was the most-watched Super Bowl ever, with Nielsen Media Research reporting 97.5 million viewers. The game had all the necessary ingredients: a tight contest with an exciting finish involving a team that was attempting to make history as the NFL's first unbeaten team since 1972. Thus, fans were driven to the game because no matter what the outcome was, the result would somehow affect football history.

Had the Patriots won the game, they would have become the first team to ever go 19-0 in a season. They would also have been the first team since the 1972 Miami Dolphins to play an undefeated season. The Dolphins went 14-0, while the Patriots, after a two game season extension in 1978, went 16-0 in the regular season.

On the other hand, fans knew that if the Giants won, the game would go down as one of the greatest upsets in sports history. Big Blue finished its season at 10-6, without capturing the Division Title. Thus, the Giants, a wild card team, were up against the odds, facing the Patriots, a team they had lost to during the regular season, a team with three Super Bowl trophies in their possession from the last decade, and a team who was just one game away from an undefeated season.

The Patriots, for the most part, slid through the playoffs, as many sports fans had expected. They skipped the first round after earning a bye. They went on to breeze past the Jaguars in the second round, 31-20, as Patriot quarterback Tom Brady set a record for single-game completion percentage at 92.9 percent. Finally, the Patriots overcame a sloppy, three-interception performance by Brady to defeat the San Diego Chargers.

The Giants, on the other hand, surprised most people by making it to the Super Bowl. In the first round of the playoffs, they defeated the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. After that game, fans watched the miracles begin. The Giants faced off against the Dallas Cowboys, who had won the Division, pulling out a 21-17 victory that almost slipped out of their hands before Giants cornerback R.W. McQuarters intercepted a pass into the end zone with

nine seconds left, turning away a last-ditch drive by Dallas quarterback Tony Romo. Dallas had defeated the Giants twice in the regular season. The Giants then headed to Lambeau Field where they took on the Green Bay Packers, a team that defeated them in the regular season by 22 points. The Giants pulled off another unexpected victory after kicker Lawrence Tynes, who had missed two field goals that day, nailed a 47-yard field goal in overtime.

Regardless of their playoff run, the Giants still headed to Arizona as the underdogs. Many people saw the NFC playoffs as a competition of who would lose to the Patriots, as their dominance seemed unstoppable. The New Englanders led the NFL in points per game, with an average of 36.8. They defeated every team they faced by an average of 20 points. The Giants, meanwhile, averaged almost 14 points less a game.

However, the improbable became reality at University of Phoenix Stadium, as the Giants completed one of the most remarkable playoff runs in NFL history with an upset of the previously unbeaten Patriots, 17-14. The Giants opened up the game with a record-setting nearly ten minute drive that ended in a field goal. The Patriots struck back on their next drive, holding the ball until the end of the first quarter, before scoring on a short run by running back Laurence Maroney.

The game remained scoreless from that point on, until the fourth quarter. The Giants' offensive line awoke in the fourth when they went on an eighty-yard drive in six minutes that concluded with a pass to David Tyree for a touchdown, putting the Giants ahead 10-7. After consecutive drives ending in punts, the Patriots scored on a pass to wide receiver Randy Moss, who had been kept quiet for most of the game. The Patriots led 14-10 with just 2:42 left to play.

Giants Quarterback Eli Manning had to get his team down the field and score a touchdown in order to win the game. Since joining the NFL, Manning had dealt with nothing but criticism from the media and had been regarded as a bust by many critics, while his older brother Peyton Manning gained legendary status as the Super Bowl winning quarterback of the Indianapolis Colts. Thus, Manning had the ball in his hands with not only a championship on the line, but his reputation, as well.

After a couple incomplete passes and a very close fourth down conversion that could have ended the game, the Giants found themselves with over 60 yards to go and under a minute and a half left in the game. The Patriots defense stepped up, forcing

Manning to scramble out of the pocket on first down and causing an incompletion on second down. On third down, Manning barely avoided a sack, escaping from the Patriots' defensive linemen to make a 32-yard pass to wide receiver David Tyree. Tyree miraculously held onto the ball while falling backwards onto Patriots defenders. Moments later, the Giants were in the red zone with about forty seconds left. Manning threw a fading pass to receiver Plaxico Burress to put the Giants in front, 17-14, securing their Super Bowl victory, an

improbable one to say the least.

Twelve-point favorite New England Patriots will have to wait until next season to put behind a near perfect season overshadowed by a Super Bowl loss and allegations of illegally taping opponents' defensive signals in the season-opener against the New York Jets. The Giants found the answer to the suddenly imperfect Patriots: a big, bad defense and an improbable comeback led by their boyish quarterback who grew up right before fans' eyes.

## Athlete of the Month: Miles Fisher

By Melissa Kaliner

The Blind Brook Trojans Varsity Boys' Basketball team won the League Championship this season, boasting an overall record of 16-4 including a 9-1 League record. Though the Trojans fell short in Sectionals, the League Championship banner the team earned this year will forever hang in Blind Brook's gymnasium. The banner and the team's number one seed in Sectionals would not have been possible without relentless hustle from senior Co-captain Miles Fisher.

Fisher's love for basketball began around the age of four. Since then, he has played in countless leagues and summer programs, including a basketball camp at St. Joe's University in Philadelphia for the past two summers. He proved his talent to the Varsity Coach at the end of his sophomore year, moving up from JV to Varsity for Sectionals.

Recently, Fisher was named the "Player Young Kids Should Emulate" among Class C Varsity Basketball athletes by *The Journal News* in recognition of his patience and knowledge when it comes to running the Trojans' offense. In addition, Fisher was honored at the County Center on March 1, as a member of the Class C All-Section team, and also won All-League.

Fisher was not only one of the team's most prolific scorers, averaging 6.7 points per game, but he also exhibited leadership and an unwillingness to quit.

Though the Trojans finished their regular season playing some of the best basketball in Section I, having capped an eight-game win streak in their

last regular season game, their road to success was not without challenges. The team began their season down 0-2, sustaining losses to Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry. However, with Fisher's determination, the team bounced back to win the following eight games.

"In the beginning of the year we lost games early because we didn't focus in practice," Fisher said. "We really became motivated after those losses, responding with hard work in our practices, where we pushed each other to a whole other level."

As Fisher's teammates will tell you, his contributions to the team were not limited to the basketball court. While Fisher



Photo/Thomas Ferrer

often manned the helm as the team's starting point guard, his positive attitude was also contagious. He played hard, whether at practice or in a game, and set an example for the rest of his teammates.

"Miles' leadership abilities establish the tone for each game," said junior teammate Joe Magliano, "and he is able to get everyone pumped up and ready to play."

Fisher tries to stay as positive as he can when coaxing the underclassmen, and before each game, he gives a speech to psyche up the team. He tries to motivate his teammates by pointing out opponents' flaws and encouraging everyone to give it their all.

"It's sad to know that this is my last time playing basketball for Blind Brook," Fisher said. "After this, no basketball will ever be as competitive or as meaningful."



## Sports Section

Sports Editor: Lisa Ganz

## Athletic Merger Programs Here to Stay

By Lisa Ganz

Worried discussions among student athletes have been circulating throughout the halls at Blind Brook for several months now. These students have been trying to figure out the truth behind the Trojans' Athletic Merger Programs, battling rumors that those teams may be cut. Due to Blind Brook's small size, the district has been trying to figure out how it can provide the most athletic opportunities to students at a reasonable price. On December 3, 2007, the Board of Education gave a presentation on Blind Brook's athletic mergers (K-12). They presented a plan for the school's mergers, while substantiating that no teams will be cut.

Since 1993, Blind Brook has been involved in merger programs, the first of which was football. That first year, the Trojans had one Varsity Football player and four Modified players. Between 1993 and 2000, Blind Brook merged its football team with host school Rye Neck, with 4-15 players participating in the program. Needless to say, the merger was discontinued in 2000 when the school built their own program.

At the same time, between 1996 and 1998, Blind Brook merged with host school Rye for ice hockey. This team led to a merger between Rye Neck, Port Chester, and Blind Brook, coined Rye Town.

This team became the current Blind Brook, Rye Neck, Harrison, known as the Rye Town/Harrison, merger. Since 1997, the girls' swimming team has merged with Rye, with 2-5 swimmers participating from Blind Brook. In the past three years, the school has added wrestling, gymnastics, and boys' swimming mergers, hosted by Rye.

Other districts in the area do not require a minimum number of students to run their merger programs, nor do most charge a fee to play. As the popularity of Trojan sports began to increase, in part due to the swell of new options, the district faced increasing monetary costs.

Despite the fact that the expenses are divided among districts, they are expensive to run on a per pupil basis, especially sports such as ice hockey for which ice time is expensive. However, the school recognized advantages of the merger programs—opportunities Blind Brook cannot offer, interaction with a diverse community of athletes, a shared cost of renting facilities, a sense of team, a potential feeder program for the development of future in-house programs. Therefore, cutting any of the teams did not seem a viable solution.

"Our goal was to strike a balance," James Spano, Director of Health, Physical Education, and Interscholastic Athletics said. "We had to find a compromise."

The school came up with a

\$2,000 cap. This means that the district pays up to \$2,000 for any child. If the student's expenses are \$2,200, for example, the district will pay \$2,000 and the family of the child will pick up the remaining \$200. The compromise is not expected to affect an overwhelming majority of student athletes, as the per student expenses for wrestling and gymnastics for the 2006-2007 season were under \$2,000. However, the expense for a participant in ice hockey or swimming was \$2,784 and \$3,342, respectively. Spano added that the more participants involved, the more the price goes down. Thus, Blind Brook is trying to publicize sports by putting out flyers and having students encourage their friends to participate.

"I have become extremely close with the girls from Rye," said Taylor Fuller, who has been on the Varsity Gymnastics team for five years. "We have our own little family, and I am sad that next year most of the girls I have been on the team with since the beginning will be gone. The merger program has helped me meet people I otherwise would not have become friends with."

At least for now, student athletes need not worry about their teams being cut. The district supports these merger teams and encourages their continuation as a staple part of Blind Brook athletics.

## One Point Short of Taking Home the Gold Ball

Continued from page 5

team could overcome its opponent's defense, sending the game into overtime.

"Our defense was straight up man to man," said Caley. "The person on Shields [Levine] played her like glue, and the girl on the other forward doubled down on Shields when she got the ball. The two guards collapsed on Brittany as well."

Haldane senior Avery Zivic scored four of her 13 points in overtime, securing her team a 40-38 lead. Caley answered Zivic with two free throws, tying the score once again with 40.1 seconds remaining. On Haldane's final possession, Shields drove past Mikva, who led the Trojans with 14 points, nine rebounds, and five blocks, and was swarmed by three defenders.

Shields was fouled and sank her second free throw. With under five seconds left, senior Justine Matthews passed in the direction of Mikva and senior Co-captain Ali Matthews, but the pass was deflected, ending the Lady Trojans' hope for a last second victory.

"At the end, the plan was to get the ball in my hands and have me dribble, penetrate down the middle, and look for one of the forwards at the blocks, but they double teamed me so I ended up having to give it to Justine," Caley noted. "Justine's pass to Keren was smart with that little amount of time left, but then they were draped on Keren. It was just pretty chaotic in the last 10 seconds, and they played good defense."

All six graduating seniors were honored for their contributions this season. Levine received the All-Section award, and was named to the All-Tournament team at the County Center. Caley was awarded All-League, in addition to making the All-Tournament team, as well. Mikva received All-Section Honorable Mention, as Ali Matthews got All-League and Justine Matthews and senior Diana Triglia received All-League Honorable Mention.

Next season looks to be a rebuilding year for Blind Brook. With no seniors on the team, the Lady Trojans will rely on incoming junior Samara Meyers, who had eight points in the Sectional Finals. The leadership and talent of this tight group of seniors will be sorely missed.

tion, and energy. "We had great participation, and smiling faces all evening. Food was eaten and there was lots of cheering," said Mango. "Mission accomplished and tremendously successful."

## Spirit Night is a Success



Photo/Eddie Licitra

Middle school students enthusiastically cheer on the varsity athletes.

By Jason Pardes

Two hundred cheers arose for the Trojans on Friday, January 25, as Blind Brook Middle School students took part in Middle School Spirit Night. From 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM, the Commons and high school gymnasium were congested with excited middle school students. Community organization Project Prevention joined with the middle school administration and parents to plan the night, which brought middle school students together for a pizza dinner and pep rally for the Girls' and Boys' Varsity Basketball games against Albertus Magnus and Tuckahoe, respectively.

The event, which began last year, is "really all about spirit and getting in touch with the school," according to Elaina Mango, a parent who helped to organize the event. Blind Brook's Cheerleaders and Dance Team members

Painted the middle schoolers' faces in red, white, and blue before the games and kept up enthusiasm with cheers and half-time performances. Between the two games, students participated in knock hockey and various raffles.

Despite all of the alternate activities available, most students were

content cheering on the basketball players. In the first game, the Lady Trojans lost 24-46. Though they were led by senior Co-captain Sam Levine who put up six points, the team was unable to hold down Magnus junior Alaina Walker, who had 17 points.

"I was disappointed when we didn't win the game," said sophomore Jennifer Jond, "but I wasn't so upset when I looked to the crowd and saw so many fans cheering for us."

The boys proceeded to take the floor against one of their rivals, Tuckahoe. The Trojans won, 46-32, giving them confidence heading into the teams' next matchup in Sectionals at the County Center. Senior Co-captain Brett Patero led the team with 12 points and 10 rebounds, followed by senior Alex Piperis who finished with nine points and four steals and senior Co-captain Miles Fisher who added eight points, seven assists,

and four steals. The energy radiating from the fans, as well as from the players, helped hold Tuckahoe senior Robert Johnson to just eight points, a stark contrast to his season average of 22.5 points per game.

"Playing against a team like Tuckahoe, we were already pumped up, but seeing and hearing all of the fans there made the experience that much better," junior Rob Magliano explained.

The game was the third straight win for the Boys' Varsity Basketball team, and after this victory, the winning streak was extended to 8 games. The team attributes much of its success to the support of the fans.

The entire night was overwhelmingly successful. About 200 middle schoolers attended, enjoying the games, as well as the prizes and DJ. The students were able to win 12 basketballs (6 signed by each of the two basketball teams' players), and each student took home red, white, and blue pom-poms.

"All of the middle school students coming out and supporting the varsity teams was great to see," said sophomore Melanie Urban, a fan who sat among the middle schoolers. "It showed school spirit and support for our sports."

Organizers of the event hope that it helped connect middle school students with the high school that they will shortly be attending. Spirit Night also enabled the Varsity Basketball players to set an example for incoming students, displaying passion, dedica-

# Features

Features Editor: Corinne Segal

## Apple Craze

By David Levinson

Nowadays, the sleekest, and savviest items seem to always disappear off the shelves quickest. Apple, a frontrunner in the tech-age and led by visionary Steve Jobs, has set the standards for innovation. Over the past decade, Apple has churned out many products such as the iPod, iTunes, and iChat. The company has, in fact, revolutionized the way we, as consumers, view the world of technology.

Apple made innovation a matter of style and simplicity. Not only are their iPods the best-looking MP3 players, but they also appeal to the masses because of how simple they are to handle. Jobs recognized that older generations did not grow up in a digital world, and thus developed Apple to be accessible to all ages.

Apple dominates the MP3 market and currently owns about 70% of the market share. The company, however, takes its brand far beyond just the iPod boundaries. The Instant Message, or "IM," which just a decade ago represented cutting edge technology, seems dated. iChat is the new fad, and Apple is making a fortune off of the "IM evolution." Previous efforts in the field of visual communication software for computers never quite took off in the consumer market, but this did not discourage Apple. Instead, Apple innovators made iChat simple and fun. Video-chatting seemed futuristic just a couple years ago, yet now, thanks to Apple, users across the country are taking advantage of this new technology.

While listeners have always craved new portable music devices, the iPod has become more than just a want; it has become a need. When your iPod breaks, do you just let it sit there, defunct, while it rots? Nine times out of ten you immediately get in your car and race to the Genius Bar at the Apple store in the Westchester Mall so the highly trained Apple medical staff can nurse the sad face on your iPod back to health.

Sharper Image (which interestingly is now declaring bankruptcy) used to be the place to play with all the futuristic tech toys, but now the spot to be is the Apple Store. With oversized iPhones on its windows, the entire store garnished in snow white, and a staff wearing matching clothing, the Apple Store is like climbing into an actual Apple product. The company is consistent with everything it does from its website to its packaging to the turtle-neck shirts Steve Jobs wears everyday.

But aside from the stylish and simple aspect of Apple's products, what is it that captures everyone's wallets and wishes? People are dependent upon Apple's products because they make life easier. Compare a computer screen of a PC to that of a Mac. Not only is the latter more aesthetically pleasing, but it is also much smoother in its operation. Essentially, Apple is simple yet stylish and powerful yet sleek. The company has become a virtual genius at pinpointing exactly what consumers want and churning out products that satisfy these needs.

Several years ago, when you saw the Macintosh logo on a computer, chances are that you looked at it condescendingly. It never matched up to the PC. Once Jobs developed the first iMac model, that colorful box that Zoolander could not find his way into, Apple won a new reputation. For me, I used to want a new cool Dell or Sony laptop for college. But now, my eyes are on a Mac so I will be able to keep in touch with friends through iChat, play around on GarageBand, and steer clear of all those nasty viruses that plague PCs.

As long as people desire what is smallest and most functional, Apple will continue to be a pioneer and a leader in the field of technology. Showing no signs of slowing down, Apple recently created the MacBook Air, the world's slimmest laptop ever. The only question left is what will Jobs and his team of experts excite us with next?

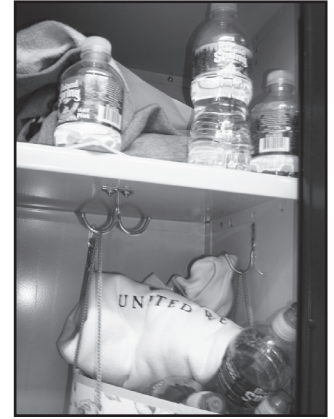


## Student Journal:

### What's That Smell?



Photos/Nicole Jablon



By Eric Schulkin

In our fair Blind Brook High School, we don't see many problems that ordinarily plague larger schools. Sure, there is the occasional unpopular Board of Education decision, but for the most part, our school and community are generally peaceful. Or at least that's what I thought, until I caught wind (literally) of what was growing inside several of the sophomore lockers.

When I look back at my note-pad for that day, I see that the first thing I wrote is the word "Pungent!" My second note: "Appears to be some kind of spoiled food." Little did I realize that the item in question, which I observed on the floor of the sophomore locker area, was only part of a trilogy of smelly catastrophes I would encounter.

A number of eyewitnesses stated that this thing on the sophomore locker area floor, which will be hereafter referred to as "The Thing," was originally made up of pieces of a banana wrapped in tinfoil, safely stored in a compartment above Locker 522. It was released from its imprisonment by several unwitting sophomores and proceeded to stink up the entire hallway.

The second of these incidents occurred at Locker 16. Its contents consisted of several different lunches, which had melded together over a period of several months. Their combination was at first an accident, but as time went on, several other students decided to add their own contributions to the mix, creating quite a "unique" smell, to put it mildly.

In addition to "The Thing" and Locker 16, I discovered one more item of olfactory offensiveness that completed my triumvirate of stink. Sophomore

Jack Stanton was kind enough to point me in the direction of the compartment above Locker 585, where we found a simple container. After commenting that it had been there for awhile, Stanton opened the container. The word repulsive does not begin to describe the odor; in fact, it likely was the worst smell I have ever encountered in my life. My companion was immediately bowled over from the stench, while it took every sense of composure I had left to write down, "Locker Number 585: SOMETHING AWFUL."

Upon closer inspection, and after carefully plugging my nose, I observed that the contents of the bowl had once been rice pudding, but had since developed a greenish-brown mold on its surface. The pudding, to which I shall assign no cute nickname because, frankly, it scares me, remains above Locker 585 while I am writing this article.

I sat down with Blind Brook Facilities Manager, Vincent Camporeale, to talk about these hygienic problems. He said that the locker hygiene problems were "totally up to the student." In order to prevent these incidents, he added, "Students should be involved with each other" to keep their area clean.

An effort should be made to find the perpetrators of these olfactory infractions, but more importantly, this message should be sent to the student body: a lot of people come into this school every day, so let's not make it unpleasant for them by stuffing food into lockers and leaving it there for months. Please, for my sake, that of the custodians, and that of the entire student body, keep our school clean. Is that really such a hard thing to do?

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## Features Section

Features Editor: Corinne Segal

### ***Blind Brook Speaks Out***

Quotes compiled by Kate Citron

### ***Should the school extend the code of conduct beyond school grounds and hours?***



Photo/Samantha Park

"The school only has the right to interfere with what happens at school. Whatever happens off campus is to be regulated by the police and parents. The school shouldn't punish someone if they hear they did something. It's not direct evidence. Isn't it wrong to punish someone for a rumor?"

— **Spencer Jardine**  
Freshman



Photo/Blythe Duckett

"What kids do outside of school is beyond the school's jurisdiction. It is also an insult to many parents, basically saying that they can't control and guide their children."

— **Diksha Nagia**  
Sophomore



Photo/Blythe Duckett

"Extended codes of conduct have existed at BBHS in the past in the form of contracts with varsity athletes. I think these are perfectly reasonable, as the athletes represent leaders and role models...Consequences for violating the terms of the contract are easily enforced without taking away from academic learning. I think anything more becomes difficult to impose and enforce."

— **Thomas Glickman**  
Physics Teacher



Photo/Marnie Blum

"The school should not punish you for what you do outside school. It is our parents' job to discipline us outside of school, and in school it is the school's job to issue our punishments."

— **Jennifer Rakoff**  
Junior



Photo/Blythe Duckett

"If a kid is already going to get in trouble by the law for something he does out of school, why should the school doubly punish him? It's a matter of who does the parenting – parents, or the school system?"

— **Andrew Becker**  
Senior

## Cheating: BBHS Comes Clean

By Kristina Creadore

Years ago, cheating on a test involved copying the paper of the person in the next row over or writing information in between fingers and on the palm of a hand. While this can still occur, new technology has changed the way students are able to give themselves an advantage over other test-takers.

According to the Blind Brook Family Guidebook for the 2007-2008 school year, "Cheating is based upon the idea that competing for a grade, not mastering material or skills, is what really matters...Blind Brook recognizes that cultural forces and academic pressures tempt or even encourage students to cheat."

Cheating constitutes using or providing someone with unlawful outside aid to complete an assignment or test. This aid may include others' work, sources which are not cited correctly, or information stored in technological devices.

On Blind Brook's four-level discipline system, cheating is classified as a Level II offense. It is grouped with infractions that include gambling, cutting class, minor theft, defacing school property, and verbal abuse of teachers or peers. Level II misconduct is described in the Family Guidebook as "misbehaviors whose frequency or seriousness tends to disrupt the learning climate of the school and to affect seriously the student's own education."

In this age of rapidly advancing technology, cheating has been transformed. Christopher Griffin, Director of Counseling and Guidance, said that new technology such as cell phones can help students to cheat.

"Technology has created different ways to cheat," Assistant Principal Jane Wermuth said. "However, I don't think students are more or less inclined to cheat because of it."

**"My policy in my classroom is always that honesty is the best policy... It's better to say you didn't do the work than to cheat and get it done..."**

— **Christina Colangelo**  
English and Drama teacher

"I've seen times when people used their cell phones to cheat, but for the most part people rely on whispering and hand signals," said sophomore Tyler Ketchabaw.

Another technology that has helped students to cheat is the use of TI-83 or TI-84 graphing calculators, which students are required to own for high school math courses. Information, such as formulas, can be stored in the memory of these calculators. In an effort to combat cheating, exam proctors often check that

the memory on all calculators has been cleared before a test or quiz.

Two years ago, a group of 11th grade students in a Math 3 class were caught trying to use formulas stored on their calculators during a midterm. "The punishment was exactly what the Family Handbook says to do: a zero," said Math Department Coordinator Michael McCarvill.

If a teacher or proctor suspects that a student is cheating, he/she must use a Conduct Referral Form to report the incident to the Principal. A meeting is then set up with the student, Principal and/or Assistant Principal, and possibly the teacher, to examine the situation. The student's counselor and parents are notified and a report of the student's disciplinary referrals is sent monthly to the counselor, Principal, and Superintendent following the incident.

Possible consequences in-

clude counseling, a conference with the student's parents, suspension in or out of school, and removal from activities or sports. In addition, the student will receive a 0 on the assignment or test. If the student is a junior or senior, instances of premeditated cheating are documented on his or her permanent record and college transcript.

Christina Colangelo, a teacher in the English department, said that cheating often backfires for students in the future. "My thoughts on cheating are that eventually it catches up with the student," she said. "Eventually when you don't have the opportunity to cheat, you're not going to know [the information] and you're not going to do well."

"My policy in my classroom is always that honesty is the best policy," she added. "It's better to say you didn't do the work than to cheat and get it done."

Griffin related cheating in school to the use of illegal performance-enhancing drugs in baseball. "The greater the stakes, the more inclined people are to cheat," he said.

When asked how prevalent the administration considers cheating to be, Wermuth replied, "Honestly, I don't know how widespread it is."

Griffin responded similarly, saying, "I don't know how to answer that. It's pretty common to exchange home-

Please turn to page 14

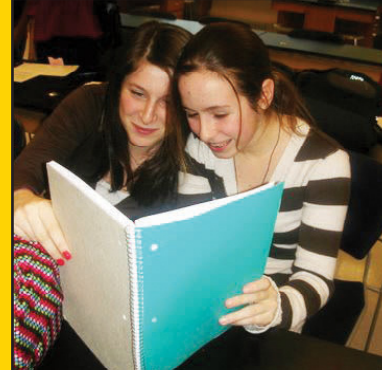
# DARWIN DAY

Photos/ Stephanie Sherry



# STUDENTS

Photos/ Taylor Fuller, Victoria Ferrer and Stephanie Sherry  
Layout/ Ashley Woychowski



# Foreign Language Week

La Noche de las Películas Extranjeras por Manuel Dávila-Molina y Marc FINDER

Uds. ya saben que aquí en Blind Brook, estudiamos muchas lenguas extranjeras. Por eso, vamos a honrar la semana dedicada a todos estos idiomas. Por todo el país, los colegios públicos celebran "La Semana de las Lenguas Extranjeras". La primera semana de marzo es un tiempo para reconocer y celebrar la diversidad de las culturas y lenguas que estudiamos en Blind Brook.

Habrà muchos juegos y eventos divertidos durante esta semana. Por ejemplo por la mañana cuando se hacen los anuncios, habrá preguntas a cerca de culturas y países diferentes; se harán los anuncios en diferentes lenguas. También habrá dos cafés especialmente organizados por los departamentos de francés e italiano. Nosotros del departamento de español les vamos a ofrecer una experiencia única "La Noche de las Películas Extranjeras".

Esta noche está convirtiéndose en una tradición común en la cual las clases de español, AP y 4 honores, escriben, actúan, redactan y producen sus propias películas. Los temas son muy diferentes, pueden ser cuentos favoritos de nuestra juventud o historias que hemos leído en clase. Tu puedes haber oído o visto algunas de las favoritas que se han presentado anteriormente, como: "La Bella y la Bestia", "Robin Hood" y "Continuidad de los Parques". Van a haber muchas películas nuevas en español este año en esta Noche de las Películas Extranjeras, por ejemplo, "Cinderella", "Shrek", "Star Wars" y otros también. Van a ser presentadas en el Auditorio el Martes 18, y cualquier estudiante y familia que quiera ir, será muy bienvenido (¡no tienes que pagar!) Y si alguna de las otras clases de lenguas quiere producir su propia película nosotros con mucho gusto la exhibiremos. Si tienen preguntas, por favor hágasela a la Sra. Brennan-Juana. ¡Nos vemos!

**Porque Te Quiero**  
Por Benjamin Engle  
Pruebo todos los días.  
Vivo todos los días.  
Pruebo ganar tu corazón.  
Pienso de ti todos los días.  
Pero nunca gano.  
Pero la lucha continúa.  
Pero siempre me apartas.  
Pero no estás a mi alcance.  
Porque te quiero.

**Sueño contigo**  
Tú eres el número uno en mis ojos.  
Deseo ser el número uno en tus ojos.  
Deseo que tú sueñes conmigo.  
Pero nunca gano y la lucha continúa.  
Porque te quiero

Quiero pasar tiempo contigo.  
Quiero viajar por el mundo contigo.  
Te puedo mostrar el mundo.  
Cuando yo estoy contigo,  
tengo un sentimiento indescriptible  
Porque te quiero

Me completas.  
Porque te quiero.

**La Naturaleza**  
Por Aaron Prusak  
Hermosa natural  
En formas de aguas cristalinas  
Montañas pintorescas que tocan el cielo azul  
Playas con arenas blancas y finas  
Bosques con árboles grandes  
Selvas con animales raros  
La cosecha que toman de la tierra  
Estos regalos son de la naturaleza  
Contaminación del aire y del agua  
Calentamiento global  
Talar los árboles y bosques  
Químicas de los aerosoles  
Muchos especies de animales en peligro  
Estos problemas vienen de los seres humanos  
La salvación del medio ambiente  
Es el regalo que podemos dar

**La Valeur de la Patience**  
Par : Corinne Segal  
J amie Farquhar

Quand ils étaient jeunes, il y a très longtemps.  
L'Éléphant et le Léopard, à la jungle ils habitent.  
Mais le problème: c'est qu'ils étaient différents.  
L'Éléphant était lent, et le léopard, vite.

Si on voyageait en Afrique, on verrait  
Les deux, ensemble, matin et nuit.  
Ils parlaient et jouaient dans le soleil  
L'Éléphant et le léopard étaient de meilleurs amis.

Un jour, ils marchaient vers l'eau  
Le léopard a commencé à courir  
L'éléphant a dit, « Attends! Je suis trop gros! »  
Mais le Léopard ne s'est pas arrêté, il devait rire.

Après quelque temps, il a trouvé  
Qu'il était perdu, sans ses amis  
« Si seulement je ne me dépêchais pas, » il pensait.  
J'aurais l'Éléphant et de l'eau dans ma vie.

Quand il a trouvé le lac, il n'avait plus d'eau.  
Mais il a vu L'éléphant, et a écouté ces mots

« Voilà la leçon, » l'Éléphant a dit,  
« Je marche lentement,  
Mais si tu avais attendu tes amis,  
Tu aurais de l'eau finalement. »

**Le Léopard et L'Hippopotame**

Il était une fois un léopard supérieur,  
Qui pense qu'il est le roi de la terre.  
Les autres animaux étaient inférieurs.  
Finalement, son arrogance le coûtait son état super.

Un jour il a parlé aux autres animaux,  
Parmi la foule il y avait un hippopotame.  
Le léopard a dit, « Je suis le plus beau !  
J'ai envie de toutes les femmes ! »

Puis, il a dit, « Je suis le plus vite,  
Et je suis le plus fort de tout le monde ;  
En comparaison de moi, vous êtes petits. »  
Alors, l'hippopotame a dit, « Apprends ! »

L'hippopotame a continué à dire « C'est peut-être vrai,  
Mais tu n'es pas le meilleur en toutes les choses que tu penses.  
Par exemple, je sais que tu n'es pas le meilleur à nager. »  
Le léopard a répondu, « D'accord, bonne chance ! »

Les deux animaux ont décidé de faire courir à travers de la rivière,  
Mais à mi-chemin le léopard commençait à se noyer.  
L'hippopotame l'a sauvé au lieu de finir la première.  
Le léopard a appris qu'il n'était pas le meilleur, comme il a pensé.



- Gennaio** lungo e duro, ma cresce il giorno e cala il buio.
- Febbraio** L'acqua di febbraio riempie il granaio
- Marzo** pazzerello guarda il sole e prendi l'ombrello
- Aprile** aprite le finestre, è nato aprile
- Maggio** Maggio in fiore, in cuore l'amore.
- Giugno** Giugno, la falce in pugno.
- Luglio** In luglio c'è gran caldo, se in gennaio ci fu gran freddo
- Agosto** Se vuoi molto mosto zappa la vigna nel mese di agosto
- Settembre** A settembre si taglia ciò che pende
- Ottobre** Tuoni d'ottobre, verrà un inverno caldo
- Novembre** Novembre pieno di brina il fuoco mi riscalda il petto, ma non la schiena
- Dicembre** Con dicembre troppo bello non lo è poi l'anno novella

## Features Section

Features Editor: Corinne Segal

# Access Denied

By Kristina Creadore

Blind Brook students surf the web for a myriad of reasons. Some conduct research, others value online games, and still other teens use the Internet to check out the latest news or see if they have any new "Wallposts" on Facebook. However, within the school building, some of these options are not viable, due to a network system that restricts students from visiting certain websites.

According to Instructional Technology Coordinator Colin Byrne, "The filters right now block pornography sites, hate sites, game sites, and social networking sites."

"We have a device that actually does our filtering for us," he explained. "Jeff Thomas [the Middle School/High School Network Specialist] maintains it, but I and [Director of Technology]

Christine Burton decide what filters are in place and who has override codes, along with what websites are unblocked."

While the filter system is sometimes viewed as an unnecessary annoyance, there is actually a federal act called the Children's Internet Protection Act, which requires schools to implement filters if they wish to receive federal funding.

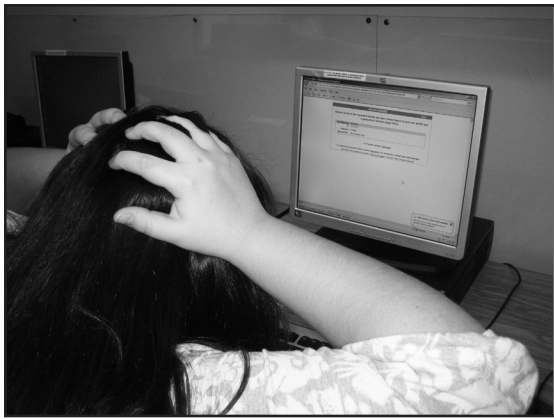
"The company that makes the filter product that we use has preset sites that are blocked," said Byrne. "Something that's not blocked one week may be blocked the next. We try to go back and fix that when it starts blocking things it shouldn't." In addition to the preset filter, the technology department has also blocked additional sites that it believes are inappropriate for use during the school day.

Byrne has acknowledged that no system is perfect. "The filter right now is somewhat rigid and [sometimes] just blocks a key-

word," Byrne said. This means that if a website simply references a game, for example, the site may be accidentally blocked. "If that is the case, we then try to go in and unblock that particular website," he said.

Student reaction to the website filter system is mixed. Senior Luis Blanco said, "I grudgingly agree that the blocks are necessary so that school libraries are actually used for school work. The computers are a limited resource and I don't like it when they're full with people playing games."

Sophomore Jacob Press said



Photo/Michelle Riesenfeld  
**Freshman Nikki Weisblum expresses frustration when her attempt to access a website fails due to the school's web restrictions.**

that some blocked websites containing games should be recognized as potentially beneficial to students. "I think that you should be able to use the games that the computer comes with

because they are more for strategy, not hand eye coordination, especially if no one is waiting to use the computer to do work," he said. "These games have a purpose and are actually beneficial."

Byrne mentioned that teachers in the Health and Social Studies departments have a limited password that enables them to use blocked websites for educational means. "Teachers as a whole, [though], cannot override a blocked website with a password," Byrne said.

"If there is a lot of frustration, come talk to me and I will try to explain why [a certain site] is blocked and if a student has a compelling reason why it shouldn't be, I'll try to work with the student," Byrne said. He added, however, "Everyone should understand this is a school environment and the computers are supposed to be here for educational purposes."

# School Drug Testing: Privacy vs. Policy

By Christina Tempesta

Before Lindsey Earls could attend a meeting of her high school's academic quiz team, she was forced to submit a urine sample, a rule that seemed ludicrous to her.

Ever since her case was taken to the Supreme Court, students in public high schools have wondered how far their right to privacy extends if they are suspected of drug use.

The topic of drug testing in school has received mixed reviews from students. "Testing for drugs based on outside activities is an invasion of privacy," freshman Mark Vavolizza said, "but testing for use of drugs while in school is within the school's right."

Junior Joe Magliano said, "Personally, it wouldn't make a difference, but some students may find it as an invasion of privacy because of their experimentation with recreational drugs and steroids."

In the 2003 Supreme Court case Board of Education vs. Earls, Earls sued Tecumseh High School in Oklahoma for instituting the "Student Activities Drug Testing Policy." The policy stated that students involved in extracurricular activities could be subject to random drug testing. Earls argued that it violated the Fourth Amendment, which protects citizens "against unreasonable searches and seizures."

The Court upheld the policy, giving public school officials the power to administer drug tests at random to students who participate in extracurricular activities. However, the choice of whether to actually do so lies with each individual school.

Although Blind Brook owns breathalyzers that could be used to detect alcohol intake, parental permission is needed before a student can be tested. If a student is suspected to be under the influence of drugs, he will be evaluated in school, his parents will be called, and he will be tested by his own doctor.

As of now, the school only tests students for drug use if they are suspected to be under the influence during school hours. However, the recently proposed extension of the Code of Conduct to beyond the school day caused some students to question whether suspicion for drug use outside of school could warrant in-school testing.

When asked how the extension would affect drug testing policy, Interim Principal William Stark said, "I don't know the answer to that, because it hasn't been defined by the Board."

Stark added that he met recently with the Board of Education to outline a night of community discussion, which is planned to occur in late March. The question of in-school drug testing, he said, could be addressed by the community at this meeting.

Nancy Garretto, the school nurse, stated that Blind Brook does not emphasize punishment for drug use so much as helping students to make positive decisions. "If students are using drugs in school, they are in need of more help than what we can give them," she stated. "However, any help that the school can give them, we do."

Many schools have no testing policies, but those that do often specifically test students who wish to participate in extracurricular activities, especially sports. However, Blind Brook's drug-testing procedures do not differ for athletes.

Athletic Director Jim Spano said, "If the school were to drug test students or athletes, the school board would have to adopt it and the test could only be done with parental permission."

Many in the community believe that issues such as drug use should be dealt with within the home. Sophomore Claudia Treacy stated, "The school should be responsible for us in school and our parents are responsible for us outside of school."

# Cheating: BBHS Comes Clean

Continued from page 11

work. I'm sure [cheating on a test] happens."

Nicole Haber, a Blind Brook graduate and sophomore at University of Southern California, agreed that Blind Brook students are not immune to the temptation to cheat. "Cheating in Blind Brook happens," she said. "It's sad, but kids will do anything to get into college."

In an effort to prevent cheating, some teachers have made use

of Turnitin.com, a website where students can electronically submit their work, which is scanned for plagiarism before being sent to the teacher.

United States History teacher Shelley Jacobson requires her students to submit their essays to Turnitin.com. "It makes people think twice, maybe promotes more honesty," she said.

Chemistry teacher John Latino pointed out an added benefit

of using the website. "There is a time and date standpoint," he said. "[Students] know that they have a deadline to meet, and as far as that goes, that's good for them."

"Teachers need to be proactive," said Griffin. "Students need to be given education, information, and structure." He also added that students should value their own work and education, and practice "intellectual honesty."

In a January 2006 *Focus*

article entitled "Turnitin.com Clamps Down on Plagiarism" by Corinne Segal, Wermuth was quoted as saying, "One of our goals is to impart values. Lying, cheating and stealing are not good values."

This opinion is reasserted in the Family Guidebook, which states, "The school clearly has an interest in students' becoming honest, and honestly devoted to doing their own best work."

## Features Section

Features Editor: Corinne Segal

# Raising Recycling Awareness

By Rebecca Raider

As individuals begin to become increasingly "environmentally-conscious," and "Go-Green" campaigns pick up speed, students have naturally become more concerned with the issue of recycling. Earlier this year, students expressed concern that Blind Brook may have an inadequate recycling system. This prompted the student Congress to attempt to educate the school community about the importance of recycling.

As of February 15, 2008, the State of New York has been spot checking dumpsters to make sure that school districts and individuals are conducting recycling in accordance with the law. Schools who fail to follow these guidelines will be subject to fines.

A representative from the Port Chester Department of Public Works explained, "The only way anybody is fined is if whatever they are recycling is not what we recycle, or anything is mixed, where all their bottles and cans are mixed with newspapers or vice versa."

At a town meeting two years ago, then-junior Matt Sadownick dumped out a recycling bin on the



Photo/Matt Gottlieb

**A student haphazardly drops a gum wrapper into the school recycling bin. The school is trying to raise awareness about the importance of recycling and encourage students to throw their trash into actual trashcans.**

auditorium stage to show the large amount of trash that had been mistakenly dumped there instead of in trashcans. Science Department teacher and Congress member Julie Hensley helped coordinate this demonstration in order to encourage the Blind Brook community to start making a greater effort when it comes to recycling within

the school building.

Under the 1992 New York State Source Separation Law, all recyclables must be separated from regular garbage. All cardboard must be flattened, bundled, and tied; newspapers must be bagged separately; and office type paper must also be bagged separately. If there are other tra-

ditional recyclables, such as plastic bottles or aluminum cans, they can be grouped together in a separate bag as well.

When asked if Blind Brook was effective at recycling, Blind Brook Facilities Manager Vinny Camporeale said, "Blind Brook is as effective as any other school, maybe even better."

Some students beg to differ. "Blind Brook is very mediocre at recycling," said sophomore Zachary Greenberg. "Students are sometimes careless and don't go out of their way to put things in the recycling bins."

"Personally, I don't believe that Blind Brook is effective at recycling at all," said senior Andrew Becker, President of the student Congress. "I know that if they find one piece of non-recyclable trash in the blue recycle bins, they throw the whole thing out including the recyclable items. I don't think there are enough garbage cans around school, which is a problem because it discourages people from separating their trash from bottles or other things that can and should be recycled."

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ON  
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SATURDAY, MARCH 15	8:00 PM
SUNDAY, MARCH 16	3:00 PM

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# Politics

Politics Editor: Ben Lubkin

## School Codes of Conduct: How Far Can They Legally Reach?

By Daniel Gelfarb

In the fall, the Blind Brook Board of Education announced that it would consider extending the district's Code of Conduct to outside of school, stirring up considerable controversy. The Community Coalition sub-committee released a "White Paper" in mid-February, at the request of the Board, to put the possible Code changes in context. The "White Paper" includes an analysis of the school's legal rights, begging the question of what rights the Board actually has when expanding the school's Code of Conduct.

In the "White Paper's" legal review, district lawyers Keane & Beane P.C. wrote, "Students generally may not be disciplined for conduct which would violate the Code of Conduct when the conduct occurs off campus." The Code is intended to follow New York State law, as interpreted by the courts.

However, the Code goes on to say that "There is an exception to this general rule, however, when the student's behavior has a 'nexus' to school, a school function or other on-campus conduct. A nexus can be found when the conduct 'may endanger the health or safety of pupils within the educational system or adversely affect the educative process.'"

Thus, the key to being able to reprimand students for out of school events is finding a nexus to the school. But finding a nexus can be tricky.

The "White Paper" legal review analyzes two examples of off-campus Code of Conduct breaches. In the first example, two students arrange to have a fight over a weekend, which then carries over into school. Keane & Beane P.C. says that the students might be subject to discipline for the weekend fight if they planned the fight while in school or if the fight was precipitated by an in-school event.

However, if the students first had a fight over the weekend, and then had a "carryover" brawl in school, the students probably would not be disciplined for the weekend quarrel because there was not a sufficient nexus between that fight and the school.

The second example involves underage drinking. Keane & Beane P.C. writes that students who drink off campus during a

weekend or at night probably cannot be disciplined because there is an insufficient connection with the school.

However, if students sign a pledge not to consume alcohol in order to participate on a sports team, they can be expelled from the activity for violating their pledge because it was a requirement to participate.

Though it may be difficult for the school to enforce an extended Code of Conduct, several Blind Brook students expressed concern. Freshman Robbie Winston said, "Most kids are happy when the ninth period bell rings on Friday because they are free from school jurisdiction until Monday."

Senior Sam Levine echoed similar sentiments, saying that the proposed code of conduct "should not be allowed, and I strongly believe disciplining students is the responsibility of the parents."

In 2007, the Supreme Court limited student First Amendment rights and off-campus privileges in its *Morse v. Frederick* ruling. The high court ruled that the free speech rights of Joseph Frederick, an 18 year old student, were not violated when his principal confiscated a banner held off-campus.

On January 24, 2002, students and faculty were allowed to leave classes at Juneau-Douglas High School to watch an Olympic Torch procession. Frederick, a senior at the school, joined his friends on a public sidewalk outside the high school. As television cameras appeared, they unrolled a poster saying "Bong Hits 4 Jesus."

When the students unfurled the banner, Principal Deborah Morse raced to confiscate it. Frederick was suspended from school for eight days, and the Supreme Court found that this was not a violation of Frederick's First Amendment right to freedom of speech. The high court implied that the school could regulate student actions off of school property, and thus set a precedent possibly providing Blind Brook's Board of Education with further off-campus regulation rights.

Though an extension of the Code of Conduct would be legal under law and court rulings, it faces a precarious future. The legal context behind the details of an extended code will remain a key element in future debate.

## How Not to Run a Campaign: The Rudy Giuliani Story

By Dan Levy

For eight months, Rudy Giuliani was the favorite to win the Republican presidential nomination. But around the time of the January 3 Iowa Caucus, Giuliani's stock suddenly began to take a turn for the worse. On January 30, Giuliani dropped out of the race altogether.

How had this happened? How could someone go from a presidential favorite to a drop-out in less than a month? For Giuliani, the answer is quite simple: He had one of the poorest presidential campaign strategies in this country's history.

In today's politics, most prominent officials in local, state, and federal government have at least one political adviser. And the bigger the spotlight, the bigger the team of advisers. A state senator may have a small team, the mayor of a big city may have a larger

one, and a US senator could have an even larger one. But a presidential candidate always has the most comprehensive team of advisers, a team that includes dozens of analysts, publicists, and supporters whose job is to craft the campaign in a way that appeals to voters. And so it is truly remarkable that in this day and age a presidential candidate such as Giuliani, with one of the largest political teams on the planet, could fail on such a massive scale. How could it have happened?

Well, the widespread failure of the Giuliani campaign hinged on one fatal mistake: Giuliani did not campaign for the first two primaries, the Iowa Caucus and the New Hampshire Primary. Although these two states are not extremely important in the grand scheme, they do matter for one big reason: the winners gain early momentum and become more attractive to future voters.

Giuliani had decided to focus his campaign on Florida, the first big state to host a primary. At first, he was doing well, with over a 5 point lead. But then came the Iowa Caucus and the New Hampshire primary, followed by primaries in

Nevada and Michigan. Slowly but surely, as Giuliani fell further and further behind in those states, his lead in Florida evaporated. By the time the Florida primary had arrived, Giuliani's lead had disappeared and he received a meager 15 percent in the primary compared to John McCain's 33 percent. The next day, Giuliani dropped out of the race and endorsed his former rival.

I do admit, in his campaign's defense, that this year was an unprecedented presidential primary season. This was the first time

that "Super Tuesday," a day in which 22 states' primaries and caucuses were clumped together, created a "political circus" of sorts. There is no doubt that there were many advisers on the Giuliani campaign who thought that Iowa and New Hampshire would matter less this year because of the Super Tuesday

frenzy. Yet more advisers on the Giuliani team still told him to listen to history and campaign in Iowa and New Hampshire. He chose not to listen, and was forced to pay the price.

It has, in fact, been quite a strange year. But the bottom line is that Giuliani, who has consistently been described as pigheaded, made some terrible campaign decisions. Not only did his refusal to campaign in Iowa and New Hampshire hurt him, but the fact that he relied on a one-dimensional argument (his touting of his 9/11 record), made him an easy target for criticism. At points, it almost seemed as if he cared about absolutely nothing else.

In the end, Giuliani was laughed off the campaign trail. Unexpectedly, journeyman McCain, whose campaign was originally looked at as somewhat of a farce, is now in position to win the nomination. It all just shows how volatile politics truly are. In something as important as the presidential primary, you better know what you're doing, or you shouldn't bother running at all.



## Calling all Blind Brook graduates and proud parents!

We would like to feature more stories on former Blind Brook students and the interesting paths they are pursuing personally or professionally after high school.

Email us at [focus@blindbrook.org](mailto:focus@blindbrook.org) if you would like to offer an idea!

## Politics Section

Politics Editor: Ben Lubkin

# Weedin' Out the Truth

By Nathan Marrow

Vending machines selling medical marijuana 24 hours a day were unveiled in Los Angeles last month, while a California court recently ruled it legal for employers to fire employees for use of medical marijuana. The latest uncertainty over medical marijuana use in California has led to renewed debate across the nation over the legalization of marijuana for all purposes.

Many students at Blind Brook favor the complete legalization of marijuana. Junior Scott Kaufman said, "If [marijuana] was legalized, it would be a lot safer." Individuals cannot overdose on marijuana, and there have been no cases of natural deaths caused by the drug. However, death is possible if marijuana is laced with other substances.

Studies have also found that smoking marijuana significantly affects the lungs, immune system, as well as a person's personality and ability to learn.

A Blind Brook student who wished to remain anonymous said, "I stopped smoking this year because I was doing it too much, and now my grades are better, so I'm not having second thoughts about quitting." However, another said, "I was doing better in school when I was smoking [marijuana] than after I quit."

There is still debate over the addictiveness of marijuana, as some would say it is far less addictive than other drugs. However, marijuana does have addictive qualities and studies have shown

that 10-14 percent of users will become heavily dependent. Some call marijuana a "gateway drug" because marijuana users are 2-5 times more likely to move on to "harder" drugs than non-marijuana users.

of eye diseases that can lead to blindness, has also been shown to be treatable with marijuana.

Blind Brook High School Social Worker Terry Frank said that marijuana "should definitely be legalized for medical purposes."

**"Clearly our current policies aren't working... perhaps a trial period of legalization that could be regulated and taxed significantly [should be implemented]."**

-Terry Frank  
BBHS Social Worker

New York State currently has a marijuana therapeutic research program, and only 12 states allow the use of marijuana for medical purposes with the consent of a doctor. Cultivation, use, and transportation of marijuana with the recommendation of a doctor have been legal in California since 1996. Marijuana possession, however, for any reason, is illegal under federal law. Thus, California law actually contradicts federal law.

Medical marijuana is used to relieve nausea and loss of appetite caused by AIDS and chemotherapy. Glaucoma, a group

Health Teacher Jill Ben-Porat, on the other hand, said, "The only two medical purposes that I see for [marijuana] are if no other conventional drug is working and if it was in the form of a THC pill. In general, I don't see any advantage to legalizing marijuana."

Tetrahydrocannabinol, better known as THC, is the main active chemical in marijuana and is responsible for causing the "high" associated with the drug. Two medications are currently approved by the FDA that contain THC. Cesamet, approved in 1985, and Marinol, approved

in 1992, are synthetic THC pills used to treat nausea.

Voters in Denver, Colorado passed a measure in 2005 that legalized adult possession of an ounce or less of marijuana. Despite the new law, misdemeanor marijuana arrests rose. In November, voters returned to the polls to pass a proposition that made marijuana offenses the lowest priority of police.

Some foreign countries display lenient policies towards marijuana usage. In the Netherlands, marijuana can be legally purchased in specialized shops. In Canada, the growing of marijuana (the cannabis plant) is illegal, though the use of marijuana is tolerated.

Marijuana use in Alaska was legal for 15 years beginning in 1975, after the state's highest court ruled it legal to possess marijuana for personal consumption. A study done in 1988, however, showed that teen marijuana use in Alaska was twice the national average, and the state soon outlawed the drug. Freshman Zephany Mayell, though, said that "If marijuana was legalized, [usage] would have a slight increase, but not much because people wouldn't think it's as cool."

Frank said, "Clearly our current policies aren't working... perhaps a trial period of legalization that could be regulated and taxed significantly [should be implemented]."

*Additional reporting for this article by Jack Santon.*

## Oh, the Places They Go: Ross Feinstein Class of 2001

By Adam Harris

For a large number of students at Blind Brook, politically apathetic would accurately characterize them. One Blind Brook graduate who broke the mold, however, is Ross Feinstein, an alumnus of the Class of 2001.

Even in high school, Feinstein knew that he had a strong desire to study and one day become active in our nation's political system. He even wrote a senior thesis on the Electoral College. When he entered Union College, Feinstein was able to take his interests to the next level as he majored in political science with a minor in history.

During his summers, Feinstein did the most to take advantage of the opportunity to explore fields that were of interest. After his freshman year, he obtained an internship in the corporate communications office of *The New York Times*. The following summer, he gained another valuable intern-

ship at the US Mission to the United Nations. While working with these esteemed organizations, Feinstein gained not only experience, but valuable contacts as well. Once out of college, he received an opportunity that would cement his career path in politics.

Feinstein was approached after graduation by his co-workers from the US Mission to the UN to interview at the newly created Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). After interviewing, Feinstein received a position as the Deputy Press Secretary/Spokesman for the ODNI. The ODNI was created in April 2005, through the legislation known as "the Intelligence Reform and Ter-

rorism Prevention Act of 2004," in response to intelligence related mishaps. The purpose of ODNI would be to effectively organize and oversee all of the other 16 intelligence-related government agencies, including the CIA, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security. In total, the ODNI currently oversees an intelligence community of 100,000 employees with an annual budget of 43.5 billion dollars.

The head of the ODNI, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), is the President's principal intelligence advisor. Feinstein elaborated that, "The DNI briefs the President 6 days a week and is responsible for making sure all of the agencies are talking with one

another, sharing information, and focused on the appropriate areas."

As a Deputy Press Secretary/Spokesman, Feinstein has watched the ODNI grow from less than 20 employees to the current 1,539 member workforce. During this time, Feinstein has had the opportunity to work with the office's founding director, John Negroponte (now the Deputy Secretary of State), and General Michael V. Hayden (now the Director of the CIA).

In his position, Feinstein works with all major media networks and newspapers, as well as the White House press staff, on issues related to legislation. This includes coordinating official press releases, official responses, and media events. Feinstein explained, "My job does entail a bit of travel with our senior leaders – both domestic and international. My job also requires that I have heightened technological skills – something that has always been my passion."

*Please turn to page 18*



Politics Section

Politics Editor: Ben Lubkin



Photos/Mori Einsidler  
**Above: Model UN members vote during a committee meeting. Left: Club Secretary Julia Whalen represented Belarus at the most recent conference.**

# Obama and McCain Win BBHS Mock Primary

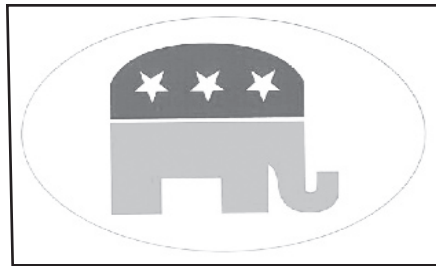
By Joey Goldstein

February 5th, better known to voters as Super Tuesday, marked a giant step for the presidential candidates in securing their party's nominations for the presidency. New York was one of twenty-four states that participated, handing out 281 Democratic delegates and 101 Republican delegates. To win the Democratic or Republican nomination, a candidate must win 2,025 or 1,191 delegates, respectively.

and Republicans were Senators Obama and McCain.

Due to the fact that citizens who take part in New York's primary may only vote for a candidate of their affiliated political party, students were asked to choose which party—Democrat, Republican, or Independent—they would register with. 76 percent registered as Democrats, 16 percent registered as Republicans, and 8 percent registered as Independents. Gender wise, a similar number of males and females affiliated themselves with the Democrats, while nearly twice as many males than females chose the Republican Party. There was no significant difference with the Independents.

In the Blind Brook mock election, Obama defeated Clinton by 69 votes. Of the 113 Blind Brook males associated with the Democratic Party, Obama was overwhelmingly supported, winning 76 percent of the group's vote. The Democratic race was much closer for females, who supported

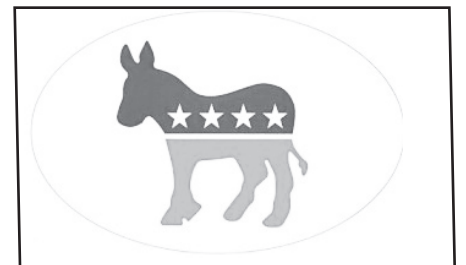


New York's own senator, Hillary Clinton, took home the victory in New York, beating Illinois Senator Barack Obama with 57 percent of the vote. In Westchester County, 52 percent of the vote went to Clinton, with 44 percent going to Obama.

On the Republican side, John McCain easily won all 101 delegates with 51 percent of the vote. Mitt Romney, who has since removed himself from the race, finished second at 28 percent. (Since Super Tuesday, McCain has virtually secured the Republican presidential nomination).

While these are the official results in New York State, do the numbers accurately express the political feelings of Blind Brook High School students? To resolve this question, *Focus* distributed a survey, or "mock election," to students on Super Tuesday.

With 313 students responding from all grade levels, the clear winners for the Democrats



Obama by a margin of 8 percentage points over Clinton, 54 percent to 46 percent. Interestingly, groups of all grade and gender combinations supported Obama over Clinton except for the junior girls, of whom 64 percent supported Clinton.

Of the 50 students who aligned themselves with the Republican Party, Senator McCain was the favorite, garnering 66 percent of the vote. Both males and females favored McCain equally.

## Model UN Hits the Road

By Larry Rosenzweig

On February 3, Blind Brook's Model United Nations club returned from a four day trip to the University of Pennsylvania, where they participated in the Ivy League Model United Nations Conference.

The Model UN club participates in several conferences each year, at which students from around the globe meet to discuss relevant global issues. In the conferences, which are held and organized by universities, each participating school represents one or more UN member country. Students are assigned to committees, where they have the chance to serve as delegates of their school's country and discuss specific issues. Prior to the trips, students research their countries' positions on various topics and write position papers, or essays that state these positions, in order to prepare.

Teachers and other faculty members accompany the students as chaperones. Club Advisor Rebecca Riley, a middle school English teacher, and high school Math Teacher Nicole Simmons, were the faculty supervisors on the most recent trip. Riley has attended multiple Model UN conferences and is very optimistic about the club's progress this year. "I'm really excited about this whole year because I feel we're trying to take our participation to the next level," she said. "I'm also really excited

about the strong number of new members this year; it bodes well for the future of the club."

"I felt it was a great experience seeing my students in a different setting," said Simmons, who had never before gone on a Model UN trip. "I was very impressed with how they handled themselves in their committees."

This fall, the club instituted measures to prepare new members for conferences. Every week during meetings, freshmen and other Model UN novices participated in mock committee sessions and practiced writing position papers. Junior Kevin Becker, the club's Vice-President, stated that "this was the first year the freshmen were prepared and understood what was going on during the conference."

"I partook in many discussions throughout the whole trip and was able to meet and greet new people in a new city," said club member Alex Kellman, a freshman. "...it was a great overall experience."

The recent trip to Penn was the club's second trip this scholastic year; in December, the club went to Harvard, an annual trip.

Senior Dana Silverstein, the club's co-President, said, "Right now, we are planning for our annual day-trip to the UN in the city. This trip is always really informative and also a lot of fun for all the club members."

## Oh, the Places They Go: Ross Feinstein Class of 2001

Continued from page 17

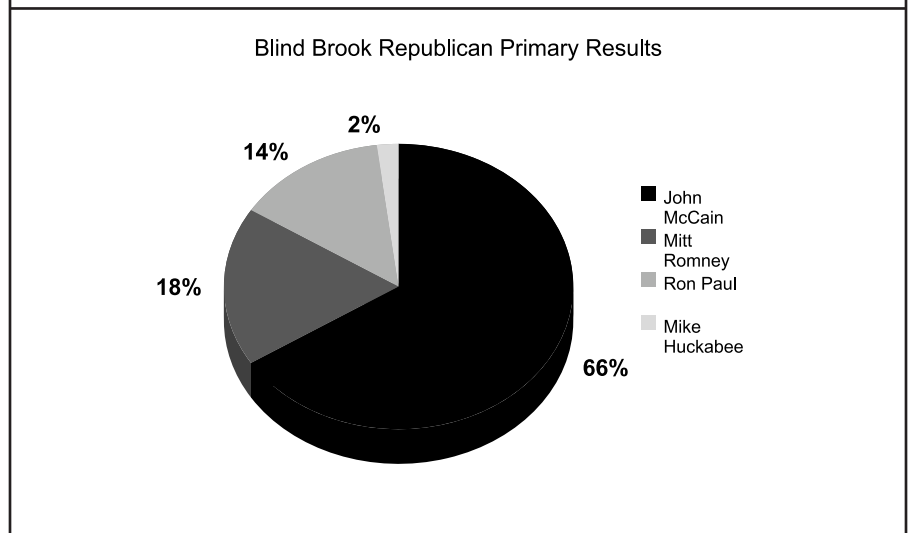
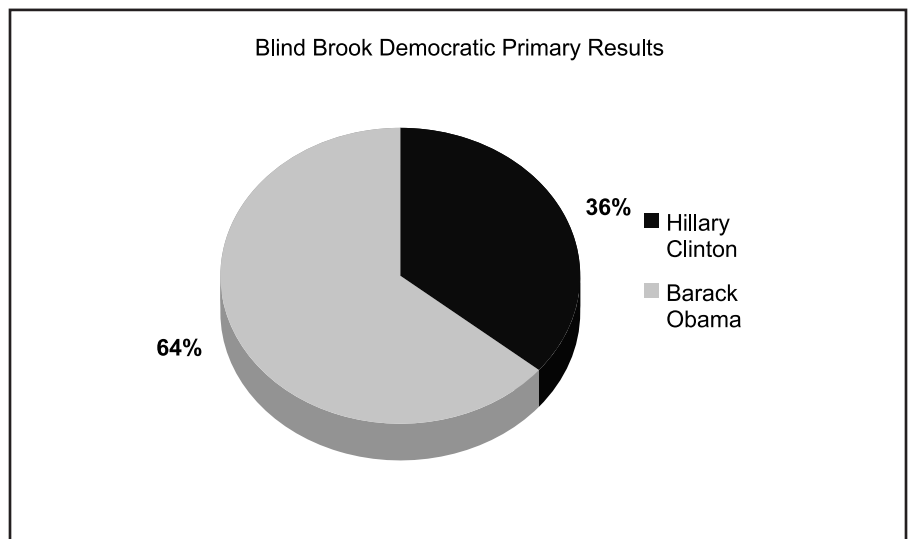
According to Feinstein, some of the most alluring aspects of his job are "the fast pace of the position and the constant interaction with the press on all intelligence matters." He added, "I like the feeling of dealing at times with crisis management."

For other students interested in taking a similar career path, Feinstein says that it is important to be able to multi-task, to be articulate, to write well, and to think on your feet. He said that these were "all the things I learned at Blind Brook."

In particular, he said, "Many teachers were instrumental in my achieving those attributes, including Mrs. Mella, Mrs. Jacobson, Mrs. Curto, Mrs. Jackson, and Mr.

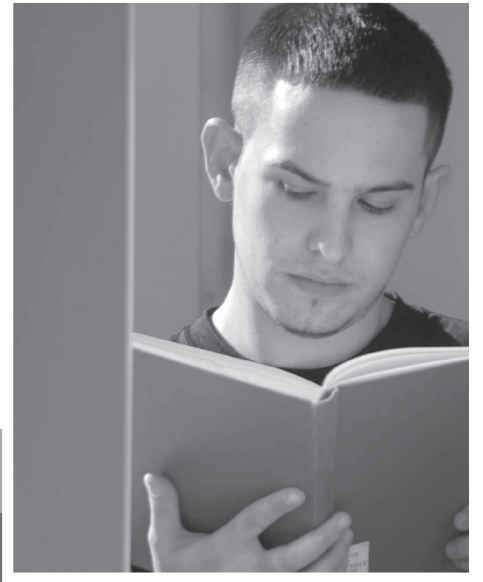
Press." Outside the high school classroom, Feinstein gained valuable experience through his participation in a multitude of extracurricular activities. Feinstein was the editor of the school yearbook, a writer for *Focus*, the web designer and moderator of the school's first website, a four year member of the Mock Trial team, and a class officer.

Since graduating from Blind Brook, Feinstein has accomplished more than he could have bargained for. Today, for Feinstein, accompanying the current Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, to a CNN Late Edition interview is "Just another typical day!"



# Open House on May 20

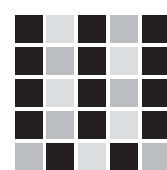
at Westchester Community College



Open House  
5 - 7:30 pm  
914-606-6735

We're opening our doors in a special way, inviting high school juniors, seniors, and parents to tour our beautiful 218-acre campus in Valhalla. Meet students, faculty, and counselors and get started with the registration process.

Find out why more local high school graduates attend Westchester Community College than any other college or university. If you can't attend our Open House, see our video for high school students at [sunywcc.edu](http://sunywcc.edu).



Westchester  
Community College

State University of New York

# Arts & Entertainment

A&amp;E Editor: Chloe Greenbaum



Photos/Eddie Licitra

Senior Andrew Benowich, who plays Tevye in the musical, and junior Stephanie Sherry, who plays Golde, are hard at work helping to build the set.

## An Insider's Look:

# Fifteen Things to Know Before Seeing *Fiddler on the Roof*

By Scott Winston

Every March, my life becomes a little hectic. That might be the understatement of the century; my life becomes very hectic. This, of course, can be attributed to my participation in Blind Brook's spring musical. This commitment always results in forty actors and actresses, and many stage crew and orchestra members, spending more time in school than at home, missing favorite television shows, eating a lot of pizza, and nodding off in class. Even so, each spring we return for another adventure and try to balance out our lives, much like a "fiddler on the roof."

Now, I may have just completely butchered that metaphor, but it is the central theme to this year's musical selection, "Fiddler on the Roof." This show explores how one man, Tevye, deals with his religious traditions and his family in the changing landscape of Tsarist Russia during the early twentieth century. The story centers on Tevye's attempts to maintain his religious beliefs as each of his three oldest daughters choose husbands that move progressively away from established customs.

This show is a moving musical that contains both humor and pathos. *Fiddler* will be my fifth Blind Brook production, and as a departing senior, I thought I would share some important information with you before you come see the show. So without further ado, here are "Scott Winston's Fifteen Things to Know Before Seeing *Fiddler on the Roof*:"

1. The musical is directed by Christina Colangelo (like a superhero, she is Ms. Colangelo by day, Chrissy by afternoon). This is her third Blind Brook production after *Bye Bye Birdie* last spring and *The Crucible* in the fall.
2. Interestingly, the fiddler on the roof is not in fact the star of *Fiddler on the Roof*.
3. Tevye (senior Andrew Benowich) is a poor, Jewish man who loves and provides for his wife, Golde (junior Stephanie Sherry),

and five daughters, Tzeitel (junior Lauren Konigsberg), Hodel (junior Stacey Lurie), Chava (junior Jennifer Rakoff), Shprintze (sophomore Elana Levy), and Bielke (junior Samantha Park).

4. The three men who come to love and be loved by the three eldest daughters are Motel (senior Scott Winston/Me), Perchik (junior Steve Fisher), and Fyedka (senior Kyle MacLean).

5. The characters' names are ridiculously hard to pronounce. "Shprintze" took the cast a particularly long time to figure out. On a related note, Konigsberg does not play a woman named "Pretzel."

6. Shprintze and Bielke are Tevye's two youngest daughters, and are played by Levy and Park, respectively. SHOCKING REVELATION ALERT: Park plays the younger daughter even though she is older than Levy.

7. Blind Brook graduate, Jessie Komitor, who played "Rosie" in last year's *Bye Bye Birdie* and is currently a freshman at NYU-Tisch School of the Arts, returned to the Blind Brook stage to choreograph for the show.

8. *Fiddler on the Roof* was released on Broadway in 1964 and ran for 3,242 performances before closing, a record at the time.

9. The show features some of the most iconic songs in Broadway history including "Tradition," "If I Were a Rich Man," "Matchmaker," and "Miracle of Miracles."

10. Gwen Stefani sampled "If I Were a Rich Man" in her 2004 hit "Rich Girl." One would think that the forty year difference is enough to clue people in that it was not the other way around, but sadly I still hear things backstage like, "Oh my god, they totally just stole that from Gwen Stefani!"

11. The show was nominated for ten Tony Awards and won nine, including Best Musical. Last year, Blind Brook's *Bye Bye Birdie* was nominated for nine Helen Hayes Awards and won two. Coincidence? I think not.

12. In 2004, the show returned to

# The Stubborn Pen is Mightier Than the Sword

By Justin Cohn

On February 12, 2008, picketing members of the Writers Guild of America (WGA) nationwide lay down their signs and unrolled their fists. Behind some closed doors, the Hollywood bigwigs, still dry in the mouth from an estimated loss of \$1.5 billion, signed a tentative agreement, giving writers 2.5% gross of new media (Internet streaming, mostly) sales, among other victories for writers under the Guild.

The strike steamrolled through three months of very important television, and postponed production of popular shows such as *24*, *The Office*, and *Scrubs* (entering its final season). It also reduced the 65th annual Golden Globes to a 30-minute announcement, tainted by jittery E! network hosts, Billy Bush and Nancy O'Dell. The only shows that stayed on air were late night shows, which experienced a giant loss in viewers during the strike. TV was virtually gone, for three entire months, and we all barely survived.

The tentative agreement has, well, tentatively saved some award ceremonies, such as the Film Independent Spirit Awards and the Academy Awards. Shows have begun filming for their postponed seasons. All seems to be well and right with the television world.

But was the strike really necessary? I hate to side with faceless corporate imbeciles who blasted it for having no purpose (Michael Eisner, former CEO of Walt Disney is quoted as saying, "I see stupid strikes and I see less stupid strikes, and I see smart strikes. This is a stupid strike"). But for the menial change that it caused in the contract, it denied the people a very important entertainment source for

three months. Surely, it is a righteous argument, and the writers were fighting for money that they deserve, but they may have lost all that money by forfeiting three months of salary anyways.

The answer may lie behind the notoriously sour relations between producers and writers. The strike began when the writ-



ers and producers got together to settle a new, working contract for the WGA, but could not cut a deal that felt fair to both sides. This has happened twice before, once in 1988 and once in 1960, both times over contract conflicts. In both of these prior instances,

however, the WGA fought for very important reform in writers' pay, including extra salary for material sold overseas and extra salary for the sale of material to television stations.

In this case, the writers did not even reach the contract that they believed they rightly deserved (according to multiple statements by Patric M. Verrone, president of WGA, West). They put thousands and thousands of miscellaneous workers such as makeup artists and camera workers out of work and out of pay, yet what did they really achieve?

I am all for specialized work guilds, and the right to strike, if necessary. Hollywood producers tend to be stingy and iniquitous, there is no doubt about that. The money was rightfully theirs, and the writer's earned that 2.5% pay. But with three months of entertainment, salary, and intrigue gone, there will certainly be a backlash against the writers. Let's just hope that in June, when the Screen Actors' Guild contract expires, there is not yet another long, and possibly pointless, strike to ensue.

Broadway for the fourth time and ran for an additional 781 performances. Alfred Molina (Doc Ock from *Spiderman 2*) starred as Tevye and later in the run, Rosie O'Donnell starred as Golde. It is safe to say that Donald Trump did not see this revival.

13. It has been a very religious year for Blind Brook theater participants. *Fiddler* is the story of a man and his Jewish traditions, while *The Crucible*, which was performed in the fall, is also ingrained in religious values.

14. The week leading up to the

performances, rehearsals run for seven hours a night. This is known as "hell week," but I've never been able to figure out why.

15. Come see the show. It is going to be excellent, and everyone has been working their tukuses off (Oy vey, I am already speaking like an old-time Jewish man!).

*Fiddler on the Roof* evening performances are Thursday, March 13th, Friday, March 14th, and Saturday, March 15th. There is also a matinee on Sunday March 16th. Don't wait to buy your tickets!

## Arts &amp; Entertainment Section

A&amp;E Editor: Chloe Greenbaum



Photo/Julia Whalen

## Critical Shopper: Mint Boutique -For the Consumer on a Budget-

By Julia Whalen

When one looks through any fashion magazine, the styles showcased often come with daunting price tags. Want to achieve the celebrity look, but on a normal budget? Consignment shops may be the perfect place to look.

Mint, located in Byram, Connecticut, is a consignment shop that sells "recycled" clothes for girls starting at age two. Co-owners Debbie Gabel and Randi Henry came up with the idea when their children were going through the Bar and Bat Mitzvah years. "I would buy a dress and my daughter would wear it once," said Gabel. Many women's consignment shops existed, but there were never any for kids.

Mint carries many designer brands such as Juicy Couture, BCBG, and Seven for All Mankind. Dresses and jeans are the top sellers, but the store carries a large selection of other items as well, such as accessories. Items from samples and closeouts can be found for a fraction of their original value; in fact, most of the merchandise the store sells is anywhere from fifty to seventy percent off retail prices.

Bringing items in to sell is a simple process. The items must be current style-wise and in "mint" condition. Individuals can bring in fifteen items at a time. The beauty of a consignment shop is that people make money off the

clothes they once bought and no longer wear. The store gets sixty percent of the purchase and the former owner of the item gets forty. A check is sent out monthly with the money from the sales of the worn clothes. Mint works in a two season cycle. If any of the items do not sell within one season, the person who dropped them off can pick them up, or have them donated.

Because of the large selection and the fact that new merchandise comes in every day, many people who go in to sell clothes end up buying a thing or two as well.

Mint has recently begun to carry women's clothes as well. "Many women come into the store looking for clothes for themselves," stated Gabel. "Due to high demand, we are starting to integrate women's merchandise in with the kids' stuff."

Consignment is actually a multibillion dollar business, and the store is extremely popular. The name Mint came from two ideas: the fact that the clothes are in "mint condition" and the idea of being conscious of the environment. By bringing clothes to Mint, people are basically "recycling" clothing.

If buying current styles for a lower price or getting money for clothing that has just been stuffed in the back of a closet sounds intriguing, be sure to check out Mint's store at 253 Mill Street in Byram, CT.

## A Music Lover's Review of the Grammys

By Mori Einsidler

The Grammys are the awards given annually to artists responsible for outstanding achievements in the record industry. The 50th Annual Grammy Award Ceremony was held on February 10th, 2008, and many artists were either snubbed or dubbed the best in their respective categories. After watching the Grammys, it seemed to me that while some winners truly deserved to take home the trophies in their respective categories, other nominees were robbed by less worthy contenders.

### Album of the Year

Much to the dismay of Kanye West (again), his third hip-hop album *Graduation* lost out to *River: The Joni Letters*, Herbie Hancock's jazz remake album of various Joni Mitchell songs. Though it is monumental to see Mitchell's music earn the most significant Grammy of the ceremony after her near six year hiatus from music, I also would not have minded seeing Amy Winehouse take it home for her R&B/soul infused pop album *Back to Black*. Her current rehabilitation center, though, might have needed to install some additional shelf space to display what would have been her sixth Grammy of the evening.

### Song of the Year

Unfortunately for Carrie Underwood, her contrived attempt at rock star grit on "Before He Cheats" was not enough to earn her a Grammy in this category. Nor were Rihanna's incessant "Ella ella eh eh's" on "Umbrella" able to top Winehouse's vehement (though ironic) "No no no's" on her single, "Rehab," deservedly dubbed the best song of 2007.

### Best New Artist

Among the nominees for best new artist was Nashville, Tennes-

see's Paramore. The band's ascent in the top charts has earned its members (with an average age of 19) fame. Their album, *Riot!*, has convinced many that these straight-edge rockers possess more than a little musical prowess and promise. Conversely, the Grammy was won by Winehouse, whose drug test failure prohibited her from getting a Visa to attend the actual Grammy Ceremony in Los Angeles. I would have preferred to see the award go to Feist, the folksy, indie-pop sensation whose single "1234" gained popularity after its stint on the new iPod Nano commercial. Additionally, the Canadian songstress proved herself musically competent and loveable on her major label debut, *The Reminder*.

### Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance

It seems that the Boss is still boss! Bruce Springsteen's career has had twice the longevity any new artist today can even begin to hope for, and he is still going strong with his 14th full length album, *Magic*. His hit "Radio Nowhere" easily overcame Beck's "Timebomb" and Paul McCartney's "Only Mama Knows" to win this category.

### Best Rap Solo Performance

Thankfully not flaunting last year's sign that read, "I Told You So," Kanye West did take home the Grammy for his outstanding performance on his track, "Stronger." Personally, I think he owes it to Daft Punk, whose electronic beats and choruses are what make this song so undeniably catchy and so deserving of the award. Still, Jay-Z's "Show Me What You Got" off his album *Kingdom Come*, and T.I.'s "Big Things Poppin' (Do It)" off his latest *T.I. vs. T.I.P.*, "bowed in the presence of greatness," and were unable to stop West from taking home this award.

## Book Review:

# A Tough Love Guide to Becoming a *Skinny Bitch*

By Samantha Levine

"Are you sick and tired of being fat? Good. If you can't take one more day of self-loathing, you're ready to get skinny." As I read these opening words to the best-selling diet book, *Skinny Bitch*, I was filled with excitement at the prospect of finally unearthing the secret to getting the perfect body. But instead of flipping the page to find motivational words and inspirational ideas, I received a mouthful of criticism targeted toward the generally unhealthy public and some far-from-supportive words. I suppose that authors Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin would refute my statement by claiming that they use a "tough love" approach.

Within the first few pages, I

was told that "If you can't wake up without [caffeine], it's because you are either addicted to caffeine, sleep deprived, or a generally unhealthy slob." Ouch! I guess next time I'll pass on the vanilla latte. In retrospect, I laugh at myself for being offended by that mild accusation. Little did I know what was to come.

After a rocky start, authors Freedman, a former model agent and "self taught know-it-all," and Barnouin, a former model with a degree in science, describe in detail everything that is harmful for the body: cigarettes, alcohol, junk food, coffee, and soda. This is reasonable since it is common knowledge that these nasty habits will not cure obesity.

The next chapters relay the

basics: carbs and sugars are the enemies, artificial sweeteners are equally evil, and so on. However, as soon as I hit the chapter "The Dead, Rotting, Decomposing Flesh Diet," it all went downhill from there. Instead of providing helpful diet tips for all types of people, the authors advocate the vegetarian lifestyle as the sole way to be skinny. It was even said so bluntly, "So yeah, if you want to get skinny, you've got to be a vegetarian- someone who doesn't eat dead animals or seafood. Quit whining." Ouch again.

The authors' one-sided take on vegetarianism seems a bit unfounded since there is an abundance of people who eat meat and are still healthy and fit. In an attempt to convert the readers into avid vegetarians, the au-

thors include an entire 23-page chapter about the brutalities and terrors of the slaughterhouse business, including graphic terms like "throats stabbed open" and "skin being sliced away from their faces." At this point I questioned whether I was reading a diet book or an animal rights crusade.

Not only do the authors urge readers to eliminate meat from their shopping lists, but they also assert that consuming any form of dairy products is awful for the body. The next chapter discusses the horrors of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other food organizations, claiming that they make consumers'

Please turn to page 22

## DVD Review:

***Across the Universe***

By Michelle Caley

*Across the Universe* was widely viewed as a must-see movie this year. Having never gotten around to see it on the big screen, I rushed over to Blockbuster the day it became available to home audiences. I was anticipating greatness, and how could I not? It seemingly does not get much better than a major feature film created from a catalogue of Beatles songs. Music alone, though, is a very precarious premise for an entire movie, and if not executed perfectly, a music-based film can fail miserably. Was *Across the Universe* a great success or did it fall short of its potential? The odd reality is that as I ejected the disk from my DVD player, I was left torn, unable to make up my mind.

*Across the Universe* is essentially the adaptation of a number of Beatles songs into a story. The movie follows young adults trying to find love and a purpose in life during the turbulent 1960s. More specifically, the story chronicles two characters who end up as lovers, Jude (Jim Sturgess) and Lucy (Evan Rachel Wood). The names might sound familiar as belonging to two separate icons in Beatles songs... no coincidence there.

After grappling with my feelings regarding the movie for hours afterward, I finally came to a conclusion. It was well-made; except for one crucial element: the storyline, or lack thereof. Its dullness and monotony could not have kept me less engaged. The plotline started off simple enough, and seemed to be leading toward a Romeo and Juliet set in the '60s. Soon, however, it became quite confusing. New characters were introduced in the most mind-bogglingly bizarre ways. I went through an entire scene not knowing who a character was, and when I was finally made aware of her identity, it was dreadfully anticlimactic.

There were also particular scenes that take the word "strange" to a whole new level, scenes that could not even be saved by the presence of Bono (whom I love but was unfortunately in my least favorite parts of the movie). It seemed as if the director made some of the scenes weird simply for the sake of weirdness. I then arrived at the epiphany that maybe it was all supposed to be puzzling and peculiar and turbulent in order to epitomize the overall feeling of the decade. Essentially, if that was the purpose, I deem it unwise, and if that was not the purpose, what was going on?

In spite of the film's hazy and dry plot, the music was its saving grace. As a Beatles fan, I was a little apprehensive at the thought of hearing reworked versions of such incredible songs. However, my fears were allayed with each successive song throughout the movie, and I soon rushed out to buy the soundtrack.

Another exciting part of the movie was its artistic spin. The cinematography and direction were extremely inventive and original, and director Julie Taymor masterfully created a work of art out of an otherwise bland plot. Each musical scene could have been a chart-topping, award-winning music video.

Although the storyline of *Across the Universe* leaves something to be desired, the soundtrack and innovative direction made the movie enjoyable. It is a true shame that the writers were unable to think of a story that would better complement the fabulous tunes interspersed throughout the film. The creators of the movie succeeded in living up to the musical genius that inspired it but failed at making it noteworthy or classic. I think the writers stopped just short of making a truly brilliant film, whereas the director surpassed brilliance.

**Book Review***Continued from page 21*

safety their last priority and business their first.

Yet after numerous chapters of hair-raising allegations and postulates, the book ends on a relatively light note. The authors give encouragement and hope by saying, "Chances are there will be times you feel deprived, angry, overwhelmed, and frustrated. But these few, fleeting moments will all be worthwhile once you are skinny." My favorite line of the book is, "Love yourself enough to do whatever it takes to be the best you can be." After reading that, I breathed a sigh of relief, for finally the authors inform their

audience of a realistic approach to feeling good about oneself, which does not necessarily have to include being skinny.

Finally, after reading the list of "approved foods" and skimming some of the cited sources, I closed the book and attempted to make a concise recapitulation of its main points. Basically, in order to become a "skinny bitch" I would have to give up coffee, junk food, meat, eggs, cheese, and milk. At this point I weighed my options. Ultimately I decided to forgo the authors' advice and stick to my own imperfect, albeit delicious, regimen.

**Artist Spotlight:  
BBHS Art Teacher  
Ms. Meghan Petras**

By Sharon Friedlander and Danielle Treacy

Although most students at Blind Brook know Ms. Meghan Petras as a high school art teacher, her identity transcends that of an instructor when she steps off the school premises. Outside of the four art-adorned walls of her classroom, she is known as a professional artist, and more specifically, a sculptor and painter. As her second year at Blind Brook comes down the home stretch, Petras is working on honing her advanced artistic skills through animations, sculptures, and paintings. Her passion for art has not wavered since she was a young child, and we sat down with her to find out about her personal art history.

**Ms. Petras, where did you grow up?**

In Central New York, in the Finger Lakes region. It is a beautiful area.

**When and why did you first decide to become an artist?**

There are many creative people in my family that have had a huge influence on me and I have always wanted to be an artist. My father builds furniture as a hobby, my sister has her own interior design business, and my brother works in the film industry; my mother was always making quilts or flower arrangements. Even among my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, there is a tremendous amount of talent and appreciation for the arts.

**What kind of artistic training and education have you had?**

I went to SUNY New Paltz as an undergraduate for Art Education and Ceramics and Rhode Island School of Design for my M.F.A. in Sculpture. I was also very fortunate to be able to work as a studio assistant for Ursula Von Rydingsvard who is an amazing artist and was a huge mentor to me.

**What projects have you done in the past?**

Up until a few years ago I concentrated mostly on sculpture but recently have been creating a lot of paintings and animations.

**Have you ever been featured at a museum?**

I had my thesis show in the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in 2004 and have shown in galleries throughout New York and Rhode Island.

**What inspires you artistically?**

There are so many things that inspire me as an artist. I love being in nature, and looking at natural forms, listening to music, and looking at art.

**Are you currently working on anything outside of school?**

Currently I am working on an animation that will become a collaboration with a musician friend of mine who will design the sound for the piece. I am also working on some new drawings for future paintings.

**How did you get into teaching?**

My first experience with teaching was as a volunteer teacher in a Vietnamese kindergarten in Boston through a really cool program called City Year. It was an amazing experience.

**What other jobs, relating to art, have you had?**

Throughout college I worked with various artists, helping them with their work, and also dabbled in film, working on sets.

**What is your personal favorite type of art either to look at or create?**

I have so many favorites! I love sculptures, paintings, and animations.

**What do you see as your strengths as an artist?**

I think one of the most important strengths an artist can have is discipline, which I try to maintain in my practice as an artist. I think it is also important to be open to the various places your creativity can take you.

**Thank you.**

*If you are interested in seeing some of Ms. Petras' work, check out her website, [meghanpetras.com](http://meghanpetras.com).*



Photo/Victoria Ferrer

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Click on the Focus link at

[www.blindbrook.org](http://www.blindbrook.org)

## Editorial

# Just Five More Minutes!

By Corinne Segal

It is 6:30 AM on a weekday morning, and I am physically unable to rise out of bed. Technically, I know that I have no choice; I am fully aware that soon, I will have to explain the projectile motion of a cow that is launched off a cliff at a speed of 20 meters per second. This fact, however, seems to be of little importance when contrasted with my craving for another second of sleep.

On mornings such as these (read: every morning), I wonder why it is so painful to wake up. At such an exceptionally busy time in our lives, why should we be getting less sleep than ever before? Even as I become more alert throughout the day, my conclusion remains the same: our school day should begin later.

Sleep deprivation has become a considerable problem throughout America, where improved technology has provided us with the means to work literally twenty-four hours a day. The problem is especially prevalent among adolescents, who, as they grow, experience a change in their circadian rhythm, which dictates an individual's natural sleep cycle. This delays their sleeping schedule until later in the night, making it impossible for them to

fall asleep as early as they used to.

In addition, this biological change is compounded with the laughable amount of stress that high school students endure throughout the college admissions process. It is hardly surprising that most students sleep six to seven hours a night, which is 2-3 hours less than they theoretically should.

I have found that there are two common routes that students take to cope with academic stress.

First, we become ruthlessly driven perfectionists: we decide to memorize thirty SAT vocabulary words a day, or study for just one more hour when we've already studied for two. We promise ourselves that we'll sleep tomorrow, because we'll be ahead on our work.

On another day, we become masters of procrastination: we decide to watch four episodes of our favorite TV show on DVD or mindlessly surf the Internet, taking frequent breaks to call and IM our friends. By nightfall, we realize that we have forgotten what a subjunctive verb even is, much less how to conjugate one, and frantically start to study. At about midnight, we discover how soothing a textbook passage can really be, and drift in and out of sleep,

desperately trying to keep our eyes open for five more minutes.

So admittedly, our sleep deprivation is partly the fault of our personal schedules. Regardless, there are many nights when we cannot conquer our workload, however hard or efficiently we work. It may be harmless to abandon that extra hour of sleep once or twice; however, it is when this behavior becomes chronic that it presents a serious problem to our education and health.

I understand that calling for a later school day may seem to be a cop-out from the results of behavior that originates with students themselves. However, even if we complete our work early, nearly all teenagers will only be able to sleep at a relatively late hour, due to the biological changes we have been subject to. Even if we have no activities or homework to fill our time, we will remain sleep-deprived to a certain extent.

Numerous schools across the country have implemented a later start to school and observed the positive impact that an extra 30-45 minutes of sleep had on students. Because they are able to be more focused in class, these students have experienced a long-term advantage that few students or ad-

ministrators can argue with: better grades. I doubt that we would be any exception; if we slept more, either by changing our own behavior or starting school later, we would be happier, as well as healthier.

In my view, Blind Brook has always expressed concern with every aspect of students' well-being and sought to provide them with the best environment possible for learning. It is not unreasonable to expect the school to collaborate with students in working toward a schedule which places them in a position to perform their best. We already design our daily schedules around our interests and college preparatory needs; why shouldn't we additionally factor in what is best for our health and grades?

Of course, there is no ideal schedule for a hardworking high-school student. Sleep, however, is one of our fundamental requirements, both mentally and physically; perhaps more of it would provide the additional mental clarity to achieve an A, or stave off that winter cold that everyone seems to be getting.

Bottom line: We need sleep and we simply cannot function without it. Despite what many of us like to pretend, we are only human after all.

## It's Time to Pop Blind Brook's Bubble

By Ben Lubkin

In the 2001 movie "Bubble Boy," Jake Gyllenhaal is born without an immune system and is forced to live in a bubble during his youth. By the end of the movie he leaves the bubble, gets the girl, and lives happily ever after. Here at Blind Brook, we don't have a confining glass structure surrounding us, but we do live in another type of bubble: an isolationist bubble.

Take the economy, for example. Over the past several months there has been growing fear that America is entering a recession. Stock markets have experienced increased volatility, and the Federal Government quickly responded with lowered interest rates and a stimulus bill. After this sequence of events, I was discussing our nation's economic dilemma with Substitute Teacher Mauro Sax. I asked Sax how this period of economic turbulence would affect students at Blind Brook. Sax responded by saying that a recession wouldn't have a large effect. In an affluent community such as Rye Brook, economic trends are dampened.

Rye Brook's economic security is only one example of our community's isolation from world and national events. Our isolation is not that of Tokugawa Shogunate-era Japan's, where outside contact was strictly prohibited. Rye Brook suffers from (or should I say enjoys) a conceptual isolationism.

The average day in our community can be considered upper-middle class bliss, where the most important things include getting into the best colleges and winning varsity games. Everything else that is occurring in the world – the suffering, the destruction, and the constant uncertainty – is far away.

Each day, however, the turmoil around the world rages on. Suicide bombings occur daily throughout the Middle East, disease and poverty plague Africa, and on and on. And if you're reading *The New York Times*, you have only skimmed through the first ten pages. The National Report, full of murders and injustices, is next. The Metro Section, with tragic stories occurring as close as the Bronx, follows. Finally, if you're reading on Sunday, you'll come to the Westchester Section. The front page may feature a new condominium construction plan, with a column on the decreasing college acceptance rates to the left. Scrolling through the section, the most upsetting story may be a conflict over a new dog-poop law.

If this global detachment is not bad enough, sometimes, unbeknownst to ourselves, we are even complicit in these aforementioned problems.

About a month ago I was watching the movie *Blood Diamond*, which tells the story of Sierra Leone's civil war. The war, in which a rebel group called the

Revolutionary United Front battled the government, was largely fueled by the nation's lucrative illegitimate diamond trade. The RUF harvested the diamonds using slave labor and sold them to diamond distributors. This money allowed the RUF to buy the advanced weapons that would eventually kill 50,000 people, money that only existed because Western consumers splurge on diamonds.

As consumers, America's excessive usage of paper products has amplified deforestation around the world. Precious rainforests, which offer a sanctuary for scientific discovery, are being cut down at an alarming rate. Our school, with its extravagant usage of paper for teaching and its failing recycling programs, cannot claim innocence.

We must ask the vital question: What should we, the students, do about our community's isolation? Should we choose to stay in our state of ignorant bliss or should we begin to understand the world around us? Each Blind Brook student must choose his or her own path, as we all picture ourselves in the world differently.

Personally, I believe that our community needs to "pop the bubble." It is time for high school students to have a complete understanding of global events and to understand how their actions contribute to these events. Eventually, I hope that all students will be able to

proficiently analyze the world they live in and do their part as global citizens to help it.

There are many mediums that are currently used at Blind Brook to achieve this goal. The Social Studies department implements current events projects. Additionally, global-oriented clubs, such as Model United Nations, the STAND Darfur club, and the Invisible Children club, are spreading awareness and education. I commend these efforts and I hope that they inspire us to broaden our global perceptions.

But there is always room for improvement. Let's vocalize our opinions outside of Rye Brook. *Focus* published a story in the fall about two seniors that attended a pro-Israel rally, and I believe that it is time for everyone in Generation Y to speak out for their rights. After all, what happened to the days when youth organized protests to speak out against the Vietnam War? The War in Iraq is just as unpopular but it is practically ignored by our nation's youth.

I don't want to get ahead of myself, though. Change takes time, but after all Blind Brook won't have to change that much. If you just flip through the newspaper once a week, it's a start. And, if everyone just flipped through a newspaper each day, Blind Brook's bubble would begin to deteriorate. If Jake Gyllenhaal was able to get out of his bubble, why can't we?

### Corrections:

In the December 2007/January 2008 issue of *Focus*, Ashley Woychowski's name was inadvertently omitted as the designer of the center-spread. Also, in the Sports Section, a photo of Joe Magliano playing basketball was incorrectly identified. We apologize for any confusion.

# Editorial

## Moving Beyond the AP Obsession

Back in May of 2007, Blind Brook was honored by being named to *Newsweek's* annual Top 100 Public High School list for the second year in a row. While it is considered a noteworthy accomplishment by some, most informed individuals realize that the rankings are somewhat arbitrary. Placement on the list is determined by the sheer number of students that sit for the AP tests in June, regardless of how well they do. Recently, however, Blind Brook joined other districts in signing a letter requesting its removal from the list, as a protest against what it considers to be a "flawed system."

I completely support the school's decision to remove our high school from the list, but I am unsure of what it actually means for the future of our school. Does it mean we are going to try to actually beat the AP craze that has been sweeping the nation, or is it too late for anything to be done?

As of now, by signing the abovementioned letter, the school has publically proclaimed that it does not support the idea that intelligence or adequacy can be measured simply by the number of APs a student takes. But if this is the case, why are students often

made to feel otherwise?

You can point a finger in a million directions from the administration to parents to the College Board and college admissions officers, all sources that put pressure on us to "live up to our

ber students can take. Or maybe, just maybe, we have to realize that as human beings, we have our limits.

It is the same as with everything in life. Just as we are taught from the time we are young that

signs up for an AP course, that student is essentially saying, "I want to work hard."

If this was an ideal world, that statement would be accurate. However, I think it is safe to say that at Blind Brook and countless other schools across the country, nothing could be further from the truth. Sure, there are many students who take an AP course because they have a genuine love for the subject and want to explore it in-depth. But, honestly, the majority of students do not fall into that category. Most have signed up for the course simply because they believe they have to in order to get into a certain college, or better yet, simply because their parents have told them that this is the case.

Students end up signing up for classes that they are simply unqualified for. These students often grow discouraged because they are in over their heads and end up performing poorly. Further, these students sometimes even hold back their peers who actually deserve to be there by slowing down the class.

Mathews went on to say that the actual work in the class is more important than the score received on the test because the students are preparing themselves for college. However, if students are unable to grasp any of the concepts in the courses and get ones or twos on the exams, how much preparation was really done?

I certainly do not wish for this to come across as a diatribe against Mathews because I respect many of his intentions and the research he conducted. The problem goes way beyond his research or *Newsweek* or Blind Brook for that matter. *Newsweek* did not create the "AP obsession" and neither did Blind Brook. The question, however, remains: We have recognized that equating AP's with success is a problem, but are we actually going to back up our declaration with actions and do something about it?

*Madeline Sims*

Madeline Sims  
Editor-in-Chief

*Does it mean we are going to try to actually beat the AP craze that has been sweeping the nation, or is it too late for anything to be done?*

full potential." Somewhere along the line, though, this phrase took on an entirely new meaning. It became translated into "If you are not taking as many APs as possible before you collapse, you are not doing enough."

It is easy enough to say we do not support something; it is much more challenging to actually back it up with action. Maybe we need to offer fewer AP courses. Or maybe we should limit the num-

ber students can take. Or maybe, just maybe, we have to realize that as human beings, we have our limits. It is the same as with everything in life. Just as we are taught from the time we are young that everyone has different limits when it comes to how much chocolate cake they should eat so they don't feel sick; how many pounds they should bench-press so they don't get injured; and even once we are a little older, the idea that just because a friend can drink four beers and feel fine, that does not mean you can too. The same idea applies to AP classes. Just because one student can take four and handle the workload, it does not mean everyone is capable of doing so.

Is it fair to reward schools that encourage students to become swallowed by this "AP obsession" and enroll in classes that they should not really be in? Of course not. As discussed in the article entitled, "Blind Brook Ditches *Newsweek* Top 100," which appears in this issue of *Focus*, the ranking system was created by *Washington Post* columnist Jay Mathews.

Thanks to an interview he granted *Focus*, I was able to discover his reasoning behind the rankings. The truth is that he had noble intentions when he first devised his ranking system. He believed in encouraging schools to allow the greatest number of students to sign up for AP courses because he equated enrollment in such classes with the opportunity for students to challenge themselves. He said that if a student

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